

BEING ART

A STUDY IN ONTOLOGY

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Submitted for the Degree of Ph.D. in Philosophy on August 4th, 2006

ABSTRACT

I present and defend a two-category ontology of art. The basic idea of it is that singular artworks are physical objects, whereas multiple artworks are types of which there can be tokens in the form of performances, copies, or other kinds of realisations.

I argue that multiple artworks, despite being abstract objects, have a temporal extension, thus they are created at a certain point of time and can also drop out of existence again under certain conditions. They can, however, not be perceived by the senses and cannot enter into causal relations.

The identity of an artwork is determined by its structural properties, but also by the context in which it was made. The essential contextual properties of an artwork are those that are relevant to the meaning of the work.

A realisation of a multiple artwork has to comply with the structure of the work and has to stand in the correct intentional and/or causal-historical relation to the work. Realisations that diverge too much from the structure of the work, like translations of literary works, are what I call “derivative artworks”.

I argue against the thesis that all artworks are multiple. I claim that there are singular artworks, and some of them are even necessarily singular. I show why certain standard arguments against the idea that all artworks can be realised multiple times are flawed, and present my own theory about what decides whether a work is singular or multiple, namely that successful intentions of the artist determine which category an artwork belongs to.

Concerning singular artworks, I also investigate what the relation between the work and the matter it is made of is, and how a work can survive a change in its parts and still remain the same work.

DECLARATIONS

I, Michael Weh, hereby certify that this thesis, which is approximately 62000 words in length, has been written by me, that it is the record of work carried out by me and that it has not been submitted in any previous application for a higher degree.

Date _____ Signature of candidate _____

I was admitted as a research student in September 2003 and as a candidate for the degree of Ph.D. in September 2003; the higher study for which this is a record was carried out in the University of St Andrews between 2003 and 2006.

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I hereby certify that the candidate has fulfilled the conditions of the Resolution and Regulations appropriate for the degree of Ph.D. in the University of St Andrews and that the candidate is qualified to submit this thesis in application for that degree.

Date _____ Signature of supervisor _____

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

I would like to express my deep gratitude to my supervisor, Berys Gaut, whose helpfulness, patience, and guidance over the last three years I very much appreciate.

I am much obliged to the *Deutscher Akademischer Austauschdienst* for the financial support.

I profited from discussions with, and criticisms from, several members of the St Andrews philosophy community. I would like to especially thank Sarah Broadie, Patrick Greenough, Katherine Hawley, John Haldane, Lisa Jones, Daniel Nolan, Simon Prosser, and Marcus Rossberg. Always helpful were the discussions with the philosophy postgraduates, in the Friday Seminar or elsewhere. I apologise to everyone I have forgotten.

For years now, I have enjoyed the encouragement and support of Birgit Recki and Reinold Schmücker. I am very thankful for it.

And, of course, M and B.

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INTRODUCTION

The question I will attempt to answer in what follows is: what kind of things are artworks? To be more precise: to which ontological category or categories do the objects we regard as artworks belong? Are artworks physical things? Or do they exist only in people's minds? Or are they maybe abstract entities like numbers? Physical, mental, and abstract objects are different kinds of objects, and the ontological question about artworks aims at understanding the way in which artworks exist.

Engaging with the ontology of art is a worthwhile enterprise for a variety of reasons. The most obvious one is that ontological questions are of genuine interest: what *is* a novel, a symphony, a painting? Do they exist eternally? What makes a performance of *Macbeth* a performance of *Macbeth*? What is a forgery? What happens if we restore a statue and barely any original material is left? ... These are puzzling issues.

But not only that. Understanding what art is – why something is art, how to interpret artworks, what makes art valuable, what good art is – is a very broad task. A conception of the ontological status of artworks should be part of such a programme. The question *what is it?* seems to me to be a necessary question within the general philosophical endeavour to make sense of art. Also, as a basis for a wider theory of art, an ontology of art might provide directions, restrictions, and insights into other fields of inquiry. For instance, one claim of mine is that an artwork's identity is co-determined by the context of its production. And if context is part of the identity of a work, this might support

theories about the interpretation of art that say that one has to know about the context of an artwork's making in order to properly understand it.

However, I will restrict my attention to the ontological question and say nothing about the value of art, the definition of art, and only very little about the interpretation of art. This is not only because of the lack of space that would have been needed for a wider investigation, but also because I would like to keep the ontological framework that I am going to present here independent of other art-philosophical considerations.

So I am not going to offer an explanation as to *why* something is art. I just assume that there are artworks. The fact that there are objects where it is controversial whether they are art or not is of no relevance here. It is enough to say that there are clear-cut cases of artworks, paradigm examples where no one would deny that they are art, and to apply the ontological question to them. What is true of these paradigm artworks will then also be true of the controversial cases, should they turn out to be art, too. I believe that the issues of ontology and definitions of art can be separated, and I also do not see that any of the prevailing definitions of art would entail particular ontological commitments. I do not see that, for example, a supporter of a historical definition of art would have to disagree with any of the ontological theories discussed here on grounds of his definition.

I take it to be a virtue of an ontology of art to be close to our intuitions and commonsensical. That might not always be possible, at least not concerning every problem or puzzle that has to be addressed. But if there are two theories with the same explanatory power, and one of them is rather revisionary, whereas the other one is in accordance with many of our pre-philosophical and otherwise common beliefs and practices, I would prefer the latter theory.

The central thought of the theory that I will present and defend is that so-called multiple artworks (like literary and musical works) are abstract objects, whereas singular artworks (for example, painting and carved sculpture) are physical objects. This claim is based on the works of, mainly, Richard Wollheim and Jerrold Levinson. I also emphasise the relevance of the context of an artwork's production for its identity and meaning.

The thesis consists of four chapters, each of which has several sections. In the first chapter, I discuss the most prominent conceptions within the ontology of art. To begin with, the view that all artworks are physical objects is rejected – at least multiple artworks cannot be considered to be physical. The view that artworks are mental objects is also shown to be implausible. I then discuss the theories of Nelson Goodman, Gregory Currie, and Richard Wollheim. Wollheim's ontology proves to be a promising approach, but it needs more elaboration and leaves too many questions unanswered. Wollheim thinks that multiple artworks are types, and performances, prints etc. of works are tokens of the corresponding types. Singular artworks, on the other hand, are physical objects.

The second chapter deals more closely with the idea that multiple artworks are abstract objects. The type/token distinction, as initially developed by C. S. Peirce and then applied to art by Wollheim, brings with it a couple of questions and problems that have to be clarified before the overall theory can be accepted as plausible. One is whether artworks, being abstract objects, are created or discovered. Abstract objects are traditionally regarded as having no temporal extension, but at the same time it is one of our standard convictions about artists that they *create* works. I argue that not all abstract objects are atemporal and that therefore there is no conflict between a conception of artworks as

abstract and the view that they are created. Neither is it problematic for this conception that abstract objects cannot be perceived and cannot enter into causal relations. This is followed by a section about what realisations of artworks are, and that realisations have to be distinguished from means to realise works. The chapter is concluded by suggestions about how artworks are brought into existence, and if they can also drop out of existence again.

The topic of the third chapter is work identity. Is a work merely determined by its structural properties – like a sequence of words or sounds – or do contextual properties also matter for the identity of a work? I argue for the latter position, and subsequently I hold that context also matters for the meaning of works and for whether they are singular or multiple.

After that, I present a theory about the identity conditions between type and token. What are the conditions a performance, a print, a screening, etc., have to meet in order to be a realisation of a certain type?

The next section of the chapter deals with the contextual properties of artworks at more length. Surely not all of the contextual properties of a work are essential. For instance, the *Mona Lisa* could arguably have been finished a day earlier and would still have been the same work. But could it also have been done by someone other than Leonardo? How should we distinguish essential from contingent contextual properties? The solution that I propose is that those contextual properties of a work are essential that are relevant for the meaning of the work.

The fourth chapter comes back to singular artworks and to the idea that they are – in contrast to multiple artworks – physical objects. I argue against the view that there are actually no singular artworks and that all works can be realised multiple times. The main claim I put forward is that it is the successful

intentions of an artist that determine whether a work is singular or multiple. I also discuss the difference between originals, copies, and forgeries, and take a closer look at art forms like print making, which are difficult to categorise in terms of singularity or multiplicity.

A final section of the chapter addresses the problem of change. If singular artworks are physical objects, the question arises whether they remain the same despite changes in their physical constitution, for instance because of restoration. I make a suggestion as to why works can survive a certain amount of change of parts.

Drawing upon the work of various philosophers¹ and putting forward my additions to their views plus my own ideas, I hope to suggest a plausible ontological framework for artworks.

¹ All translations of German texts are my own.

CHAPTER I

THE MAIN POSITIONS

1. Artworks as Physical Objects

A first attempt to answer the question about the ontological status of artworks might be to simply say that they are physical objects. This seems to be not only the obvious, but also right thing to say – at least in the case of some artworks. Surely paintings and sculptures, for instance, are concrete objects? Physical matter is used to make them, one can touch them, move them, they have a clear location in time and space ... There seems to be nothing particularly puzzling or surprising about what kind of things paintings and statues are.

However, regardless of the question of whether this view is correct, the “physical-objects hypothesis”, as Richard Wollheim calls it,² is starting to become dubious once we consider multiple artworks.

Of course, the book that I am holding in my hands is a physical object. The performance I enjoyed or endured last night – by being an event – is also a physical object. But *is* the book in fact the artwork *Ulysses*, and *was* the performance *Macbeth*? The physical-objects hypothesis can be understood in more than one way when applied to multiple artworks, and one of them would be to insist that indeed every physical manifestation of an artwork *x is x*. So my copy of *Ulysses* is the artwork *Ulysses*, just like my upstairs neighbour’s copy of *Ulysses* is the artwork *Ulysses*. However, this is undoubtedly wrong. If my

² Wollheim, Richard: *Art and its Objects*. Second Edition. Cambridge 1980.

copy was identical with the work *Ulysses*, and my upstairs neighbour's copy was identical with it, too, then his and my copies would have to be identical, which they are obviously not. They are two discrete objects.

Additionally, if I lost my copy of *Ulysses*, that would mean that *Ulysses* was lost. But surely the work survives the loss of my copy. We could even imagine a scenario where all the copies of a literary work are lost, without the work itself therefore ceasing to exist. If, say, all written inscriptions of a poem become lost, the poem could still exist, because someone knows it off by heart. It might even not have been written down in the first place, like for example in preliterate societies.³ Still we would not deny that the poem exists.

Regarding every performance of *Macbeth* as identical with Shakespeare's work would also mean that if I did not like yesterday's performance of *Macbeth*, I would not like *Macbeth* – though it should be possible that I like *Macbeth*, but was disappointed by yesterday's performance.

There must be a difference between an artwork and copies or performances of it – they cannot be identical. So maybe my *copy* of *Ulysses* is not the artwork, but the original it is a copy of: the manuscript.

This suggestion, though, is not any more sustainable than the previous one. If Ellen is an admirer of *Ulysses*, she does not need to be an admirer of Joyce's manuscript. We would also be happy to say that she has read *Ulysses*, even though she has never even seen the manuscript. Also, the manuscript may be damaged, or some pages might be missing, but *Ulysses* is neither damaged nor incomplete. The manuscript could even not exist anymore – in that case, according to the theory that the original is the work, *Ulysses* would not exist anymore. If, on the other hand, the manuscript was identical with the artwork

³ Hanfling, Oswald: "The Ontology of Art". In his: *Philosophical Aesthetics*. Oxford 1992, pp. 75-110:79. *Ulysses*, too, might be memorised by someone, unlikely as it is.

Ulysses, then *Ulysses* would have a spatio-temporal location. But it would be very odd to say that *Ulysses* is in Dublin. The question “Where is it?” does not seem to make sense regarding literary or musical works – only when asked about copies or performances of them.

Regarding other art forms, say opera, it is hard to find a physical object that could count as an original in analogy to the manuscript as the original of a novel. Should we consider the score as the original? But a score has no audible qualities. Would not having these be a necessary property of an opera? Roman Ingarden observes:

Insofar as the score plays no role in aesthetically experiencing a work of music, we experience it by directly listening to one of its performances, without knowing the score at all or having to know the score. This fact already shows that the work of music is entirely different from its score.⁴

And like a manuscript, the original score may be lost. Then we would have to say that the whole artwork is lost. Properties like the colour of the ink the score was written in would be properties of the musical work.⁵ In some cases, there even might not be a score at all, like in improvised or folk music.⁶

Is perhaps the debut performance the original? Then any further performances would be performances of the first performance. Very few people would ever hear the actual works. One also does not have to know the debut performance in order to stage an opera. Additionally, if what one has to stage in order to stage an opera was a performance of the debut performance, there would be no space for any variation, interpretation and experiments. Some performances are radically different from the debut performance, but are they not still

⁴ Ingarden, Roman: *Untersuchungen zur Ontologie der Kunst. Musikwerk – Bild – Architektur – Film*. Tübingen 1962, p. 27.

⁵ Ingarden, Roman: *The Work of Music and the Problem of its Identity*. Translated by Adam Czerniawski. London 1986, p. 35.

⁶ Ingarden: *Work of Music*, p. 38.

performances of the same opera? The debut performance may also fail or a lightning bolt may strike one of the musicians. Then that would be part of the artwork, and later performances would have to repeat that.

Another suggestion would be to imagine an “ideal performance” as the original. Yet apart from the problems of what that is supposed to be and what the conditions for being an ideal performance could be, an imagined object is not a physical object. So the notion of an ideal performance is not compatible with the physical-objects hypothesis, and we shall see in a while that the notion that artworks are mental objects is deeply problematic. If one of the many actual performances of an opera, on the other hand, is chosen as the ideal one, the same problems as with the debut performance theory arise.

What makes the theory that (multiple) artworks can be identified with their originals initially attractive is the fact that we usually treat original manuscripts and scores as something special. But notwithstanding sociological practices, the theory has to be rejected.

All attempts to explain the ontological status of works of art in physical terms turn out to be highly implausible – at least concerning multiple arts. Still it might be possible that singular arts are physical objects. At least this seems like a straightforwardly commonsensical assumption. And indeed, one claim within the ontological framework for artworks presented in the following chapters will be that singular artworks are physical. Explaining this claim and arguing for it will have to wait until later, though. For now, let us just keep it in mind as a working hypothesis.

1.1 Classes and Aggregates

Perhaps works of art are the class of all the relevant physical objects? But the class theory is implausible for several reasons. First, a class is defined by its extension. But if the class of copies of *Ulysses* today has x objects as its extension and a new copy is printed tomorrow, the extension would be x_{+1} , and x and x_{+1} are not identical.⁷ So the work has changed. Every time new copies are printed, we are faced with a new work, since the extension of the *Ulysses*-class is not the same anymore. On the other hand, all not-yet-performed performance artworks would be identical, because their classes are empty.⁸

An artwork would also not be finished until no further copies were produced. In most cases, an artist could never claim to have finished her work. To do this, she would have to order the production of copies to stop. But this is not how we usually think an artist finishes her work.

According to the class theory, artworks that have a temporal extension would also become longer with every new performance. A performance of an opera could take three hours. If it is performed for a second time, then the artwork would suddenly be six hours long and so on.

Additionally, the question remains unexplained why we come to group the copies of an artwork together as a class. What would entitle me to call this book a copy of *Ulysses* if *Ulysses* is the class of all of its copies? How should I know that something belongs to the *Ulysses* class, if I do not already, independently of that membership, know what *Ulysses* is? It seems that I have

⁷ Cf. Wolterstorff, Nicholas: *Works and Worlds of Art*. Oxford 1980, p. 45.

⁸ Reicher, Maria: *Zur Metaphysik der Kunst. Eine logisch-ontologische Untersuchung des Werkbegriffs*. Graz 1998, p. 15.

to know first what the work is before I can know whether this copy is part of the work class. But if the work *is* the class of its copies, the situation becomes paradoxical. The notion of resemblances does not help, either, as Wollheim observes:

[T]o say that certain copies or performances are of *Ulysses* or *Rosenkavalier* because they resemble one another seems precisely to reverse the natural order of thought: the resemblance, we would think, follows from, or is to be understood in terms of, the fact that they are of the same novel or opera.⁹

One might add that the notion of resemblances is deeply problematic anyway, as Nelson Goodman has pointed out.¹⁰ Goodman himself proposes a more elaborate account of artworks as classes of their occurrences. We will come back to his theory.

One could also hold the view that artworks are the aggregates of the corresponding physical objects. So my copy of *Ulysses* is a part of the work, the latter being the sum of all *Ulysses* manifestations. But this would mean that if I lost my copy of *Ulysses*, a part of *Ulysses* would be lost. On the other hand, if a new edition of *Ulysses* is printed, this would mean that *Ulysses* has changed. In fact, according to the theory of artworks as aggregates, artworks change continuously and will keep changing as long as new exemplars are produced. But why should *Ulysses* today be something different from what it was yesterday? The problem that works would change applies to the aggregate theory like it does to the class theory.

⁹ Wollheim: *Art and its Objects*, p. 10.

¹⁰ Goodman, Nelson: *Languages of Art. An Approach to a Theory of Symbols*. Second Edition. Indianapolis/Cambridge 1976, pp. 3-5.

Another unwelcome implication of the aggregate theory is that if Tom did not like a certain performance of *Macbeth*, he would also not like a part of the artwork *Macbeth*. It would not be possible for Tom to like everything about *Macbeth*, though he was barely enthusiastic about yesterday's performance.

2. Artworks as Mental Objects

According to another ontological conception, artworks are mental objects. The best known proponents of this theory are Croce and Collingwood, whose theories are largely congruent.¹¹ Both assume that the artwork is located in the artist's mind.¹² The material object that we – falsely, according to them – call an artwork is just an external representation of the actual work, which is a mental object.

Collingwood illustrates his theory by an analogy to someone building a bridge. Before the bridge is built, the engineer has a plan of the bridge in his mind. This plan is not to be confused with the “plans” written on paper, or with instructions of how to build the bridge. “A plan is a kind of thing that can only exist in a person's mind.”¹³ The bridge that later evolves out of this plan is the physical embodiment of the plan, but is not the plan itself. Likewise, an artist's “plan” is the artwork; his “plans” could be sketches or a notation; and the physical object resulting from the artist's activity is a manifestation of the plan, but is not the artwork.

¹¹ Wollheim: *Art and its Objects*, p. 36.

¹² Collingwood, Robin George: *The Principles of Art*. Oxford 1979; Croce, Benedetto: *Aesthetic*. Translated by Douglas Ainslie. London 1922.

¹³ Collingwood: *Principles of Art*, p. 132.

When a man makes up a tune, he may and very often does at the same time hum it or sing it or play it on an instrument. He may do none of these things, but write it on paper. Or he may both hum it or the like, and also write it on paper at the same time or afterwards. Also he may do these things in public, so that the tune at its very birth becomes public property [...]. But all these are accessories of the real work, though some of them are very likely useful accessories. The actual making of the tune is something that goes on in his head, and nowhere else.¹⁴

This making is what Collingwood calls the “creation” of a work of art. The work of art, existing in its creator’s mind, is accessible to us via the material object he designed after his plan. We have to reconstruct the artwork in our own minds in order to appreciate it. The material object is thereby a means to an end.

[W]hat is written or printed on music-paper is not the tune. It is only something which when studied intelligently will enable others [...] to construct the tune for themselves in their own heads.¹⁵

Though Collingwood uses the creation of a tune as an example, his theory is to be understood as applying to all art forms.

Obviously someone can compose a tune “in his head”, as Collingwood sometimes calls it – nitpickers might insist that “in his mind” would be more accurate, because we would not find a tune if we opened that person’s head. However, to say that this mental content is to be regarded as the artwork cannot be correct.

¹⁴ Collingwood: *Principles of Art*, p. 134.

¹⁵ Collingwood: *Principles of Art*, p. 135.

First of all, it is barely imaginable that someone has, for example, a whole opera in his mind. Some works of art are obviously far too complex to keep them constantly in mind – and what happens if the composer forgets parts of the opera or even the whole opera? Does it then, at least partly, cease to exist? If he has to take a look at his own writings to remember it, this would mean that the opera temporarily did not exist.

But even if the artist manages to wholly keep his work in mind, what happens after she dies? Defenders of the mental objects theory would have to admit that in this case the artwork does not exist anymore. But it would be excessively counterintuitive to claim that an artwork stops to exist once its creator has died. An overwhelming amount of the artworks we think we know and enjoy would in fact not exist – surely nobody can seriously embrace such a position.

Collingwood would reply that by the material object the artist has left behind, we are able to reproduce the work in our minds, so the artwork still exists. But this idea, too, is dubious.

Following Collingwood, we cannot have any direct acquaintance with an artwork. Even if we are standing in front of the *Mona Lisa*, the *Mona Lisa* is just an object that allows us to re-imagine Leonardo's plan. But is this really conceivable? Can a mental content be transported via an object so it can arrive in someone else's mind unchanged? Collingwood affirms this, provided that the object is "studied intelligently". But what does that mean? When is the study of a painting intelligent? Trying to explain the process of artists passing their works on to their audiences will also be difficult to reconcile with the epistemic privateness of states of mind.

Furthermore, how do we know a painting is indeed an appropriate embodiment of the artist's plan? How do I know that Leonardo had the *Mona*

Lisa in mind, exactly the way it looks now? What if his plan was different and he did not manage to manifest it appropriately? I am not able to verify whether what I see, hear or read accurately corresponds to what the artist originally had in mind. The physical externalisation of his or her plan may have turned out different from the plan.

If, on the other hand, the physical objects designed by artists are supposed to be capable of accomplishing the task of transferring artists' plans to audiences' minds, why should we not consider them as artworks?

Additionally, the mental entities theory ignores the role of medium. The choice of materials and techniques used by an artist obviously plays no part in constituting an artwork, since the artwork qua being mental does not possess any physical properties. A mental object theorist may say that medium is important only insofar as it is a way to convey his plan. But, again: if an artist accomplishes the task of designing an artefact that is capable of enabling other people to re-imagine his artwork, why should we not simply say that this artefact is the artwork?

There is also another way of understanding artworks as being mental objects. The location of an artwork might not be in the artist's mind, but in the audience's. So what happens when I enjoy an artwork is that my dealing with it causes an imaginary thing to exist in my mind, and this thing is to be considered as the artwork. The physical object that caused it is not the work, but a triggering device from which the work emerges in my mind.

This theory can take shape in two different ways. The first one is that the artwork is the sum of the contents of all the audience's minds. But it must be objected that the way in which we experience an artwork may differ from

person to person. Then we would have to say that there is not *one* work of art called *Ulysses*, but different ones. The ways in which *Ulysses* is experienced or understood may also change in the course of time. New ways of understanding the novel may arise due to historical or social circumstances and ideas. Then *Ulysses* would change. These consequences are to be avoided if we do not wish to concede that there are several *Ulysseses*, distinct from each other because of different mental contents of the readers. And if the printed copies of the novel cause a different mental object in every single reader, in the end we would be unable to say what the artwork is, apart from maybe an amorphous collection of imaginary things.

The second possibility is to say that *Ulysses* is the mental entity in each individual reader's mind. So there are as many artworks *Ulysses* as there are people who have read the novel. But then if my upstairs neighbour and I are talking about *Ulysses*, how can we refer to the same artwork? After all, we are talking about two distinct objects. There would not be *one* work called *Ulysses*.

Likewise, just as it is hard to imagine that an artist is able to keep a complex artwork wholly in his mind, it is hard to imagine than an audience can. We would have to read *Ulysses* in one sitting and remember everything about it to completely have *Ulysses* in mind. Because this is barely possible, *Ulysses* would be a fragmented artwork that probably never exists as a whole at one point of time.

The mental objects theory fares no better than the physical objects theory, or the classes and aggregates theories. Both approaches to explaining what kind of things artworks are afflicted with consequences implausible enough to dismiss them.

3. Artworks as Abstract Objects

The view that – at least some – artworks are abstract objects, alongside, e.g., properties, relations, natural kinds, sets, and numbers has become one of the mainstream accounts within the ontology of art. Two prime reasons are responsible for this: the exclusion of other possibilities and the explanatory power of the abstract objects view. The theories that all artworks are physical or mental are deeply flawed, whereas the abstract objects theory is well suited to explain puzzling phenomena especially concerning multiple artworks: what is the work, how can it have no spatio-temporal location, what is the relation between work and performance ... But even though many philosophers think that artworks are abstract, there are significant differences between competing conceptions of the abstractness of works and disputes about questions of detail. There is not *one* theory of artworks as abstract objects, but several. At this point I shall briefly summarize the theories of Goodman, Wollheim, and Gregory Currie. Later, I will also discuss what other defenders of the abstractness view, like Jerrold Levinson or Maria Reicher, have to say. The postponement is due to the fact that certain questions addressed in subsequent chapters are better suited as starting points for this.

3.1 Goodman: Autographic and Allographic Arts

Strictly speaking, Goodman does not belong under the heading “Artworks as Abstract Objects”. He thinks that some works are classes, and classes are usually regarded as abstract, but Goodman as a strict nominalist would not

agree with the latter claim. For the lack of better places, this chapter is nevertheless the best to present his views.

Goodman does not follow the common distinction between singular and multiple arts, but introduces two other categories. For him, artworks are either autographic or allographic. Autographic are those works of art that, first, can be forged; second, whose history of production is relevant; and third, for which there is no notation. At the core of the distinction is the notion of forgery.

An autographic artwork, like a painting or a sculpture, is unique and an original. A copy of it is either just that – a copy or reproduction, but not an instance – or a forgery. The special status of originals is due to the aesthetic difference between originals and copies or forgeries of them – a difference that does not matter in the case of allographic artworks. Goodman insists that there is an aesthetic difference between originals and forgeries. That we might not be able to perceive a difference between a painting and a well made forgery, be it by “merely looking” at the pictures or by using technical instruments, proves nothing: “[N]otice now that no one can ever ascertain by merely looking at the pictures that no one ever has been or will be able to tell them apart by merely looking at them.”¹⁶ Additionally, the knowledge that this painting is an original and that painting is a forgery will make a difference in my experience of them, Goodman says, even if they are perceptually indistinguishable.

Within allographic arts, like musical or literary works, there can be no such thing as a forgery. If I try to “forge” *Ulysses*, I merely produce an instance of *Ulysses* and not a forgery. The reason is that allographic artworks are notational. A notation is a sequence of symbols, like notes or words. The notation of a symphony would be the score, for example. The notation defines

¹⁶ Goodman: *Languages of Art*, p. 101 f.

what counts as an instance of an allographic work. If a performance complies with the notation of symphony x, it is an instance of x, and if a book complies with the sequence of words *Ulysses* consists of, it is an instance of *Ulysses*.

Let us suppose that there are various handwritten copies and many editions of a given literary work. Differences between them in style and size of script or type, in colour of ink, in kind of paper, in number and layout of pages, in condition, etc., do not matter. All that matters is what may be called sameness of spelling: exact correspondence as sequences of letters, spaces, and punctuation marks. Any sequence – even a forgery of the author’s manuscript or of a given edition – that so corresponds to a correct copy is itself correct, and nothing is more the original work than is such a correct copy.¹⁷

That is why it is not possible to forge an allographic artwork. Any attempt to forge a literary work will only result in the production of an instance of the work, because all it takes to produce an instance is compliance with the work’s notation.

Notations also serve as means to identify works. If I read a poem, it is due to its notation that I find out that it is Byron’s *Darkness*. Its notation defines the constitutive properties of a work, so the notation a given instance of a work complies with tells me what it is an instance of.

Whereas allographic artworks are determined by notations, autographic artworks are not. There simply are no notations for autographic works, Goodman claims. Instead, an autographic artwork’s identity is determined by its history of production – who made it, when, under which circumstances, and so on. This history of production does not matter for allographic artworks.

¹⁷ Goodman: *Languages of Art*, p.115 f.

Forgeries, according to Goodman, are as objects that “unfoundedly pretend”¹⁸ to have the same history of production as originals. Since its history of production is irrelevant for an allographic artwork, it cannot be forged. But the *Mona Lisa*, for instance, is an autographic work and thus determined by its history of production. So Tom can produce a painting that looks like the *Mona Lisa* and pretend that it has the history of production of the *Mona Lisa* – though the history of Tom’s painting is a different one, of course. He has produced a forgery.

The distinction between autographic and allographic arts does not coincide with that between singular and multiple arts.¹⁹ Goodman points out that there are some art forms, like printmaking or sculptures cast from moulds, are autographic but multiple. Each print or statue is an original, an autographic work, but at the same time one of (at least possibly) several instances of the same work. The autographic/allographic distinction also means that an artist creates a physical object when she creates an autographic work and a notation when she creates an allographic work.

Allographic works are classes, according to Goodman. *Ulysses* is the class of objects complying with the notation of the work. Goodman is rather vague concerning this point, because he talks of classes with the uneasiness of a nominalist. He explains in a footnote that speaking of classes “is for me informal parlance admissible only because it can readily be translated into more acceptable language.”²⁰ However, he leaves it open how this translation could be done.

¹⁸ Schmücker, Reinold: *Was ist Kunst? Eine Grundlegung*. Munich 1998, p. 192.

¹⁹ Goodman: *Languages of Art*, p. 115.

²⁰ Goodman: *Languages of Art*, p. 131.

By referring to notations as defining compliance-classes, Goodman avoids the problem mentioned earlier of how we would come to group objects together as belonging to a class, if the class is supposed to be the work. Other problems remain. If a musical work is the class of its performances, then the work does not exist before the first performance has taken place. But I suppose we would be strongly inclined to say that the work already exists before the first performance, possibly once the score is written down. Apart from that, as mentioned, all works that are not performed yet would be identical with each other. And every new performance would change the class and thus change the work. Nicholas Wolterstorff also points out that classes have their members necessarily, whereas an artwork “might always have had different and more or fewer occurrences or objects than it does have[.]”²¹

The theory that artworks are classes need not be paid any more attention to, it seems to me. However, I will come back to Goodman’s important and influential thoughts about forgeries and notationality later on, in Chapter 4.1. For now, it should be sufficient to cast a first shadow of doubt about his claim that the history of production of a work is only relevant in the case of autographic works. This is a central issue and will be addressed at length in Chapters 3.1 and 3.2.

²¹ Wolterstorff, Nicholas: *Works and Worlds of Art*. Oxford 1980, p. 44.

3.1.1 The History of Production of a Work: First Arguments

Against Goodman, Wollheim argues in his “Are the Criteria of Identity that Hold for a Work of Art in the Different Arts Aesthetically Relevant?” that the history of production does not only determine the identity of autographic arts, but also of allographic arts.

I think that we should reject the thesis that in some arts, though not in others, the history of a work of art’s production is relevant to its identity. I think that we should reject it because – and this is my claim against Goodman – in all arts the history of a work of art’s production is relevant to its identity.²²

Wollheim employs the following thought experiment: Suppose a sixteenth century poet writes a poem. Later, at the beginning of the twentieth century, another poet coincidentally writes down a poem that consists of precisely the same word sequence as the earlier poem, and he does not know the sixteenth century poet’s work. If we assume that these are two distinct poems, than the history of production is relevant for their identity, because that is what distinguishes the poems from each other: the words are the same, but the context in which they were written is different.

If, on the other hand, one insists that there is only one poem here, that could mean two things. We could either “merge” the two poems, claiming that both poets wrote down the same poem and refuse to answer the question, *whose* poem this is.²³ Or we could subsume the later poem under the earlier one and say that the later poet wrote out what the earlier one has already created.

²² Wollheim, Richard: “Are the Criteria of Identity that Hold for a Work of Art in the Different Arts Aesthetically Relevant?” In: *Ratio* 20 (1978/79), pp. 29-48: 33.

²³ Wollheim: “Criteria of Identity”, p. 35.

Goodman would affirm the second interpretation, regarding the later poem as an instance of the earlier one. But that would mean that the history of production *is* relevant for the poem's identity, because the later poem is an instance of *the poem written in the sixteenth century*. So Wollheim's argument is: if we attribute an artwork to a certain artist, we are taking a history of production into account, and if we do not, there seems to be no history of production – which is counterintuitive. This shows that the history of production does matter in allographic arts, too.

It might be doubted, though, whether this is indeed a knockdown argument. One might reply: sure, the second poem is an instance of a poem *written by somebody at an earlier point of time*. But these are uninteresting properties, and no one has shown yet that they are relevant for the identity of the poem. Because, after all, a performance of a symphony also has a different history of production than the symphony itself. Nevertheless it is not a work distinct from the symphony, but an instance of it.

But consider Wolfgang Künne's example. Like Wollheim, he disagrees with Goodman and thinks that the history of production is relevant for allographic as well as autographic works.

In a several years old copy of a collection of literary parodies by author A could be a text x that, word by word, corresponds to a manuscript y by the parodied author B that was discovered yesterday. Under these circumstances, x and y would not be instances of one and the same work in which A parodies the verses of B.²⁴

Künne gives us much more pressing reason to assume that Goodman cannot be right in stating that the context of production does not matter for the identity

²⁴ Künne, Wolfgang: *Abstrakte Gegenstände. Semantik und Ontologie*. Frankfurt 1980, p. 241.

of allographic artworks. The texts of A and B are obviously distinct works. A work and a parody of a work cannot be said to be the same work, it seems.

This is just to give a first impression of what might be going wrong with Goodman's theory in addition to the problematic view that works are classes. More arguments will have to be considered to decide about the role of contextual properties in individuating works in due course.

3.2 Wollheim: Types and Tokens

In *Art and its Objects*, Wollheim develops a type/token theory of artworks. The central idea is: whereas singular artworks are physical objects²⁵, multiple artworks are types. Copies and performances of works are tokens of the corresponding types: "*Ulysses* and *Der Rosenkavalier* are types, my copy of *Ulysses* and tonight's performance of *Rosenkavalier* are tokens of those types."²⁶

The type-token distinction was introduced by Charles Sanders Peirce.²⁷ It is not the same as the universals-particulars distinction. I will say more about types in general and the conception that artworks are types in Chapter 2. For now, it should be sufficient to point out only a few features of types. The most basic one is that types are abstract objects, and tokens are particulars.

²⁵ Wollheim refrains from a further elaboration of what exactly it means to say that singular artworks are physical. *Art and its Objects*, pp. 177 ff.

²⁶ Wollheim: *Art and its Objects*, p. 75.

²⁷ Peirce, Charles Sanders: "Prolegomena to an Apology for Pragmatism". In: Hartshorne, Charles and Weiss, Paul (Eds.): *Collected Papers of Charles Sanders Peirce*, Vol IV, The Simplest Mathematics, pp. 411-463: 423.

Other examples of types that Wollheim names are the Boeing 707 or the Red Flag. Any Boeing 707 that we can see at an airport and any red flag raised are instances of the types, but a type itself is not a physical object.

In order to characterize what a type is, Wollheim first contrasts it with what it is not. A type is not a particular. But neither is it a class or universal. One difference between these and types lies in the sharing of properties. A class may share properties with its members: for instance, the class of big things is big. But these are contingent exceptions. Usually, there are no shared properties between classes and their members, e.g. the class of red things is not red. Universals and types on the other hand do share properties with their instances.

The [...] difference is this: that in the case of universals no properties that an instance of a certain universal has necessarily, i.e. that it has in virtue of being an instance of that universal, can be transmitted to the universal. In the case of types, on the other hand, all and only those properties that a token of a certain type has necessarily, i.e. that it has in virtue of being a token of that type, will be transmitted to the type.²⁸

So the universal “redness” is not red, though all of its instances necessarily are red. But all the properties that copies of *Ulysses* necessarily have can be transmitted to the type *Ulysses*: it has them, too.²⁹

Wollheim does not say much on a crucial question concerning the type-token theory: when does something count as a token of a certain type? What are the conditions a book has to meet to be an instance of *Ulysses*? Anyone who

²⁸ Wollheim: *Art and its Objects*, p. 77.

²⁹ Note that this is only true of *necessary* properties. Contingent properties like the size of the book or the font in which the text is printed are not transmittable to the type. How to distinguish the necessary from the contingent properties will also have to be part of the type/token account of works advocated here.

defends a type-token theory of artworks must be able to answer the so-called question of *work identity* convincingly, otherwise there would be an unsatisfying explanatory gap in the theory.

What has been said before about properties being transmittable from tokens to their types does not help, as Wollheim states, because the notion of the necessary properties of a token presupposes that we know which properties belong to the type. “We cannot hope to discover what the properties of the Red Flag are by finding out what properties the various red flags have necessarily: for how can we come to know that, e.g. this red flag is necessarily red, prior to knowing that the Red Flag itself is red?”³⁰

So we first need to know the properties of the type. Then we have to find out to what degree they have to be realised by an object to be a token of that type. Does there have to be a thorough compliance of properties between type and token? If we think of musical performances, for example, we may be tempted to say no. Musical performances often do not exactly comply with the score of the work. Modern performances of *Macbeth* also differ from those one hundred years ago. But are they not still tokens of the same type?

Wollheim says that they are, because interpretation is allowable in instantiating types. “[I]nterpretation may be regarded as the production of a token that has properties in excess of those of the type.”³¹

Commonsensical as that might seem, the two main questions about work identity remain open: what are the properties of a type? And must there not be a border between objects that are instances of a type and those that cannot be counted as instantiations of it anymore, because they diverge too much from the properties of the type? How far can interpretation go? Does a performance

³⁰ Wollheim: *Art and its Objects*, p. 81.

³¹ Wollheim: *Art and its Objects*, p. 82.

cease to be a token of “*Macbeth*” if a certain extent of interpretation is exceeded?

I shall try to answer these questions in Chapter 3. The task will be to find out what the identity of an artwork type is determined by – here the notions of histories of production and notations will resurface – and what the identity conditions between types and tokens are.

3.3 Currie: Action Types

To apply the type/token framework to artworks has proven to be a seminal venture – largely due to Wollheim’s work. It can be safely said to have become the predominant view within the ontology of art. However, what Wollheim has set forth in *Art and its Objects* is not a fully elaborated theory and has to be worked out in more detail. Currie adopts the basic idea of works being types, but gives it a twist that is quite different from other ontologies of art.

First, according to Currie, *all* works of art are types. There is no such thing as singular arts. Every work of art is, at least in principle, capable of having multiple instances.

But the main point of Currie’s theory is that artworks are *action* types. Actions are a subclass of events, and an action type can be instantiated by multiple tokens. Currie refers to Jaegwon Kim’s definition of the simplest event type: it is made up of an individual, a property and a time. The event of, for example, Beethoven’s composition of the *Hammerklavier Sonata* features more elements though. For Currie, an artwork is the action type of discovering

a (for instance musical) structure via a certain heuristic path. He calls this the “Action Type Hypothesis”.

Currie claims that for the identity of a work of art, not only its structure – which in this case would be a sequence of sounds – is constitutive, but also its history of production. The structure defines it only partly. The relevant history of production Currie calls the “heuristic path” that leads to the discovery of the structure. He characterises it in analogy to science:

In speaking of a scientist’s ‘heuristic path’ to a theory I mean the process whereby the theory was arrived at; the facts, methods and assumptions employed, including analogical models, mathematical techniques and metaphysical ideas.³²

An artist’s heuristic path to her artwork includes her historical and biographical background, her influences, problems she might have faced and solved, etc. The heuristic path, according to Currie’s description of it, includes anything that might be of contextual relevance to the artwork’s discovery. It is the job of art critics to reconstruct and portray an artist’s heuristic path. Also, what we appreciate about artworks is not only the final product, “but an appreciation of the artist’s achievement in arriving at that pattern or structure.”³³ That is to say, the heuristic path. The event *Beethoven’s composition of the *Hammerklavier Sonata** would consist of the following elements:

[L]et ‘ $[A, \mathbf{P}, t]$ ’ denote the event which is the object A having property \mathbf{P} at time t (properties and relations will be denoted by bold letters). A relational event can be expressed as ‘ $[A, B, \mathbf{R}, t]$ ’; the event * A bearing the relation \mathbf{R} to B at time t *. We can then represent the event which is *Beethoven’s composition

³² Currie, Gregory: *An Ontology of Art*. New York 1989, p. 68.

³³ Currie: *Ontology of Art*, p. 68.

of the *Hammerklavier Sonata** as $[B,S,H,\mathbf{D},t]$ where B is Beethoven, S is the sound structure of the work, H is Beethoven's heuristic path to S , \mathbf{D} the (three-place) relation x discovers y via heuristic path z , and t the time of composition.³⁴

B and t are variables that can be replaced by any person and any point of time, so the work is the action type * B discovers the *Hammerklavier Sonata* via a certain heuristic path at t^* . Beethoven's actual composition of the *Hammerklavier Sonata* thus is a token of that type. It might have been someone other than Beethoven who discovered this sound structure via the given heuristic path, or at another time. It would still have been a token of the same action type. But if the heuristic path differed from Beethoven's, then the resulting artwork would be a different one as well, even if the sound structure were the same.

An implication of Currie's theory is that artworks are not created, since a work is the *discovery* of a structure. He illustrates his anti-creation claim by employing Putnam's notion of Twin Earth. On this *doppelgänger* world, there might have been a Twin Beethoven who has composed the *Hammerklavier Sonata* by the same heuristic path as Beethoven, only a few years later. The first thing this shows is that all artworks are multiple, because all artworks are action types – and action types can be realised more than once. This is Currie's "Instance Multiplicity Hypothesis".³⁵

The argument against the idea that artworks are created is that in this scenario, the *Hammerklavier Sonata* was composed twice, once by Beethoven, and later

³⁴ Currie: *Ontology of Art*, p. 69.

³⁵ Currie: *Ontology of Art*, p. 8. Whether the IMH is correct will be discussed in Chapter 4.2.

by Twin Beethoven. Because nothing can be created twice, works are discovered.³⁶

Currie anticipates the reply that one might still say that Beethoven created the work and Twin Beethoven later discovers what was already created. He fends it off by saying that the reverse scenario is also possible: Twin Beethoven composed the *Hammerklavier Sonata* before Beethoven did. In this case, it was not actually Beethoven who created the work, but Twin Beethoven. Beethoven instead discovered it, and we were wrong to think that he created it. But this would be an unconvincing consequence, Currie claims. We could never be sure whether an artist who we take to be the creator of a work actually created it, because there might always have been a *doppelgänger* who created it first. If composition equalled creation, we could never say for sure whether an artist composed a work. This problem can be avoided by the discovery thesis.³⁷

The first thing that springs to mind concerning the Action Type Hypothesis – and arguably the discovery thesis and the Instance Multiplicity Hypothesis as well – is that it conflicts with the ways we usually think about artworks. Identifying works with action types rather than what we might call artefact types is revisionary. However, this cannot be the decisive criterion to evaluate a theory. It might be at odds with our ordinary beliefs, but nevertheless true.

Some doubts about Currie's ontology of art call into question whether the latter is the case, though. One is articulated by Jerrold Levinson:

³⁶ Currie: *Ontology of Art*, p. 62.

³⁷ Currie: *Ontology of Art*, p. 62 f. Currie also acknowledges that the discovery thesis could be countered by showing that authorship is a necessary part of a work's identity. If what two artists make are necessarily distinct works, since they are distinct artists, the creation thesis could be upheld, because then Beethoven's and Twin Beethoven's compositions would not be the same work. We will take a look at the necessity of authorship in Chapter 3.5.

According to Currie, when I am at a concert listening to a performance of Beethoven's Seventh Symphony I am not actually listening to Beethoven's Seventh Symphony; the Symphony in fact can't be listened to but only appreciated indirectly, by reconstructing the process whereby Beethoven arrived at the structure a sounding of which is all that one is hearing."³⁸

We cannot hear the discovery of a sound structure, and we cannot see the discovery of the *Mona Lisa*. The painting called *Mona Lisa* is not the artwork anyway – the work is Leonardo's discovery of the corresponding visual structure. We might also not know what an artwork is. Say one discovers a lost painting by Leonardo. If the artwork is Leonardo's discovery via a heuristic path that eventually led to the production of this painting, we would not know what the artwork is if we happen to not know anything about the history of production of the painting. But would we not insist on knowing what the work is, namely *this painting*, even though we do not have any information about the context of its making?

David Davies also points out that the notion of structures might be problematic in the case of some artworks.

[T]here are works in the late modern tradition that are unhappily construed as involving discovered structures, even if there is an art-object that possesses particular structural features. We do little to facilitate our appreciation of a work like Duchamp's *Fountain* if we construe it as the discovering of the structural properties of the exhibited urinal by a particular heuristic path.³⁹

Currie is right, I think, in saying that the heuristic path generally plays an important role in our appreciating – and one should add: understanding – of works of art. However, as Davies stresses, sometimes the point of a work lies

³⁸ Levinson, Jerrold: "Art as Action". In his: *The Pleasure of Aesthetics*. Ithaca and London 1996, pp. 138-149:141.

³⁹ Davies, David: *Art as Performance*. Oxford 2004, p. 136.

not so much in the way in which a structure was discovered, but in the work-object itself. Levinson criticises that the Action Type Hypothesis neglects the role of the artistic end product: “When all is said and done, in art we primarily appreciate the *product*, viewed in its context of production; we don’t primarily appreciate *the activity of production*, as readable from the product.”⁴⁰

Whether artworks are created or discovered deserves closer attention, which will happen in Chapter 2.2. For now I would just like to mention that the Twin Beethoven scenario does not seem to me to be conclusive in favour of the discovery thesis. I am not convinced that it follows from the fact that there might be a – albeit remote – possible world where someone else has composed the *Hammerklavier Sonata* before that work is discovered. It is certainly possible that a Twin Beethoven has composed the work before Beethoven did. In this case, Twin Beethoven has created it, and Beethoven has written down an inscription of a work that was already created by someone else, even though unbeknownst to him. We were simply wrong to attribute the creation of the *Hammerklavier Sonata* to Beethoven and not to his faster Twin. Admittedly, saying that we can never be sure whether an artist has in fact created a work or not might be an odd concession. Acknowledging this does not force us to abandon the creation thesis, however.

The main problem with Currie’s proposal lies in the counterintuitiveness of its core idea that artworks are actually actions rather than the artefacts eventuating from these actions.⁴¹ As long as competing accounts of the ontological status of

⁴⁰ Levinson: “Art as Action”, p. 141.

⁴¹ The same applies to David Davies’s “Performance Theory” that he presents in his *Art as Performance*. Davies’s theory resembles Currie’s insofar as he, too, thinks that artworks are processes that lead to the production of what we usually consider as artworks. Both theories would require a thorough revision of our conception of what artworks are. For a critique of the

artworks are not faced with such a problem, they are at an advantage. However, one of Currie's motivations for postulating the ATH is his point about our appreciation of the achievement of an artist, and it is an important point. One of our reactions to experiencing a great work of art is surely that we are impressed that somebody was able to do this: to come up with these verses, to paint this picture, to imagine this plot, to compose this melody ... In addition to admiring the actual artwork, we admire the capability to create such a work. Here is a vague idea of what Currie's theory could be an inspiration for: maybe it would make sense to "double" what art is. Maybe our conception of art could be enriched by saying that there is also the art of art making. Not only paintings, novels, symphonies, and so on, are artworks, but also the processes that lead to their production. Producing an artwork is an art in itself, in addition to the work we usually regard as art.

Coming back to the type/token theory as Wollheim suggested it, I will take Wollheim's theory as the basis of the ontology of art that is to be elaborated and defended in what follows. The type/token distinction seems like a plausible and promising approach to explaining what artworks are, and it shall be investigated whether this first impression will prove to be true. So I will next look in detail at what it means to say that multiple artworks are types. What are types? What are tokens? Are types discovered or created? Are there problems for a conception of artworks as abstract objects in terms of the properties traditionally ascribed to abstract objects, like non-perceptibility and acausality?

These are some of the questions that have to be addressed in the next chapter. For now, I will stick with Wollheim's hypothesis that only multiple artworks

Performance Theory, see my review of *Art as Performance* in: *The Journal of Aesthetic Education* 39, pp. 114-118.

are abstract, whereas singular artworks are physical objects. It is not until later that I shall wonder whether this categorisation is indeed justified or if in fact all artworks are multiple and thus abstract objects. This method of proceeding is unproblematic, because if we should find out that the Instance Multiplicity Hypothesis is correct, what I will have to say about multiple artworks can simply in retrospect be applied to allegedly singular artworks as well.

CHAPTER II

MULTIPLE ARTWORKS

1. Abstract Objects and Temporality

The distinction between types and tokens, as introduced by Peirce, was originally applied to words. If one were to count how many times the word “the” is printed on this page, the answer would be 23. But at the same time, there is only *one* word “the” in the English language. Peirce therefore says that the latter is the type “the”, whereas the occurrences of the word on this page are tokens of that type. The same with sentences. How many are there in the following four lines?

I had a dream, which was not all a dream.

The bright sun was extinguish'd.

Morn came and went—and came, and brought no day.

The bright sun was extinguish'd.

One could either say four or three. “Whoever answers ‘four’ has counted sentence-occurrences (tokens); whoever answers ‘three’ has counted sentence-types (types).”⁴² Tokens are physical objects like the inscriptions “The bright sun was extinguish'd” on this page. They are printed with black ink, in the Times New Roman font. A token of the type “The bright sun was extinguish'd” may look differently. For example, the ink could be blue, and it could be handwritten, but still it would be a token of the same type.

⁴² Künne, Wolfgang: *Abstrakte Gegenstände*, p. 12.

The type/token distinction has found wide application in various areas of philosophy from logic to philosophy of mind. It has proven to be useful not only concerning language. For instance, we can also talk about a type “BMW Z3” that is tokened by certain objects on the street or in some James Bond movies.

While tokens are particulars, types are abstract objects. One of the things that might seem problematic about the claim that (some) artworks are abstract objects is that abstract objects are traditionally regarded as being atemporal. Properties, numbers, relations, and other abstract objects have no temporal extension: there is no point of time at which they began to exist, and they also will not cease to exist. But this sounds rather unconvincing when it comes to certain types. Surely there was no corresponding type before the Z3 was developed? And surely there was no type *V* before Pynchon wrote it? Otherwise, artworks would indeed be discovered and not created. But, as Levinson writes:

The notion that artists truly *add* to the world, in company with cake bakers, house builders, lawmakers, and theory constructors, is surely a deep-rooted idea that merits preservation if at all possible. The suggestion that some artists [...] instead merely *discover* or *select* for attention entities they have no hand in creating is so contrary to this basic intuition regarding artists and their works that we have a strong *prima facie* reason to reject it if we can.⁴³

⁴³ Levinson: “What a Musical Work is”. In his: *Music, Art & Metaphysics*. Ithaca and London 1990, pp. 63-88:67.

What does the latter mean for Günther Patzig's suggestion that we should regard artworks as belonging to what Frege has called the "third realm"?⁴⁴ Frege distinguishes three ontological "realms". The first one contains physical objects. They can be perceived by anyone; they are objective and exist mind-independently and thus independently of actually being perceived. I have said that at least multiple artworks cannot be considered as physical objects.

Frege's second realm contains subjective objects that are private and cannot be shared, i.e. cannot be perceived or otherwise accessed by someone other than their bearer. Frege calls them "ideas". The second realm is "a world of sense impressions, of creations of [...] imagination, of sensations, of feelings and moods, a world of inclinations, wishes and decisions."⁴⁵ As the discussion of the Croce/Collingwood theory has shown, it would also be implausible to count artworks as entities of this sort. But there is a third category in Frege's ontology, and Patzig's claim is that works of art are members of it.

A third realm must be recognized. Anything belonging to this realm has it in common with ideas that it cannot be perceived by the senses, but has it in common with things that it does not need an owner so as to belong to the contents of his consciousness. Thus for example the thought we have expressed in the Pythagorean theorem is timelessly true, true independent of whether anyone takes it to be true. It needs no owner. It is not true only from the time when it is discovered; just as a planet, even before anyone saw it, was in interaction with other planets.⁴⁶

Among the inhabitants of the third realm are also numbers and thoughts – Frege's name for propositions.⁴⁷ But should artworks be categorised as

⁴⁴ Patzig, Günther: "Über den ontologischen Status von Kunstwerken." In: Schmücker, Reinold (Ed.): *Identität und Existenz. Studien zur Ontologie der Kunst*. Paderborn 2003, pp. 107-120. For a discussion of Patzig's paper, cf. also Schmücker: *Was ist Kunst?*, pp. 255-264.

⁴⁵ Frege, Gottlob: "Thought". In: Beaney, Michael (Ed.): *The Frege Reader*. Translated by Peter Geach and R. H. Stoothoff. Oxford 1997, pp. 325-345: 334.

⁴⁶ Frege: "Thought", p. 337.

⁴⁷ Künne, Wolfgang: "Criteria of Abstractness. The Ontologies of Husserl, Frege and Strawson against the Background of Classical Metaphysics". In: Smith, Barry (Ed.): *Parts and Moments. Studies in Logic and Formal Ontology*. Munich, Vienna 1982, pp. 401-437: 414.

belonging to the third realm as well? I do not think so, because members of the third realm are atemporal.

Three characteristics are usually ascribed to abstract objects that distinguish them from other objects. Abstract objects cannot be perceived by the senses; they are acausal; and they are not located in space and time.⁴⁸ I will talk about perception and causality in Chapter 2.3. For now, I will focus on the atemporality condition.

If having no temporal extension – which also implies unchangeability – is a necessary condition for being an abstract object, one either has to say that artworks are not abstract, since as a working hypothesis I want to stick to the commonsensical assumption that they begin to exist at some point of time and do not exist atemporally like the Pythagorean theorem; or one could deny the necessity of the atemporality condition. The latter is what Bob Hale and Wolfgang Künne do.

Künne says that contrary to the traditional conception, some abstract objects *are* temporal and therefore also subject to change: “[B]iologists, for example, are accustomed to speaking of the origin of species, of their development, of their division, of their regressive development and of their becoming extinct.”⁴⁹

However, a possible objection to this example would be that the sentence

(a) The species A will soon become extinct

which attributes a substantial change to an abstract object, can be paraphrased into

(a’) The last specimen of the species A will soon die

so that by (a) we do not in fact refer to an abstract object, the species, but just to physical objects subsumed under the name of species A. Künne replies “that

⁴⁸ Hale, Bob: *Abstract Objects*. Oxford 1987, p. 46.

⁴⁹ Künne: “Criteria of Abstractness”, p. 406 f.

such arguments are inadequate. For one can after all turn them against their proponents and say that with [a'] one predicts an early end for the species.”⁵⁰

Another objection to Künne’s example would be to simply deny that species count as abstract objects. The cost of this would be to say that a paradigmatic case of a universal in the medieval problem of universals is in fact not a universal.⁵¹

Hale points out further examples that lead to the conclusion that not all abstract objects are atemporal.

No doubt games [...] and languages are non-spatial. The crucial question is: are they also atemporal? It seems not. Chess and English, unlike the natural numbers or sets, have their histories. They came to be at certain more or less definite times; the fact that it may well be impossible, without arbitrariness, to identify a precise date at which English began to be spoken is clearly not to the point – as much is true of the Industrial Revolution, say, but this casts not the slightest doubt on its temporality.

There are, then, some – indeed, it is clear that there are many – otherwise plausible examples of abstract objects which, though non-spatial, do not appear to satisfy the suggested requirement of atemporality.⁵²

Resorting to Husserl, Künne distinguishes between “free idealities” and “bound idealities”.⁵³ Bound idealities are temporal, changeable abstract objects. That some abstract objects are temporal, however, does not mean that there are no atemporal abstract objects. “Thus the concept of ‘free ideality’ is not empty: abstract entities of certain categories are unchangeable, for example properties and numbers.”⁵⁴

⁵⁰ Künne: “Criteria of Abstractness”, p. 407, cf. also Hale: *Abstract Objects*, p.25.

⁵¹ Künne: *Abstrakte Gegenstände*, p. 46.

⁵² Hale: *Abstract Objects*, p. 49.

⁵³ Künne: “Criteria of Abstractness”, p. 408.

⁵⁴ Künne: “Criteria of Abstractness”, p. 412.

If not all abstract objects are necessarily atemporal, then the assumed temporality of artworks does not prevent us from considering them as abstract, though they are not members of Frege's third realm like numbers or the Pythagorean theorem. If artworks are brought into existence at a certain point of time, it must be noted that Patzig's idea of applying Frege's characterisation of abstract objects to artworks is flawed because of the difference between bound and free idealities.

So far I have taken it more or less for granted that artworks are created and not discovered. But I have only based this claim on the strong intuition that this is so, an intuition that is evident in the way we talk about artists and artworks. We speak of artworks being created, of artists creating works, and of creative acts. The claim that artworks are in fact discovered and not "invented" by artists might seldom or even never be found outside of philosophical discourse. It would nevertheless be beneficial for the Creation Thesis, as I shall call it, if it could be backed up by more arguments than just reference to common intuitions.

2. Creation versus Discovery

The Creation Thesis says that artworks are created and thereby brought into existence at some point of time t and do not exist prior to t . The Discovery Thesis, on the other hand, maintains that they do exist prior to t since artworks have no temporal extension, and are discovered by artists.

Let me quote Reicher's summary of the Creation Thesis:

1. Works are created.
2. Only that can be created which does not exist yet.
3. Thus, for every work W: There is some point of time t_x at which W does not exist.
4. Thus, works are contingent and temporal.⁵⁵

In contrast to that, the Discovery Thesis:

1. Works are ideal entities, thus necessary and timeless.
2. Thus, for every Work W: There is no point of time t_x at which W does not exist.
3. Only that can be created which does not exist yet.
4. Thus, works cannot be created.⁵⁶

Reicher herself defends a creationist position, although she would like to leave open the possibility of a synthesis between both theories, namely, that artists create by discovering.⁵⁷ So a composer, for example, would create a work by discovering sound structures. But this is an unattractive suggestion, because it is that this is not what we usually take “to create” to mean.

Currie’s argument was: two distinct composers can compose the same work. Therefore, composition is discovery, not creation. But one question is whether what Beethoven and Twin Beethoven have composed is indeed the same work, as Currie claims. When talking about Goodman, I have already pointed out the view that all artworks are individuated by their history of production in addition to their structural properties. One of the defenders of this claim is Levinson. For him, a work cannot be composed twice. Two distinct acts of composition imply two distinct histories of production, and therefore the composers create two distinct works.

⁵⁵ Reicher: *Metaphysik der Kunst*, p. 125.

⁵⁶ Reicher: *Metaphysik der Kunst*, p. 125.

⁵⁷ Reicher: *Metaphysik der Kunst*, p. 143.

Since the musico-historical contexts of composing individuals are invariably different, then even if their works are identical in sound structure, they will differ widely in aesthetic and artistic attributes. But then, by Leibnitz's law, the musical works themselves must be nonidentical; if W_1 has any attribute that W_2 lacks, or vice versa, then $W_1 \neq W_2$.⁵⁸

Accurate as this remark seems to me, the point of Currie's example is that the contexts of the two compositions are *the same* – qualitatively. So insisting that a different context entails a different work is not relevant to his Twin Beethoven scenario. But there are two ways to react to it and still support the Discovery Thesis.

The first would be to nevertheless raise doubts about whether Beethoven and Twin Beethoven have composed the same work. Just noting that the histories of production are still numerically distinct is unconvincing – if any numerically distinct acts of composition automatically would imply distinct works, there would be no need to postulate that different contexts result in distinct works. But the distinctness of the *worlds* might lead to doubts about the identity of the works, as Stefano Predelli says:

What seems incredible, independently of one's stance on the metaphysics of musical works, is that two individuals, who, *ex hypothesi*, bear no interesting relation with each other, may be recognized as composers of the same work. This feature of the Twin-Earth scenario is blurred by Currie's allegation that Beethoven and Twin-Beethoven compose the same work, because 'they solve the same musical problems in the same way, under the same influences'. In fact, they don't: Twin Beethoven has nothing to do with Bach's treatment of *cancrizans*, and Beethoven has nothing to do with the invention of the Twin-Fortepiano. But even if they did, it seems questionable whether such an

⁵⁸ Levinson, Jerrold: "Musical Work", p. 69.

alleged identity of the setting in which they operate suffices for the identification of the sonatas they compose.⁵⁹

The thought needs to be explained more. Otherwise, the objection would be that Twin Beethoven had nothing to do with Bach, but, after all, with Twin Bach. And Beethoven had nothing to do with the invention of the Twin Fortepiano, but with the invention of the fortepiano. Since these are qualitatively the same, what does the lack of interaction between the worlds matter?

Levinson articulates a very similar worry and stresses the relevance of the compositions taking place in distinct worlds.

I think there is even stronger reason not to identify their musical products. For these composers belong to different worlds, and thus to different cultures, even if qualitatively identical ones, mustn't we also conceive the works they create as at least individuated by the cultures – the human (or “human”) spheres – to which they belong?⁶⁰

So the point is that although the persons, objects, and events involved in each world are qualitatively the same, the complete distinctness of the worlds and the fact that there is no contact, exchange, travel, etc. between them, gives us sufficient reason to regard the compositions as distinct.

A suggestion: as a consequence of the reluctance to identify works with each other that are composed in distinct worlds we could simply say that on Earth, Beethoven created the *Hammerklavier Sonata*, and on Twin earth, Twin Beethoven did. *Strictly speaking*, one of them created it first, and the other composed something that had already been created. But since that creation took place on an inaccessible and unconnected world, it is legitimate to say that in

⁵⁹ Predelli, Stefano: “Musical Ontology and the Argument from Creation”. In: *BJA* 41 (2001), pp. 279-292:285.

⁶⁰ Levinson: “Art as Action”, p. 148.

the actual world Beethoven created the *Hammerklavier Sonata*, even if Twin Beethoven created it before. We would not be justified to say Beethoven created it if somebody else within the *actual* world had composed it first (assumably in a sufficiently similar context), but as Pridelli and Levinson stress, the distinctness of the worlds might prevent us from identifying the works with each other.

Like I said before, I am also not convinced that the metaphysical possibility that someone composed the *Hammerklavier Sonata* before Beethoven did implies the truth of the Discovery Thesis. Suppose someone composed the work before Beethoven. Why could we then not just say that, contrary to what we believed so far, Beethoven did not create the *Hammerklavier Sonata*, but someone else? Apart from that, there is a difference between the metaphysical and the epistemic possibility that someone created it before Beethoven. For all we know, Beethoven created the *Hammerklavier Sonata*. Therefore, saying that Beethoven created it is legitimate – despite the metaphysical possibility that he did not.

The second way of dealing with the Twin Earth scenario and defending the Discovery Thesis is to admit that this is a case where two people have composed the same work, but to deny that it follows that works are discovered, because there are enough reasons to disbelieve in the Discovery Thesis.

R. A. Sharpe thinks that the very notion of discoveries is inadequate concerning art making. There are two kinds of discoveries: “discoveries in mathematics and logic” and “cases [...] where places, flora, fauna, and so on,

are discovered.”⁶¹ The latter cannot be taken as an analogy to discovering artworks, because artworks are supposed to be abstract objects, whereas these are physical things. But also discoveries of the first sort cannot be equated with the art case, because central to the concept of discovery of both kinds

is the fact that what we discover exists and with that goes the possibility of being mistaken. Andrew Wiles thought he had discovered a proof of Fermat’s last theorem in the summer of 1993 but he turned out to be mistaken. Although Columbus did discover America he also thought that he had discovered a new route to the Orient but he turned out to be mistaken on that score.⁶²

Discovering is linked with the possibility of mistakes. But how can one make a mistake in trying to discover an artwork? Sharpe claims that this idea does not make any sense.

What is it that makes an attempted discovery turn out to be a mistake? I suppose that what one finds out is not true. For example: the proof was not true; it was not a new route to the Orient; it is not a new planet; there is no unconscious ... What measures whether something was a mistake in these cases is a matter of truth. Likewise, if someone has *actually* discovered p, then it is true that p. But this criterion is not applicable to artistic “discoveries”. If Beethoven had been mistaken about the *Hammerklavier Sonata*, what would have made it a mistake? And what makes his composition “true”?⁶³

Sharpe also points out that there are instances of quotation in artworks.⁶⁴ Some works include references or allusions to other, earlier works. But according to the Discovery Theory, all works are atemporal. So it is *not* the

⁶¹ Sharpe, Robert Augustus: “Could Beethoven have ‘Discovered’ the Archduke Trio?”. In: *BJA* 41 (2001), pp. 325-327:325.

⁶² Sharpe: “Could Beethoven”, p. 326.

⁶³ Sharpe: “Could Beethoven”, p. 326.

⁶⁴ Sharpe: “Could Beethoven”, p. 327.

case – contrary to what one might assume – that the quoted work has to exist before the work in which it is quoted. Rather, the later work could just not have been discovered before the earlier work was discovered. Likewise, I would like to add, according to the Discovery Thesis, a historical novel already existed before the period its story takes place in happened. But it could not have been discovered before that period. Or a film already existed while Ellen was writing the novel it is based on. Renée Cox makes the same point: “One might argue that Beethoven’s ‘Hammerklavier’ sonata could not have eternal being because it relies for its existence on the piano, and there were no pianos before the eighteenth century.”⁶⁵ These are all strongly counterintuitive implications of the Discovery Thesis.

Generally, I find it very problematic that accepting the Discovery Thesis would require altering our conception of what it is to create art – first and foremost of course, in that artworks are in fact not created. What artists do is, rather, exploring the realm of abstract objects in the search for not yet discovered artworks. Like a mathematician working on a proof for Goldbach’s conjecture, a composer is working on a symphony. He knows it is “out there”, he just has to find it.

Concerning the appreciation of artworks, the Discovery Thesis would also mean that we have not appreciated the work of artists properly so far, because what we should appreciate is that artists manage to discover these magnificent works. What someone with no artistic talents lacks is not the ability to create verse, but to discover it.

A poet would also have to find the right word sequence amongst a multitude of word sequences. Scepticism should be proclaimed in regard to the myriads

⁶⁵ Cox, Renée: “Are Musical Works Discovered?” In: *JAAC* 43 (1985), pp. 367-374:369.

of entities the discovery-theorist has to postulate. It is unclear how exactly we are to understand the idea of discovering artworks. Is that supposed to mean that there exists an infinite amount of abstract entities, including every possible sound- or word structure, from which the artist has to pick out the right ones that are artworks? That is ontologically quite vertiginous. Or is there an extra compartment in the realm of the abstract that only contains the artworks, whereas any structures that are not artworks – maybe word sequences that make no sense or random sound structures – are left outside? Still there must be an infinite amount of “art structures”. Otherwise, one day it would not be possible to make artworks any more, because the amount of entities available is exhausted. It is hard – though not impossible – to imagine that at some time in the future no new artwork could be made anymore and the history of art has literally reached its end.

The motivation behind the Discovery Thesis should not be the desire to hold that artworks are abstract objects, because it can plausibly be claimed that not all abstract objects are atemporal, and so there is no tension between saying that artworks are abstract, but are brought into existence by artists. At the same time, the Creation Thesis is commonsensical and can plausibly be defended. So why drop it in favour of the Discovery Thesis?

3. Non-perceptibility and Acausality

Although atemporality is not a necessary condition of abstract objects and so the view that artworks are created does not collide with the postulation of their

abstractness, there are two further features of abstract objects to be considered as potential obstacles for a type/token theory of artworks: non-perceptibility and acausality. Do they pose a problem for a conception of (multiple) artworks as types?

Let us first take a look at the claim that abstract objects cannot be perceived with the senses and then at their alleged causal inertness. In both cases, it has to be clarified whether these are indeed necessary conditions and if so, whether that is problematic for regarding artworks as abstract.

That abstract objects cannot be perceived is agreed upon from times ancient to early modern: not only Plato, but also, for instance, Husserl and Frege take non-perceptibility to be a necessary condition for abstractness.⁶⁶ But this might seem to be a strange thing to say about artwork-types. Mozart's *Requiem*, being a musical work, is an abstract object. The claim that one cannot hear the *Requiem* is hard to outbid in counterintuitivity, one might think, like Wolterstorff says: "Surely this is a highly paradoxical and implausible claim – that nobody, for example, can hear Bach's *Musical Offering*[".]"⁶⁷ It seems that at least some abstract objects *can* be perceived, and musical works would be the most obvious example. Künne, however, argues that this impression is misleading and that there are no valid counterexamples to the non-perceptibility condition.

Let us take the following statement:

(a) Jane has often heard Mozart's *Requiem*.

A defender of the platonic account of abstract objects might immediately reply that this is no counterexample to the non-perceptibility condition, because (a) just means

⁶⁶ Whether it is a sufficient condition is a distinct question, but need not concern us here.

⁶⁷ Wolterstorff: *Works and Worlds*, p. 40.

(a') Jane has often heard instances/performances of Mozart's *Requiem*.

So (a) is just a convenient way of speaking and can be paraphrased into (a') without a change of meaning. And in (a') the predicate of being heard is not ascribed to an abstract object, but to concrete objects.

Not everybody might be immediately convinced by this way out. A worry might be that the paraphrase strategy needs some more explaining in order to be accepted as legitimate. So I would like to illustrate the paraphrase by means of some parallel cases that Künne discusses. Here is his line of reasoning:

One can make a true statement both by saying "This is a pipe" and "That is a pipe" whilst pointing to a pipe in the first case and pointing to a picture of a pipe in the second.⁶⁸ That does of course not mean that a pipe and a picture of a pipe are the same thing. But neither does it mean that the term "pipe" is equivocal. "Pipe" does not have two meanings, a smoking device and a picture of it. The reason is that "in contrast to the contingent homonymy of the kind 'bank/bank', there is a systematic connection between both uses of the predicate 'pipe': objects it is ascribed to in the one use are objects of whose pictorial representation it is ascribed to in the other use."⁶⁹ This shows that there are cases of predicates that can have slightly different senses as the case arises. But they are not equivocal, because there is a systematic connection between the senses: one sense is dependent on the other, or derived from it. One can only truthfully say of a picture depicting a pipe that "This is a pipe" because of the prior, more fundamental sense of "pipe". In the case of a clearly equivocal term like "trunk", for instance, there is no such connection between the various senses of the term.

⁶⁸ Künne: *Abstrakte Gegenstände*, p. 58 f.

⁶⁹ Künne: *Abstrakte Gegenstände*, p. 59.

Künne names two other examples to illustrate what is going on in a statement like (a). In (b) and (c), something is predicated of an abstract object, like in (a).

(b) The lion has 4 legs.

(c) Love is patient and kind ... it trusts in everything, it endures everything.

Their paraphrases would be:

(b') All (well-formed) lions are four-legged.

(c') Whoever (really) loves is trusting and patient.

Like in the two statements about being a pipe, the predicates in (b) and (b') as well as (c) and (c') do not have the exactly same meaning without at the same time being equivocal. So what do "four-legged" and "patient" in (b) and (c) mean?

It is certainly not the case that an animal species is just another four-legged thing alongside Leo and Lenny and that love is simply something that is patient alongside Jesus of Nazareth and Francis of Assisi; for otherwise it would have to be possible to amputate a leg of a species or cause a virtue to explode in rage. So the terms "four-legged" and "patient" in (b) and (c) have to have a different sense than they have in "Leo is four-legged" and "St. Francis is patient". But what then, is the sense that they have when they are used not as concrete but as abstract general terms?⁷⁰

In (b) the meaning is "is a species whose well-formed exemplars have four legs", and in (c) "is a virtue such that the people who possess it are patient".⁷¹

Since (b) cannot mean that the type "lion", in addition to all lions, has four legs, the sense of the sentence is that all lions have four legs. We can now apply this result to (a). The statement does not mean that in addition to all the performances of the *Requiem*, Jane has also heard the work often. Künne's point is that in sentences containing abstract general terms, the predicate's sense is not to be taken literally. What is predicated is in fact not predicated of

⁷⁰ Künne: "Criteria of Abstractness", p. 404.

⁷¹ Künne: "Criteria of Abstractness", p. 404.

the abstract object referred to, but of instances of it. So although we make statements like (a), and although they can be true, this does not mean that abstract objects can be perceived.

Künne has one more argument against the alleged perceptibility of types. Take the following two sentences:

(a) Menuhin has often heard the standard pitch a.

(b) The explosion could still be heard over here.⁷²

Again, we assume that the predicate is not equivocal. “To hear” is not a term like “trunk” or “bank” in that it has different, completely unrelated meanings. However, it makes sense to ask how loud the explosion was, whereas it does not make sense to ask how loud the standard pitch is. But if “to hear” is not equivocal, the question about how loud the sound was must always make sense.⁷³ In the case of the standard pitch a, it only makes sense concerning a token of it. So (a) means that Menuhin has often heard occurrences of the standard pitch a.

But if Künne has shown that the necessity of the non-perceptibility condition cannot be undermined, is that not bad news for a type/token-ontology of art? How can the consequences be made plausible? In the case of a musical work, all I can hear – and all I do hear – are instances of works, but never *the* work. The work, being an abstract object, is not an object of sense-perception.⁷⁴

The opposite claim, however, is even more implausible, Reicher claims.

Whoever thinks that works *necessarily* can be perceived must deny the

⁷² Künne: *Abstrakte Gegenstände*, p. 60 f.

⁷³ Künne: *Abstrakte Gegenstände*, p. 61.

⁷⁴ I shall simply stick with the example of a musical work. In the case of literary works, it is not immediately clear how they are perceived anyway: one can hear a literary work if it is read out, but does one *see* the work when one is reading a book? Surely not in the same sense as seeing a work of painting. Also note that I am still just concerned with multiple artworks here. Singular artworks, being concrete objects, can be perceived like any other concrete object, of course. Should we find out, say, that painting is in fact multiple (see Chapter 4.4), that would mean that you cannot see a work of painting, though.

possibility of unrealised works, she argues.⁷⁵ Suppose that a composer has just finished writing the score for his latest opera. The opera has obviously not yet been performed. But if it must be the case that it can be perceived – how is that supposed to be possible? One cannot hear an unperformed work.⁷⁶

This argument is not unproblematic, though. Reicher ignores a scope distinction in the claim that musical works necessarily can be heard. An opponent of the thesis that artworks cannot be perceived will stress that he does not mean that

$\Box \Diamond (\exists x (x \text{ is unperformed} \ \& \ x \text{ is heard}))$,

because this is clearly false. He will not deny that if a work is not performed, it also is not heard. What he means is rather

$(\exists x) (x \text{ is unperformed} \ \& \ \Box \Diamond (x \text{ is heard}))$.

X is unperformed, but it is still necessarily possible that it can be heard, because once it is *performed*, it is heard. Even an unperformed work can be heard – when it is performed.

However, there is a flaw in this argument, and therefore it does not establish that musical works can be heard. The argument is that one can hear a musical work once it is performed. But it must not be forgotten that a performance of a work is not identical with the work. When one hears a performance of a work, what one hears is the performance of the work, and not the work itself.

But maybe a work can be heard *through* the performance? If that means that the performance is supposed to be some kind of device through which I hear the work like hearing my friend's voice through the phone or seeing him "through" a photograph, this view has to be denied immediately, because what

⁷⁵ Reicher: *Metaphysik der Kunst*, p. 97.

⁷⁶ The composer might be able to imagine hearing the opera, like some people can imagine hearing a musical work by reading the score. But this is not *sense* perception and therefore no counter-example.

I hear through the phone or see through a photograph are things that can be perceived anyway, also without the phone or picture. The work itself, in contrast, cannot be heard.

Wolterstorff has a different suggestion. He thinks that by perceiving an instance of a work, one also perceives the work itself.

In looking at a print one sees two things at once, the print and an impression thereof. In listening to a symphony one hears two things at once, the symphony and a performance thereof.⁷⁷

To say that there is an intimate relation between a symphony and a performance of it would be trivial. To say, however, that by listening to a performance of a symphony one can *appreciate* two things separately, namely the work itself and the performance of it, would be a relevant point. I can, for instance, be an admirer of Mozart's *Requiem*, but dislike last night's performance, or I can appreciate both the work and the performance of it at the same time. But to say that one *hears* two things by listening to a performance is highly dubious. Reicher rightly argues against Wolterstorff's "double-perception"⁷⁸ model.

An analogy: would somebody who believes in the existence of abstract properties say that one *sees* the idea of redness if one sees a red thing? Probably not. It seems equally strange to say that one sees the number two (or perhaps the class of two?) if one sees two individuals, or that one sees the proposition *that it rains* if one sees that it is raining.⁷⁹

Reicher herself suggests that we drop talk about "perceiving" a work and rather say that we *comprehend* works.

There are different ways to comprehend a work, and one of them is the perception of a realisation of the work. But there are also other possibilities.

⁷⁷ Wolterstorff: *Works and Worlds*, p. 41.

⁷⁸ Reicher: *Metaphysik der Kunst*, p. 98.

⁷⁹ Reicher: *Metaphysik der Kunst*, p. 98.

One can, for example, comprehend a work by the perception of a mere reproduction or through a notation[.]»⁸⁰

Though I do not disagree with what Reicher says about how we can come to comprehend a work, I do not see why we should replace talk about the perception of a work with talk about comprehending the work. After all, saying that I have heard the *Requiem* makes perfect sense. Just because it is not strictly speaking true, but rather means that I have heard (at least) one realisation of it - as Künne has shown – there is no need to stop saying things like “Last night I listened to the *Requiem*”. We also say “The average German spends 5.5 years of his life in front of the TV” without implying that there is an entity called “the average German”. These are legitimate *façons de parler* that we use every day.

In the case of other abstract entities we might be much more willing to accept that they cannot be perceived. I can see courageous behaviour, or courageous acts, but not courage itself. Courage itself, being abstract, is just not a thing that can be seen. But I can see exemplars of courage. The apparent strangeness of making a corresponding claim about a musical work stems from the fact that our concept of music is inextricably linked with hearing. But reflection on the nature of abstract objects should be able to remedy potential bewilderment about this claim. After all, no one has ever seen, heard, tasted, felt, or smelled redness, numbers, sets, or seen propositions. I have never seen the number two – but of course many instances of it. I have never seen the set of books on my shelf – only the books on my shelf. And I have never heard the proposition that it is misty, I have only heard the sentence “It is misty” uttered. But that does not mean that I am not familiar with the number two, that I do not know what redness is, or that I cannot understand the proposition that it is misty. It just

⁸⁰ Reicher: *Metaphysik der Kunst*, p. 99.

means that perceptual contact with the abstract object is not possible – whereas instances can be encountered any time. Plus I have said that “Jane has often heard Mozart’s *Requiem*” is true – even though Jane could never have heard Mozart’s last work itself, since it is not the kind of thing that can be heard.

Non-perceptibility does not prove to be a problem for a conception of artworks as abstract entities. But maybe the acausality condition is?⁸¹ The incapacity to enter causal relations is, besides atemporality and non-perceptibility, the third feature that is traditionally ascribed to abstract objects.⁸² Does the acausality requirement lead to odd consequences?⁸³ After all, we can say things like the following – and it seems that we can do so sensibly and truthfully:

(x) *Changing Places* has made me laugh.

(y) Brecht’s plays changed theatre.

(z) Jane was moved by Mozart’s *Requiem*.

What is asserted in these sentences is artworks having effects on people – very common things to say in art reviews and criticism as well as ordinary conversations. But if abstract objects cannot cause anything, then the above statements must be false. How can this conflict be solved?

Künne insists that there are no counter-examples to the acausality condition. The surface appearance of sentences where abstract objects are said to cause

⁸¹ It is certainly seen to be a serious epistemological problem in the philosophy of mathematics, first exposed by Paul Benacerraf in his: “Mathematical Truth”, in: *The Journal of Philosophy* 70 (1973), pp. 661-679. The problem arises for a Platonist about mathematical entities. If causal theories of knowledge are correct – like many people think – then numbers, sets, functions, etc. must be unknowable, since abstract objects cannot enter causal relations.

⁸² “Traditionally” here, for once, excludes Plato.

⁸³ It does not clash with the non-perceptibility requirement, at least. Perception is mostly thought to be a causal process – but I have said that artworks cannot be perceived anyway.

something is misleading, and again paraphrases can help us out. Take his examples:

(a) Carelessness was the cause of the catastrophe.

(b) Otto's carelessness was the cause of the catastrophe.⁸⁴

Causal powers are attributed to properties here. But the relation between (a) and (b) is like that between "Somebody is at the door" and "Otto is at the door".⁸⁵ So sentence (a) is obviously just a shorthand for saying that somebody's carelessness caused the catastrophe. The correct paraphrases of (a) and (b) would thus be:

(a') That somebody was careless was the cause of the catastrophe.

(b') That Otto was careless was the cause of the catastrophe.⁸⁶

The problem might not be seen as solved by these paraphrases, though. One might object that we are now saying that a proposition caused the catastrophe. So the paraphrases themselves have to be correctly interpreted, as Künne says "Do we not rather say that *somebody* (e.g. that Otto) caused a catastrophe, because he was careless? This interpretation has the big advantage that it saves us from assuming a causal connection between a timeless entity and an event."⁸⁷ Both (a) and (b) can safely be understood as meaning that somebody acted in a careless way, and this caused the catastrophe. So the cause is nothing abstract, but physical – somebody doing something.

Schmücker takes this cue from Künne and applies it to the alleged causal powers of artworks referred to in sentences like my examples (x), (y), and (z). They can easily be rephrased into sentences that are equivalent in meaning but say that certain *events* involving artworks – to be more precise: artwork-tokens

⁸⁴ Künne: *Abstrakte Gegenstände*, p. 69.

⁸⁵ Künne: *Abstrakte Gegenstände*, p. 69.

⁸⁶ Künne: *Abstrakte Gegenstände*, p. 69.

⁸⁷ Künne: *Abstrakte Gegenstände*, p. 70.

– caused subsequent events.⁸⁸ The expressions that seem to refer to the abstract object “serve as an abbreviation for the description of a more or less complex causal connection of events in the physical world and is only used for reasons of language-economy.”⁸⁹ So our three sentences can be replaced with, for instance,

(x’) Reading a copy of *Changing Places* has made me laugh.

(y’) The performances of Brecht’s plays were so new and different that they changed theatre.

(z’) Jane was moved by listening to a performance of Mozart’s *Requiem*.

And because I have said that types cannot be perceived, we are talking about instances of the works in question, of course. So the necessity of acausality for abstract objects is not disproven by sentences like (x), (y), (z), or (a) and (b), because they can conveniently be paraphrased into sentences that say that the actual causes are events in which tokens of the works participate.⁹⁰

But no later than now an objection will be raised: I claimed that abstract objects are indeed not perceptible and also acausal. Sentences claiming the opposite can be paraphrased into unproblematic sentences. But does this strategy not come at a high price? One might say: if all these sentences can be reduced to sentences where no reference is made to abstract objects, that only indicates that talk of abstract objects is superfluous.

The paraphrases employed to show that types, being abstract entities, are acausal and cannot be perceived, surely undermine our ontological commitment, the standard nominalist argument goes. Statements about abstract objects can always be translated into statements about physical objects, so

⁸⁸ Schmücker: *Was ist Kunst?*, p. 263

⁸⁹ Schmücker: *Was ist Kunst?*, p. 263

⁹⁰ Stressing that it is work-tokens involved in the events also avoids the problem of whether abstract objects can participate in an event.

language does not commit us to the existence of abstracta.⁹¹ And reducing reference to abstract objects to reference to physical objects is what I have just been doing.

So do I undermine my own conception of artworks as abstract objects by employing these paraphrases? Perhaps unsurprisingly, I do not think so. The objection ignores two major points of our discussion. First, I have said that I take the plausibility of assuming the existence of abstract objects for granted – there is not enough room here to defend the view that abstract objects exist. In the more general philosophical discussion about abstract objects, the argument about paraphrases might play an important role, but we cannot engage with this broad discussion here. It should be perfectly legitimate for our purposes and within the framework of our discussion to work with the premise that abstract objects exist, without having to justify it. Second, and more importantly, the objection ignores the fact that the claim that (all) artworks are physical objects has been shown to be highly implausible. It should be clear from the discussion in Chapter 1.1 that the view that, for instance, a musical work is a physical object is unsustainable⁹² – and it is surely no coincidence that literally all ontologists of art agree on this point, if on nothing else. The paraphrasing-strategy of the nominalist has the goal of showing that what is alleged to be an abstract object can be shown to in fact be a physical entity. But at least in the case of certain artworks, the physicality-claim is skating on very thin ice.

So the objection is not a serious one. Claiming that the paraphrases weaken our ontological assumptions would only lead to the highly implausible claim that all artworks are physical objects. Since this claim can be discarded with a clear conscience, and since the plausibility of a type/token ontology for

⁹¹ Cf. Hale, Bob: *Abstract Objects*, p. 85.

⁹² The same applies to the thesis that they are mental objects.

artworks can hopefully be established in the chapters to follow, the objection can be set aside.

4. Artwork-Types

I have spent several pages defending the view that artwork-types are temporal abstract objects that cannot be perceived and cannot enter causal relations. But these are features that are not specific to artworks – other abstract objects have them, too. So it is time to focus more on what is peculiar of *artwork*-types.

The properties of an artwork-type and its tokens differ from each other in crucial respects. Ingarden illustrates this by pointing out the distinction between a musical work and the performances of it. A performance is a temporal object in that it is an event that lasts for a certain amount of time, say, two hours. After these two hours, the performance is over, whereas the work continues to exist. “Having come into existence at a certain moment, it [the musical work] exists as the same product even though the processes through which it came into being have passed.”⁹³ Also, a performance is objectively located in space, which means that the performance of a musical work can be perceived by every member of the audience, whereas the musical work itself does not.⁹⁴ Performances also differ from each other, not only concerning “their position in space and time, but also their various qualitative properties such as tonal colourings, tempi, dynamic detail, the perspicuity of specific subjects, and so on.”⁹⁵ There might be various ways to perform a given work, but there is only *one* work, despite the multitude of performances and the

⁹³ Ingarden: *Work of Music*, p. 15.

⁹⁴ Ingarden: *Work of Music*, p. 11.

⁹⁵ Ingarden: *Work of Music*, p. 13 f.

differences between them. The reason for the differences between the performances is that the work is to a certain degree indeterminate, or “schematic”, as Ingarden also calls it.⁹⁶

Indeterminacy is a central feature of artwork-types. For instance, the type *Requiem* does not determine the exact length of a performance of it; the type *V* does not determine the number of pages an exemplar of it must be printed on; the type *Tristan und Isolde* does not determine the stage-design or how the characters are dressed; the type *The Silence of the Lambs* does not determine the size of the silver screen it is projected at, the volume of the soundtrack, whether it is screened by using a film reel or a DVD. An artwork-type does not prescribe all of the properties of a token, but only those properties that a token has to have in order to be a token of the type.⁹⁷ The remaining properties are left open. Artwork-types are indeterminate regarding the space and time of their realisations. It is also indeterminate who realises the work – the staging of a drama, for example, can be done by anybody who is competent to do it.⁹⁸ It is not determined by the work who that person has to be. But of course, a type is not completely indeterminate – otherwise, anything could count as a token of it. Types are only indeterminate in certain respects.

Having said that, how are types determined? The view that I want to advocate is that two things determine the identity of an artwork. First, the structural properties of the work – the properties that can be established by a notation. Second, the history of production of the work, i.e. roughly speaking, the context in which the work was brought into existence. The notation prescribes

⁹⁶ Ingarden: *Work of Music*, p. 116.

⁹⁷ This is not exclusively true of artwork-types, however. Types in general are indeterminate in certain respects.

⁹⁸ There are some special cases, though, where there *are* restrictions as to who can token a work, like printmaking. I will explain these cases in Chapter 4.

the structural properties a token has to comply with in order to be a token of a certain type. But the notation also does not prescribe all of the properties of the tokens – as shown in the examples above. At the same time, the structural properties of a work do not sufficiently determine it. It is more finely individuated by its history of production. I have already briefly indicated this when discussing Goodman. That artwork-types have contextual properties that are relevant to their identity in addition to structural properties will be defended at length in Chapter 3.

Reicher argues that artworks are abstract objects by eliminating the options that they could be physical or mental objects. Also, the assumption that they are abstract objects is able to explain how works can exist even though they are not performed at the moment, and how one and the same work can be realised multiple times.⁹⁹ Reicher distinguishes between “works” – which are abstract objects that are not located in space and time; cannot be perceived by the senses; and are not completely determined – and “realisations”, which are concrete physical objects. They are spatio-temporal objects, like books or performances.¹⁰⁰ I shall use the terms “realisation”, “instance”, “token”, and “exemplar” in equivalent senses.

The relationship between work and realisation is defined as follows, with W being a work and φ being the properties of W :

For all x and all W : x is a realisation of W if and only if for all φ : If W is determined as φ , then x is φ .¹⁰¹

⁹⁹ Reicher, Maria: “Eine Typenontologie der Kunst”, in: Schmücker, Reinold (Ed.): *Identität und Existenz. Studien zur Ontologie der Kunst*. Paderborn 2003, pp. 180-199:186.

¹⁰⁰ Reicher: *Metaphysik der Kunst*, p. 66.

¹⁰¹ Reicher: *Metaphysik der Kunst*, p. 76.

According to my view, W is determined by structural properties and by the context in which it was brought into existence. For x to be a realisation of W, x has to comply with the structure of W and has to refer to W's history of production by an appropriate intention or causal-historical chain. The latter needs more explaining, which will take place in Chapter 3.3, where the question of work identity – what are the identity conditions between type and token? – will be addressed.

Whereas types are schematic, concrete particulars are completely determined.¹⁰² That artwork-types are indeterminate in certain respects guarantees that there can be, e.g., different interpretations or variations of a musical work, different stagings of a drama, varying editions of a literary work, and so on. But what exactly counts as a realisation of an artwork? The answer to this question is not as obvious as it might seem, because in, for instance, the case of film we might wonder whether it is the screening of the film or perhaps the film reel. We must distinguish between objects that are merely means to realise a work and the realisations themselves.

5. What are Realisations?

I have said that a score is not identical with a musical work, but neither is a score a realisation of a work. A score and a realisation have very different properties; for instance, one can listen to a performance, but not to its score; a score is written on paper, and one can tear up a score, but hardly a performance. A score is a manifestation of the work's notation, but it is not a realisation of

¹⁰² Reicher: *Metaphysik der Kunst*, p. 88.

the work: it is rather a means to the end of realising it. Musicians use the score to play the piece of music it is the score of.

There are other objects that function as means to realise a work, for instance film reels, CDs, or printing plates. They are tools for realising artworks, and the tools are not to be confused with the actual realisations of the works. A film reel, like the projector and the silver screen, are devices used for tokening the film.¹⁰³ A film is determined by other qualities than those of the film reel: for example, a film could have a duration of 118 minutes and 12 seconds, but a film reel is not 118 minutes and 12 seconds long. A film reel rather has a length in metres – and a film does not. Additionally, the film reel's properties are contingent. It is conceivable that celluloid might be replaced by another material or that the relation between the length of the film reel in metres to the film's length in minutes could be different.¹⁰⁴ There doesn't even have to be a film reel, because a film can be realised by playing a DVD as well, and the invention of digital film meant that film is not anymore necessarily a chemically based medium. The point of all this is just that I want to emphasise the difference between realisations of films and the means employed to do this. There is more than one way to realise a film, and even more are imaginable, but there is only one film, and arguably it could not have been different from how it actually is.¹⁰⁵

The realisation of a film is the screening of it. This can take place in a cinema, but also somewhere else by means of a DVD player, VCR, or computer. The qualities of the realisations can vary. The screen used to realise a film in a cinema is likely to be bigger than someone's TV, the resolution of a HDTV is

¹⁰³ Cf. Reicher: *Metaphysik der Kunst*, p. 158.

¹⁰⁴ Reicher: *Metaphysik der Kunst*, p. 158.

¹⁰⁵ Cf. Chapter 3.5.

higher than that of an analog TV, a DVD is able to produce sharper pictures than a video tape, and so on, but nevertheless all those different screenings are tokens of the same type. Like performances of musical works, the realisations of a film are events, though Berys Gaut observes that it would be improper to call the screening of a film a *performance*, “since one cannot, for instance, talk of a screening being a misinterpretation of a work.”¹⁰⁶

Like film, a musical work can be realised in different ways, the most obvious being performing it. But also playing a CD, tape, mp3 file or any other medium it (or rather: an instance of it) is recorded on realises the work – though like film screenings, these latter means should not count as performances. A musical work is determined by a sequence of sounds plus instructions concerning tempo, instruments, etc. Despite the risk of sounding tautological, what is realised when the music recorded on a CD is played is the musical work. Making the work audible by playing a CD meets the identity conditions between type and token – compliance with the notation and reference to its history of production.¹⁰⁷ There are also works that were never performed and are only ever realised by playing a recording of it.¹⁰⁸ Especially pieces of electronic music come to mind here.

Realisations of literary works are either inscriptions like books, or spoken words performances like the author’s reading of her novel or the recitation of a poem. There can also be a recording of a spoken word performance, and playing the recording would also realise the work.

¹⁰⁶ Gaut, Berys: “Film Authorship and Collaboration”. In: Allen, Richard / Smith, Murray (Eds.): *Film Theory and Philosophy*. Oxford 1997, pp. 149-172:162.

¹⁰⁷ More on that, as noted, in Chapter 3.3.

¹⁰⁸ Assuming that recording instruments separately in a studio and only later mixing them together into one piece does not count as a performance of the work.

Like film reels and CDs, photographic negatives are not realisations of works of photography, but means to realise them.

One can easily see that by the fact that the negative does not have those colour-, respectively, light-dark-qualities, by which the work is determined, but rather exactly their complements.¹⁰⁹

Also, the negatives may be destroyed or lost without the artwork being destroyed or lost. The same goes for the plates used to make works of printmaking. Like negatives, they should not be confused with the actual artwork or a realisation of it.

6. How is an Artwork-Type brought into Existence?

When an artist creates a multiple artwork, she brings a type into existence. But how does this work? How is the type created? Levinson states: “The crucial point is that such works [multiple artworks], though not themselves physical objects, are ontologically rooted in datable physical objects resulting from concrete acts of human invention or design.”¹¹⁰ When an artist creates a singular artwork, it is clear that she does so by creating a physical object. According to Levinson, in order to create a multiple artwork, she *also* creates a physical object, but through that process a type is brought into existence. Reicher writes that the creation of a type is determining the type.

¹⁰⁹ Reicher: *Metaphysik der Kunst*, p. 159.

¹¹⁰ Levinson, Jerrold: “The Work of Visual Art”. In his: *The Pleasures of Aesthetics. Philosophical Essays*. Ithaca and London 1996, pp. 129-137:133.

[T]he defining properties of a work are determined by its creator, i.e. by intentional acts that one can aptly call a “determining”. The “creation” of a type essentially consists of these acts of determining.¹¹¹

According to Reicher’s description, it is the core feature of an artwork-type to be “determined as...”, so the determination of a type is its creation. There is no contradiction with Levinson’s point, since we can explain the process of determination as the result – or maybe: side-product – of generating a certain physical object.

I agree with Stephen Davies that there are three ways in which this can happen: the first way to create an artwork-type is to produce “an instance with the status of an exemplar”.¹¹²

For example, a novelist produces a manuscript that is both an instance of her novel and a model with the normative function of setting the standard that other instances of her novel must emulate. Not every feature of the model is exemplary. A facsimile copy reproduces the appearance of the manuscript, but a faithful copy of the novel might have font, point size and even spellings that differ from the original.¹¹³

The novelist creates a physical object, the manuscript. The manuscript is the first token of the corresponding type, but at the same time the type is created by bringing the manuscript into existence. The manuscript fixes the notation of the work. It is the first instance of the newly created artwork and provides the “standard”, as Davies calls it, for further objects to count as tokens of the same type by inscribing a notation they have to meet.¹¹⁴ The context of the type’s creation determines the history of production of the artwork.

¹¹¹ Reicher: “Eine Typenontologie der Kunst”, p. 188.

¹¹² Davies, Stephen: “Ontology of Art”. In: Levinson, Jerrold (Ed.): *The Oxford Handbook of Aesthetics*. Oxford 2003, pp. 136-180:159.

¹¹³ Davies: “Ontology of Art”, p. 159 f.

¹¹⁴ Peter Strawson regards types as “model particulars”: “[A] kind of prototype, or ideal example, itself particular, which serves as a rule or standard for the production of others.” See Strawson, Peter F.: *Individuals. An essay in descriptive metaphysics*. London and New York 1959, p. 233.

Works of art that are only orally passed down, like certain songs or fairy tales, are also created by creating an exemplar.¹¹⁵ If a minstrel has thought up a new story and tells it for the first time, then this performance is the first exemplar of the artwork, since reciting a literary work counts as instantiating it, and he therewith creates the type. I would like to point out that the difference to bringing a work into existence by writing a manuscript is just that in one case, the notation of the work is written down, and in the other one not. But the minstrel's first performance of the new work equally determines the artwork's notation and history of production. The notation is not inscribed in this case, but it can be memorised and of course could be written down. The notation of works that are only orally passed down is probably much less exact than that of a work that is written down. Only when someone decides to write down the work and thus creates a manuscript, the notation is precisely fixed. Examples would be Homer deciding to write the *Odyssey* or the Brothers Grimm writing down the fairy tales that were hitherto only passed on orally.

The second way to create an artwork-type is to create an "encoding", as Davies calls it.

A typical example of an encoding is a photographic negative, or a suitably marked silkscreen, or a cast for a bronze statue, or, for a purely electronic musical work, a magnetic tape or digital computer file. Instances of the work are generated through a decoding, which involves submitting the encoding to an appropriate device or process.¹¹⁶

This fits with what I said before about film reels and CDs. I have claimed that a film reel is not the artwork, but a means to realise the artwork. But the film-type is brought into existence by creating a physical object, namely the master copy. It determines the film's notation, which is a sequence of pictures. By

¹¹⁵ Davies: "Ontology of Art", p. 160.

¹¹⁶ Davies: "Ontology of Art", p. 160.

creating the master copy, it is then possible to realise tokens of the film-type by using the master copy, copies of the master copy or even copies of copies as a means to token it. Likewise, a band may record their song in a studio on a digital or analogue medium. By this encoding, the band creates the song-type, and the decoding of the song by playing a CD on which it is saved, will instantiate it.

The third way Davies mentions is “through writing and issuing a set of instructions for the production of its [the artwork’s] instances addressed to their performers or executants.”¹¹⁷ Examples of this would be scores or scripts for plays. They are notations serving as instructions for how to perform the work, but in contrast to the manuscript of a novel, the score or script is not at the same time an instance of the work.¹¹⁸

Risto Hilpinen agrees that every artwork, be it singular or a multiple, is brought into existence by creating a physical object. He regards multiple artworks as types, too, and like Levinson and Davies, he thinks that an artwork-type is created by creating an artefact. Hilpinen’s list of possible ways to create an artwork is congruent with Davies’. Possible relations between creating an artefact and creating an artwork, according to Hilpinen, are:

The artefact made by the artist is

(1) identical with the work;

examples: painting, carved sculpture;

(2) an instance of the work;

examples: the manuscript of a novel or poem, a composition played by the composer; or

(3) a model of the work, viz.

(3.1.) an existential model;

¹¹⁷ Davies: “Ontology of Art”, p. 161.

¹¹⁸ I would say that the script of a play, even though one can read it, is not an instance of the play. The point of plays is that they are ought to be performed. But one can know, understand, and appreciate the play merely by reading it.

examples: an engraver's plate, the negative of a photograph, the master copy of a film; or

(3.2.) an instance (a replica) of a symbolic model;

examples: manuscript score of a musical work, the manuscript of a play.¹¹⁹

Creating a singular work of art is a case of (1), whereas (2) corresponds to Davies' notion of bringing a type into existence by creating an exemplar. (3.1.) corresponds with encoding, though Hilpinen does not include digital encoding in his list. And (3.2.) is compatible with Davies' third possibility, the creation of a notation.

I should add that the different ways of creating an artwork-type mentioned above do not rule out each other and can sometimes merge. Creating an exemplar by creating a manuscript also means that a notation of the novel or poem is created, only that in this case – in contrast to a score – the notation is at the same time an instance of the work.

In some cases of encoding, a notation may have been produced first. Before recording their song, a band could have written down a notation to aid the process of encoding – but still instances of that work may be only possible by decoding, for example if the song will not or cannot be performed live. It may also be that an artist is only able to play his music live by playing back the encoding, as with electronic music. In this case the tokening would in fact not be a performance, like the screening of a film is not.

One could also regard the performance of a song in a studio as a case of the first performance as an exemplar of the work, like only orally passed down stories. Only in this case the performance is recorded, and further instances of it are realised by decoding.

¹¹⁹ Hilpinen, Risto: "On artefacts and works of art". In: *Theoria* 58 (1992), pp. 58-82:76

7. The Passing of Artworks

Artworks are created, and there are three ways to do this. After having argued for these claims, the question whether the reverse can also happen imposes itself: can an artwork drop out of existence again? When saying that artworks are temporal objects, does that include the possibility of them ceasing to be? Or does an artwork, once it is created, go on to exist literally forever?¹²⁰

I will indeed hold that artworks can drop out of existence. They are created at some point of time and do not exist before their creation. And it is equally possible that an artwork does not exist anymore after a certain point of time.

How is that possible? If the thesis that a multiple artwork, once created, does not automatically exist forever, is correct, the work's continued existence must depend on certain conditions. If they are not fulfilled, it ceases to be. So what are these conditions?

It should be clear that an artwork-type, once created, does not depend on the *artist* in order to continue to exist. Otherwise the death of the artist would entail the end of the artwork. That leaves the following candidates for dependency:

- 1) There always has to be a physical manifestation of the artwork. It has to be continuously instantiated.
- 2) The artwork has to be instantiated at least once. This is sufficient for its continuous existence. This view is held by Reicher.

¹²⁰ I am still only concerned with multiple artworks here. The persistence conditions of singular artworks will be investigated in Chapter 4.7.

- 3) The artwork has to be instantiated at least once, and it must be possible to instantiate it again. A means to instantiate it again must exist – for example a notation or an encoding. This view is held by Schmücker.
- 4) The artwork has to be instantiated at least once, and it must be possible to instantiate it again, and there must be some conscious agent able to understand the artwork. This view is held by Amie L. Thomasson.

Possibility 1) can be quickly beat down. A work of music does not have to be continuously performed in order to exist. Otherwise, most musical works we know would in fact not exist. And it would be equally awkward to say that because a work of music is not performed all the time, it suffers from a disrupted existence. It is rather the case that the contrary of 1) is an interesting feature of multiple artworks, namely that they can be realised at different places and times, but do not have to be permanently realised. I would like to stick to the commonsensical view that if a symphony is performed tonight and then only again next week, it nevertheless continues to exist.

Reicher holds that 2) is true. Once a type starts to exist, it is not ontologically dependent on any other objects. “If works are types, then it is clear that they can exist without realisations and notations[.]”¹²¹ That means that there has to be no physical manifestation of the work at all for it to exist. Even if all copies of a novel are destroyed, it still continues to exist.

But consider the following scenario: in eighty years, no copy of Byron’s *Darkness* exists any more, no one has memorised it anymore, and nobody even knows that there was such a poem. Whereas Reicher claims that the poem nevertheless still exists, the way I see it, we should say that the poem dropped out of existence, because otherwise, the world would be full of artworks no one

¹²¹ Reicher: *Metaphysik der Kunst*, p. 108.

knows about. Amie Thomasson has the same view concerning fictional characters:

Once created, clearly a fictional character can go on existing without its author or her creative acts. Nonetheless, a fictional character can fall out of existence with the stories of a culture. If all copies of all of the stories regarding some ancient Greek heroine have been destroyed, never to be recovered or recalled, then she has fallen out of existence with the stories and become a “past” fictional object in much the same way as a person can become a dead, past, concrete object. Indeed, it would surely seem bizarre to claim that the fictional characters of all lost stories and past cultures exist as much as ever.¹²²

Thomasson calls fictional entities “dependent abstracta”. But they are not the only dependent abstracta, according to Thomasson. Multiple artworks and mathematical entities are objects of the same kind.¹²³ Thus they all have the same dependence conditions – in the case of the poem that means that if no copy and no memory of it (i.e. someone knowing it off by heart) exist anymore, the poem does not exist anymore. In this case, it is impossible to realise the poem again.

But if no further realisation is possible, I think one should disagree with Reicher and insist that in this case the poem does not exist anymore. An objection might be that the work is only irretrievably forgotten and not non-existent. But to deny that irretrievably forgotten equals dropping out of existence would be, as Thomasson says, bizarre, since she claims that works are *dependent* abstracta. Agreeing with her, I regard it as much more plausible to state that, if no realisation of the artwork exists anymore, and it is also impossible to instantiate it ever again, it also does not exist anymore.

¹²² Thomasson, Amie L.: “Fiction, Modality, and Dependent Abstracta”. In: *Philosophical Studies* 84 (1996), pp. 295-320:303.

¹²³ Thomasson: “Fiction, Modality, and Dependent Abstracta”, p. 306 f.

Could there be case of a “discovery” of an artwork here? If someone writes down the words of *Darkness* after the poem has ceased to be, would this not be a discovery of an abstract object that has already existed? Apart from the problem of how to make sense of the notion of discovering something that does not exist anymore, the answer is no if contextual properties are taken into account for the identity of artworks. The histories of production of Byron’s poem and of the poem written down after the loss of *Darkness* are likely to be vastly different – and thus the works are not identical.

So I do not agree with suggestion 2) and rather agree dependency criteria 3). It is formulated by Schmücker in the following way:

An artwork exists if there (1) was or is at least one physical object, by the production of which the work was constituted, and if there (2) is at least one physical object in which it is actually or virtually manifested.¹²⁴

The first condition simply requires that the artwork-type was created. By saying “virtually“ in (2), Schmücker means that there is a possibility to instantiate the work of art, e.g. that there is a means by which the work could be realised. So there has to be a physical object which can be used to token the work, like for example a notation, a recording, or a printing plate. I would also propose that the possibility of realising the work should be understood as nomological possibility. Possibilities like a work spontaneously manifesting itself out of nothingness can be ignored, because the logical possibility of realising a work again always exists. But then there could be no situation in which a work ceases to be. There would still be the possibility that *Darkness* is realised at some point, because suddenly copies of the poem materialise in a library. Accordingly, *Darkness* would still exist, even though no copies exist

¹²⁴ Schmücker: *Was ist Kunst?*, p. 260.

anymore and no one remembers it. But I take the plausible understanding of this situation to be that *Darkness* does not exist. So remote logical possibilities should be excluded from the conditions under which a work continues to exist.

So say that Mozart's *Requiem* exists at t_1 . A score exists, once in a while there is a performance of it, and there are some recordings of it. By unfortunate circumstances, at t_2 the recordings are lost and there are no more performances. So there are no more instantiations of the *Requiem* from t_2 on. But the artwork would still exist, because the availability of the notation in the form of the score makes it possible to realise the work again.

But at t_3 , no notation, no recording and no more performances of the *Requiem* exist anymore. There is also no one with an astonishing memory around who might remember the score and could reconstruct it. In this case, the *Requiem* does not exist anymore. There is no possibility of realising it again.¹²⁵

These are plausible dependence conditions for the existence of multiple artworks. But Thomasson postulates a further condition, indicated in 4). The existence of a fictional character depends on the existence of a story, and for Thomasson, the existence of a story depends on more than the conditions in 3).

Ordinarily, a story is maintained in existence by the presence of some copy or other of the relevant text [...]. It is in this way that the stories of past ages and their characters have been handed down to our present day. But printed words on a page are not enough for the existence of a story. A story as such can exist only as long as there are some conscious individuals who have the language capacities and background assumptions they need to read and understand it. If all conscious agents are destroyed, then nothing is left of fictional works or the characters represented in them but some ink on paper. [...] Thus preserving

¹²⁵ Ingarden agrees and says that either the notation or a performance must exist as a "method of preservation" for the artwork. Ingarden: *Musical work of Art*, p. 122.

some printed or recorded document is not enough to preserve a story – some competent readers are also required.¹²⁶

In one sense, I agree with this. I said that a work exists as long as it is possible to realise it again. And realising a work requires conscious agents. But it is also not clear how strong Thomasson means her claim to be. Does she mean that there has to be the possibility that conscious agents *could* make sense of the work at some point, even if they do not at the moment? Or does she mean that there continuously have to be conscious agents who actually can read the story for it to go on to exist?

Against the weak reading, it must be objected that in some cases, no conscious agent at all is necessary for the work to exist. If a copy – an instantiation – of the story exists, then the story exists, because that copy is a token of the work. If a token of the artwork-type exists, then the artwork exists. If there is a copy of *Ulysses*, but no conscious agents exist, *Ulysses* still exists, simply for the reason that there is an exemplar of *Ulysses*. How can *Ulysses* not exist if there is an exemplar of it? If there is a realisation of work, no conscious agents are needed for the work to exist.

Against the strong reading, I would claim even if there is no conscious agent who is actually able to understand the language the story is written in, this should not prevent us from regarding the artwork as existent. Imagine that books exist, but there are only illiterates left on the planet. Though no one has the disposition to read and comprehend the books, there is still the possibility that someone will be able to decipher the languages the books are written in sometime.¹²⁷ That possibility can hardly be denied. The Rosetta Stone comes to mind. The stone, discovered in Egypt in 1799 by a Captain in Napoleon's army,

¹²⁶ Thomasson: "Fiction, Modality and Dependent Abstracta", p. 305.

¹²⁷ Reicher: "Zur Metaphysik der Kunst", p. 109.

enabled scholars to translate the hitherto incomprehensible Egyptian hieroglyphs into Greek. I interpret this as showing that the hieroglyphic language used by the ancient Egyptians survived, even though no one used it anymore, because it was still possible for subsequent conscious agents to decode and understand it.

Thomasson does not acknowledge the possibility of realising an artwork again as long as a notation, or an exemplar that allows further realisations, still exists. Imagine that the score of a musical work exists, but nobody is able to read it. Though this means that at the moment, for contingent reasons, no one is able to realise the work, it does not follow that no one ever will be. Someone might be able to make sense of this mysterious symbol system in the future. The possibility of a realisation is there as long as the score exists. If that possibility is given, it guarantees the existence of the artwork, and no further dependence conditions are needed.

CHAPTER III

WORK IDENTITY

1. The Endeavour

The cornerstones of the theory so far: a multiple artwork is a type that is created by bringing a physical object into existence. The work itself, being abstract, cannot be perceived and cannot enter causal relations, but its realisations can. Realisations have to be distinguished from means to realise works. The work is schematic and therefore does not completely prescribe the properties of the realisations. It can also cease to be again, if it is not possible to realise it anymore.

Now a central issue for an ontology of art has to be addressed that was already hinted at here and there – the identity of an artwork. Two questions go hand in hand here: first, is an artwork solely determined by its structural properties or also by its history of production? Second, when is something a token of a type? When is a book an instance of *Ulysses*? What are the criteria that have to be fulfilled for the performance I saw yesterday night to be a performance of *Macbeth*? This is the question of work identity. The answer to it depends on the answer to the first question, though – that is why I have decided to give the whole chapter the heading of “work identity”, even though work identity is not the only concern here.

To avoid confusion: “work identity” is not supposed to mean that performance A and performance B are identical with each other, but rather that

they are both tokens of the same type. To put it in another way: when is the sentence “The type instantiated by token x is identical with the type instantiated by token y” true?¹²⁸

Two positions oppose each other in the discourse about the identity of artworks. Both agree that an artwork-type is at least in part determined by structural properties. The dispute, however, concerns the role of an artwork’s history of production. Does it matter for the identity of a work or not? “Contextualism” is the view that it does; whereas “structuralism” is the view that a work’s structural properties sufficiently determine it.

I have already announced that I do take a work’s history of production to be co-constitutive of its identity, and this claim now has to be fleshed out. So I side with the contextualist, who holds that the history of production of an artwork – the context of its creation – has to be taken into account regarding its identity. The structuralist, on the other hand, claims that context is irrelevant. In what follows, I will first argue against structuralism and then show why it is necessary to emphasize the relevance of an artwork’s history of production.

I will also talk about the identity conditions between types and tokens and put forward a definition of work identity. One thing that should become clear while arguing against structuralism is that structural congruence between type and token cannot be a sufficient identity criterion. There has to be a further condition, and the question will be what this link between type and token might be.

Concerning artwork-tokens, another problem is whether they have to comply completely with the structure of the type, or if there can be some divergence. Does, for instance, a performance of a musical work have to follow every note

¹²⁸ Künne, Wolfgang: “Ausdrücke und literarische Werke als Typen”. In: Schmücker: *Identität und Existenz*, pp. 141-148:141.

of the score, or is a certain amount of divergence tolerable? If the latter is the case, then what is the extent of permissible divergence? And what are performances that diverge too much from a work's structure?

Finally, I shall turn to a potential problem for contextualism that David Davies has called attention to, namely that of modal issues. It cannot plausibly be maintained that all contextual properties of a work are also essential – but if not, how can essential contextual properties be distinguished from contingent ones? If contextualism is to be convincingly defended, an account of which aspects of the context are essential is needed.

2. Structuralism

The structuralist maintains that the history of production plays no role in determining an artworks' identity. Its only constitutive feature is its structure – e.g., in the case of a novel or poem a sequence of words, in the case of musical works a sequence of sounds. Versions of structuralist ontologies of art may differ, but they all dismiss the history of production as irrelevant. The roots of structuralism lie in formalism: Currie writes that since the structuralist

thinks that the aesthetic qualities of the work depend essentially only on how it looks, or how it sounds, or what sequence of words it contains, it seems natural [...] to say simply that the work itself is a certain pattern of lines and colours, structure of sounds, or sequence of words.¹²⁹

Assuming any further properties to be constitutive of a work is “ontologically inflationary”¹³⁰ from the structuralist's point of view. Goodman is a structuralist concerning allographic arts. According to him, allographic arts are

¹²⁹ Currie: *Ontology of Art*, p. 47.

¹³⁰ Currie: *Ontology of Art*, p. 47.

solely determined by their notation, and any object that complies with the notation of artwork *x* is an instance of *x*. I have already quoted Künne's objection, where a structuralist would have to admit that a literary text and a parody of that text are one and the same work. Accordingly, Künne thinks that structural congruence between type and token is a necessary, but not sufficient condition for work identity. He analyzes the identity-conditions between literary types and tokens. A first condition would be the sameness of spelling: "The literary work of which *x* is an exemplar is identical with the work of which *y* is an exemplar, if and only if *x* is spelled the same as *y*."¹³¹ For something to be a token of *Ulysses*, it has to be spelled like *Ulysses*. One might want to concede that a token can differ slightly from the spelling of the type. One probably would not want to insist that a single misprint disqualifies a book from being a token of *Ulysses*. But regardless of the sorites problem lurking here, which will be addressed in Chapter 3.4, "syntactical congruence"¹³² is an obviously necessary condition for work identity. Is it also sufficient, though? Künne vehemently opposes this view: "The objections against the thesis that syntactical congruence is a sufficient condition for two tokens belonging to one and the same literary work are insurmountable."¹³³ One reason for this is that a text could have different meanings in different languages. A text that is syntactically congruent with Goethe's *Roman Elegies* could mean something completely different in the language of the Martians. "By 'Speak, ye stones, I entreat! Oh speak, ye palaces lofty...' one means over there: Terra I shall bring stone probes from Earth to Mars... Both texts are hardly exemplars of the same

¹³¹ Künne: "Ausdrücke und literarische Werke", p. 142.

¹³² Künne: "Ausdrücke und literarische Werke", p. 142.

¹³³ Künne: "Ausdrücke und literarische Werke", p. 143.

work.¹³⁴ Or take the word-type “burro”. If a token of it is in Italian, it means BUTTER, but if it is in Spanish, it means MULE.¹³⁵ So besides sameness of spelling, sameness of language is also a necessary condition for work identity of literary works.¹³⁶

Here is a possible exception, though: Say for every sentence S in language L that a work consists of, there is a sentence S* in language L* so that the S* tokens are syntactically congruent and synonymous with S tokens. Then a translation of the work into L* would be an instance of the work – not because, but despite the fact that it is a translation. Note that this requires that not every sentence in L has a corresponding L* sentence that is syntactically congruent and synonymous with it – only the ones the work is composed of. Otherwise, L=L* anyway.¹³⁷

So syntactic congruence and identity of language are necessary conditions for work identity. But even taken together, these conditions are not sufficient, as Künne illustrates by his example of the literary text and the parody of it. Here we have two syntactically congruent texts that are written in the same language, but they are still two distinct works – because of the different contexts they were made in. Not only were they written by different people at different times. The crucial point seems to be that the two texts were written with different intentions. One was meant to be a serious piece of prose, the other one was meant to be a parody.

¹³⁴ Künne: “Ausdrücke und literarische Werke”, p. 143.

¹³⁵ Künne: “Ausdrücke und literarische Werke”, p. 143.

¹³⁶ Goodman agrees, see *Languages of Art*, p. 209: “[T]he work is the text not as an isolated class of marks and utterances but as a character in a language. The same class as a class in another character in another language is another work, and a translation of a work is not an instance of that work. Both identity of language and syntactic identity within the language are necessary conditions for identity of a literary work.”

¹³⁷ I owe this point to Wolfgang Künne.

Künne takes the necessary third condition for work identity to be “text-historical relationship”.¹³⁸ An instance of work α has to stand in a text-historical relationship to α . Such a relationship does not exist between Goethe’s *Roman Elegies* and the Martian message or between the text and its parody.

Künne’s definition of work identity of literary works thus runs as follows:

The work exemplified by x is identical with the work exemplified by y if and only if the following conditions are met:

x is syntactically congruent with y .& x and y belong to the same language .& x stands in a text-historical relationship to y .¹³⁹

Levinson, too, thinks that an artwork is not merely individuated by its structural properties, as he explains in his “What a Musical Work is”. As I said before, he does not accept the idea that two composers can ever compose the same work, even if the structure of the works is the same. Because we must take contextual properties of works into account, and two compositions necessarily – Levinson claims – entail different contexts of production, the compositions cannot be the same. Levinson characterises what he calls the “musico-historical context” of a work as including:

(a) the whole of cultural, social, and political history prior to t , (b) the whole of musical development up to t , (c) musical styles prevalent at t , (d) dominant musical influences at t , (e) musical activities of P ’s [the composer’s] contemporaries at t , (f) P ’s apparent style at t , (g) P ’s musical repertoire at t , (h) P ’s oeuvre at t , (i) musical influences operating on P at t .¹⁴⁰

Whereas points (a)-(d) of “Levinson’s list” concern what he calls the “general” musico-historical context – factors that are relevant for anyone’s composition at t – (e)-(i) concern the “individual” context of composer P . Levinson counters the structuralist’s objections that the musico-historical context is irrelevant or at most of art-historical interest by some examples. “A

¹³⁸ Künne: “Ausdrücke und literarische Werke”, p. 144.

¹³⁹ Künne: “Ausdrücke und literarische Werke”, p. 144.

¹⁴⁰ Levinson: “Musical Work”, p. 69.

work identical in sound structure with Schoenberg's *Pierrot Lunaire* (1912) but composed by Richard Strauss in 1897 would be aesthetically different from Schoenberg's work. Call it *Pierre Lunaire** [sic]."¹⁴¹ Because of its different – earlier – location in the musico-historical context, *Pierrot Lunaire** would be “more *bizarre*, more *upsetting*, more *anguished*, more *eerie* even than Schoenberg's work[.]”¹⁴² Perceived against the background of 1897 and Strauss' prior work and development, *Pierrot Lunaire** would be a different work than *Pierrot Lunaire*. Or take Brahms' Piano Sonata op. 2. It has the property of *being Liszt-influenced*. But if Beethoven had composed the same sound-structure, this work would lack the property of being Liszt-influenced and thus be a distinct work.¹⁴³ Or Bartok's Concerto for Orchestra from 1943. It includes a musical satire of Shostakovitch's Seventh Symphony from 1941; a property the work would not possess if it had been written in 1939.¹⁴⁴ In all these examples, it would be strongly counter-intuitive to hold that the named properties are not relevant and that the said works would in fact be the same, Levinson says. I think this is only partly true, though – and I will explain in 3.7 why “Levinson's list” is too extensive. Some of the contextual properties he quotes are certainly relevant for the identity of a work, but others are equally certainly not.

Maria Reicher distinguishes between two kinds of properties: properties of the kind “is F” and properties of the kind “is determined as F”.¹⁴⁵ The property “is F” can be predicated of any object, whereas the property “is determined as F”

¹⁴¹ Levinson: “Musical Work”, p. 70.

¹⁴² Levinson: “Musical Work”, p. 70.

¹⁴³ Levinson: “Musical Work”, pp. 70 f.

¹⁴⁴ Levinson: “Musical Work”, p. 71.

¹⁴⁵ Reicher: “Typenontologie”, p. 187. Reicher bases this distinction on Meinong and Mally; see her: *Metaphysik der Kunst*, pp. 68-80.

can only be predicated of abstract objects. For example, the type *Red Triangle* is determined as being red and being a triangle, so any realisation of the type is red and a triangle.¹⁴⁶ To put it more formally, she defines the relation between type and token as:

For all x, for every type T: x is a realisation of T if and only if: For every F, if T is determined as F, then x is F.¹⁴⁷

But for Reicher, the history of production is not a relevant property of T. Structural sameness is a sufficient condition for work identity, she claims and presents the following example: suppose there are two composers, C₁ and C₂. Each of them composes a work, W₁ and W₂, whereby the sound-structure of the works is identical. Both works are going to be performed. Call the performances P₁ and P₂. And indeed the performances take place. But shortly before the performances, a little mishap occurs: the scores are exchanged, and the musicians involved in P₁ are handed the score of W₂ and vice versa. The contextualist is now forced to say that P₁ is in fact a performance of W₂ and P₂ a performance of W₁.¹⁴⁸ Reicher thinks that to concede this is much less plausible than to say that both performances are of the same work.¹⁴⁹ But she also admits that she is not able to show what the contextualist conception of work identity is *wrong*.¹⁵⁰

I am not convinced that Reicher's example manages to raise too many doubts about contextualism. I do not find it overtly strange to stick to the consequence that – unbeknownst to the musicians involved – P₁ is a performance of W₂ and P₂ a performance of W₁. After all, both works *sound the same*. No wonder they are easy to confuse with each other.

¹⁴⁶ Reicher: "Typenontologie", p. 187.

¹⁴⁷ Reicher: "Typenontologie", p. 188.

¹⁴⁸ Reicher: *Metaphysik der Kunst*, p. 228.

¹⁴⁹ Reicher: *Metaphysik der Kunst*, p. 230.

¹⁵⁰ Reicher: *Metaphysik der Kunst*, p. 234.

But more importantly, due to her structuralism, Reicher has to allow for a range of objects to be instances of a work that are rather unlikely candidates for that role – and this outweighs the P₁ and P₂ scenario in counterintuitiveness. If a musical work is solely determined by its sound structure, it could be realised by a bird chirping or the wind blowing through the desert. Sand formations on the beach could form letters and realise a poem. One could easily come up with a long list of occurrences that surprisingly *look or sound like* instances of an artwork, but *are* in fact not instances.¹⁵¹

David Davies points out another work-constitutive aspect that a structuralist theory is not able to accommodate. If two works are structurally identical, they may still differ from each other, because one of them is finished and the other one is not. A work that is finished is a different work than a work that is unfinished.¹⁵² But the properties of *being finished* or *complete* and *being unfinished* are part of the work's history of production and are not taken into account by a structuralist ontology.

Another example Davies employs to support contextualism is the film *Festen* by Thomas Vinterberg. It is the first “Dogme 95” film. The “manifesto” of this collective of directors includes, among other points, the renunciation of certain standard cinematic techniques like artificial light or optical work and filters. Also, only hand-held cameras are allowed and the sound must not be edited afterwards. The rules articulated in the Dogme-directors’ “Vow of Chastity” naturally affect the look of the Dogme-films. If one does not know this background of *Festen*, one would not understand a major aspect of the film.

¹⁵¹ Reicher also cannot simply add a condition to avoid these consequences, like that realisations have to be intentionally made by conscious agents, because this would not be structuralism anymore. The structuralist claim is that a work is solely determined by its structural properties, and if part of the work is how and by whom it can be realised, the work is not only determined by its structure.

¹⁵² Davies, David: *Art as Performance*, p. 110.

One might be irritated and consider the film to be technically poorly made. But “[o]nce we take account of the self-imposed constraints under which Vinterberg is working, however, we [...] better assess the basic artistic statement articulated by the film.”¹⁵³ Davies’ point in arguing that contextual properties are constitutive for an artwork is not only that they are necessary for their individuation, but also for the proper appreciation of an artwork.

To try to abstract the work from that context [that of its making], so that we are to imagine one and the same work existing when an instance of *one and the same* structure-type is instantiated in a very different art-historical context, seems to do serious violence to the conception of a work that guides us in our appreciative endeavors.¹⁵⁴

The arguments presented so far should at least encourage serious scepticism about structuralism. I shall now take a look at what is probably the best known contextualist ontology of art.

3. Contextualism

Jerrold Levinson is one of the most prominent defenders of contextualism. He takes multiple artworks to be “indicated types”. Let S be the sound structure of a work and PM the performance means.¹⁵⁵ Levinson then defines a musical work as a

¹⁵³ Davies: *Art as Performance*, p. 71.

¹⁵⁴ Davies: *Art as Performance*, p. 76.

¹⁵⁵ Levinson thinks that part of a musical work is that the means by which it should be performed are prescribed. So, for instance, one property of Beethoven’s Piano Sonata No. 14 is that it has to be performed with a piano. The sound-structure of the work played with a synthesizer would not realise the work. I will not to engage in the discussion whether this view is correct, but I sympathise with Levinson and would regard performances deriving from the prescribed performance means as “derivative works” – see 3.5.

S/PM structure-as-indicated-by-X-at-t¹⁵⁶,

where X is a variable for the composer and t a variable for the point of time of the composition. The pure sound structure S exists prior to t, but it is important to distinguish it from the S/PM structure-as-indicated-by-X-at-t. The latter only comes into existence through the act of the composer's indication.

Levinson calls pure sound structures and other “purely abstract structures that are not inconsistent – e.g., geometrical figures, family relationships, strings of words, series of moves in chess, ways of placing five balls in three bins”¹⁵⁷ *implicit types*. They exist atemporally – so one could count them as members of Frege's third realm. Levinson contrasts implicit types with *initiated types*, which come into being when an implicit type is indicated by “an intentional human act of some kind”.¹⁵⁸ Since the arguments against structuralism strongly suggest that musical works are not implicit types, they must be initiated or “indicated” types, as Levinson also calls them. What happens when a composer creates a musical work is that he indicates an implicit type and so brings a new entity into existence, the implicit type-as-indicated-by-him-at-t. These two are distinct entities. The act of indication – or fixation, determination, or selection¹⁵⁹ - is usually carried out by the artist producing an exemplar of the artwork – which complies with what was said in Chapter 2.6. A difference between Levinson's claims and what I have said so far is that Levinson maintains that the pure sound structure itself already exists before the artwork is created. I have argued that some abstract objects *do* have a temporal extension, and therefore one can plausibly hold that musical works do not exist prior to the act of their composition. Levinson agrees that they do not exist

¹⁵⁶ Levinson: “Musical Work”, p. 79.

¹⁵⁷ Levinson: “Musical Work”, p. 80.

¹⁵⁸ Levinson: “Musical Work”, p. 81.

¹⁵⁹ Levinson: “Musical Work”, p. 79.

prior to their creation, because the artwork being a S/PM structure-as-indicated-by-X-at-t is not identical with the pure sound structure that exists prior to the act of indication. But if not all abstract objects are atemporal, there is no need to concede that the pure sound structure is atemporal. After all, since Levinson insists that artworks are created and not discovered, it seems more plausible, easier, and ontologically more parsimonious to me to claim that the artwork begins to exist at t and that there is no implicit type prior to t, from which the work is allegedly somehow derived. Why say that by selecting a type a *new* type is created, instead of simply saying that the artist creates a type – without postulating any further types to which the artwork is related through the act of indication. What it means to indicate a S/PM structure remains rather unclear anyway. How does it work? Currie rightly accuses Levinson of being “metaphysically obscure” here.¹⁶⁰ He goes on to say:

Columbus discovered America (let us suppose). In doing so, did he bring into being a new entity; America-as-discovered-by-Columbus? Fleming discovered penicillin, in the process of doing so did he bring into being penicillin-as-discovered-by-Fleming? What sort of entity would that be, if not simply identical with penicillin?¹⁶¹

Setting aside the question of whether “indicating” is indeed supposed to mean the same as “discovering”, Currie’s question is a good one: what is the difference between a pure sound structure and an indicated sound structure? Are they not the same in the end?

But maybe this point is not too important altogether. The central claim of Levinson’s thesis is one I completely agree with: that a musical work is a structure that is embedded in a history of production. What the latter in fact comes down to will be examined in detail in the last section of this chapter.

¹⁶⁰ Currie: *Ontology of Art*, p. 58.

¹⁶¹ Currie: *Ontology of Art*, p. 58.

One thing that Levinson insists on, however, is that the artist is essential to a work. On the indicated type-view, it is not possible that somebody else than the actual artist could have composed his work, because “if ψ is the S/PM structure of the Quintet op. 16, then all that [say] Hummel might have composed is ψ -as-indicated-by-Hummel-in-1779, and not ψ -as-indicated-by-Beethoven-in-1797.”¹⁶² But what is the motivation for taking the artist to be essential?

Levinson appeals to our intuition that an artist’s artwork is *her own*. It is something *she* created, and our ontology of art should credit the fact that it is her intellectual property.¹⁶³ Wollheim argues in the same vein: “[W]hat the novelist produces is his own. He has made it; he is responsible for it; if it expresses anything, it expresses him; it can be properly understood and appreciated only in the light of his having made it.”¹⁶⁴

Levinson adds: “Could anyone else have composed Schubert’s C-major String Quintet, in addition to Schubert? Could, say, Bertschu have? Here is one reason for doubt: Schubert’s Quintet surely reflects Schubert’s creative activity on a given occasion, and not Bertschu’s. So how can we identify Bertschu’s Quintet with Schubert’s?”¹⁶⁵

The intuition that it is essential to a work who the artist is might be very strong – and I share it. When talking about the context of a work’s production, this might also be the first aspect of the context that comes to mind. Nevertheless, the issue requires closer examination, and I will come back to that shortly.

¹⁶² Levinson: “Musical Work”, p. 83.

¹⁶³ Levinson: “Musical Work”, p. 83.

¹⁶⁴ Wollheim: “Criteria of Identity”, p. 37.

¹⁶⁵ Levinson, Jerrold: “Art as Action”, p. 148.

The role that contextual properties play for the ontology, the understanding and the definition of art is also widely emphasized by Arthur Danto in his *The Transfiguration of the Commonplace*. It was probably Danto who first postulated the relevance of context for the identity of works.

Danto takes Borges' story "Pierre Menard, Author of the *Quixote*" to be an exquisite illustration of the insight that

the works are in part constituted by their location in the history of literature as well as by their relationships to their authors, and as these are often dismissed by critics who urge us to pay attention to the work itself, Borges' contribution to the ontology of art is stupendous: you cannot isolate these factors from the work since they penetrate, so to speak, the *essence* of the work.¹⁶⁶

Danto admits that Menard's work could easily be mistaken to be Cervantes' and vice versa¹⁶⁷, but nevertheless those are two different works, differing in some of their essential properties.

The example of the two *Don Quixotes* leads Danto to his notion of the "historical possibility" of artworks.¹⁶⁸ Menard's *Quixote* has many of its properties because it came into being at a later point of time than Cervantes' – like being written in an archaic style or referring to Spain as "the land of Carmen".¹⁶⁹ Had Menard written his work parallel or even earlier than Cervantes, it would have lacked these properties. But the point Danto is making here is more general: for some objects to be artworks, a specific art historical context is necessary, and without this context, they would not have been art. "[C]ertain artworks simply could not be inserted as artworks into certain periods of art history, though it is possible that objects identical to

¹⁶⁶ Danto, Arthur: *The Transfiguration of the Commonplace. A Philosophy of Art*. Cambridge, MA 1981, p. 35 f.

¹⁶⁷ Danto: *Transfiguration*, p. 34.

¹⁶⁸ Danto: *Transfiguration*, p. 46.

¹⁶⁹ Danto: *Transfiguration*, p. 35.

artworks could have been made at that period.”¹⁷⁰ Warhol’s *Brillo Boxes* would not have been an artwork one hundred years earlier, because the artworld context of that time was not developed far enough to comprise such a work. It required the art historical developments of the following century to allow for *Brillo Boxes* to be an artwork. The artwork could have existed in the past as a mere object, but it would not have been deemed as an artwork. There was no historical possibility for that. Likewise, for instance, abstract painting would not have been possible in the Renaissance. If it requires a certain context for objects to enjoy the status of being art in the first place, it is obvious that contextual properties determine an artwork’s identity – and that also means that Cervantes and Menard have not written the same, but two different works of art.

The arguments against structuralism are very pressing – and at the same time, contextualism seems like a plausible and convincing conception of artworks. But Levinson’s theory, despite being on the right track, apparently has its problems. So the account of contextualism to be presented here is not yet exhausted. I have put forward objections to structuralism and sketched contextualism by outlining Levinson’s and Danto’s ideas. The sketch must be filled in, though: what exactly is the context of an artwork’s production? Which aspects of the production process does it include and which not? I will attempt to answer this question, but will discuss the identity conditions between types and tokens first.

¹⁷⁰ Danto: *Transfiguration*, p. 44.

4. Instantiations

A work is not solely determined by its structure, and structural congruence is not a sufficient identity condition between artwork-types and –tokens. So which role might the history of production play concerning the relationship between works and realisations? It is clear that the history of production of a work cannot be instantiated by a realisation. A copy of *Ulysses* does not instantiate the history of production of *Ulysses*. A performance of a musical work does realise the history of production of the work. The history of production of a work and that of a realisation will always be different.¹⁷¹ More generally, the question is: when is a copy of x a copy of x and not of y? For a plausible definition of work identity, Levinson notes that what is needed is

the right sort of link or connection between [the] copy or performance in question and the work itself as originating in an artist’s creative activity on a particular occasion. To instantiate a historically rooted indicated structure such as a sonnet or a sonata it does not suffice merely to instantiate a certain pure structure.¹⁷²

I have already presented Künne’s account of what sort of connection this should be: a token has to stand in a text-historical relation to the type. He explains this as follows:

The concept of an exemplar of a work [...] also has a *causal* component. In order to be an exemplar of work α , a text must – so to say – have the right history: x and y are exemplars of one and the same work only if either x is a transcription of y, or y a transcription of x, or if x and y have in the end been produced with the same master copy. In the latter case, there would have to be a text z such that: x is a transcription of a master copy that is a transcription of a master copy that ... is a transcription of z & y is a transcription of a master

¹⁷¹ Except works that are created by creating a first instance. Here the work itself and the first instance have the same history of production.

¹⁷² Levinson, Jerrold: “Autographic and Allographic Art Revisited”, in his: *Music, Art & Metaphysics*, pp. 89-106:100.

copy that is a transcription of a master copy that ... is a transcription of z. We can formulate this necessary condition in an abbreviated fashion by: x and y have to be *text-historically related*.¹⁷³

A parody of z would not be part of this chain between work and exemplars, because the parody is not a transcription of z. It is a work of its own and does not have the “right history” that would trace it back to z.

The criterion of the correct historical relation between work and realisation can be applied to other art forms than literature, as well. For instance, inscriptions of the notation of a work; or performances themselves in cases where no inscription exists; or recordings of the work; in other words: objects that realise the work or are used to realise the work have to descend from the initial physical object by which the work was brought into existence. I shall call this the “descent view”.

An alternative suggestion as to what links a work to its instances is that the tokens have to be *intended* to be instances of the corresponding artwork. The artists involved in a performance of *Macbeth* must have the intention of performing *Macbeth* for the performance to be an instance of *Macbeth*. In the case of structurally identical works, the intention of the responsible agent(s) decides what the realisations are instances of. In order to realise Cervantes’ *Quixote*, one needs to have the intention of printing tokens of his *Quixote*, and not tokens of Menard’s, and vice versa.

An objection to the idea that the connection between an artwork and a performance of it is the performer’s intention is that one might face epistemic difficulties. How does one know whether a token was intended to be a token of type x?

¹⁷³ Künne: “Typenontologie”, p. 144.

In most cases, the intention will be obvious. A performance of *Macbeth* is announced as being a performance of Shakespeare's *Macbeth*, and a copy of *Ulysses* makes it clear that it is a copy of Joyce's novel. A token of an artwork usually obviously indicates what it is a token of. The intentions of the performers or publishers are manifested in the token and can easily be identified. But what if Ellen finds a tape in the cellar of her new house, and there is a performance of – probably – Beethoven's Piano Sonata No. 14 on it? If the artist remains unknown and no other information is available, Ellen can never know whether this is indeed a performance of Beethoven's work or rather a performance of another work with the same sound structure. She would have to find out who is responsible for this performance and ask him or her if s/he had intended it to be an instance of Beethoven's work.

This is not a strong objection to the intention thesis, though, because even if Ellen cannot know whether the performance is a token of the Piano Sonata No. 14 or not, the artist's intention still is the criterion for what it is. What the performance realises is nevertheless determined by the intention of the pianist. That Ellen cannot find out whether it is actually Beethoven's work she is listening to is unfortunate, but on the other hand, it would be a rather safe assumption that it is.

Could there be instances that are unintended? I would feel reluctant to say that a monkey could instantiate Goethe's *Roman Elegies* by jumping up and down a typewriter.¹⁷⁴ The text produced this way would just not be an instance of the work, so it is not an unintended realisation. But maybe there are other cases that speak against the necessity of intentions to realise a work.

¹⁷⁴ Goodman does not have a problem with that, see his "Comments on Wollheim's paper", in: *Ratio* 20 (1978/97), pp. 49-51:50.

Suppose a pianist who is in desperate need of money is spontaneously hired to play according to a score that is given to him. He has no idea what the work is, and the score also does not say so. He just plays by reading the score without wondering which work he is performing. So what is he performing? Possibly several works with the same sound structure at once? Or no work at all, since there is no intention on his behalf to perform it? – One could still say that this is no counter-example to the intention thesis, because the pianist is at least intending to perform the work the score of which lies before him – regardless of what that work might be.

What about an orchestra consisting of robots performing a musical work? Does this performance contradict the intention thesis? After all, it would be more than odd to talk of the robots’ “intention” to perform the work. They are just programmed to play instruments. But one might reply that whoever programmed the robots had the intention to let them perform a work, so there is an intention behind this performance.

A more threatening counter-example to the intention thesis is the following: suppose Ellen forgot her copy of Goethe’s *Collected Poems* on the photocopy machine and left the room. Ten minutes later, Jane enters the room and leans against the machine to drink her coffee. Accidentally, she presses the COPY button. She thereby produces an instance of the *Roman Elegies*, but neither she nor Ellen intended to do so.

Another example: Jane and her theatre group want to perform *Macbeth*. But due to inexplicable circumstances and confusions, they use the text of *Hamlet* for their performance. Their intention was to perform *Macbeth*, but haven’t they now performed *Hamlet*? They obviously have not performed *Macbeth*, but

it seems strange to deny that they have performed *Hamlet*, even though they did not intend to.

Plausible as the intention thesis might first be, and despite the fact that realisations are usually intentionally made, I am not convinced that the right intention is always necessary to realise a work – the last two scenarios seem to be valid counter-examples to that.

Künne's notion of the correct historical relation can avoid these problems. The accidental photocopy is an instance of the *Roman Elegies*, because it is a transcript of an inscription of the work. The latter is descended from the first instance of the work. It does not matter whether the photocopy was made intentionally or not. It is a realisation of the work because it is a copy of an earlier instance. And the performance of Jane's theatre group is a realisation of *Hamlet*, because the text they used to perform the play is the text of *Hamlet* due to it being descended from the first instance of the *Hamlet* text. What matters in both cases is "where the text comes from", and not the intentions of the agents involved.

A brief look again at the examples mentioned earlier: it should be clear why – according to the historical relation view – copies of Cervantes' *Quixote* are copies of Cervantes' work and why copies of Menard's *Quixote* are copies of Menard's work. They simply descend from different works. When Menard wrote his novel, he did not transcribe the text of an exemplar of Cervantes' work, but wrote a new work.

Ellen's situation after having found the tape in her cellar does not change if one adopts the descent view – she still does not know what the performance is a performance of, because she does not know which work it descended from.

But, as in the case of the intention thesis, it is determined which work the performance realises.

The indifferent pianist hired to play a piece unknown to him is on both views playing whatever the score is a score of.

What the robot orchestra realises depends on what they are programmed to do. It is due to their programmer's intention which work this will be, but at the same time the notation that is programmed into them is descended from a work – the one they are performing.

Reicher's scenario with the exchanged scores can be interpreted in two ways, depending on which link between type and token one favours. According to the intention thesis, P_1 is a performance of W_1 , despite the fact that the musicians use the wrong score, because it can be presumed that their intention is to perform W_1 , and even though the score they are using is of W_2 , they are able to realise W_1 with it. The descent view would say that P_1 is a performance of W_2 , because the score is descended from W_2 . But regardless of which explanation one might find more convincing, Reicher fails to make a case against contextualism with her example, because the contextualist can either reply that P_1 *does* realise W_1 , so that the exchange of the scores does not matter, or that there is a plausible enough reason to think that P_1 realises W_2 .

An argument against structuralism I also mentioned was that structuralism allows for things like the wind blowing through the desert or a monkey jumping up and down a typewriter to realise works. And I take it that there are intuitions against these counting as instances of artworks. Both the intention view and the descent view rule out such cases as realisations. There are no intentions at work here, and neither are there relations to prior realisations going back to the origin of the work.

I do not strongly prefer the historical descent view to the intention view. But I think that there are more cases conceivable that are problematic for the intention view than for the decent view. If one wanted to insist on the necessity of the right intentions to perform a work, maybe one could find ways to fix these problems – I am not opposed to the idea. It should also be noted that intentions and historical relation do not exclude each other, of course. In most cases of work realisations, both are at work: realisations are meant to be realisations, and they stand in the correct historical relation to the work they realise.

The definition of work identity I would like to put forward thus runs as follows:

X is a realisation of y if and only if x complies with the notation of y, and if x historically descends from y as determined by its history of production.

Saying “y as determined by its history of production” is just stressing that works are individuated by their histories of production. X is a realisation of Cervantes’ *Quixote* and not of Menard’s because it is descended from Cervantes’ work. But the reason why Cervantes’ and Menard’s novels are not the same is that they have different histories of productions. So the identity conditions between type and token are structural congruence and historical descent, and the history of production of the work plays no direct role here. Why x is a realisation of y has nothing to do with the history of production of y. The history of production distinguishes works from each other, so it is the reason why y is not the same work as the structurally same z. X is a realisation of y and not of z, because y and z are distinct works and x is descended from y.

Coming back to the first identity condition, more has to be said about compliance with the structural properties of a work. Not every performance of,

say, a musical work, complies exactly with its score. There may be voluntary or accidental divergences from the notation of the work due to interpretation, variation, or simply mistakes. There might be a misprint in a copy of *Ulysses*, or the film reel of *The Silence of the Lambs* might be slightly damaged at one point and the images are therefore blurred for a second during a screening of the film. Would the identity conditions between type and token not be fulfilled in these cases? Goodman answers in the affirmative and says that a single false note indeed disqualifies a performance from being an instance of the corresponding work.¹⁷⁵ Goodman admits that this may seem counter-intuitive, but he seems to think that this is the price he has to pay for his theory to stay coherent. However, this is an exceptionally strict conception of work identity, and I take it that there are strong intuitions to hold that a misprint, a few false notes, etc. do not prevent a copy or a performance from being a realisation of a work. Certain variations from the original structure of a work are surely unproblematic for type-token identity? One might, for instance, point out contemporary editions of literary works. Languages change, and some words are spelled differently today than they used to be. But still a 2006 copy of the *Roman Elegies* is equally an instance of the work as a 1795 print. To deny this would run counter not only to our intuitions, but also to our common practices – the ways in which we regard cases like this and how we deal with them. I take it to be a benefit of a theory of work identity if it does not conflict with these practices. Davies additionally remarks that “it seems likely that few of us have ever heard a ‘Goodmanian’ performance of many of the performed works we take ourselves to appreciate.”¹⁷⁶ Goodman’s standard for work identity entails that we were in many cases wrong to consider them as instances of

¹⁷⁵ Goodman: *Languages of Art*, p. 129.

¹⁷⁶ Davies: *Art as Performance*, p. 215.

certain works. I do not see what attractions such a theory of work identity might have to offer that could outweigh its problems.

One might say that no divergence from the work's structure is permissible, because otherwise the following problem would arise: say performance a differs from the structure of work x in 3 %, and it would still count as an instance of the work. Performance b differs from the notation in 3 %, too, and is therefore also an instance of the work. But by the principle of the transitivity of identity, if a is identical with x, and b is identical with x, a and b must be identical, which would mean a difference of 6 % from the work's notation is permissible. But one might not want to allow for a divergence of 6%.

The error in this argument is, however, a misunderstanding of the concept of work identity. As pointed out before, the idea is not that a and b are identical with x, and a and b are also not identical with each other. A and b are both instantiations of x, but not identical with it. And a and b are not identical with each other, but both instances *of the same type*.

So in order to comply with intuitions and common practice, a certain leeway between the structure of the type and the structure of the token should be allowable. But how much structural divergence should be tolerated?

My suggestion, even though its helpfulness is limited, is to allow only for a small degree of divergence.¹⁷⁷ Why is that?

It seems impossible to give a satisfactory definition of "small degree". The enterprise is hopeless: how could a rule like "14 false notes are allowable" or "8% misprints are allowable" be justified without being completely arbitrary?

¹⁷⁷ Wolterstorff only allows for a small divergence, as well. To perform a work, "one brings about a sound-sequence-occurrence which comes fairly close to exemplifying the acoustic and instrumental properties normative within that work[.]" *Works and Worlds*, p. 79.

So sorites series arising here leads into vagueness problems. If one false note is allowable, then surely two false notes are. If a performance with two false notes is still an instance of the work, a performance with three false notes is, as well ... But when does a performance of a musical work stop to be a performance of that work? There just is no clear cut off. This is equally problematic to determine as from which amount of hair on his head on Tom starts to be bald, or where red stops and orange begins.¹⁷⁸

The advantage of postulating that only a small degree of divergence is tolerable is that this allows for ruling out certain performances to be instances, namely those that diverge to a considerable, large, or even radical degree. As Currie writes:

It is intuitively clear that the unintelligible copy of the novel, the unrecognisable performance of the sonata and the millionth print, pulled when the plate has been worn blank, will not count as instances at all.¹⁷⁹

It is even more difficult to distinguish instances from non-instances if a more generous amount of divergence is stipulated. Admittedly, this is not a precise notion. It is no less difficult to determine what a considerable or large divergence is than to determine what a small divergence is. Though in practice, the problem might be smaller than in theory. When seeing a performance, one can usually tell whether the divergence is small, large, or radical, even though one possibly cannot articulate the criteria for one's judgement. Likewise, despite the existence of borderline cases, one can usually tell whether a man is bald or not without being able to give a precise justification.

¹⁷⁸ Goodman avoids this problem, of course, by insisting that there must not be a single false note. But that does not change the fact that he defends a very counterintuitive position.

¹⁷⁹ Currie: *Ontology of Art*, p. 125.

Not much more can be said about this problem. Vagueness issues appear in many areas of philosophy, and the problem is by no means exclusive to the question of work identity. So maybe one just has to admit that what counts as instances of works is vague without being able to offer a way out. Or maybe one could say that borderline cases have to be assessed by the audience or by art critics. Whether a given case diverges too much from the structure of the work or not might only be decidable by a consensus.

5. What Translations Are

But what about those performances that fall outside of the scope of the small amount of allowable variation? If a performance cannot be counted as a performance of *Macbeth* anymore, because it differs too much from the work's notation – then what is it?

Note that my theory of work identity does not say that it is not an artwork. I am not advocating a conservative conception of how a work should be performed. The theory proposed here is not to be understood as in any sense normative. Its purpose is purely to identify classificatory standards concerning work identity. The idea is rather that a performance, which diverges too much from the notation of *Macbeth*, is not an instance of *Macbeth*, but it might still be an artwork – but a different artwork!¹⁸⁰ It would be a performance that is very similar to a performance of *Macbeth*, but it is still a distinct artwork. The best way to illustrate this thesis is by the example of a translation. As noted earlier, an instance of a literary work has to be in the same language as the

¹⁸⁰ Though it has to meet the notation of *Macbeth* to some degree – the attempt of Jane's theatre group to perform *Macbeth* resulted in being an instance of *Hamlet*. There was no structural congruence with *Macbeth* at all.

work, because the same sequence of words could mean something completely different in the language of the Martians. But that would imply that a translation of *Ulysses* is not an instance of *Ulysses*. And I indeed propose to draw this conclusion and regard the translation as what I would like to call a “derivative artwork”.

The claim that translations are works distinct from their originals might seem odd at first sight. After all, we commonly regard the German, French, or Italian translation of *Ulysses* as proper instances of Joyce’s novel. But strictly speaking, this is not the case. Since a translation of *Ulysses* does not comply with the aforementioned necessary conditions for work identity, it is not an exemplar of *Ulysses*. But what else is it?

Of course the German translation is a work very similar to *Ulysses* and obviously closely related to it, but it is a distinct work. It could not have been brought into existence without the existence of the original¹⁸¹ and strongly resembles it – for instance, it features the same plot, characters, and locations – but still they are distinct works. They are collaborations between the author of the original and the translator.

Thinking about translations in this way might be contrary to our common beliefs and practices concerning translations¹⁸², but is at the same time surely not counterintuitive – especially if one takes the example of a poem. Here the intuition that I have not actually read the work if I have only read a translation of it might be the strongest, because it seems that certain expressions, uses of

¹⁸¹ There could have been a novel consisting of the same word-sequence as the German *Ulysses*-translation, but arguably it would have been a different work than the German *Ulysses*-translation.

¹⁸² Though not in every case! For instance, Klaus Mann wrote his autobiography *The Turning Point* first in English, and later translated it into German himself as *Der Wendepunkt*. It is not uncommon among literary critics to regard them as two works. Notorious are the difficulties to translate *Finnegans Wake*, about which Arno Schmidt complained. Voices claiming that this work cannot be translated are not uncommon. There is a German translation of *Finnegans Wake* that claims not to be a translation of *Finnegans Wake*.

language, metaphors, and other stylistic devices – at least sometimes – cannot be adequately transported into another language. For some expressions, sayings, or sentence constructions, there are no equivalents in other languages.

At the same time, regarding translations as collaborative works also emphasises and acknowledges the work done by the translator more than it is usually done. I take a clearer-cut categorisation of works and the latter point to be the advantages of the derivative artworks-view.

In other art forms than literature, it is also much less controversial to regard them as collaborations instead of the work of a single artist. Film is the paradigm example here.¹⁸³ But even a writer is usually not solely responsible for his novel. An editor might change the shape of the novel not unconsiderably before it is published. This is a comparatively mild form of collaboration, but there are in fact often collaborations, even though the work is commonly attributed to a single artist. From Michelangelo to Jeff Koons, artists have employed assistants helping them in their work. An architect cannot construct a building herself. Bands write songs together. Once one starts to consider these cases, it might seem much less unconvincing to regard translations as collaborations and to allow for a wider application of the term.

So a derivative artwork is an artwork whose existence depends on a prior artwork it is closely related to, but it differs too much in its structural properties from that artwork to be counted as an instance of it. Translations are not the only example of derivative artworks. For instance, novels turned into films, remakes of films, or cover versions of songs are also derivative. The film is not an instance of the novel, but derived from it. It is a closely related work that

¹⁸³ Cf. Gaut: “Film Authorship”.

does not comply with the identity conditions between the novel and instances of it. A film based on a novel should be a very obvious example of a derivative artwork. But likewise, a performance of *Macbeth* that differs too much from the notation of *Macbeth* is a derivative artwork, but not an instance of *Macbeth*.

6. Possible Works

In the preceding sections, I argued for the implausibility of structuralism and promoted endorsing a contextualist account of the identity of artworks. However, the idea that the identity of an artwork is not only determined by a sequence of sounds or words, or by the constitution of physical matter, but also by contextual properties, becomes problematic under modal considerations.

The question of whether an artwork could exist in a counterfactual situation poses no big problem for the structuralist: she can simply state that an artwork exists in every world where it exemplifies the same structure. Maybe she will concede that the structure could have been slightly different, but there is not much more to say here for the structuralist. According to her, an artwork could well have been created by somebody else at a different point of time and in another context than in the actual world. The contextualist, on the other hand, seems committed to the view that a work can exclusively exist in worlds where an identical history of production is provided; so she takes the contextual properties of a work to be essential. But it would be counterintuitive to hold that *all* of the contextual properties of a work are essential. Surely Wagner could have finished composing *Tristan und Isolde* one day earlier, and surely Anthony Hopkins could have turned up three hours later one day than he

actually did while *The Silence of the Lambs* was shot – and still they would be the same works, it seems. So which contextual features of artworks are essential and which are accidental?

This question has to be addressed for two reasons: first, the answer to it will complete the analysis of the identity of artworks. So far I have discussed structuralism and contextualism, decided on advocating contextualism, and clarified what it takes to be an instance of a work. A closer look at the contextual properties of artworks is now not only advisable for the sake of rounding out the picture, but also because, second, contextualism would be in serious trouble if it should turn out that no contextual properties at all can be regarded as essential. This would lead back to structuralism, because then a work could also be created under completely different circumstances and would be the same in any world as long as it merely exhibits the same structure. Since I have argued that structuralism is an untenable position, this would be an awkward consequence.

Although the concern here is the essentiality of contextual properties, I would like to first address the non-contextual features of artworks. Assuming that multiple artworks are determined by a notation and singular artworks by physical matter, to what degree could they be different in a counterfactual situation? Could, for example, a musical work have consisted in a more or less different sound sequence? I suggest admitting that an artwork's notation could indeed have been slightly different. One should regard this in analogy to what I have said about the extent a token of a given type has to comply with the notation of the type. A small degree of divergence is allowable, though it is not possible to state an exact definition of what counts as a small degree.

Nevertheless, there might be examples of works where even a slight alteration of the notation would result in a distinct work. Imagine that the word “Dublin” in *Ulysses* would be replaced by “Paris”. This might render *Ulysses* into a rather surreal novel, because though it is supposed to take place in Paris, the descriptions of the city match perfectly with Dublin.¹⁸⁴ In contrast, a difference in notation should not affect the identity of *Naked Lunch* as severely. The fragmentary character of Burroughs’ novel could endure more notational divergences, especially considering that its sequence of sentences is to a large degree random due to Burroughs’ employment of his cut-up technique.

The variable force with which notational differences affect an artwork’s identity also applies to whatever art form the work belongs to. A poem could be less different than a novel could, because the importance of each single world in a poem is much higher than in a novel.

What also could not have been different is the language in which a literary work is written, since I have said that a different language means a different work.

Concerning the physical constitution of singular artworks, I would like to postpone the discussion till Chapter 4.5, where I will deal with the question of how a singular artwork can sustain its identity despite changes in the matter constituting it. The theory developed there will also be applicable to the modal issue: to the degree that an artwork can change and still remain the same, it could also have been different in a possible world.

¹⁸⁴ And if the descriptions of Dublin in the novel were altered to descriptions of Paris, we would be faced with a different work anyway. I have said that sameness of spelling is a necessary condition for work-identity, so such a difference in the spelling would imply a different work.

Now to the contextual properties. In the light of modal considerations, two options are open to the contextualist. One would be to claim that an artwork can indeed only exist in a world where the same context is given. But this runs counter to our modal intuitions. Why should it not have been possible for Magritte's *Le Temps Menaçant* to be painted one week earlier? Why should it be necessary that Braque painted *Le Bougeoir* in the studio he actually worked in and not some other one? Taking these properties to be essential would be counterintuitive, and one would "take what seems to be 'insignificant' details to be work-constitutive".¹⁸⁵ If every aspect of a work's history of production is an essential property of the work, it is also essential whether a writer has worked in room A or B, what he had for lunch and so on. But I take it to be agreed that this is not a desirable consequence. At the same time, some aspects of the history of production must be essential. David Davies calls the phenomenon that some contextual properties are essential and others not – depending on each individual case, as he claims – the "work-relativity of modality".¹⁸⁶

So one should rather go for the second option and accommodate the modal question within a contextual ontology of art. Concerning possible worlds, Levinson "admit[s] some weakness of will faced with this query."¹⁸⁷ Accordingly, Levinson only makes a few comments on the question of modality.

[G]iven a musical or literary work is identified as a structure-indicated-in-a-given-context-and-titled-so-and-so, the most appealing view is probably to regard the constituents of the type as indeed essential to it – structure, context,

¹⁸⁵ Davies: *Art as Performance*, p. 113.

¹⁸⁶ Davies: *Art as Performance*, p. 107.

¹⁸⁷ Levinson, Jerrold: "Titles". In his: *Music, Art and Metaphysics*, pp. 159-178:163.

title – while recognizing a measure of looseness in what counts as the same structure, same context, same title.¹⁸⁸

This remark is not very helpful, as Davies says. Though Levinson acknowledges that an artwork could have slightly different properties in counterfactual situations and so avoids the counterintuitive proposal that a work’s history of production has to be identical in every world in which it exists, the problem is “that sometimes slight differences in the constitutive features of works *are* relevant to work identity[.]”¹⁸⁹ Levinson’s account gives no possibility of distinguishing between these cases.

What needs to be done now is to investigate whether any contextual properties of works can be identified as essential.

I have quoted Levinson’s list of contextual properties earlier on in Chapter 3.2, and it should be clear by now that it is far too extensive. It is not plausible to postulate that, e.g. “the whole of cultural, social, and political history prior to *t*”¹⁹⁰ needs to be provided in a world for a work to be the same there. The *Brillo Boxes* could surely exist in a world where Picasso has painted one less painting, or where Kokoschka never pursued an artistic career. Maybe they would have been different works in a world where there was never a Dada movement, but for now let us merely say that “the whole” of art-history cannot be essential. Certain political and social events can be essential to a work – I will come back to that – but surely *Les Femmes d’Alger* can exist in a world whose socio-political history is not precisely the same. What does it matter to the *Brillo Boxes* who the last Egyptian pharaoh was? It should be uncontroversial to say that, except maybe for major events, history might have been more or less different.

¹⁸⁸ Levinson: “Titles”, p. 164.

¹⁸⁹ Davies: *Art as Performance*, p. 113.

¹⁹⁰ Levinson: “Musical Work”, p. 69.

And as said before, it also seems that there are properties that belong to an artwork's context of creation that are nevertheless irrelevant. David Carrier points out that it should be irrelevant for a sonata of Beethoven whether he had used black or red ink to write it down or that "during the composition Beethoven sneezed 866 times and the tallest man in Peking ate 69 dumplings."¹⁹¹ But while it should be immediately intuitive that these properties are not essential to a work, the question remains why this is so and what distinguishes them from other properties. The answer is, as I will argue, that the essential properties of a work are those and only those that are relevant for the meaning of the work.

The underlying assumption for what follows is that artworks are more than just, for instance, a sequence of words, or sounds, or paint on a canvas. They also have meanings. As Levinson puts it concerning literary works:

We do not treat literary texts the way we would random collections of sentences, such as might be formed in the sands of a beach or spewed out by computer programs. The sentences that make up a literary work, on a primary level, are not merely a collection or assemblage but the body and substance of what we assume to be a unitary act of expression.¹⁹²

I do not want to promote a fully elaborated theory of meaning here, but instead would like to understand "meaning" in a very broad sense: the meaning of a work is what there is to be understood about a work. Examples in what follows will make this point clearer. The idea is that the meaning of a work is what interpretative practices are aimed at¹⁹³, and that is, first, the literal meaning of the work, which it is – on my view – fixed by the artist's intentions. But the meaning is more than that. When one understands the meaning of a

¹⁹¹ Carrier, David: "Art without its artists?" In: *BJA* 22 (1982), pp. 233-244:233.

¹⁹² Levinson, Jerrold: "Intention and Interpretation: A Last Look". In: Iseminger, Gary (Ed.): *Intention and Interpretation*. Philadelphia 1992, pp. 221-256:223.

¹⁹³ I will set aside the question whether there can be more than one legitimate interpretation of a work.

work, one understands the narrative – if there is one – the references made, what the artist wanted to express, the point of the work, the background against which it was made – historically, biographically, psychologically, if relevant – and whether it occupies a significant place in art history, for instance whether the work was revolutionary and introduced new ideas and techniques. So the meaning of a work also includes circumstances of production one needs to know in order to properly understand a work. Berys Gaut characterizes this broad conception of meaning in analogy to the meaning of actions and historical events:

[W]hen one wonders about the meaning of such things, one seeks to assess their significance, to make sense of them, or in the broadest sense to understand them. Such concerns cover a broad range of activities: one seeks an explanation for these actions; one aims to understand the values which they express; one tries to see them as part of a broader social or historical pattern; one tries to characterize the actions in ways which reveal apparently unfamiliar actions as being of a type with which one is familiar, and so on.¹⁹⁴

To understand an artwork in this sense, it is not sufficient to look at the intentions behind it. A broader context makes up the meaning, and to understand the meaning requires knowledge of the relevant aspects of context.

Wollheim says: “In order to determine the meaning of a work we have first to determine what the meaning-bearing properties of the work are, and it is only on a very naïve view of the matter that we can do this without invoking the creative process itself[.]”¹⁹⁵ Again, examples illustrating this assumption will follow. If, say, a literary work is not just a sequence of words, but also has a meaning that is not just linguistic meaning, then the “meaning-bearing properties”, or, as I would prefer to call them, “meaning-fixing properties”, are

¹⁹⁴ Gaut, Berys: “Interpreting the Arts: The Patchwork Theory”. In: *JAAC* 51 (1993), pp. 597-609:598.

¹⁹⁵ Wollheim: *Art and its Objects*, pp. 199 f.

essential to it, because two literary works consisting of the same word-sequence but having different meanings would be two distinct works.¹⁹⁶ Let me now go through some candidates for meaning-fixing and therefore essential contextual properties. A first and obvious one would be the identity of the artist herself.

The artist. This is the safest candidate for essentiality, because it is one of our basic assumptions about art that an artwork is what a particular artist has created. I have quoted Wollheim and Levinson insisting on the essentiality of authorship. And is the essentiality of authorship not even trivially true? It seems that Leibniz's Law demands it anyway. If Tom and Jerry both write a poem, and the word sequences of the poems are identical, then does the fact that poem 1 has the property of *being written by Tom* and poem 2 the property of *being written by Jerry*, not automatically mean that they are different poems? – Unfortunately, things are not that easy. This argument already presupposes that the identity of the artist *does* matter for the identity of the work. But there might be reasons to doubt that, for instance if one thinks of scientific theories. Here it does not matter who came up with a theory. Suppose Tom and Jerry both and independently of each other find a proof for Goldbach's conjecture. They both write down the same sequence of symbols, dreaming of fame and richness. We would not say that there are two proofs, because one has the property of *being Tom's proof* and the other has the property of *being Jerry's proof*. Rather, they both have come up with one and the same proof. More generally, for the identity of scientific theories, it does not seem to matter who

¹⁹⁶ Like in the work/parody-example employed before. Or see Chapter 5 of Danto: *Transfiguration* for a wider elaboration of this claim.

developed them; and two or more people can come up with the same theory.

Why should things be different concerning artworks?

A scientific theory is a – potentially rather complex – string of propositions. Propositions are abstract objects, like multiple artworks. This, however, does not mean that there are no differences between scientific theories and artworks concerning their individuation. I have pointed out a major difference between certain abstract objects and others before: some are “bound”, others “free idealities” – some are atemporal, others not. This already shows that not all abstract objects are to be treated in the same way. And I would like to claim that there are fundamental differences between an artwork and a scientific theory. Here are some of these differences:

A scientific theory describes and explains, or at least tries to, a state of affairs obtaining in the world. An artwork does not necessarily do that. An artwork might do a lot of things, but it is not a theory about physical phenomena. Although a novel might try to analyze, say, human psychology, it should be uncontroversial to state that the aims of scientific theories and novels are not the same. Even if the point of a novel is to make a point about psychology, it still does that by different means than a scientific theory, like employing a plot and choosing a certain style – which plays no role in a scientific theory.

Also, while a scientific theory consists of a string of propositions, for artworks this is only true of literary works, but not of the rest. But even the analogy to literary works is not too far-reaching. The propositions of a scientific theory are either true or false. Whether that is the case with the propositions of a novel is a matter of dispute.¹⁹⁷ Whoever is right in this debate, there cannot be a doubt about the principle of bivalence applying to the

¹⁹⁷ Simply put, for Frege, they have no truth-value; for Russell, they are false; other conceptions are put forward by, for instance, David Lewis and Kendall Walton.

propositions of a scientific theory. A scientific theory is falsifiable, and what sense would it make to say that of a poem?

Furthermore, a scientific theory could be expressed in completely different words, using different formulations. This is not possible (at least not to the same degree) in the case of a literary work, because a very different word-sequence here would mean a different work. It matters that the artist has chosen to express himself *this way* – whereas the scientist’s choice of words is not at all equally important.

A proposition can also be expressed by sentences in different languages. “It rains a lot in Scotland” expresses the same proposition as “In Schottland regnet es viel”. Literary works, on the other hand, cannot be translated without becoming a different work.

These differences should make it clear that artworks cannot simply be equated with scientific theories. So one cannot simply say that the identity of the creator does not matter for a scientific theory, so it does not matter for artworks. But at the same time, this does not show that the identity of the creator *does* matter for artworks. What the differences suggest is that a fact about scientific theories – that it does not matter who came up with them – might not be true for artworks. The latter are contextualized structures, as it should have become plausible to say through the discussion in the previous chapters, and the former are not. But are there arguments to support the claim that the artist is an essential part of that context?

One strategy would be to say that who the artist is automatically determines further properties that are essential – I will talk about them shortly – like intentions or aspects of an artistic and cultural background that fix the meaning of a work. So some essential properties supervene on the artist’s location in

time and space and her biography and psychology, and therefore the artist cannot be someone else. But one might maintain that if two artists work in exactly the same context, have the same intentions and the same meaning-fixing biographical and psychological make-up, this would be a case where they both could have created the same work.

Intuitions might vary here. I would be willing to concede that this is the only – however remote – possibility where someone else could have created the same artwork. So I acknowledge that I do not have a knockdown argument for the essentiality of authorship, because I accept this possibility. But maybe we should say that the intuitions supporting the essentiality of the artist are strong enough so that it should even apply in this case.¹⁹⁸

What about the following scenario? Say Ellen writes a poem in the morning. Due to mysterious circumstances, she completely forgets about the poem in the afternoon. In the evening, she decides to write a poem – and comes up with a poem consisting of the same word sequence as the earlier one. Are these two distinct poems, or is the later one an instance of the earlier one? Supposing that Ellen's intentions and relevant psychological make-up are the same in the evening as in the morning, this would be a case of two distinct creations of the same work.¹⁹⁹ Note, however, that this example contradicts neither contextualism in general nor the essentiality of authorship. Contextualism says that different contexts entail different works, but here the contexts *ex hypothesi* do not (relevantly) differ, and I have just conceded that if the contexts of two

¹⁹⁸ Guy Rohrbaugh offers a formal proof for the essentiality of authorship in his: "I Could Have Done That", in: *BJA* 45 (2005), 209-228. The problem here is, though, that one of his premises is that if two artists create works within the same world, they are necessarily distinct works. From this assumption, he argues that this is true across all possible worlds. However, Rohrbaugh unfortunately does not offer any arguments to support his contestable premise (p. 214).

¹⁹⁹ Strictly speaking, though, Ellen has not created a work in the evening, but only inscribed an already existing one.

creations are the same, the works could be the same as well. The essentiality of authorship is not affected by the example anyway, because the artist is the same in the morning and in the evening.

When postulating that a work could not have been created by someone else than the actual artist, one might still wonder whether the artist herself could have had a different personal history. On the one hand, I take it we would be inclined to say that he could have been born in a different hospital or could have had something else for lunch on October 7, 1985. On the other hand, there are cases where a part of the artist's biography is strongly relevant to his work. Take the fact that Burroughs wrote *Naked Lunch* under the influence of various drugs. He did not even quite remember writing the novel. Would *Naked Lunch* have been a different work had Burroughs not been addicted to drugs? He might have come up with the same word-sequence without the use of the drugs, because he, say, imagined what a novel would be like that is written under the influence of them, and his imagination was extraordinary enough to accomplish that. However, in order to properly understand *Naked Lunch*, one needs to know about Burroughs's addiction. Otherwise, one does not understand, for example, why the style and structure of the novel are so weird. One would also not know that the novel is partly autobiographical. And I think we should consider these two works as distinct: *Naked Lunch* written under the sway of narcotics being very expressive and partly autobiographical and *Naked Lunch* written soberly and being a complete fantasy.

So let us say that the artist's biography cannot be different in a way that would change the meaning of his work.²⁰⁰ I do not want to commit myself to a specific theory of interpretation here. But unless you are an austere constructivist about interpretation, the example of *Naked Lunch* should be convincing. Without knowing about the context of its provenance, one does not understand a major aspect of the novel.

Likewise, a parody is surely intended to be a parody. If Jane Austen's *Northanger Abbey* was intended as a serious Gothic novel in a possible world, it would be a different work, because a Gothic novel and a parody of a Gothic novel are hardly the same work.²⁰¹ There is no need to go into more complicated cases and I would like to simply say that in some cases, a work's meaning is determined by the artist's intentions and aspects of her biography, and in these cases that context is essential.²⁰²

So if the assumption is that parts of an artist's biography can be relevant to the meaning of a work and could not have been other than they actually were, since that would result in a different meaning (like Burroughs imagining drug experiences), one should say that an artist must have these in all worlds where his work is the same.

Allusions and References. This is a clear-cut case of essential context. If there are allusions and references to real persons, places, or events, and so on, in a

²⁰⁰ Against Kripke, one might want to stress that it is not essential who somebody's parents are, because there is one exception: if A and B have a child C, then C could have had the same DNA if A had conceived C with the identical twin of B (or B with the identical twin of A). This only works for identical twins, not twins, though.

²⁰¹ Currie discusses this example in "Work and Text" in his: *Arts & Minds*. Oxford 2004, pp. 9-27.

²⁰² Saying that aspects of an artist's biography can be essential does not entail the necessity of authorship, though. Someone else with the same biography could have been the artist. I have already conceded that if the relevant context is the same, someone else than the actual artist could have created her work.

work, then they must exist in every world in which the work exists, as well. Davies writes: “Orwell’s *Animal Farm* could not exist in a world in which an event like the Russian Revolution never occurred, and [...] Picasso’s *Guernica* could not exist in a world in which events like those depicted in the picture did not take place.”²⁰³ They would have been fantasy works. Likewise, Klaus Mann’s *Mephisto* would not be the same work in a world where Gustav Gründgens did not exist, or at least never became an actor and never came to terms with leading figures of the Third Reich, and his *The Turning Point* would be a different work if it was not an autobiography but fiction. Or take this example by Rohrbaugh:

Consider Maya Ying Lin’s Vietnam Veteran’s Memorial in Washington, DC. I suppose for the sake of argument that it is physically possible that she engage in an exactly similar production-process in a warless world. The possibility is a bizarre one, and it is difficult to imagine a context in which it would have come to pass. What I find plausible is the claim that, however one fills in the story, the monument produced is not the same work of art that which sits on the Mall in our world. The counterfactual monument would commemorate a war that never happened, men who never died. Its significance in that world seems so thoroughly altered that we ought to say that it is not our memorial.²⁰⁴

That the events alluded to in a work took place is contingent, but it is still essential to the work that they took place. The same goes for allusions and references to other artworks within a work. There are many references to literary works in Arturo Pérez-Reverte’s *The Dumas Club*, mostly to those of Alexandre Dumas. Had those works not existed, *The Dumas Club* would not be the same. It would not be a novel playing with intertextuality, not expressing the author’s admiration for certain other writers. It would not be about works of fiction, but about fictional works of fiction. *Kill Bill* is full of references to

²⁰³ Davies: *Art as Performance*, p. 111.

²⁰⁴ Rohrbaugh: “I Could Have Done That”, p. 219.

Easterns of the 1970's, either in the form of direct quotes, deliberate stylistic similarities, or by using iconic actors from the genre. If the films *Kill Bill* is an homage to had never existed, *Kill Bill* would have been a very different film.

Though it is not the same thing as an allusion, maybe this is the right place to point out another essential property of certain artworks, because it can also be an instance of reference: pictorial meaning. Facts concerning the content of a picture might be essential to their context. Whether what is depicted exists or not surely is relevant to the identity of a work. A picture of Edgar Allan Poe would not be the same work in worlds where Edgar Allan Poe never existed, because there it would not be a portrait, and a picture of a three-eyed blue monster would not be the same work in worlds where three-eyed blue monsters exist.

Further essential properties of works are metaphors and symbols – at least if they are relevant for the meaning of the work. In a world where the meaning of metaphors and symbols used in a work changes because of the way this world is, or where they make no sense, the work is also not the same. Very generally speaking, if there are any references to the world as it is in a work, then any possible world in which the work is the same has – so to say – to comply with the work.

Influences. Artistic influences are another point in “Levinson’s list”. Davies’s example here is Cézanne’s influence on Picasso’s early works.²⁰⁵ *Les Femmes d’Alger (O. J. R. M.)* is influenced by Cézanne’s works. But does that mean that this is an essential property of the painting? Would it be a different painting in a world where Cézanne did not exist? There is a causal connection

²⁰⁵ Davies: *Art as Performance*, p. 112.

between Cézanne's works and *Les Femmes d'Alger*, as any art historian will confirm. But an effect could have had a different cause. There might be a world where Cézanne never existed, but instead there was another painter who created paintings that look the same or at least very similar to those Cézanne painted in the actual world. In that world, Picasso was influenced by this painter's works, but to the same effect.²⁰⁶

At the same time, if there was no such painter at all, then *Les Femmes d'Alger* would indeed be a different work. It would be even more original and revolutionary.²⁰⁷ So if an artist was influenced by x, the lack of this influence would result in a different work. But the influence could have come from somebody or something else than x. So one should talk of an *x-style* influence being essential. If a work is influenced by x in the actual world, there has to be an *x-style* influence: an influence like that by x that has the same effect on the work.

The general artistic context. Davies has correctly pointed out that some works' identity is much more closely tied to a general art context than others.

In the case of certain works – for example, much mid-to-late-twentieth-century visual art – it is difficult to imagine how those very works could exist in a world that did not very closely reproduce the actual artistic and cultural context of generation. In the case of other works – for example, “naïve” paintings – very little of the actual engendering artistic and cultural context seems to be required in order for the work to exist in a world.²⁰⁸

Take the *Brillo Boxes*. It is difficult to conceive of the work as being ripped out of the art context of the 1950's and 60's New York art scene with its

²⁰⁶ Davies acknowledges that point in a footnote: *Art as Performance*, p. 111.

²⁰⁷ Cf. Levinson's example of Brahms's Piano Sonata op. 2, which would be different if it had not been influenced by Liszt. “Musical Work”, p. 70 f. I will argue shortly that originality is essential.

²⁰⁸ Davies: *Art as Performance*, p. 112.

protagonists, ideas, movements and theories. The *Brillo Boxes* would not have been the same before this context existed: once again, Danto's notion of the historical possibility for art has to be stressed. At the very beginning of the 20th century, the conception of art was not developed far enough to allow for a work like the *Brillo Boxes* to be art. So it would not have been the same artwork, namely not an artwork at all! And at the end of the 20th century, the *Brillo Boxes* would not have been the same either. They would exist in a much different context – they would not be original, they would not push the boundaries of what can be art further, they would not be embedded in an art scene like the fifties and sixties New York one. In order to understand the point of the *Brillo Boxes*, one has to know about this context, about Warhol, about his work. Without knowing about the background against which Duchamp invented his readymades, the point of *Fountain* will remain rather cryptic. But if this kind of knowledge is necessary in order to understand a specific work, then the context could not have been much different. This leads back to the meaning of a work. The comment the *Brillo Boxes* is making about art is due to the context Warhol was working in, such as theories and ideas about art prevalent at that time, things that happened in the art scene that influenced Warhol and made the *Brillo Boxes* historically possible, practices within the artworld that Warhol reacted to with his work. The notion of a general context alone is vague, but in a given case we can spell the essential aspects of it out: namely those having an impact on the meaning of a work.

This kind of complex context is surely not required for understanding a naïve painting of a landscape, as Davies says.²⁰⁹ It is just a painting of a landscape, and there is nothing more to understand about it. The work is not a comment on

²⁰⁹ Davies: *Art as Performance*, p. 108.

art, it is not part of a larger movement, it is not related to any theory of art and would also have been historically possible many years earlier – though it is not *completely* unimportant when the work was created, it has to be pointed out against Davies. Had it been created before the development of accurate perspective painting, say in 1300, it would indeed have been a different work: an amazingly original work employing a hitherto unseen technique instead of a naïve, unspectacular painting of a landscape. This again would affect the meaning of the work. Part of the 1300-version's meaning would be that it was the first painting using perspective, at least on the broad conception of meaning that I endorse. If Tom tries to understand this painting and does not know that it is the first instance of perspective painting, he misses an important aspect of the work. He does not know what the artist has done here: that he has come up with a hitherto impossible way of painting, that he has developed a new technique and thereby single-handedly generated a massive leap in realism in painting ... The essential more general artistic context in this case would then be that this had not been accomplished before. So the naïve painting, too, could not have been created in *any* context, besides the fact that it arguably could not have been created by somebody else. It is just more flexible as to when it could have been created than the *Brillo Boxes*.

As long as the required context is given, the point of time of creation could also have been different anyway. It would be implausible to say that the *precise* point of time is essential, anyway. A work finished at 2.28 pm on October 7, 1985 could surely have been finished 23 minutes earlier or later. And one could also conceive of a world whose history and art-history is accelerated. There the *Brillo Boxes* might have been created 50 years earlier, given that the required meaning-fixing context is given. If the context is the same and the different

point of time does not affect a work's meaning, it also might have been created at that point of time.

Originality. I have said that *Les Demoiselles d'Avignon* is a different work in world without a Cézanne-style influence, because it would be much more original and revolutionary. One might ask: does that really make a difference? Does the property of being original really distinguish a work from a work that is not original?

Künne thinks so:

It is always (logically) possible that a work is no different from another one in its sound-sequence, but different because of the positional property of being created then-and-then by this-and-this person and because of further properties depending on this one. (If work a, composed 1780 in Vienna, has the same sound-sequence as work b, composed 1980 in Vienna, and if a possesses the property of being epoch-making, then it is highly unlikely that b is epoch-making as well.)²¹⁰

However, one must not make the mistake of understanding “epoch-making” as meaning that the work's influence on subsequent novels was enormous. That would be an implausible candidate for essentiality. It might have been that *Ulysses* was not influential, because just out of bad luck for Joyce, his novel was ignored for random reasons. But still it would have been the same novel. Originality, on the other hand, and epoch-making means being influential because the work was highly original, depends on the artworks preceding a work. If there had already been ten stream of consciousness novels before *Ulysses*, Joyce's novel would not have been original. And we should indeed speak of two distinct works here: the highly original actual *Ulysses*, and the unexciting *Ulysses* that is the eleventh novel of the same sort. In other words:

²¹⁰ Künne: *Abstrakte Gegenstände*, p. 91.

in a world with ten stream of consciousness novels before Joyce wrote his, he has not written *Ulysses*, but a different work.

Originality is not necessarily a term with positive connotations. There could be a world where originality is not appreciated at all, and its inhabitants prefer repetitive, epigonal art. Let us talk of originality in a descriptive sense: being something that has not been done before in salient respects. This again can be seen as part of the meaning of a work. Originality could be due to various features of a work: its plot, its style, its technique, an idea behind it. But surely all those are intended by the artist. It might be that an artwork is unintentionally original, just because the artist did not know much about art history, and it turns out that she has done what has not been done before. But still the features due to which the work is original are intended. It is hard to conceive of the style, technique – or even medium! – of an artwork as being unintended. If the artist's intentions are part of the meaning of a work, it follows that originality is essential to a work. But even if one is sceptical about the role of intentions for the meaning of artworks, the broad conception of meaning that I advocate would still recommend regarding originality as part of the meaning of a work and therefore essential. To understand *Ulysses*, it seems to me, one has to know what a novelty this work was when it was first published. As in the case of the first painting using perspective, if there are features of a work that are saliently new, one has to know that they are new in order to properly understand the work. And if the meaning of a work is what there is to be understood about a work, then originality is essential.

But what if we should find out that somebody wrote a novel structurally identical to *Ulysses* five years before Joyce wrote his novel? Would *Ulysses* suddenly be a different work, because it is not original, even though Joyce did

not know the earlier novel? – No, it would just be a different work than we *thought* it was.²¹¹ It has still got the same properties, we were just wrong to attribute that of originality to it. For Joyce, this would be rather tragic, of course. But imagine that Tom writes a poem. Then he finds out that a structurally identical poem, written by Jerry, already exists. That is bad luck. But the poems would still be two distinct works because of their different properties, and a property that Tom’s poem would not possess is that of being original. There is a positive practical consequence of contextualism, as Rohrbaugh points out.²¹² Contextualism ensures that Tom has created an artwork, even though a structurally identical poem already exists.²¹³ On the structuralist view, Tom has merely created the same poem as Jerry. Or one could even think that he has created nothing at all. If artworks are created, then Tom has not created a poem since it already existed and so cannot be created again. But according to contextualism, Tom has created a new poem that did not exist before and that is distinct from Jerry’s, even though it is not original.

Menard’s *Quixote* has many of its properties because Cervantes’s *Quixote* already existed. Not only is Menard’s *Quixote* not the same work as Cervantes’s, it would be yet another work if there was never a *Quixote* before. It would, to take the most obvious property, not have been a rewriting of Cervantes’s *Quixote*. Artworks possess some of their properties, like originality, influences and allusions, due to other, earlier works. The art history preceding

²¹¹ Cf. Levinson, Jerrold: “What a Musical Work Is, Again”. In his: *Music, Art, and Metaphysics*, pp. 215-263:227.

²¹² Rohrbaugh: “I Could Have Done That”, pp. 220 f.

²¹³ Here is a discrepancy between theory and practice, though. In practice, Tom would probably just be accused of plagiarising Jerry’s work.

a work might have been constituted differently, but only as far as, say, the work would still have been original against the background of that history.²¹⁴

In this sense artworks differ from chairs. If a chair was original in one world and unoriginal in another, we would probably still allow the chair to be the same in both worlds. Whether it is original or not does not seem to matter for the identity of the chair. But artworks are “no ordinary artifacts”, as David Wiggins writes.²¹⁵ I have argued at length that an artwork’s identity is also determined by its context, whereas that is not the case with chairs, I suppose. One of these properties could be originality, supervening on other contextual properties like whether there has been a similar work before.

So much for my theory of essentiality. Davies’s answer to the question about which contextual properties are essential is the following: he takes artworks to be performances that cumulate in bringing an object into existence – a view that is comparable to Currie’s and quite different from my own ontology of art. Even though Davies claims that only his performance theory is able to solve the challenge of accommodating the work-relativity of art in a contextualist ontology, I do not see why a similar strategy should not be available to, for example, Levinson as well. However, according to Davies, what the essential contextual properties in each case are, depends on

a judgement as to which features of the art-historical context of creation must be directly or indirectly incorporated into what we would take to be an adequate characterization of the originating performance.²¹⁶

²¹⁴ We might think that, for example, somebody else than Cervantes could have written *Don Quixote*. But then Menard’s *Quixote* would have been a different work as well! Since a different artist arguably implies a different work, Menard’s *Quixote* would have been a rewriting of a work other than Cervantes’s *Quixote*.

²¹⁵ Wiggins, David: *Sameness and Substance*. Oxford: Blackwell 1980, p. 126.

²¹⁶ Davies: *Art as Performance*, p. 114.

Against Davies, it should be said that other contextualists could make use of the notion of an “adequate characterization”, too. Why should Levinson not be able to postulate that whatever aspects of the musico-historical context of an indicated type are essential is a matter of an adequate characterization of the type? Davies appeals to our intuition about

“Could this have been done under those circumstances?,” where “this” refers to a generative performance rather than the product of such a performance.²¹⁷

But the same question could be reformulated with “this” referring to the product. “Could this musical work exist under those circumstances?” would equally rely on our intuitions about what the essential properties of a work are, without assuming that the work is a performance.

Davies’s suggestion is not problematic because of the underlying claim that artworks are performances, but because of the sponginess of the notion of an “adequate description”. What is that supposed to be? What are the criteria that make a description adequate in contrast to a description that is not precise or correct enough? What if different people offer different descriptions? There might be incompatibilities or at least different emphasises between descriptions of whether “this could have been done” under non-actual circumstances. Who is to say which one is the preferable description?

There is one weakness that my theory shares with Davies’s, namely that in a given case – empirically speaking maybe even quite a few – we might not be able know what exactly the essential properties of a work are, i.e. for instance we know that it is essential to the work who created it, but we might not know who that was.

If Jane discovers a painting in her attic and does not know who painted it and under which circumstances, she cannot name all the essential contextual

²¹⁷ Davies: *Art as Performance*, p. 117.

properties of the work. Accordingly, she also cannot fully understand the work. However, this inability to point out the essential properties is only due to her lack of knowledge. If she did know enough, she could name the essential properties.

There just are cases where we cannot fully understand the meaning of a work and where we cannot say what its essential properties are because we do not know about the context of the work's creation. This epistemic problem is unavoidable due to a lack of omniscience. But we could understand the work – if we possessed the relevant information. And the framework of essentiality developed here would then allow us to say what its essential contextual properties consist in.

I said that the modal issue is relevant to ontology because it might have turned out that no plausible candidate for an essential contextual property can be found. And if a work could exist in any context without its identity being affected by that, contextualism would seriously lose ground. But I have argued that the meaning-fixing context is essential to a work – or at least could only have been different as far as the same effects on the work were provided. So there is a way to face the modal challenge and reconcile it with contextualism. In addition to that, this account of essentiality fills in the gaps that remained in the theory of the identity of works.

CHAPTER IV

SINGULAR ARTWORKS

1. Coming Back to the Physical Objects Hypothesis

So far I have postponed discussion of the ontological status of singular artworks and have with Wollheim – as a working hypothesis – just assumed that they are not abstract objects like multiple artworks, but physical objects. It is now time to examine if there are good arguments for this assumption and if it can be defended against various objections.

I will first take a look at some arguments supporting the claim that singular artworks are physical objects and then see if arguments against the claim prove to be convincing. For the time being, by “singular artworks” I will just refer to paradigm cases of this category, namely painting and carved sculpture. The reason for this is that there are some art forms where it is not immediately clear if they are singular or multiple. The status of works like printmaking, architecture, action art, and others, will be discussed later, once my theory of singularity/multiplicity has been explained.

I will argue against the claim that all works are multiple and will in the course of that also take a closer look at the phenomenon of forgery and at methodological arguments for a one-category ontology. After that, I will present my account of why not all artworks are multiple and what decides whether a work is singular or multiple.

In the final section of the chapter, I will clarify what exactly it means to say that singular artworks are physical objects: are they identical with the physical matter they are made of, or rather constituted by it? The chapter will close with a section on this problem and on how an artwork as a physical object can survive the loss or change of some of its parts, for example through restoration.

2. Are There Singular Artworks?

This is the first question to consider, and it will take some time to finally be answered: what defines a singular artwork? The most obvious characteristic is that it is singular, i.e. it exists in only one instance. There is only one *Mona Lisa*, and there cannot be multiple instances of the *Mona Lisa*, whereas there can be multiple instances of *Ulysses*. But a little more precision is advisable. The criterion to decide whether a given work is singular cannot be if there *actually* is just one instance of the work.²¹⁸ There might be a multiple artwork, say the novel *x*, of which there is only one instance – the manuscript. But this does not make *x* a singular artwork, because there could be many copies of *x*, and they would all be instances of *x* if they fulfilled the necessary identity criteria.

A copy of the *Mona Lisa*, on the other hand, would not – as I shall define “singular artworks” – be an instance of the painting, but just that: a copy of the *Mona Lisa*. So a singular artwork can only exist in one exemplar, and it is impossible that there is more than one. As Reicher puts it:

If, for example, a painting is singular, the following must hold: even if there is a second painting that is indistinguishable from the first one by any

²¹⁸ Cf. Davies: “Ontology of Art”, p. 158.

perceptible property, we are still not faced with two exemplars of one and the same work, but with either *two works* or with one work and a *copy* of that work, whereas the copy does not count as an exemplar.²¹⁹

So there can only be copies, reproductions, posters, forgeries, facsimiles, or pictures of the *Mona Lisa*, but not an exemplar of the *Mona Lisa* other than the original. Talking of one exemplar or instance of the *Mona Lisa* might even be slightly misleading, as it is not supposed to suggest that there is some abstract entity *Mona Lisa* of which Leonardo's painting is the one and only possible instance. The claim is rather that in the case of singular artworks, there is no type the painting would be a token of at all, but only the original physical object. The original *is* the work.

The view that paintings and sculptures are singular artworks that are to be identified with physical objects is held by many ontologists of art, including Wollheim, Levinson, and Wolterstorff. However, the view is not unchallenged, and some people think that what would normally be considered as singular artworks can – at least in principle – exist in several instances, too. In other words: there are no singular artworks at all. And if there could be several instances of the *Mona Lisa*, this not only means that the *Mona Lisa* is not a singular work of art, but also that it is not a physical object, but rather an abstract object like a literary or musical work.²²⁰ This view is defended by, amongst others, Currie, Reicher, and Strawson.²²¹

²¹⁹ Reicher: *Metaphysik der Kunst*, p. 30 f.

²²⁰ One might draw other conclusions from the assumption that paintings are not singular – e.g. that the work is the aggregate of the exemplars and therefore not an abstract object – but this is nevertheless the conclusion that all the philosophers whose arguments I am going to discuss draw.

²²¹ As Currie remarks, structuralists are likely to endorse the view that all works are multiple: “If appearance [i.e., structure] counts for everything, then the copy of *Guernica*, as long as it looks right, ought to be as much an instance of the work as my correctly spelt copy of *Emma* is an instance of that work.” *Ontology of Art*, p. 28. For Strawson's defense of the claim that all works are multiple, see his: “Aesthetic Appraisal and Works of Art”. In his: *Freedom and Resentment and Other Essays*. London 1974, pp. 179-188.

But let us first look at some reasons why one might want to insist that some artworks are concrete particulars. To begin with, that this is how we deal with and think about paintings and sculptures. The assumption that, say, paintings are singular artworks, is implied in our social practices concerning paintings. We put the originals in museums and not copies of them. We buy and sell originals at considerable prices, and we also insure them. At the same time, if somebody destroys the *Mona Lisa*, we think that the *Mona Lisa* – the work – is destroyed, whereas we do not worry about the work *Ulysses* if someone destroys a copy of it or even the original manuscript. In the case of multiple artworks, the work remains undamaged if instances of it suffer damages, but we think that by ruining a painting, the work itself is ruined.²²² We also assume that the *Mona Lisa* can be stolen, whereas *Ulysses* itself cannot be stolen. One can steal a copy of a novel or a CD recording of a symphony, but not the work.

We value originals and seem to value and appreciate the fact that this very object before us is the object that the artist has produced. His hands have touched, formed, and shaped it, which is not true of a copy of it. “Standing before the *Mona Lisa*, we are aware that this, and this alone, is the object that was formed by the master’s hand. This knowledge, together with the content and aesthetic qualities of the work, makes up the whole experience that we get from such a work.”²²³

The sociology of our dealings with artworks doubtlessly suggests that there are singular artworks and that they are physical objects. However, one might

²²² Just as a sidenote: asked about his motivations, the “art destroyer” Hans-Joachim Bohlmann, who damaged several eminent paintings by the means of acid and knife cuts, said: “The bigger the damage, the more important I took myself. Everything else you can replace, but the paintings even the old masters would not manage to do again.” Lakotta, Beate: “Ich bin mein eigener Sklave”, *Der Spiegel* 40/2005, pp. 170-175:172f.

²²³ Hanfling: “Ontology of Art”, p. 97.

question whether we may draw ontological inferences from sociological contingencies. After all, our appreciation and high esteem of originals might be nothing more than a fetish. It is perfectly conceivable that there is a world where painting is treated as a multiple art form. Like novels, paintings exist in many copies there, and originals are treated merely like we treat the original of a manuscript or score. Like the manuscript, the original just serves as a means to bring the corresponding type into existence. Originals are not displayed in museums, and only a few specialists are interested in them. Or one might imagine the reverse example, where novels are treated as singular artworks, as Goodman writes:

In a typical Martian library there are no tables, desks, or cubicles, and seldom any chairs except for the guards. There are no open shelves, and no books circulate. In each reading room, certain of the most important books are set out on separate pedestals, against the wall and behind a rail that keeps readers about four feet away, pages being turned by remote control. Frequently, groups of children are led through the room while a docent lectures about the books.²²⁴

But is the singular / multiple distinction indeed just a matter of social practice? I will come back to this question soon in Chapter 4.5. For now, it should just be stated that our social practices alone might not grant sufficient reasons for accepting the distinction, but at the same time, the example of the Martian Library does not force us to abandon it. Our social practices might be misleading in the sense that there are no singular artworks and we merely act as if paintings, sculptures, and so on were singular. But equally, the Martian's social practices might be misleading, and novels are multiple, despite the fact that the Martians treat them as singular artworks.

²²⁴ Goodman, Nelson: *Of Mind and other Matters*. Cambridge / MA and London 1984, p. 176.

But first I would like to see if there are good further arguments for maintaining that there are singular artworks, and which make no reference to sociological facts. Goodman offers three main arguments for why there cannot be multiple instances of autographic arts. “Autographic” is not the same as “multiple”, so these categories cannot be used interchangeably. But nevertheless, it is worth a look whether Goodman’s arguments can be applied to the singular/multiple distinction as well. He says that there can only be one instance of an autographic artwork because a) the copy of an original does not offer the same aesthetic experience as the original, b) that there is no notation for autographic artworks, and c) that originals and their copies / forgeries differ in their histories of production.

I have already mentioned Goodman’s claim that the aesthetic experience of a painting and that of a copy of it differ in Chapter 1.3.1. He insists that even if one cannot see a difference between a painting and a copy of it, one might, first, still be able to see one in the future; and second, the knowledge alone that this is an original and this a copy makes an aesthetic difference. I would like to suspend judgement about this claim, because I do not have a theory about aesthetic experience, and there is not enough space here to develop and defend one. But what about Goodman’s other arguments?

Maybe singular artworks cannot be multiply realised because they lack a *notation* that would allow for multiple instances? The point of a notation, as I said before, is twofold: it gives instructions as to how to instantiate a work, and it allows us to identify a work. Goodman thinks that compliance with the notation is a sufficient criterion for identifying, say, an inscription of a poem as x. I have argued that the work’s history of production has to be taken into account as well, but for now this disagreement with Goodman does not matter.

His point is that because there is no notation for autographic arts, not only do we not have instructions for how instances of a work have to be constituted to be instances of it, but we also cannot determine whether this is an instance of x by means of a set of symbols.

In painting [...] with no such alphabet of characters, none of the pictorial properties – none of the properties the picture has as such – is distinguished as constitutive; no such feature can be dismissed as contingent, and no such deviation as insignificant. The only way of ascertaining that the *Lucretia* before us is genuine is thus to establish the historical fact that it is the actual object made by Rembrandt.²²⁵

Take a musical work. Its notation prescribes how a performance of it has to be constituted in order to count as a performance of the work, namely by a certain sequence of notes. As I have said, the work is underdetermined to a certain degree. It is, for instance, irrelevant who performs the work, where, or wearing which shoes. But the thing that is not irrelevant is the sequence of notes. The notation gives a precise instruction as to how the performance has to be – this sequence of notes has to be played – and leaves inessential features the performance might have open. Such a notation does not exist for painting, the argument goes. There is no language – a notation is a language – to define how an instance of the *Mona Lisa* would have to be constituted to be an instance of the *Mona Lisa*.

This claim seems to be in agreement with what I have said about the identity conditions between types and tokens. I have said that:

X is a realisation of y if and only if x complies with the notation of y, and if x historically descends from y as determined by its history of production.

But if there is no notation, there also cannot be exemplification, it seems. The definition cannot be applied to paintings. For a painting to be an instance of the

²²⁵ Goodman: *Languages of Art*, p. 116.

Mona Lisa, it would have to comply with the notation of the *Mona Lisa* – but there is no notation of the *Mona Lisa*.

Wolterstorff says the same thing:

[T]he painter, in creating his painting, does not select a set of properties as criteria for correctness of occurrence. Accordingly, he does not uniquely determine some norm-kind. No requirements for something's being a correct object of something are selected in creating *The Odalisque*. If there were, we could determine whether *The Odalisque* is a correct or incorrect object of the composed art work, just as we can determine whether the author's manuscript copy of his poem is or is not a correct copy. In fact, nothing of the sort can be done for *The Odalisque*.²²⁶

But could *sketches* not serve as notations for paintings? Could not a sketch – probably together with instructions concerning colours – play the same role a score does for a musical work? Goodman denies this. “The sketch, unlike the score, is not in a language or notation at all, but in a system without either syntactic or semantic differentiation.”²²⁷ Without going into the technical details of Goodman's theory of notations, this means that a sketch is not precise enough. The rules of a notational system have to fulfil certain standards of exactness. The notation of a work has to exactly determine the properties instances of the work have to have. But a sketch does not do that.²²⁸ Think of a sketch of the *Mona Lisa*. In order to count as a valid notation for the *Mona Lisa*, the sketch would have to guarantee that, if we comply with it, the result looks – at least very closely, I assume²²⁹ – like the *Mona Lisa*. Is that conceivable? I agree with Goodman: “[A] sketch does not determine a class of objects that are the equal and only instances of a work of painting. Unlike the score, the sketch

²²⁶ Wolterstorff: *Works and Worlds*, p. 72.

²²⁷ Goodman: *Languages of Art*, p. 192.

²²⁸ Neither does a description in a natural language like: “The upper left corner is red, there is a blue dot in the middle...”

²²⁹ This would be another problem if paintings were multiple: could their instances diverge from the original? Would a sketch be able to prescribe an allowable degree of divergence?

does not define a work, [...] but rather *is* one.”²³⁰ For any sketch, one can imagine very different paintings emerging, so a sketch of the *Mona Lisa* would not guarantee that a painting produced using the sketch would look like the *Mona Lisa*. Wolterstorff is equally dismissive:

If, instead of applying paint to canvas, the artist would draw up a set of specifications for paintings, then he would compose a norm-kind. He might also, if he wished, paint a painting in accord with the specifications. But that would be quite incidental. In fact, this phenomenon already exists in the field of painting. One finds it in ‘paint by number’ sets for children.²³¹

Furthermore, a notation not only serves as a means to instantiate a work, but also to identify a work²³². Goodman’s claim is, as Levinson puts it, “that the root of allographicity is notational identifiability, that the notions are in effect coextensive.”²³³ So if I hear a musical work, I can – at least in principle – work out its notation and through the notation find out which work I have heard. This is not possible for paintings and sketches. I can trace back any musical or literary work to its notation by listening to it and finding out which notes are played, or reading it and identifying the sequence of words. If I have an instance of an allographic work, I can figure out what its notation is. But there is no analogous process of inferring from a painting to the sketch. A painting does not tell us what its sketch must have looked like. When I have an instance of a poem, it is clear what its notation is, and there can also only be one

²³⁰ Goodman: *Languages of Art*, p. 193. Goodman is right, we often consider sketches as artworks, and they are exhibited in museums. The original score of a work, on the other hand, is not considered as an artwork, and if it is exhibited at all, then rather for reasons of historical curiosity.

²³¹ Wolterstorff: *Works and Worlds*, p. 73.

²³² At least for Goodman all we need in order to identify an allographic artwork is the notation. According to contextualism, the notation would not be sufficient, but still necessary. For the argument at hand here, it does not make a difference.

²³³ Levinson: “Autographic and Allographic Art Revisited”. In his: *Music, Art, & Metaphysics*, pp. 89-106:95.

notation of the poem.²³⁴ But there could be many ways in which the sketch for the *Mona Lisa* might have been. The painting does not tell us. One is only able to say that the sketch of a painting *might* look a certain way – as one of many possibilities – but not that it *must* be this way, whereas in the case of the poem, the notation must be this sequence of words.

Schmücker is unimpressed by these arguments. He holds that a painting can be instantiated multiple times despite the lack of a notation. In fact, he takes forgeries, copies, and reproductions of paintings as instances of the paintings and so thinks that paintings are multiple artworks. According to Schmücker, a notation is hereby not necessary.

We cannot determine whether something is a reproduction of a certain artwork without supposing that the work is constituted by certain properties that are in principle reproducible.²³⁵

Otherwise, we would not be able to identify a copy of a given painting as a copy of that painting. Schmücker is of course right that we generally have no problems deciding whether something is a copy of the *Mona Lisa* or of *Le Temps Menaçant*. We simply, without much effort, recognise a poster of the *Mona Lisa* as a poster of the *Mona Lisa*. And that is because of the properties that are reproducible of which Schmücker talks. So what are these properties? The answer is obvious: how the painting looks. Because we know how the *Mona Lisa* looks, we can recognise a copy of it as a copy of Leonardo's painting. But is this reason enough to say that a copy of the *Mona Lisa* is an instance of it? I do not think so.

²³⁴ The instance of the poem might diverge from the notation slightly, e.g. through a misprint, so we can make a mistake here in deducing what the notation is. So let us for the sake of the argument say that we are faced with an instance of the poem that perfectly complies with the notation.

²³⁵ Schmücker: *Was ist Kunst?*, p. 195.

If paintings were types of which there can be tokens, one would need to spell out identity conditions between painting-types and -tokens. We apparently cannot use the notion of a notation for this end, because there is no notation for paintings. So Schmücker's identity condition for paintings seems to be: x is an exemplar of y iff x looks like y.

But "looks like" is not a good identity criterion! "Looks like" is as slippery as the notorious notion of similarity. Surely a (good enough) copy of the *Mona Lisa* looks like the *Mona Lisa*, but the *Mona Lisa* also looks like *Le Temps menaçant* to a certain degree, because both objects are square, framed canvases with paint on them. There are also objects that very much look like each other without being cases of instantiation. Tom might look like his twin brother Jerry, but he is not an instance of Jerry. Also, think of readymades. If Schmücker were right, then all ordinary snowshovels would be instances of *In Advance of the Broken Arm*.

Schmücker's suggested identity criterion is false. Nevertheless, he believes that copies, photographic reproductions, and even forgeries of a painting count as instances of the work. He bases this view on two arguments, the first of which is that "with many works of visual art we are only acquainted because of the existence of copies, moulds or replicas."²³⁶

While it is true that we are acquainted with some works only through copies, while the original does not exist anymore, this does by no means show that those copies are instances of the work. The one thing just does not follow from the other. Schmücker claims that the work still exists in this case, even though

²³⁶ Schmücker: *Was ist Kunst?*, p. 195.

the original was destroyed.²³⁷ And if the work can survive the destruction of the original, it cannot be identical with it.

So there was once a painting x, which was destroyed at some point. But a copy of x survived, so we know that there once existed an x and what it looked like. But why is that supposed to mean that x still exists? Let us say that my grandfather died before I was born. I am acquainted with the fact that he existed and what he looked like because I have seen photographs of him. But still my grandfather does not exist anymore.

Schmücker fails to explain why we should regard a copy as an instance, and his claim that acquaintance with an object implies its existence is unconvincing. Equally unconvincing is his second argument against the singular status of paintings. He says that if one assumes that a work of visual art is identical with its original,

one has to regard every duplicate of the original as an artefact distinct from the original, because there cannot be a further exemplar of the work apart from the original. [...]

Even the perfect forgery of Caspar David Friedrich's *Mondaufgang am Meer* is an exemplar of this work, for we do not regard it as the (original) exemplar of a different artefact.

Talking of a “distinct artefact” might be a slightly unfortunate use of terminology here, because of course the original and the duplicate are two distinct artefacts – they are two distinct concrete particulars. But it is clear what Schmücker means: if one is not willing to accept that the duplicate is a token of the work, then it must be a distinct work. But what is supposed to be the problem with this result? Why not simply say that a forgery of a work is not an exemplar of the work, but a forgery of it – and in this sense indeed the original exemplar of a different artefact? I do not see why it should be problematic to

²³⁷ Schmücker: *Was ist Kunst?*, p. 196.

maintain that, for example, a poster of the *Mona Lisa* is not an instance of the work, but a poster of it, and there is a difference between a poster and an instance of the work. The poster is a representation of the work, but it does not realise it, like a poster of the caffeine molecule is not an instance of the caffeine molecule. This might be even more obvious in the case of a photograph of the *Mona Lisa*. Forgeries, posters, and photos are things that *look like* the work without being realisations of the work.

Schmücker's conviction that paintings can have multiple instances goes back to Strawson. But whereas Schmücker thinks that there *are* some singular arts – though painting is not one of them – like improvised music, fluxus, and land art, Strawson is opposed to the idea that only certain artworks should be types, whereas others are physical objects. He thinks that all kinds of artworks are multiply realisable.

One is tempted, presumably, to make the distinction in this form [between singular and multiple artworks] by the merely contingent fact that we are, for all practical purposes, quite unable to make reproductions of pictures and statues which are completely indistinguishable, by direct sensory inspection, from the originals. If this practical limitation did not exist, then the originals of paintings and works of sculpture, like the original manuscripts of poems, would not have any but a sentimental value, and, perhaps a technical-historical interest as well; we should be able to speak of the same painting being seen by different people in different places at one time. [...] [T]here is no reason for regarding the members of some classes of works of art as essentially particulars, rather than types. All works of art, certainly, are individuals; but all are equally types and not particulars.²³⁸

So if we had a Supercopy Machine that is able to produce 1:1, molecule-by-molecule, *Star Trek* technology-style copies of paintings, then paintings could be instantiated multiple times. It is only due to technical limitations that we cannot do this at the moment.

²³⁸ Strawson: "Aesthetic Appraisal and Works of Art", pp. 183f.

Maybe this is a way to resurrect Schmücker's claim that copies of paintings are instances of paintings? Should he just have made his putative identity criterion for paintings clearer and less slippery by referring to a Supercopy Machine that is able to produce a perfect reproduction of a painting's "visual pattern"²³⁹ with no differences whatsoever in how the painting and the copy look? So maybe there could be a notation for paintings, if we had the required technology. An atom-by-atom description of a painting would be a perfectly fine notation. Thus: in contrast to what has been suggested so far, painting is not necessarily non-notational! So far the underlying assumption was that there is no notation for painting. But this seems false – at least there *could* be a notation for painting. A sufficiently precise description of the paintings visual properties would be notation that would allow for multiple instances of the work. In the case of some paintings, producing a notation for them should not even require sophisticated technical means like the Supercopy Machine. Think of a – structurally – rather simple Mondrian painting. Surely one could give a precise enough description of the painting: the positions of the lines, their thickness, length, colours, etc. could be specified and used as instructions as to how to realise the work. This would not be possible for a structurally more complex painting like the *Mona Lisa*, but the point is merely that the claim that there is generally no notation for painting cannot be sustained. So if painting is a singular art, then it is not because there is no notation!

Does that mean that painting is or could be multiple? That is not immediately clear despite the possibility of a notation for painting.

²³⁹ Currie: *Ontology of Art*, p. 78.

It would be a weak objection to say that the original painting and the supercopy still differ in their contextual properties – which is Goodman’s third argument – since their production processes are different. The original, which would be the first instance of the corresponding painting-type, would differ in its history of production from that of a supercopy. But a performance of Beethoven’s Ninth also differs in its history of production from that of the work itself and those of other performances of the work. We must distinguish two cases here: if composer A composes symphony B, and composer C composes symphony D, we can say on contextualist grounds that B and D are distinct works because of their different histories of production. But if conductor E wants to perform B, it does not matter that the performance of B will have different contextual properties than B. The performance is not yet another work. The conductor does not want to create a new work of art, but wants to instantiate B. The performance just has to comply with the notation of B and has to be intended to be a performance of this very work. Likewise, if Tom wants to instantiate the *Guernica* with the Supercopy Machine, the fact that the supercopy has a different history of production than the original does not mean that it is not an instance of it

Trying to use Goodman’s arguments in order to support the claim that there are singular artworks has not proven to be very helpful. Particularly unclear remains the role of notation. Obviously it is not the case that there cannot be a notation for paintings. But what is the relation between notationality and multiplicity anyway? Is notationality a sufficient condition for an artwork being multiple? That does not seem to be true. Speaking against it is not only Goodman’s example of the Martian library, but also the fact that there could be

a notation for at least some paintings (e.g. the Mondrians), but paintings apparently are singular – at least they are regarded and treated as singular. Plus the existence of a notation might not even be necessary for a multiple artwork. Works of printmaking might be multiple, but no notation is employed to produce them. This is no problem for my definition of work identity, though. Even if this means that not all multiple artworks are notational, there is still something in these cases that plays the same role as a notation, i.e. in printmaking a plate, or in photography a negative. The plate and the negative determine the (visual) structure of the realisations – only in contrast to a notation not in a language, but by technical means.

But it is not obvious whether printmaking is singular or multiple, anyway. Take a lithographic work x . There are ten prints of x . If printmaking is multiple, then there is one work x of which there are ten realisations.

But it is also possible to think about printmaking this way: there is in fact not a single work x that is realised multiple times. Instead, each print is an individual artwork. Even though we usually speak of x as if it was one work, there are in fact ten artworks x_1, x_2, \dots, x_{10} . Common language use is misleading here. The prints are all distinct, even though admittedly very similar, works of art.

I will suggest regarding printmaking as a special case of multiple artworks in 4.5. The point at the moment is simply that it is plausible to assume that printmaking is multiple. In that case, notationality is neither necessary nor sufficient for multiplicity.

Arguing that painting is singular because there is no notation for painting did not work. Neither did arguing that a painting and a copy of it would have different histories of production.

2. Forgeries

For Goodman, the distinction between autographic and allographic artworks is based on the possibility of forgery. Autographic arts can be forged, whereas allographic arts cannot – or rather, autographic arts are autographic *because* they can be forged. Let us recall Goodman’s definition of forgery:

A forgery of a work of art is an object falsely purporting to have the history of production requisite for the (or an) original of the work.²⁴⁰

The definition is convincing and, to my knowledge, accepted as uncontroversial. What makes a forgery of the *Guernica* a forgery is that it allegedly has a history of production that it does not have: to have been painted by Picasso in 1937, and so on.²⁴¹ Since autographic arts for Goodman are identified by their histories of production, they can be forged. But allographic arts cannot be forged, because the history of production is irrelevant to an allographic work’s identity, Goodman claims. Anything that corresponds with the notation of an allographic artwork is an instance of it, and not a forgery. If I want to “forge” *Ulysses* by producing a book that contains the word-sequence of *Ulysses*, I have produced an instance of *Ulysses* and not a forgery.

Reicher raises an objection against the claim that only autographic arts can be forged. She accepts Goodman’s definition, but turns it against him by saying: “But it follows from this that, in principle, everything is forgable of which one can tell a history of production.”²⁴² And I can tell a history of production not only about paintings. I can say that this painting has a certain history of

²⁴⁰ Goodman: *Languages of Art*, p. 122.

²⁴¹ And a forger does not intend his work to be an instance of a given painting, but pretends that it is the painting.

²⁴² Reicher: *Metaphysik der Kunst*, p.35. The *can* is important here, because Reicher is a structuralist, as I have said. She is not claiming here that the history of production is relevant to any work of art – which would be a contradiction to the views she later defends in her book – but only that one can “tell a ‘story’” (ibid.) about musical and literary works as well as about paintings.

production, but I can of course also say that composition x has a certain history of production.

But can musical and literary works really be forged? Several cases have to be distinguished. The following examples are certainly possible: a) I can forge a manuscript or score and claim that it was written by Joyce or Wagner; b) I can announce that tonight's performance will star Pavarotti, when it is in fact not him but someone pretending to be him; or c) I can pretend that tonight, the musicians will perform *Tristan und Isolde*, when in fact they are not playing, but it is only playback. One might call these cases forgeries, but they are – as Goodman observes²⁴³ – not forgeries of works. They are all deceptions, but what the audience is deceived about is not the work in question, but a) an object which is not the work, b) a person performing a work, and c) how the work is realised. So these cases do not show that allographic artworks can be forged.

I just said that these cases might be called forgeries. We should, however, be clearer in our use of “forgery”. First, it is important to distinguish between two types of forgeries, as Levinson has worked out:

We can call the first type *referential* forgery and the second type *inventive* forgery. Something is a referential forgery if it falsely purports to be the or an original of a particular *actually existing* work of art. [...] Something is an inventive forgery if it falsely purports to be the or an original of a work that *does not exist*, and whose ascribed artist may not exist either.²⁴⁴

The distinction is important because there can be inventive, but not referential forgeries of musical or literary works. Insofar as referential forgeries are

²⁴³ Goodman: *Languages of Art*, p. 113. Also p. 118: “[T]here are forgeries of performances as there are of manuscripts and editions. What makes a performance an instance of a given work is not the same as what makes a performance a premiere, or played by a certain musician or upon a Stradivarius violin. Whether a performance has these latter properties is a matter of historical fact; and a performance falsely purporting to have any such property counts as forgery, not of the musical composition but of a given performance or class of performances.”

²⁴⁴ Levinson, Jerrold: “Autographic and Allographic” p. 103.

concerned, Goodman is right that there cannot be any of allographic artworks.²⁴⁵

There can be inventive forgeries within singular as well as multiple arts. Tom can paint a painting and purport a false history of production of it, for instance that is a hitherto unknown painting by Picasso. Tom can also inventively forge a novel. He can come up with a text entitled *Ulysses II* and claim that he has found this lost work of Joyce in his attic. Tom purports that Joyce has written the text, when in fact he himself has.

And of course Tom can referentially forge a painting. He can create a painting of the same size and look as *Guernica* and claim that it is the original. He purports that this painting has the history of production actually applying to the original. But what Tom cannot do is referentially forge a literary or musical work.

What Tom could do is take a random text and claim that it is an instance of *Ulysses*. Let us say that he takes the text of *American Psycho*, binds it, and on the cover it says *James Joyce, Ulysses*. But would it be appropriate to call this a forgery? I would hold that this case completely misses the concept of forgery. There is a feature of forgeries that is not included in Goodman's definition; probably because it is too obvious. A referential forgery also has to resemble the original it refers to – and as closely as possible, if it is supposed to be a good one. The point of a forgery is that it could be taken to be the original. A qualification about the “could”: surely somebody completely ignorant of both *Ulysses* and *American Psycho* could be deceived into believing that *American Psycho* is *Ulysses*. But one does not even remotely have to be an expert in

²⁴⁵ Reicher (*Metaphysik der Kunst*, p. 41) correctly points out that there is an ambiguity in *Languages of Art*. It seems as if Goodman means referential forgeries when he is talking about forgeries, but he also explicitly calls the van Meergeren-Vermeers forgeries.

literature to see that what Tom is selling as *Ulysses* is *American Psycho*. Tom's "forgery" has no chance of success before a sufficiently competent audience. A good forgery of the *Guernica*, on the other hand, might deceive even the most distinguished expert. The *Ulysses II* forgery could also stand the test of experts, but what is not going to happen is that *American Psycho* is taken to be *Ulysses*. This is as doomed to fail as Tom presenting the *Guernica* and claiming that it is the *Mona Lisa*. So in this sense, Goodman's definition is too broad. If anything is a forgery that purports to have a false history of production, I can also purport that this telephone is a chair. So things would count as a forgery that we would not call forgeries.²⁴⁶ As Christopher Janaway describes the impossibility of forging poems:

[E]ither you fail to produce something corresponding exactly in terms of the notation, in which case you do not have a proper candidate for successful forgery, or you do produce something corresponding exactly in the notation, in which case you have satisfied the requirements for the object's being an instance of Larkin's 'Days' or whatever, and there is no slack in between.²⁴⁷

I suggest revising the original definition of forgery by saying that a referential forgery is a *copy* of an original falsely purporting to have the history of production requisite for the original. "Copy" implies that the forgery sufficiently resembles the original so it stands a realistic chance of being taken to be the original. To avoid talk of resemblance: a copy is – in the ideal case – a 1:1 reproduction of a painting's pictorial properties.

So what if Tom produces a book purporting to be an instance of *Ulysses* that sufficiently resembles the original? What if it resembles the original to such a high degree that it word-for-word corresponds with the word-sequence of

²⁴⁶ What Tom can do is take the text of *Ulysses* and claim that it is his own work. However, this is also not a forgery, but plagiarism.

²⁴⁷ Janaway, Christopher: "Two Kinds of Artistic Duplication". In: *BJA* 37 (1997), pp. 1-14:7.

Ulysses? – One might regard this book in two ways, but neither of them says that it is a forgery of *Ulysses*.

The first would be to say that Tom's book is something like the Menard-case. And Menard's *Quixote* is not a forgery of Cervantes's! Tom's "*Ulysses*" is a work distinct from Joyce's *Ulysses* because of the different contextual properties of the works.

Or one could agree with Goodman and state that what Tom has produced is simply an instance of *Ulysses*. Compliance with the work's notation is a sufficient condition for work identity for Goodman, so Tom has instantiated *Ulysses* by trying to forge it. This is precisely why Goodman thinks that there can be no forgeries of allographic artworks.²⁴⁸

I think that interpreting the situation as a Menard-case is not appropriate. Though I do not agree with Goodman that structural congruence is a sufficient condition of work identity, I nevertheless claim that Tom has produced an instance of *Ulysses* and not a work of his own like Menard. I said that besides complying with the type's notation, an instance of a type has to historically descend from the type and/or be intended to be an instance of it. And that is exactly the case with Tom's book. Tom wants to forge *Ulysses*, so he wants this book he produced to be taken as *Ulysses* – which establishes the required link for work identity between type and token. He intends the book to be *Ulysses*, and it is historically descended from *Ulysses*. The Menard case is different: despite the closeness of his work with Cervantez's, Menard does not want to merely realise Cervantez's *Quixote*, but wants to create a new work.

²⁴⁸ Reicher makes an interesting point against Goodman: "For Goodman, artworks are always 'classes of individuals'. Works of painting are 'one-member classes'. I understand 'classes' as something non-physical, and thus a class (in this sense) cannot be forged. So all works are allographic. But [...] it seems that Goodman rather means *aggregates* when he talks of classes. Aggregates, however, are physical objects and thus can be copied, so that all works would be allographic, which cannot be for Goodman's purpose." *Metaphysik der Kunst*, p. 43.

There is a possible counter-example to the claim that multiple artworks cannot be referentially forged. Aren't there things like forgeries of Rolex watches, Nike shoes or Ray Ban sunglasses? Obviously there are, because you can buy objects purporting to be Rolexes, when in fact they are only imitations. But would that not mean that an abstract object can be forged? After all, there apparently is a type "the Rolex watch" (or perhaps rather a specific Rolex model) of which you can buy a forged instance. There is a notation for Rolex watches, it might be presumed, namely a set of written and drawn instructions about how to produce one. The Rolex forgery might also look very much like the original, so it fulfils the criterion of sufficient similarity to the original. If it is well enough done, it might pass as the real thing. So we seem to be justified in speaking of a referential forgery of a type here.

Nevertheless, I do not think that this is a threatening objection to my claims, because there are two ways of replying to it that should both make it clear that forging a Rolex and forging a symphony are not the same thing. In fact, the case is analogous to printmaking and how printmaking can be understood to be a singular or multiple art form.

One reply – the one I prefer – would be to say that the identity conditions between type and token are different concerning musical works and concerning Rolex watches. The difference is that in one case it matters *who* produces the instance, whereas in the other, it does not. For something to be a Rolex watch, it has to be manufactured by Rolex. If Swatch produce a watch that looks like a Rolex watch, it is still not a Rolex watch. Part of the definition of a Rolex watch is that Rolex produced it or through a legal contract commissioned someone to produce it. They have a copyright on it, and a Rolex watch is a

Rolex watch – amongst other factors – due to Rolex having manufactured it. In the case of a musical work, it does not matter who performs it. It does not matter whether it is Tom’s, Jerry’s, or Herbert von Karajan’s orchestra that is playing Beethoven’s Ninth – all the performances are instances of the work. This is why a “forgery” of Beethoven’s Ninth is just an instance of the work.

So I can forge a Rolex watch because I can claim that it was produced by Rolex, but I cannot do something analogous to forge Beethoven’s Ninth, because there are no constraints on who can produce an instance. Also think of banknotes. Not anyone can instantiate a £10 note. Only a printer commissioned by the British state to do so can instantiate the type “£10 note”. But one does not need any legal permission to perform a musical work, which one could then pretend to have.

What I can do is, as we said, claim that this performance is conducted by Karajan, when in fact it is not, but that is a forgery of a performance and not of the work. I can also claim that this edition of *Ulysses* is from publisher x or an exemplar of the first edition, but again that is not a forgery of the work.

The second possible reply to the Rolex argument is to say that Rolexes are to be regarded as, so to say, singular watches. Then the claim would be that there is in fact no type-token relation between the Rolex and its instances, but rather that there is a range of singular works of which one can then make a forgery. Say there is a watch model, the Rolex y. To be a y, the watch has to be produced by Rolex, and there are ten ys. They are not ten instances of the type y, but ten singular – though very similar – watches. Likewise, one might think that the ten prints of lithographic work x are also ten singular works. To be an x (to be more precise: to be x_1 , or x_2 , and so on) it matters that it was taken from plate z. The requirement to be printed by the means of one particular plate

might be set in a – maybe a bit stretched – analogy to the requirement that a *y* has to be manufactured in one of Rolex’s factories. According to this interpretation, Rolex watches can be referentially forged because they are singular.

As I have already said and will explain in more detail shortly, I find the first reply – to say that these are types with special identity conditions – more plausible, also regarding works of printmaking. But the second reply certainly does not lack plausibility either. Both can explain why there can be forgeries of Rolex watches, Nike shoes – and works of printmaking.

Here is another argument against the idea that types could be forged, articulated by Reicher. She states that it is almost a trivial matter that multiple artworks cannot be forged, because

Copies (and originals, too) are always physical objects. We do not regard musical and literary works as physical objects. Thus a musical or literary work is never an “original”; and where there is no original, there cannot be copies. For these trivial reasons a literary or musical work cannot be copied. But we commonly call concrete paintings “works”. Concrete paintings are physical objects and can therefore be originals or copies. Because of that, it is easy to accept that works of painting can be copied.²⁴⁹

The consequence is that multiple artworks cannot be forged, because a “forgery” of a musical or literary work would either be an instance of that work or a distinct work like Menard’s *Quixote*, and because, more generally, something non-physical cannot be forged anyway. But if multiple artworks cannot be forged, then paintings and carved sculptures are singular and physical objects! The reason is obvious: there are forgeries of paintings and sculptures. And if there are forgeries of these kinds of artworks, the works

²⁴⁹ Reicher: *Metaphysik der Kunst*, p. 42.

themselves cannot be anything non-physical, but must be physical objects. And if they are not abstract objects, they cannot have multiple instances and are therefore singular artworks.

This leads back to the sociology of our dealings with artworks. I said earlier that our common practice doubtlessly suggests that there are singular artworks, and painting would be a paradigm example. However, the worry was that sociological facts might be not too conclusive. That we treat paintings as singular – and hence there can be forgeries of them – might be a mere matter of decision. Should ontological classifications not be independent of that?

3. Methodological Considerations

Let us briefly consider a general methodological argument that both Currie and Reicher put forward. The question is whether our ontology should consist of one or two categories of artworks: are there singular and multiple artworks, or is there only one kind of artworks, namely multiple artworks?²⁵⁰ Defenders of a one-category ontology of art like to point out an alleged advantage of their theory, which Reicher formulates as: “I take it to be a good methodological principle to generally prefer a uniform theory.”²⁵¹ The claim is that if we have the choice between a one- and a two-category ontology, monism is the better option because it is generally the more attractive approach. But why exactly is that supposed to be the case? I can only assume that the reason for saying that it is better to have a uniform ontology of art instead of one that says that there

²⁵⁰ One could also hold a one-category ontology that only recognizes singular artworks. But nobody does.

²⁵¹ Reicher: *Metaphysik der Kunst*, p. 62. Currie writes: “[I]n these matters I think that our natural inclination is for uniformity.” *Ontology of Art*, p. 85.

are fundamentally two kinds of artworks, is because that makes the theory simpler and more elegant.

Of course it seems simpler to say that all artworks are the same kind of thing – a type, for instance, whereas it sounds like more theoretical luggage to postulate that some artworks are types, whereas others are material objects, and that they behave in different ways. And simplicity and parsimony have a long history of being appreciated in ontology.

It might be of an almost aesthetic appeal, too, to stay monist about artworks. A theory that is able to explain the ontological status of all artworks in terms of one category seems more elegant than one that has to make distinctions among artworks and insists that different things are true of different kinds of works.

However, I have strong doubts that a one-category ontology of art can indeed claim to have these advantages.

First, it is not necessarily simpler. If it requires too large an effort to make monism about artworks plausible, then the theory might be even far more complicated than a two-category ontology. It is not automatically simpler to say that all artworks are multiple. The price for constructing such an ontology might outweigh the advantages of a one-category ontology. Is a two-category ontology that offers plausible and commonsensical explanations not clearly preferable?

For the same reasons, a one-category ontology is not more elegant if it has to make crude assumptions and counterintuitive postulations. Take Schmücker's argument that copies of paintings must be instances of paintings, because there are cases where we are acquainted with the work even though the original does not exist anymore. Instead of making such a claim, is it not better to simply

concede that paintings are physical, whereas certain other artworks are not? Ugly arguments are not elegant.

Surely a one-category ontology of art *could* be preferable on methodological grounds if there was one whose flaws would not spoil its potential advantage. I am not denying that simplicity and elegance are desirable features of a theory. However, a one-category ontology of art that seems preferable for methodological reasons has not been brought forward so far, I would like to claim.

5. Singularity and Multiplicity as Production-Based Categories

So far we have found out some important characteristics of singular artworks. Amongst other things, the singular/multiple-distinction is obviously not as straightforward as it might seem. Painting, for instance, could be a multiple art form if the required technology was available. Furthermore, not every multiple artwork is notational. Photography and printmaking seem to disprove that notationality is a necessary condition for multiplicity. Whether it is a sufficient condition has been called into question by Goodman with his example of the Martian library.

So there is a web of phenomena that have to be distinguished and explained in more detail. There are – or can be – singular artworks; hitherto singular artworks that might as well be multiple, like paintings; multiple artworks that are notational like music or literature; multiple artworks that are not notational like printmaking; and multiple artworks that might as well be singular, like Martian literature. The aim of this section is to clarify how to make sense of

these possibilities by going through several example cases, some of them real and some imaginary. The overall aim of the investigation is to answer the question: what makes an artwork singular or multiple? The view that I will present here is that being singular or multiple is a matter of an artwork's production process. Once this theory has been explained and made plausible, the picture of the singular/multiple distinction will be rounded out.

The overall thesis that I would like to put forward and defend can be summarised with the slogan "production determines category". Whether an artwork is singular or multiple depends on the artist's intentions. They have to be seen in the broader context of prevailing artistic practices and conventions, because an artist is influenced by them, but ultimately it is because of the artists' intentions that the *Mona Lisa* is singular and *Ulysses* multiple. The argument against the claim that there are no singular artworks that is derived from this view is: whoever thinks that the *Mona Lisa* is multiple does not understand the work. It was not Leonardo's intention that this painting should be a multiple work of art.²⁵²

In Chapter 3 I said that the context of its production is relevant to an artwork's identity. I also remarked that a view in the theory of interpretation compatible with this is that in order to be able to fully understand and appreciate an artwork, one has to know about the context of its making. Theories about the role of context in ontology and in interpretation might mutually support each other. If the – very generally speaking – contextualist stance towards ontology and meaning is correct, context might also be relevant concerning which category an artwork belongs to. This is just to point out that what I am saying about artists' intentions determining ontological categories

²⁵² I will explain shortly what it would mean if he *had* intended it to be multiple.

can be seen as part of a larger programme that one might pursue, namely a theory of art that puts heavy emphasis on the importance of context in many respects.

To go back to the example of the *Mona Lisa*: surely it was not Leonardo's intention that his painting should be instantiated multiple times – that thought probably never even occurred to him. He wanted the *Mona Lisa* to be a singular work of art. If (at least certain) intentions of an artist fix the meaning of a work, then part of the meaning of the *Mona Lisa* is that it is supposed to be a singular work of art. So if someone says that the *Mona Lisa* is a multiple work of art, he or she is simply wrong. The *Mona Lisa* was not intended to be multiple, thus it is not multiple.

Reicher briefly hints at this view, though she does not follow the thought any further:

The difference between composers and painters might be that composers think of their work being realised by other persons (that is why they produce notations), whereas painters realise their works themselves and usually do not attach importance to further realisations by others – on the contrary.²⁵³

Composers and writers intend their works to be realised multiple times, to be performed, printed, and read out. The more often his novel is printed and sold, the happier a writer will be. Painters, on the other hand, want their work to be unique and do not want every copy of it to count as an instance.

This is what determines whether a given work is singular or multiple. The artist's intention decides the issue, and in most cases paintings and carved sculptures are intended to be singular, and literature and music are intended to be multiple artworks. As I said, a broader context of prevailing artistic practices and conventions is likely to play a role here. Tom's intention that his

²⁵³ Reicher: *Metaphysik der Kunst*, p. 57.

painting is a singular artwork is influenced by or born out of the fact that paintings are also commonly regarded as being singular, understood as being singular, and treated as being singular. Tom's intention surely cannot be simply separated from artistic traditions, from long established practices and theories. Even if he deliberately declares his painting to be multiple, and any copy of it shall be a realisation of it, this intention might be a reaction towards ways of treating paintings that are too conservative for Tom's taste. However, the point is merely that the artist's intentions are embedded in a wider artistic context.

That the intentions behind the production of a given artwork should determine whether it is singular or multiple is also to say that being singular and being multiple are not natural properties. Though certain art forms standardly count as singular and others as multiple, this is due to artistic traditions that might have been different and might also change in the future. An artwork is a cultural artefact. The answer to the question of whether it is singular or multiple is not to be sought from a physicist or chemist. They could tell us about the nature of rocks and liquids, but artworks are not natural kinds, but cultural kinds, and singularity and multiplicity are properties an artwork possesses merely due to what the artist who created it wanted it to be. The nature of the artwork is up to its designer.

Goodman suspects that "initially, perhaps, all arts are autographic. Where the works are transitory, as in singing and reciting, or require many persons for their production, as in architecture and symphonic music, a notation may be devised in order to transcend the limitation of time and the individual."²⁵⁴ The development of notations as means to realise a work multiple times thus happened because people wanted to preserve and pass on artworks, or several

²⁵⁴ Goodman: *Languages of Art*, p. 121.

people were needed for its realisation. Poetry might initially have been singular, because poets intended their works to be singular – maybe just because that was the way poetry was treated. A poem was recited once, and this singular event constituted the work. Then the desire to recite the same artwork more than once, to spread it and make it available to more people, led to a new intention: that the work should be recited multiple times and not only by the poet, but also by other people. Empirically, this might be wrong, but this is just supposed to be an illustration of the production-based categorisation theory.

The same transition from singular to multiple might happen to painting, I said in the previous chapter – a development promoted, for instance, by the development of the Supercopy Machine. This is not to say that painting could become multiple merely because of the existence of the perfect reproduction techniques the supercopy machine provides. The supercopy machine would be the means to multiplicity, but does not necessitate it. What cannot happen is that painting in general becomes a multiple art form. The possibility of perfect copies does not mean that paintings are no longer singular artworks. This misses the point made earlier. Who claims that the *Mona Lisa* is singular has not understood the work, since it was not the intention of the artist that the painting should be multiple. Even though the supercopy machine would make painting notational, this does not change the fact that painting – at least up to the invention of the supercopy machine – was commonly intended to be singular. A notational art form can still be singular, given the corresponding intentions of the artist. Goodman has made this point with his example of the Martian library. On Mars, there is only one exemplar of each novel, and literature is treated as a singular art form. But have I not also said earlier on that it cannot be decisive for whether a work is singular or multiple how many

exemplars there are? After all, there could be only the manuscript of a novel and no further exemplar, but that would not make the novel a singular artwork. However, it is not the fact that there is only one exemplar of the latest novel by a Martian writer that makes it singular. What makes it singular is that writer's intention. Again, this might have to do with broader cultural practices on Mars. The writer probably intended his novel to be singular because that is just the way literature has been treated on Mars for thousands of years. At the same time, had he intended his novel to be multiple, to be printed as often as possible, to be spread out, and any copy (that fulfils the correct identity conditions) is to count as an instance of his work, it would have been multiple. The Martians might nevertheless only have printed one exemplar and put it in their museum. But in that case they missed the artist's intentions. They did not understand that this is not how the artist wanted his work to be treated. The Martians are wrong in thinking that it is a singular artwork.

There are three possible consequences of the invention of the supercopy machine:

- a) The new, "post supercopy machine", paintings are multiple, and the old "pre supercopy machine" paintings remain singular. The old paintings, given that they were intended to be singular, would remain singular anyway. But it could become common that paintings are intended to be multiple. The originals might still enjoy the special interest of aficionados, just like original manuscripts and scores do. But anything that complies with the notation of painting x and refers to x is a token of that type.

It is perfectly conceivable that it could become the standard intention of painters that their works are multiple. This kind of development might

take some time, but it is possible that just like we now regard paintings as singular, we will regard them as multiple at some point in the future.

- b) It could be that some of the new paintings are multiple, and others are singular. While the old paintings remain singular, future painters do not have uniform intentions as to how their paintings are to be treated. Some of them produce singular artworks, others multiple artworks. Say that Tom is not only a talented painter, but also an obsessive gambler. Furthermore, he is a very unfortunate gambler, and so he is broke. On a weekend in Las Vegas, he desperately wants to gamble and makes the following deal with a local loan-shark: Tom will get \$10 000 from him, and in return the loan-shark will get whatever the profit from Tom's next painting will be. One week later, Tom is working on his new painting and intends it to be a multiple artwork. The painting is a huge success, and for years Tom earns royalties from it. All these earnings belong to the loan-shark, though, and Tom is increasingly annoyed with himself and thinks that he should have intended this painting to be singular. Then he would just have sold it once, probably for much less than he has been earning through the multiple instances, and the loan-shark would not have made that much money out of Tom.
- c) A third possible scenario is that following the establishment of supercopy machines, all paintings stay singular. The old paintings are singular anyway, and the new ones will be singular as well. Despite having the appropriate technology, future painters do not intend their paintings to be multiple. There will be no change in the way paintings are treated. Copies of paintings – even supercopies – are still just copies and not instances, and paintings can still be forged referentially. That is also to say again

that notationality is not only not necessary – at least not in all cases – but also not sufficient for multiplicity.

What would be the consequences of the supercopy machine for forgeries anyway? Under conditions a) paintings could not be forged anymore, just like works of literature. A “forgery” of a painting would just be an instance of the painting. Accordingly, b) entails that only the old paintings can still be forged, not the new ones, and c) entails that only some of the new ones can be forged. Obviously, if d) were to happen, all paintings could still be forged. In scenarios where there can be forgeries of paintings, the invention of the supercopy machine means that forging has become much easier, though.

What if an artist’s intentions and the common cultural practices contradict each other? I have briefly pointed as such a constellation, i.e. the Martian writer who intends his novel to be multiple, but it is treated as if it was singular. Or, to make up another example, say Tom proclaims that his latest painting is a multiple work of art, and anything that corresponds 1:1 with its pictorial properties is supposed to be an exemplar of the work. But the artworld does not comply. The original is sold for 10 000 Euros, but copies of it are sold for 10 Euros. No one owning a copy of it thinks that he owns an *exemplar* of Tom’s work. Does that still mean that the painting is multiple? Or has Tom’s intention failed in this case?

By now somebody who is not happy with the idea that intentions should determine to which category a work belongs to will object. If intentions and cultural practices are in conflict, is it not very unconvincing to keep insisting that intentions decide whether a work is singular or multiple, even though they contradict all established practices? If Jane declares that her novel is singular,

is it not still multiple? One might refer to Kendall Walton's "Categories of Art" for an alternative conception of the production context determining categories.

The "categories" Walton is concerned with in his paper are genres – what decides which art form a work belongs to? Walton gives four criteria that determine "in which categories a work is correctly perceived".²⁵⁵ One might be tempted to take Walton's criteria and apply them not only to the question of which genre an artwork belongs to, but also to the ontological question. Maybe it would be more plausible to say that Walton's criteria govern the singular/multiple distinction instead of artist's intentions. I will briefly go through the four criteria and then argue for a compromise between both the four criteria conception and the intention conception.

The first criterion is whether the work in question, *W*, has many standard features of a category, *C*. Walton writes that "[a] feature of a work is *standard* with respect to a (perceptually distinguishable) category just in case it is among those in virtue of which works in that category belong to that category."²⁵⁶ For instance, standard features of paintings are that they are painted; on a flat surface; on one side; standard features of novels are that they are composed of words; that there is a plot; and so on.

The second criterion is "the fact, if it is one, that *W* is better, or more interesting or pleasing aesthetically, or more worth experiencing when perceived in *C* rather than it is when perceived in alternative ways."²⁵⁷

The third criterion is whether *W* was intended to be perceived as belonging to *C* by the artist. So Walton does not overlook intentions, but thinks that they are only one of four criteria and are not decisive on their own. That intentions

²⁵⁵ Walton, Kendall: "Categories of Art". In: *The Philosophical Review* 79 (1970), pp. 334-367: 357.

²⁵⁶ Walton: "Categories of Art", p. 339.

²⁵⁷ Walton: "Categories of Art", p. 357.

alone cannot always decide which *genre* a work belongs to is immediately convincing. If Tom sculpts a statue and says that this is a painting; or if he writes a novel he claims to be science fiction, but it takes place in ancient Rome, they are not a statue and not a science fiction novel, despite Tom's intentions. His intentions have failed and are overridden by the other criteria deciding over *C*. Whether the idea that intentions determine *singularity and multiplicity* can be as easily dismissed remains to be seen, though.

Finally, it matters whether *W* would be treated as belonging to *C*. "The categories in which a work is perceived, according to this condition, are generally the ones in which the artist's contemporaries did perceive or would have perceived it."²⁵⁸

Would the Walton account of categories be useful when applied to the singular/multiple distinction? That would mean that whether *W* is singular depends not only on the artist's intentions, but also on whether *W* shares standard features of singular works or whether it has contra-standard features (like being notational); whether it is more rewarding to experience *W* as a singular work; and whether *W* would generally be perceived as singular.

Regardless of which theory seems preferable, the slogan "production determines category" still captures the general idea promoted here to explain what makes a work singular or multiple. The question is just how to understand "production" – as the artist's intentions or as governed by the four criteria.

My answer is that it is *successful* intentions that decide whether a work is singular or multiple. Intentions can fail, and in this case the three remaining criteria determine the category of the work. Two examples should make this point clearer.

²⁵⁸ Walton: "Categories of Art", p. 358.

Suppose Jane writes a novel and intends it to be a singular work of art. The work is supposed to be a physical object, i.e. the manuscript. Copies of it are not instances of the work, but merely something like posters of the work. Is this work indeed singular?

I take it that there are strong intuitions against this. The novel is not singular. In this case, the artist's intentions have failed. What Jane has created is not a singular work of art, even though she wanted it to be singular. Intentions might just fail, and this is an instance of it. Likewise, Tom's intention to write a science fiction novel has misfired when he wrote a story set in ancient Rome. It is much more plausible to say that Jane's intention has been overridden by the other three of Walton's criteria: her work shares a large number of standard features of multiple artworks (like other novels); it is probably better to experience it as multiple, because then more people have access to the work, and it is not so tragic if someone loses his book, since it is only one exemplar of many; and also people would just treat the work as multiple. So why have Jane's intentions failed? Because there is more reason to think her work is multiple – it seems much more apt to apply the three criteria and say that because of them, her work is multiple.

But consider this case: last week, a notebook by Leonardo da Vinci was found. It contains detailed information about his intention to make a multiple artwork, the *Mona Lisa*. Leonardo wanted to usurp the way painting is usually treated and wanted to climb the peak of innovation by designing a Supercopy Machine that would produce paintings that look exactly like the original *Mona Lisa*. The notebook contains design notes for the Supercopy Machine and personal thoughts about revolutionising painting. There would not only be one *Mona Lisa*, but many! Everyone could have one!

For contingent reasons, Leonardo was not able to build the Supercopy machine. But I think that here we might be strongly inclined to say that, yes, as it turned out, the *Mona Lisa* is a multiple artwork (even though there happens to be only one instance). Leonardo not only wanted it to be multiple, he also made explicit plans how this is to be done and what the point of it is. If one thinks of the many devices Leonardo designed or planned to design, it is not absurd to think he might have build or at least wanted to build a Supercopy Machine. We did not know it for a long time, but the *Mona Lisa* is multiple. According to the Walton criteria (except the intention-criterion), the *Mona Lisa* would not be multiple, but in this case, the Walton criteria are overruled by the artist's successful intentions.

So here are two cases where artist's intentions and broader cultural practices conflict, and in one case it is more plausible to think that intentions determine the category the work belongs to, and in the other, the prevailing practices. In such a conflict, it is decisive for which of the two possibilities there is more reason to be convinced by. In the case of successful intentions, there is more reason to believe that they determine the work's category, and in the case of failed intentions, there is more reason to believe that the prevailing practices – as captured by Walton's three criteria – determine the work's criteria.

So what would have made Jane's intention to create a singular work successful? There would have had to be appropriate behaviour- and thought-patterns on her behalf. Say Jane had written a manifesto accompanying her novel in which she explains that novels are highly undervalued by mass production and that the way we treat literature has to be changed to stop its trivialisation. She has read Goodman and became convinced that the Martian way to treat literature is the only adequate one. She says that books should be

regarded in analogy to paintings so that the beauty of the letters will be appreciated. When her publisher calls to inquire about the new novel, she refuses to let him publish it ... Under these circumstances, it might seem far more plausible to say that – weird as it may nevertheless be – Jane’s intention was successful, and despite the prevailing practices, her novel is a singular work of art.²⁵⁹

As a real-life example, Sol LeWitt’s “wall drawings” come to mind. They are multiple works of drawing, because this is what LeWitt successfully intended them to be. He provided rather vague instructions how to realise the drawings and let others do the actual drawing. One of the ideas behind the wall drawings was that this way, they are repeatable and can be realised without any further involvement of the artist. “LeWitt held that his wall drawings, regardless of their ‘ownership’ status, could be copied by others at will – assuming that the copier conscientiously followed the artist’s instructions.”²⁶⁰ His intention was successful, because he had an elaborated explanation why – contrary to the prevailing standards – these works are multiple.

I would like to quickly point out just two more things concerning the Walton vs. intentions issue. Walton does not offer any arguments why it should be exactly these four criteria that decide over categories of art. He just trusts that they “fit our intuitions reasonably well”.²⁶¹ I do not disagree with that, but I suspect that at the root of at least criterion one and four, artist’s intentions are

²⁵⁹ Had Jane been a Martian, by default her novel would have been singular. Her intention that it should be multiple would have been in conflict with the artistic traditions on Mars – according to Walton’s categories, on Mars her novel would have been singular. For her intention that her work should be multiple to succeed, she would have to display corresponding behaviour- and thought-patterns that give reason to believe in her success.

²⁶⁰ Garrels, Garry (Ed.): *Sol LeWitt: A Retrospective*. New Haven and London 2000, p. 38.

²⁶¹ Walton: “Categories of Art”, p. 357.

responsible for the prevailing cultural practices.²⁶² The historical development of certain standards – features that are typical of a given art form – is surely due to what artists intended to do – and succeeded in. That, e.g., certain materials are used in painting and that paintings are treated in certain ways is in the end because artist deliberately did things that subsequently became accepted by the audiences and became standards. Paintings are not coincidentally two-dimensional, and not hung up upside down; the point of horror has not accidentally become to scare audiences; short stories are not randomly not written in verses, but because that is what artists intended to do and what has become standard because their intentions succeeded and became established. So it seems correct to me to say that standard features of categories of art and ways artworks are usually treated are ultimately because of successful intentions, even though intentions can then also conflict with these traditions.

It might also be worth noting that the discussion of these two conceptions of categorising artworks is often unimportant because of by the fact that usually prevailing practices and artist's intentions as to whether a work is singular or multiple do not conflict with each other, anyway. But I hope to have made it plausible that in the case of such a conflict, successful intentions determine the status of a work, whereas failed intentions are overridden by the established categorisations.

²⁶² Criterion two – which category a work is aesthetically most enjoyable in – might be ambiguous in many cases and therefore seems to me to be of doubtful usefulness. What about painting? Would it be better if a painting was multiple, so more people could enjoy it and have it at home? Or is it better that there is this single, very valuable object which would become more uninteresting if it lost its special status? The answers to such questions are far from obvious.

Two problems with intentionalism in the theory of interpretation impose themselves upon us now. First, could it not be – or even more, is it not often the case – that an artist has no specific intention? That she does not explicitly decide whether her work should be singular or multiple? Empirically speaking, it seems unlikely that artists go to work and consciously intend that their latest painting should be singular. Leonardo did not say to himself: “This one is going to be singular!” when he started painting the *Mona Lisa*.

Indeed, in most cases, I presume, artists do not ask themselves whether their work should be singular or multiple. But that is neither surprising nor a problem for the theory at hand. Since most art forms have been treated exclusively either as singular or multiple for centuries, if not longer, aberrations from these traditions are highly uncommon. Therefore a painter does not deliberately decide whether her work should be singular or multiple, since she is working in a tradition that she is not questioning. If there is no explicit intention to the contrary, we can assume that an artwork complies with the established categorisations.

Second, what if we do not know anything about the intentions of an artist? If we do not know about the relevant intentions, how can we tell whether a given work is singular or multiple? The problem is not as striking as it might seem. Even though there might be cases where we do not know which category an artwork belongs to, we might still make an educated guess. If we find the manuscript of a novel, we can safely assume that the novel was intended to be a multiple artwork, since this is just the way novels are treated. As long as there is no evidence to the contrary, we can very plausibly assume that an artwork belongs to the same category as the other members of its kind. And if one encounters artworks from another culture where traditions might be

different, one has to observe that culture and how it treats various art forms. It might still be that we are faced with a work, but we are not able to find out whether it was intended to be singular or multiple. But that is not an objection to the theory. It can simply happen that we do not know enough about a work. There are also cases where we do not know anything about the context of a work's production, and because of our lack of knowledge, the meaning of a work remains, at least partially, opaque to us.

Certain art forms cannot be as straightforwardly categorised as the paradigm examples of novels, poems, paintings, and sculptures, where it is clear what the category is that such works belong to standardly. Printmaking, in particular, is a difficult case.²⁶³ The question whether this art form is singular or multiple cannot simply be answered by reference to the artist's intentions, because here we might have a special problem concerning artists having no particular intention. I have said that in a case like this we should simply look at the prevailing cultural practice and assume that the artist's intention complied with it. With printmaking, however, this does not help, because it is not immediately clear what the prevailing cultural practice is. Are prints usually treated as singular or multiple artworks?

It is not obvious, it seems, whether works of printmaking, like etching, lithography, woodcut and screen-printing, standardly count as singular or multiple artworks. In discussing forgeries of things like Rolex watches, I have already said that both possibilities do not lack plausibility, although I said that I favour the view that they are multiple.

²⁶³ Cf. Currie: *Ontology of Art*, pp. 13 f.

In accordance with the theory this chapter is concerned with, the following holds: if Tom produces a work of lithography, and he explicitly intends his work to be either singular or multiple, then this decides the category the work belongs to. But if he is not concerned with ontological musings and just produces ten prints, we need a default way to categorise them, if we still want an answer to the question whether these are ten instances of one work or ten distinct singular works.

Two candidates for the ontological status of works that I have dismissed in Chapter 1 might seem more plausible concerning printmaking. Could it be that works of printmaking are aggregates or classes of the prints? – The answer is a clear no. The same problems that disqualify the claim that musical works are aggregates or classes arise for printmaking. Since aggregates as well as classes are extensionally defined, each new print taken would mean that the work has changed. When Tom makes ten prints of his latest work, the work changes ten times, because the extension of the aggregate changes ten times. Equally implausible would be the consequence of the reverse process: if one of the prints is destroyed, the work itself is not the same anymore afterwards.

The idea that a work of printmaking is identical with the plate can be shrugged off even quicker. It would entail that the work is destroyed when the plate is destroyed, and we would be unwilling to accept that. We would also be unwilling to say that one has to know the plate in order to know the work.

So is the standard category for printmaking singular or multiple? Reicher has the following to say about the problem:

Printmaking is, it seems, much closer to painting than literature or music, since one counts it, like painting, among the “visual arts”. Consider the case of Emil Nolde’s woodcut *Junges Paar* (1917). Say there are ten prints of this work. Should we now say that, strictly speaking, there is not a single work

with the name *Junges Paar*, but ten very similar works that stand in a causal relation to the same plate? We could surely do this, but then we move away from the ordinary use of the term “work”. We usually do not say that Nolde has created ten almost indistinguishably similar woodcuts that all bear the title “Junges Paar”, but rather that he has created *one* woodcut of that title of which there are ten exemplars.²⁶⁴

Reicher’s is a good summary of the problem. Intuitions might go in both directions, but in the end it is more plausible to say that printmaking is multiple. Leanings towards the view that printmaking is singular might arise from the closeness to painting and the fact that prints are often treated as if they were singular works. A single print of *Junges Paar* might be the centre of attention in a museum, even though it is only one instance of a multiple artwork. Prints are usually numbered, and one might think that there are ten works here: *Junges Paar*₁ to *Junges Paar*₁₀. However, what I am looking for is a default way to categorise printmaking – a description of the way we commonly think about printmaking. And though I would not want to claim that the view that *Junges Paar* is in fact ten prints is unsustainable, I think that the following is a better description of works of printmaking.

The idea is that printmaking is multiple – but a *special case* of multiple artworks.

Let us say that there is an etcher E who has produced a plate x of which he takes three prints. The prints are all instances of the work w. Thus we are faced with a multiple artwork. But w differs from other multiple artworks in three respects: first, there is usually only a limited number of prints taken. Artists sometimes stipulate that only a few prints may be produced, sometimes the plate is even destroyed to prevent the production of further prints. Second, not anyone can produce an instance of w. Prints either have to be made by E or by

²⁶⁴ Reicher: *Metaphysik der Kunst*, p. 26 f.

someone commissioned by E to do so. Musical works, on the other hand, can be performed by anyone – no special legitimacy is required. Third, because of the legitimacy requirement, there can be referential forgeries of works of printmaking, despite them being multiple artworks. I can produce a print and claim that it was made with x, but it was not. I can also produce a print using x and claim that it was done or commissioned by E, but it was not. In both cases I have forged w.

Because works of printmaking are multiple artworks that have specific features distinguishing them from other multiple artworks, I suggest introducing a new term for this kind of multiple artwork, namely *restrictedly multiple artworks*. Works of printmaking are multiple artworks, but there are restrictions as to how instances are realised, by whom, and how many there are.

The special characteristics of printmaking are also the reason why for Goodman, “multiple” does not have the same extension as “allographic”. Works of music and literature and other multiple artworks are allographic, but printmaking is multiple and autographic. He says that etching: “[...] is like music in having two stages and in being multiple in its second stage; but whereas music is autographic in neither stage, printmaking is autographic in both.”²⁶⁵

I have said that the artist does not have to produce the prints herself. She can tell a printer to perform this task for her, and still we regard the prints as *her* work. This is not an uncommon phenomenon at all. Nevertheless, whoever produces the actual prints has to be authorised by the artist to do so. If I today take a print from a plate made by Dürer, I have not produced an instance of the work. Say that Dürer handed an etching to a printer and told him to make ten

²⁶⁵ Goodman: *Languages of Art*, p. 118.

prints. They are all realisations of the work. If the printer then makes ten more prints, they cannot be considered as instances of the work, even though they might be indistinguishable from the authorised prints. Instead, they are forgeries of the work, purporting to have a history of production that they do not actually hold: being made by Dürer or being made under the authorisation of Dürer. If the Bank of England decides that more £10 notes have to be circulated and therefore instructs its printers to print ten thousand £10 notes, and one of the printers makes five extra notes for himself, then they are forgeries, because he was not authorised to print these five notes. In both cases, the forgeries are very elaborate, because they were made by the same technical means as the originals, but that does not make them less of a forgery.

If the ten Dürer-forgeries should be discovered today, we might still treat them as having a certain value, despite them being forgeries. After all, they were made with the original plate and by Dürer's printer. Say furthermore that the plate does not exist anymore. The forgeries might even find their way into a museum, but not because they are instances of Dürer's work, but because of what they are: unauthorised prints taken from the original plate. This history of production might make them interesting and valuable, even though they are not instances of the work.

Another possible scenario is this: Dürer instructs his assistant to make ten prints of *The Riders of the Apocalypse*. Five of them are supposed to be made using black ink, and the other five using green ink. Are they all instances of one and the same work, or are there two works here, a black one and a green one? That would depend on the intentions of the artist – on whether he wanted to create one or two artworks. If there is no corresponding intention by the artist, the question how many works there are depends on our notion of work

identity. Goodman here states generous identity conditions between work and instance. He says that prints taken from the same plate all count as instances of the work, “however much they differ in color and amount of ink, quality of impression, kind of paper, etc.”²⁶⁶ If we decide to be generally rather strict concerning the identity conditions between types and tokens, as I advocated in Chapter 3.4, one might be more inclined to say that a difference in ink colour results in a different work. Just consider the case of (traditional) film, which is, after all, a printed art as well. Imagine a screening of *Blue Velvet*. After the screening, another film is shown, namely *Blue Velvet* in green. All of the film’s colours are shades of green. Do we have two screenings of the same film here or rather two films? Or think of a black and white film that becomes coloured. There is a digitally coloured version of *Night of the Living Dead*. Is that really the same film as the 1968 black and white film? I do not think so. Being black and white or being coloured makes a huge aesthetic difference. Romero shot the original deliberately in black and white, so a coloured film is not what he created, but something else. The coloured *Night of the Living Dead* is a version of the original film, closely related to it and derived from it, but not the same. So the green and black prints, even though taken from the same plate, are not instances of the same work. The plate in this case served as the means to realise two works.

Accordingly, if Dürer instructed his assistant to make ten black prints, and the assistant – accidentally or intentionally – makes green ones, they are not instances of the work. If Dürer wanted his work to be printed in black, then green prints are not his work. Nevertheless, he might approve of the prints after

²⁶⁶ Goodman: *Languages of Art*, p. 118. It is slightly puzzling to see that Goodman is very strict about the identity conditions for musical works and does not allow for a single false note, whereas differently coloured prints are all supposed to be instances of the same work.

they are done, even though they were originally not supposed to be green, they would then count as instances.

The whole notion of prints having to be commissioned by the artist easily leads to borderline cases. Problems arise from the fact that artists' intentions as to how instances of their works have to be constituted might be unclear, and that it is vague what exactly counts as commission and in which sense an artist has to be involved in the production of the prints. Does she, for instance, have to approve of the final products? Tricky scenarios can easily be devised in which it is genuinely hard to tell whether a given print was authorised and thus is an instance of the artist's work, or not. Say that Warhol commissions one of his assistants to make five prints of his latest work. While Warhol is turning his back on him to have a chat with a friend, the assistant produces a sixth print – which, according to what I have said so far, would not be an instance of the work. But very soon, only ten minutes later, the assistant is already plagued by his bad conscience and admits to Warhol that he has made the unauthorised sixth print. Warhol then says that it's fine and that he does not care. So has the status of the print changed from being a forgery to being an instance of one of Warhol's works within ten minutes, just because of Warhol's shrug of the shoulders? It might be difficult to get rid of the feeling that this is odd, even though it is the right thing to say. Let me give a summary of a curious real-life example before I make a general suggestion about how to treat borderline cases.

In the early 1980s, Joe Simon bought a Warhol print.²⁶⁷ When he tried to sell it over Sotheby's 15 years later, the auction house sent the print to the so-called Warhol Authentication Board to make sure it is a genuine Warhol. The Authentication Board's function is to verify that works claiming to be Warhols

²⁶⁷ My information about this is derived from the BBC documentary "Warhol: Denied", 2006. Cf. <http://news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/entertainment/3215199.stm>

are indeed Warhols. And it decided that Smith's print is in fact not a work by Andy Warhol.

The Board's decision makes all the difference. If the print were considered authentic, its value would be around two million dollars. If not, it has at most decorative value. The common practice is that the authority to assess whether a work is a Warhol or not is the Authentication Board, and its verdict is decisive. If the Board says that a work is not by Warhol, then no auctioneer will dare to sell it as a Warhol.

The reason why there are difficulties determining the authenticity of a Warhol is Warhol's methods of producing art. The history of production of the Joe Simon print is a good illustration of this. Warhol produced a silkscreen image of himself and used it to produce a couple of prints. At the same time, Warhol was planning to give a party. Some friends took over the job of organising the party. One of them then suggested to Warhol that the people who are helping him to organise the party should get a print each as a "payment" and sign of appreciation for their efforts. Warhol agreed and said that his friend should make prints from said silkscreen image and give them to the helpers. So the friend went to a print shop and had them make six prints from the silkscreen image. The party helpers then each got one of these prints.

The Authentication Board declared that these prints are not artworks by Andy Warhol. The reason is that Warhol did not supervise their production and did not inspect and approve of the final product.

In most cases, though, Warhol had nothing to do with the mechanical procedure of making prints. Prints were usually made by Warhol's assistants. He just commissioned the production of the prints. Apparently, in many cases his assistants enjoyed a considerable amount of freedom in their work: Warhol

let them chose the colours and was not interested in the technical details of how the prints were produced. However, says the Authentication Board, there is still a significant difference between these cases and that of the prints made for the party helpers: in the latter case, the prints were commissioned by Warhol, but they were not produced in The Factory, and Warhol did not acknowledge the final product.

The decision of the Authentication Board may seem hard to countenance, but the example nevertheless shows how difficult it can be to say whether in a given case a print is authorised. Whether the artist has to approve of the final product or not, for example, may just depend on her usual practices. With the six Warhol prints, it seems very obvious that it cannot be a necessary condition for the prints being authorised that Warhol checked and approved of the final product. Context makes it clear that he just allowed his friend to make the prints and that he was not interested in being bothered any more than that. Another artist, though, might always insist on inspecting each print and approving it. But to define a given artist's standards of commissioning might be impossible or arbitrary.

I therefore suggest that we treat borderline cases as what they are. Suppose an artist gives the wrong plate to a printer and tells him to make ten prints. But in fact the artist did not want another ten prints of this work, and has just confused his plates. What these prints are, is ten prints that were accidentally ordered to be taken from plate x instead of y. Whether prints are instances of a certain work may just be impossible to say with certainty. In the case of the print that Joe Simon owns, that would mean that what he owns is a print taken from a silk screen image created by Andy Warhol, but it is unclear to what extent it

was authorised by Warhol.²⁶⁸ Whether it is “a Warhol” is just indeterminate. In some cases, there is no definite answer to the question whether x is a token of y. But we can give a description of y, and we do not need any more than that.

An objection to this suggestion might be that for practical purposes, it can be very important to know whether a print is an instance of a work, and saying that its status is indeterminate would be unsatisfactory. In the Joe Simon case, the answer to the question makes a difference of two million dollars.

But that is a problem that has nothing to do with ontology. If members of the artworld accept that an Authentication Board can decide whether something is a Warhol or not, and if the prevailing art business has it that in the case of one judgement, a print is worth two million dollars and in the other not, then it is maybe time to question these practices. To say that a print is a print taken from a silk screen image created by Andy Warhol, it being unclear to what extent it was authorised by him, is a perfectly fine answer to the question *What is it?* What that means for the financial value of the print is a completely different issue, and it is not the task of an ontology of art to provide guidelines and rules for art auctioneers.

Printmaking is also not the only restrictedly multiple art form. The same principles of restriction – that realisations of the work have to come from a certain source and have to be authorised – apply to (chemical) photography and carved sculpture. In the case of photography, the original negative would be the analogue of a plate.

Let us come back to the claim that production determines category. I have said that it is the artist’s intention that determines whether a work is singular or

²⁶⁸ Likewise, the print I took today from a Dürer plate is an unauthorised print taken in 2006 from a genuine Albrecht Dürer plate.

multiple and that the default categorisation for the not clear-cut case of printmaking is restrictedly multiple. However, is it really up to the artist to decide about the category her work belongs to in *any* case? The last question I would like to address is whether there are art forms that cannot be multiple or cannot be singular, despite the artist's intentions. Are there any art forms that are necessarily singular or multiple? So far I have talked about painting, carved sculpture, music, and literature. In these cases the artist is indeed free to determine how many instances of her work there can be. Artworks belonging to these art forms can be either singular or multiple.

Currie, Reicher, and Strawson primarily talk about the paradigm cases of allegedly singular artworks when they put forward their arguments for why they are actually multiple. All three claim that there are no singular artworks at all. But could one not, like Schmücker does, object that there are *some* singular artworks, like Fluxus, land art, or improvised music?

The latter might seem like a good candidate for a necessarily singular work of art. No score is used for playing improvised music, and an improvised musical piece is not played again by the musician. But nevertheless, improvised music can be multiple. The reason is that a performance of an improvisation can be recorded. I have argued in Chapter 2.5 that playing a recording of a musical work realises the work. So through recordings, improvised music can be realised multiple times. Furthermore, through the recording, a musician could in principle derive the notation of his improvised piece and then play it again. Performances of improvised music can be repeated, though when repeated, the music is not improvised anymore.

Are the various forms of action art maybe singular? We might think that Fluxus, happenings, performances, and the like, being events, cannot be

realised more than once. Since time and place are generally regarded as essential properties of events, action artworks cannot be realised repeatedly. Josef Beuys' *Coyote; I like America and America likes me*, took place in New York in 1974 and lasted four days. If he had decided to repeat the performance one year later, that would not have been the same event and thus not the same work.

But this is a weak argument, of course. The same event token cannot be repeated, but if we regard *Coyote...* as an event type, it would have been possible to realise it several times. A performance of a play is also an event token and as such cannot be repeated, but the performance is a realisation of a work-type and thus the work can be realised repeatedly. Again, whether a work of action art is singular or multiple depends on the artist's intentions. Usually, works of action art are singular. But suppose that Tom's artwork consists in him sitting down at a table and eating four and a half chocolate biscuits. The first happening takes place in a trendy New York gallery. Then Tom declares that the happening shall take place three times, and in the following week he also eats four and a half chocolate biscuits in Paris and in London. In this case, Tom's work was multiple. At the same time, his intention might also have been that the work should be singular and only be realised once, in New York.

However, there could be action artworks that are singular regardless of the artist's intentions. Tom might stage a very controversial happening: he destroys the *Mona Lisa* in order to publicly criticise the exaggerated attention the painting enjoys. This work of action art is singular, because the *Mona Lisa* is a singular work and cannot be destroyed again. Tom's intentions in this case cannot change the fact that the happening is not repeatable. Robert Rauschenberg's *Erased de Kooning Drawing* comes to mind, too. Another

example of an unrepeatable event would be to be the first person taking a bath in orange juice or being the hundredth person to sneeze on New Year's Eve.²⁶⁹

Other action artworks might be tightly bound to a certain social or political situation. In this case, the possibilities for their repetition are limited to a period of time. Say that Tom eats his biscuits in front of the White House as a comment on George Bush's presidency. After Bush is not President anymore, Tom's work cannot be realised again. Once the social context a work is embedded in does not exist anymore, it might not be possible to realise the same performance again without its meaning being altered. And a different meaning entails a different artwork.

So here is a case of necessarily singular artworks. Another one is land art. One might even say that this is conceptually so. One of the main points of land art is that the work is transitory and will eventually perish. The work then does not exist anymore. The work has perished when the object in question has perished. If land art were multiple, the work would survive even though the first instance has perished. Works of land art are often documented by the means of photographs or videos, but those are neither identical nor instances of the work. A photograph of Andy Goldsworthy's *Red Pool* is either just a picture of the work or an artwork itself – but not the same artwork as *Red Pool*.

One might remark that the point of land art being that the works are bound to perish is of course due to artists' intentions. Artists working within this art form have defined what land art is and what it is about. So that means that land art is not necessarily singular. If it had been Goldsworthy's intention that any puddle coloured red and surrounded by trees and stones is a realisation of *Red*

²⁶⁹ There is a difference between these two cases. The *Mona Lisa*-destruction's status as singular is derived from the fact that the *Mona Lisa* is singular because of Leonardo's intentions. The first person to take a bath in orange juice is singular of logical necessity, because there can only be one first person to do that.

Pool, then the work would have been multiple. The question is whether this *Red Pool* would have been a work of land art as we define land art, or rather a work belonging to a slightly different art form. So my claim is just that – on the prevailing conception of land art – works of land art are singular.

Another necessarily singular art form is found art. It is a material object and not an abstract object that is “found”. The *objet trouvé* cannot be instantiated multiple times, since it is one concrete object that is presented as the artwork, and concrete objects cannot be instantiated. An unmade bed cannot be an instance of Tracy Emin’s *My Bed*, because a bed cannot be an instance of another bed. A bed can only be an instance of the type “bed”, but in the case of found art, it is a concrete bed that is put forward as *the* work and not merely an instance of the work. That found art is singular is *per definitionem* so, since found art is defined as a material object being presented by an artist without being altered by her.²⁷⁰

Works of architecture are usually singular, but could also be multiple. I do not know of an example of a multiple work of architecture, but it is conceivable that an architect designs a type of building and then constructs one instance of that type in every capital of the world.

Most architectural buildings are also associated with a specific site. If one were to erect a building like the Empire State Building in Mexico City – which would be possible, since architecture is notational – or an Eiffel Tower in Berlin or a Sphinx in Edinburgh, would we be willing to accept them as instances of the corresponding works? I suspect that we would say that they are replicas of the Empire State Building, the Eiffel Tower, and the Sphinx, but not instances of them. Part of the identities of these works is that they were erected

²⁷⁰ If one took the work of found art to be the finding of the object rather than the object itself, though, found art would be repeatable. The action of, say, “finding a stone” could be repeated.

in specific places. There are actually to scale replicas of the Eiffel Tower in Las Vegas and Disneyland. But they are not instances of the Eiffel Tower, because first, Alexandre Gustave Eiffel did not intend his work to be multiple, and second, they are not in Paris.

I do not see any case of an art form that can be multiple, but cannot be singular. If a work can be realised multiple times, it can – given the artist's successful intention – also be realised only once. No potentially multiple artwork *has* to be multiple, at least I cannot think of a counterexample to this claim. Whereas some artworks might only be realisable once, there are no artworks that can only be realised more than once. Declaring a notational artwork like a piece of music or literature to be singular might seem very alien to us, but it is nevertheless entirely conceivable, as seen in the example of the Martian library. We might never encounter such a case, but empirical likelihood is neither here nor there: the mere possibility of such a scenario is sufficient to show that music and literature are not necessarily multiple. The reverse, though – that there should be a work that cannot be realised just once but only repeatedly - does not apply.

To sum up, when Currie, Reicher, and Strawson doubt the traditional view that there are singular artworks on the one hand and multiple artworks on the other, they are partly right – but only partly. Though a paradigm case of singular artworks like painting could also be multiple, this is not only due to the possibility of a notational system for paintings. Rather, I have claimed, what determines whether a work is singular or multiple is the artist's intentions.

So I agree with the sceptics of the traditional division in saying that some allegedly singular artworks could also be multiple. But I disagree with them

about the claim that *all* art forms are multiple and about the reason why they are multiple. Some art forms are bound to be singular, like specific kinds of happenings or works of architecture bound to a concrete site. Other artworks *are* singular, even though they might as well have been multiple. A work's category is determined by the successful intentions of the artist, not by the existence of a notation alone.

If there is no explicit intention of an artist about which category her work is supposed to belong to, I have said that we can safely assume that her intention was to comply with the standard way of categorising the work in question. Usually composers want their works to be multiple and painters want their works to be singular, and it never occurs to them to have any intention to the contrary. I have also suggested that works of printmaking – which resemble characteristics of both singular and multiple artworks – are best described as being restrictedly multiple.

6. The Persistence of Artworks

There is one more issue concerning singular artworks that I would like to address. This concerns the *physicality* of singular artworks. Since singular artworks are physical objects, the following question arises: could it be that many artworks are not what they seem to be – that they are not the artworks we think they are? If, for instance, paintings are physical objects, that also means that they may change. This can happen in two ways:

First, museums are full of artworks that lack some of their original parts. The arm of a statue might have broken off, or the corner of a painting might have

become damaged. And second, artworks can acquire new parts. Restoration is a common practice to preserve artworks that otherwise would decay or suffer some other damage over the course of time. *The Last Supper*, for instance, has been repeatedly restored since the 18th century. Restorers had to deal with cracks in the painting, dirt on the surface, paint dropping off, and other problems to keep the work from deteriorating. Indeed, *The Last Supper* has been restored so many times that experts disagree about how much of the work is still the original material. And this is exactly the problem that arises when artworks change – are they still numerically the same after the change(s) as when they were created? Does the loss and/or replacement of parts affect the identity of artworks? Is a restored artwork still the same as before the restoration, or is *The Last Supper* as you can see it in 2006 strictly speaking not the same artwork as the one created by Leonardo in 1498? After all, parts of the painting have changed, so *The 1498 Last Supper* and *The 2006 Last Supper* do not have the same properties, and if they do not have the same properties, they cannot be the same object.

One might wonder why the persistence of artworks is supposed to be a problem at all – at least why it is supposed to be a problem within aesthetics. Work in metaphysics has spawned several theories as to how a material object can persist through time, so why don't we pick our favourite account and apply it not only to tables or chairs, but also to artworks? For example, we could take an endurantist stance and say that an artwork remains the same after a restoration because it has the properties it possesses in relations to points of time, and thus there is no conflict with Leibniz's Law when a painting acquires new parts that it did not have before, because there is no contradiction between being F at t_1 and being G at t_2 . Or we could side with the perdurantist and say

that the artwork is not only extended in space, but also in time and has different temporal parts, and in one part it had property F and in another G.

The reason why one should pay special attention to the case of artworks, however, is that artworks might have special persistence conditions that make them different from ordinary artefacts. I shall explain that this is the case and what the persistence conditions of artworks might be.²⁷¹

There are two more issues that arise in this context. One of them should be addressed prior to the persistence-question, and the other afterwards. The first is the clarification of what is meant by the physicality of singular artworks. In what sense are they physical? Are they identical with the matter they are made of? The second is what might happen to an artwork. Which kind of changes can occur to an artwork and what would be the ramifications for the identity of the work be in each case? The kind of change that is primarily addressed here is a change in constitution. I will briefly say something about change of intrinsic properties as well, but my main concern is change of parts, since it is the more interesting question because of its practical implications.

6.1 Constitution and Persistence

In her “The Statue and the Clay”, Judith Jarvis Thomson argues that a statue is not identical with the material stuff it is made of.²⁷² Suppose we buy a ten pound portion of clay at 9AM and call it CLAY. Later, we make a statue out of it and put it on a table at 2PM. We call the statue ALFRED. So is CLAY

²⁷¹ That it is possible to remain neutral about the endurance/perdurance discussion has been elaborated by Jonathan Lowe and Storrs McCall in their: “3D/4D equivalence, the twins paradox and absolute time”, in: *Analysis* 63 (2003), pp. 114-123.

²⁷² Thomson, Judith Jarvis: “The Statue and the Clay”. In: *Noûs* 32 (1998), pp. 149-173.

identical with ALFRED? A first argument against their identity is that CLAY existed at 9AM, but ALFRED did not exist at 9AM. So they cannot be identical.

On the other hand, ALFRED is a statue at 2PM, and CLAY is a statue at 2PM. They occupy the same spatio-temporal zone. Doesn't this mean that they are identical? Thomson denies that by denying that CLAY is a statue at 2PM. She says that CLAY constitutes a statue, ALFRED, at 2PM, but *is* not a statue.

Another example against the Identity Thesis that ALFRED = CLAY should make this point clearer:

Suppose that just before 3PM I break off ALFRED's left hand, replace it with a new one, and throw the old one on the floor. CLAY is not wholly on the table at 3PM, for part of it is on the floor then:

(5) CLAY is not wholly on the table at 3PM.

But isn't ALFRED wholly on the table at 3PM? If

(6) ALFRED is wholly on the table at 3PM

is also true, then the Identity Thesis is false.²⁷³

But why should we accept (6)? Thomson claims that artefacts can undergo the loss or replacement of some of their parts. She does not give a reason for this assumption, but appeals to our common intuition that, for example, if I replace the windshield wiper of my car, I still have the same car. Likewise, ALFRED can survive the loss of its left hand and still be ALFRED. The only restriction is that the part that is lost or replaced may not be too large: if I just keep my car's windshield wiper and replace the whole of the rest of the car, I do not have the same car anymore. Also the successive replacement of many small

²⁷³ Thomson: "Statue and Clay", p. 152.

parts of my car will at some point lead to the fact that it is not the same car anymore.²⁷⁴

I will simply suppose – with ordinary thought – that artefacts can undergo replacement of a small part, leaving open how small is small, and what happens when (or would happen if) a replacement of small parts is (or if it were) part of a series of such replacements.²⁷⁵

Thomson then goes on to elaborate what it means to say that CLAY constitutes ALFRED instead of being identical with it. For our own purposes here, we need not concern ourselves with constitution in detail, because we have already learned two important things.

First, the statue is not identical with the clay.²⁷⁶ Thomson’s arguments should convince us of that. Mark Johnston offers a further argument against the Identity Thesis: “For suppose we have a plasticene pot. We squash the plasticene, thereby destroying the pot. We then use the plasticene – all of it – to make a bust of Napoleon. Clearly the pot is not identical with the bust, even though they have the same material parts.”²⁷⁷ I will argue in a moment that it is not only the case that the statue is not identical with the clay – as Thomson and Johnston observe – but also that it is not matter alone that constitutes an artwork. This insight will help us to see why Thomson’s claim that an artefact can survive the loss of some of its parts, is also true of artworks.

²⁷⁴ Though this has been denied by some philosophers. E.g. in Roderick Chisholm’s view, the car can be constituted by different things at different times. See Chapter 3 of Chisholm, Roderick M.: *Person and Object. A metaphysical Study*. London 1976.

²⁷⁵ Thomson: “Statue and Clay”, p. 153 f.

²⁷⁶ The view that two numerically distinct objects can temporarily coincide is not uncontested, though. See e.g. Burke, Michael: “Copper Statues and Pieces of Copper: A Challenge to the Standard Account”. In: *Analysis* 52 (1992), pp. 12-17. However, there is not enough space here to go into this more general debate.

²⁷⁷ Johnston, Mark: “Constitution is not Identity”. In: *Mind* 101 (1992), pp. 89-105:93.

A statue is an artefact, but not every statue is an artwork. As I will explain below, my view is that artworks are artefacts that have a certain property: that of being art. So an artwork is *not* three things, i.e. matter, an artefact and an artwork, but only two: matter constituting an artefact that has the property of being art.

Note that ALFRED is a statue, but nobody said that it is an artwork. Let us now suppose that ALFRED_{art} is an artwork, because regardless of the question about change in “ordinary” material objects, I hold that with artworks, we have a special case of persistence conditions.²⁷⁸

Think of the Sphinx in the Valley of Kings. It is not only a big sculpture, but also an artwork. It has lost many of its parts in the course of the last 4500 years. Due to the effects of erosion, it has become smaller. Its face is damaged. But this does not lead us to say that it is not an artwork anymore. We also say that it is still *the* Sphinx, the same artwork, despite its changes. How can this be explained?

The Sphinx is not identical with the portion of bedrock it is made of. It is rather constituted by a portion of bedrock, but the crucial point is something else: the Sphinx has properties in excess of its physical matter. These are the properties that make it an artwork.

Almost all contemporary definitions of art are based on extrinsic properties as necessary and sufficient conditions for something being art. So let us just say that there is a set of extrinsic properties that make something art and call them “art properties”.

²⁷⁸ Thomson is well aware of the difference between a mere statue and an artwork and possible consequences this distinction may have, as she says in a footnote. Thomson: “Statue and Clay”, p. 170.

We may argue about what these properties are, but Danto has shown that they must include non-perceptual, non-physical properties. Some artworks are perceptually indistinguishable from ordinary objects. Duchamp's *In Advance of the Broken Arm* is an artwork, whereas an ordinary shovel that looks exactly the same is not. So there must be some properties that *In Advance of the Broken Arm* possesses that make it an artwork, and that are at the same time not possessed by the ordinary shovel.

The logical point, while it guarantees that if *a* is not identical with *b*, then there must be a property *F* such that *a* is *F* and *b* is not *F*, does not require that *F* be a *perceptual* property, and we have enough practice with indiscernibilia to be able to offer actual instances where the differences are not such as may be registered by the senses.²⁷⁹

Depending on your favourite definition of art, *F* might be, for example, having had art status conferred upon, fulfilling a function of art, or standing in the right historical relation to prior artworks. When I talk of “art status” or the conferral of art status in what follows, this is only because of my own sympathy for an institutional definition of art – it can always be translated into the terms of other definitions of art.

So if $ALFRED_{art}$ is an artwork, it is not only constituted by *CLAY*, but also possesses art properties.

CLAY constitutes *ALFRED*, so two things, the material matter and the artefact, occupy the same space. But $ALFRED_{art}$ is not an additional thing, a mysterious further entity. The reason for this is that “being art”, that is, “having art status”, is a temporal property of some artefacts. Most artworks have this property as

²⁷⁹ Danto: *Transfiguration*, p. 43.

long as they exist, but clearly not all do. On the one hand, many artworks have not been art from the time of their creation on, but have only begun to be considered as art at a later point of time. Just think of so-called “folk art”. Early Christian objects, too, were not originally regarded as art, but served cultic purposes or served to educate the largely illiterate churchgoers. On the other hand, an artwork can also lose its art properties again. It still continues to exist as an artefact, but not as an artwork, because it has lost the temporary property of having art status. Similarly, it is a temporary property of Tom to be a student. He loses that property after graduating from university, but there is no entity in addition to Tom called “student” that suddenly would not exist anymore after his graduation. So ALFRED_{art} is just ALFRED with art properties. It is the same object under certain contextual conditions that are responsible for the object having art properties. Consider this example of Danto’s: “[S]ay a pile of hemp of the sort Robert Morris exhibits now and again turned up in Antwerp in the seventeenth century when it could certainly have existed as a pile of hemp but almost certainly could not have existed as an artwork, simply because the concept of art had not then evolved in such a way as to be able to accommodate it as an instance.”²⁸⁰ This means that both in the twentieth and in the seventeenth century there exists a pile of hemp, but only in one of them does it possess art properties. Still the artwork is nothing more than the artefact; however, only in the seventeenth century it is for contextual reasons impossible for it to have the property of being art.

²⁸⁰ Danto: *Transfiguration*, p. 45.

Creating an artwork thus means creating an object that has (or will have) the property of being art. An artist does not create two things – an artefact and an artwork – but only one.²⁸¹

Of course one might deny my claim that there is no extra entity besides CLAY and ALFRED and say that “the artwork” is a further entity. I see no argument that would *force* us to deny this view. But on the other hand, I see no argument why we should postulate a third entity. First, the idea seems strange to me that context should create a new object. Just because the context is a different one in the twentieth century, why should this entail that we are suddenly faced with two different objects, one a pile of hemp and the other one an artwork? Second, for economical reasons, it is much better to do without a third entity.

My thesis is now that ALFRED_{art} can change to a certain degree in its physical constitution and still remain the same artwork, as long as this change does not affect the art properties. We can remove ALFRED’s left hand, and we still have ALFRED on the table, says Thomson. The same goes for ALFRED_{art}, granted that it does not lose the art properties by the loss of the hand. ALFRED_{art} still possesses the property *having art status conferred upon it* after the loss of its hand, so it is still the same artwork ALFRED_{art}, although it underwent a physical change.

But to what degree can an artwork undergo change? Certainly we would not consider the Sphinx as an artwork anymore if it were only a pile of rocks. The

²⁸¹ One might wonder about readymades: here an artist does not create a new artefact, but she creates an artwork. So does that not suggest that artefact and artwork are two distinct entities? – I think George Dickie is right in saying that the artefact in question becomes a new, “complex” object by its use as an artistic medium. So the artist has indeed brought a new artefact into existence. See Dickie, George: *The Art Circle. A Theory of Art*. Evanston, IL 1197, p. 45 f.

original Sphinx, that is, the artefact constituted by some particular matter, possessed art properties. Since that artefact is destroyed when the Sphinx is turned into a mere pile of rocks, the artwork has also vanished, because the original artefact does not exist anymore.

Also we assume that $ALFRED_{art}$ is the same artwork as $ALFRED_{art \text{ minus hand}}$. But if we replace every part of $ALFRED_{art}$ with a different material and call this statue $ALFRED_{completely \text{ replaced}}$, we would not allow that it is identical with $ALFRED_{art}$. By the complete replacement of its original parts, $ALFRED_{art}$ would lose its art status and not be an artwork anymore – or at least not the same one. Why is that? Because the obtaining of art status depends on the object's physical constitution. It is *this* concrete object upon which art status has been conferred, this is the material the artist has used, and this object has a certain history of production. If too many parts of ALFRED are changed, the object is not ALFRED anymore. If I replace every part of my car, except for the windshield wipers, I do not have the same car anymore. Equally, if I change too many parts of $ALFRED_{art}$, it is not the same original physical object anymore, and since it was that object that had art status, a change that is too excessive brings about the loss of art status.

6.2 Restoration

In the light of what has been said about change of parts in artworks so far, I shall now take a closer look at the problem of restoration. Is it possible that by the practice of restoration an artwork at some point ceases to be the same artwork? Or does restoration not affect an artwork's identity? I have conceded

that a certain degree of change should be allowable, but there are arguments against this view. Mark Sagoff in his “On Restoring and Reproducing Art” claims that by restoring artworks, we corrupt their authenticity, so a restored artwork is not the same artwork anymore.²⁸²

Sagoff takes authenticity to be a necessary condition of aesthetic value. What we appreciate about a painting is the fact that it is created by a certain artist at a certain point of time. So for Sagoff the history of production of an artwork is relevant to its identity. We do not value a forgery, because it is not authentic by not having the history of production of the original. Otherwise, Sagoff says, we could always prefer a reproduction of a painting to the original. It may even look better, because the colours of the original could be faded. But we obviously do not. “The reason is this: we value one object way above another because it is the product of a different process.”²⁸³ We prefer the original to the reproduction, because of its authenticity. If the original did not have this special property of being authentic – which the reproduction or forgery does not – nothing would speak against removing the originals from a museum, throwing them away and replacing them with reproductions. Nor would we care if some madman destroyed or damaged them.

Such damage was indeed done to Michelangelo’s *Pietà* in 1973. As a result, the arm of the statue was broken, the nose knocked off, and an eye and the veil were damaged. The Director of the Vatican Museum, Redig de Campos, was responsible for the restoration. He decided to carry out an integral restoration, whereby lost parts of the statue are replaced by new ones. A purist restoration, on the other hand, does not replace any parts, because that is considered to

²⁸² Sagoff, Mark: “On Restoring and Reproducing Art”. In: *The Journal of Philosophy* 75 (1978), pp. 453-470.

²⁸³ Sagoff: “Restoring and Reproducing Art”, p. 456.

render the statue inauthentic. Purists insist that nothing inauthentic may be part of the statue, otherwise it would no longer be the same artwork. Sagoff defends a purist position.

The point 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.²⁸⁴

So, according to Sagoff, in contrast to ordinary material objects, lost parts of an artwork may not be replaced, because that makes the artwork inauthentic and thereby a different object. One can now see where my own theory of change in artworks corresponds to Sagoff's and where it does not.

I agree with Sagoff that singular artworks enjoy a special status among material objects, because the art properties are relevant for their identity. The prevailing of these properties does not survive a certain degree of change of material parts, I say. If that degree is exceeded, the artwork is not the same anymore, because it has lost those properties, as in the case of ALFRED_{completely restored} or the Sphinx turned to a pile of rocks. In Sagoff's words, it is not authentic anymore. But Sagoff claims that no change at all is allowable.

In contrast to my own theory, Sagoff denies the legitimacy of any replacement of parts of artworks, whereas I hold that a certain degree of replacement is allowable. So I disagree with Sagoff that even a minor change of parts affects an artwork's identity.

If Sagoff were right that restoration alters an artwork's identity, we would have to face some unpleasant consequences, as S. J. Wilshire observes:

²⁸⁴ Sagoff: "Restoring and Reproducing Art", pp. 458 f.

[W]e would often be obliged either to leave works of art in serious disrepair in order not to make part of them something inauthentic or actually destroy present works of art as we know them in order to rid them of inauthentic parts. The result of following such a principle would be disastrous, leaving us with very few past works of art to appreciate at all.²⁸⁵

On the other hand, I would not want to deny Sagoff's claim that an artwork that has become inauthentic is not the same artwork anymore – but the question is what counts as “inauthentic”? Does restoration in fact make an artwork inauthentic?

The problem with Sagoff's theory is that he does not distinguish between constitution and identity. He takes change in the matter an artwork is made of to be the same as change of the actual artwork that is constituted by it. Suppose we replace the left hand of ALFRED with a different piece of clay. Then CLAY has changed, but ALFRED is still the same. CLAY is not the same anymore if a part of it is lost or replaced by different matter, but ALFRED is.

ALFRED_{art} is authentic. But if ALFRED_{art} is the same artwork as ALFRED_{art} minus hand, then ALFRED_{art} minus hand is authentic, too. ALFRED_{completely replaced} is not authentic anymore, since it is not the same artwork as ALFRED_{art} or ALFRED_{art} minus hand. Our realisation that a minor change in parts does not affect an artwork's identity entails that its authenticity is not affected by that change.²⁸⁶

²⁸⁵ Wilsmore, S. J.: “Authenticity and Restoration”. In: *BJA* 26 (1986), pp. 228-238: 230.

²⁸⁶ Catherine Z. Elgin states that restoration is allowable as long as the restorer manages to preserve what Goodman calls the “symptoms of the aesthetic” that determine what (or rather when) an artwork is. Elgin, Catherine Z.: “Restoration and Work Identity”. In her: *Between the Absolute and the Arbitrary*. Ithaca and London 1997, pp. 97-109. Peter Lamarque suggests that restoration does not affect the identity of a work as long as the work's “essential aesthetic character and value” remain. Lamarque, Peter: “Work and Objects”. In: *Proceedings of the Aristotelian Society* 100 (2002), pp.141-162:159.

Sagoff would deny that $ALFRED_{art}$ is the same artwork as $ALFRED_{art \text{ minus hand}}$, but one should also bear in mind that a minimal change of parts is compatible with our intuition that we still have the same statue in front of us. If a diminutive part of ALFRED's fingertip is lost, should that really mean that ALFRED is not the same anymore? Additionally, material objects change their parts on a molecular level continuously. If one claimed that this kind of change would affect an object's identity, then no object at all would stay identical with itself through time. That cannot be Sagoff's claim, because he claims that it is possible for artworks to stay authentic. But if change on a molecular level is allowable, why not also on a minimal level like ALFRED losing a splint of its finger? Or on a small level like ALFRED losing its hand? It is Sagoff's burden to show why a minimal change of artworks, in contrast to molecular change, is supposed to make an artwork inauthentic. As long as he does not do that, I do not see why we should accept Sagoff's arguments.

Sagoff's understanding of authenticity is too strict and so leads to the implausible consequences Wilshire has pointed out. Because the relation between material matter and organized matter is that of constitution instead of identity, the work of art can be restored and still remain authentic.

6.3 Possible Changes

Let us return to the general question of persistence of artworks. I have said that a piece of matter CLAY constitutes some organized matter, the statue ALFRED. Whilst CLAY cannot survive the loss of one of its parts, ALFRED

can.²⁸⁷ Organized matter, like a plant, a human being, or an artefact, may change in parts and still remain the same. Artworks are artefacts that also have art properties. Several things could happen to the artwork:

1) The artefact could be destroyed by the loss of too many of its parts or because it is annihilated. This would also mean that the artwork is destroyed and does not exist anymore.

2) The artefact could remain completely unchanged, but lose its art status.

3) The artefact could change in its composition, and because the change is too radical, lose its art status.

4) The artefact could change in its intrinsic properties, and because the change is too radical, lose its art status.

5) The artefact could change in its composition, but keep its art status, like ALFRED_{art minus hand}.

6) The artefact could change into a new artefact. This would entail the loss of art status of that artefact, because it was the original artefact that possessed art status, and now we have a new artefact. It may well be that the new artefact turns out to be an artwork, too, but it would be a different one.

7) We could even imagine that the artefact remains the same, but becomes a new artwork.

I would like to go through these cases one by one. Some require more explanation, others less. An example of 1) would be the Sphinx turned to a pile of rocks. Not only would an artefact cease to exist, but also an artwork. As mentioned before, we must not think that three things are destroyed here. A portion of bedrock would be destroyed and an artefact that had certain

²⁸⁷ Thomson: "Statue and Clay", p. 156.

properties that made it art, but not also an extra entity called “artwork”. If Tom is atomised, a person who had the property of being a student is destroyed, but not an extra entity called “student”.

An example of **2)** would be fascist “artworks”. They once counted as art, but we do not consider them to be art anymore. They have lost their art status, but the actual artefacts remain the same and possibly still exist.

One could argue that fascist artworks are just bad art, not non-art. One could grudgingly admit that Leni Riefenstahl’s films are art, but terrible art that is to be repudiated because of the purpose they served. But on the other hand, there is still a difference between bad art and non-art. Not every painting is art, not even bad art, just because it is a painting. Talking of fascist art, there are clearer-cut cases than the controversial films of Riefenstahl. And though there are exhibitions of NS-“art”, such exhibitions are to be considered as historical documentations, not as art-exhibitions.

Likewise, Tom would lose his student status if he were to time-travel and emerge in the future where there were completely different conditions for being a student. If the conditions for being a student in Scotland in 2006 and being a student in Scotland in 2106 are completely different, then the new context entails the loss of Tom’s student status. Though Tom still continues to exist, he does not have the property of being a student anymore.

Possibility **3)** would occur if ALFRED_{art} underwent a massive loss of its parts, so that, say, only the legs are left. We might also think that a specific part of ALFRED_{art} is relevant to its identity in such a way that its loss alone would make ALFRED_{art} lose its art status. Let us say that the head of ALFRED_{art} is extremely beautifully and originally crafted, whereas the rest of the statue is rather clumsy. Then ALFRED_{art} could not survive the loss of the head without

still being the same artwork ALFRED_{art}. Maybe the statue would still be ALFRED – or maybe not – but at least it would not have art status anymore.

Possibility 4) is that the intrinsic properties of an artwork change, and therefore it loses its art properties. An intrinsic property well suited to illustrate this is shape. Suppose ALFRED is suddenly bent. He is indeed bent over far enough for his head to reach his feet. Or ALFRED falls victim to the workings of a shrinking-machine, and is reduced to the size of a matchbox. I take it that we might be unwilling to say that we are still faced with ALFRED_{art} after one of these transformations.

We have already discussed possibility 5), where the physical change does not affect the art status and the artwork stays the same. Restoration is a case of 5). Parts of an artwork are replaced, but still we have the same artwork after the restoration.

An example of 6) would be the *Frauenkirche* in Dresden. Most parts of the building were destroyed, so it lost art status. Then the building was reconstructed by using different materials than the original ones. Now we have a new artefact. It may look like the former artefact²⁸⁸, but it is not the same, since it is to a large extent constituted by different matter.

Now there are two possibilities: either the new building acquires art status and so becomes an artwork – though a different one from the original architectural work of art – or it does not acquire art status and thereby continues to exist as the new artefact, but not as an artwork. The reconstructed *Frauenkirche* is no doubt an artwork. It also strongly resembles the original one, but it is a different artwork due to the vast change in its parts.

²⁸⁸ Indeed, the complete construction plans were still available and so were used for the reconstruction.

To take another example, suppose a Martian shoots at ALFRED_{art} with his disintegration-gun, and 70% of the statue is reduced to its atomic parts. By that, ALFRED, and ALFRED_{art} alike, cease to be. All that remains is a minor portion of CLAY. After that, a restorer restores the missing parts of the statue. Like the new building, the new statue is not the same as the destroyed or disintegrated one, because the change of its constituting matter was too large. The new statue may never become an artwork, but in fact it may also become an artwork, if art status is conferred upon the new artefact, though it would not be ALFRED_{art} anymore.

A different case is this: in the 1960's, the temples of Abu Simbel were threatened by the rising waters of Lake Nasser, so they were dismantled piece by piece, transported to a secure location and then reassembled. Though there was a temporary change in the material matter constituting the temples, since they were dismantled, we do not have a new artefact after the reassembling. The artefact remains the same, and the artwork remains the same. Because the result of the reassembled organized matter is the same artefact – in contrast to Johnston's example of the pot turned into a bust – this procedure did not affect the identity of the artwork.

Thinking about the dismantlement of the temple leads to possible ship of Theseus scenarios. Let us say that the temples are half dismantled, and that one half is moved to the new site and reassembled, whereas the other half remains on the original site. What do we have here? – I suggest that neither half is identical with the original temples. We have said that an artwork cannot survive a radical loss of parts, and losing 50% of its parts counts as a radical loss for an artwork. So we have two groups of temples, both of them missing too many parts to be identified with the original ones. Now, if one group is

dismantled and reassembled with the other group, we are faced with the original artwork again. A ship of Theseus *problem*, however, does not arise: say the first group's missing parts are restored with new material. We still do not have the original artwork afterwards, since it consists only to 50% of its original parts. If those original parts are removed, reassembled with the other group, and restored with new material in this group, we have two sets of temples. One is constituted by completely new parts and the other one by the original parts. The latter one is the same as the original temples, and the other one is a new set of temples.

A ship of Theseus problem concerning restoration would only arise if we allowed for complete restoration, i.e. that every part of an artwork gets restored so that eventually no original parts are left. However, we postulated that an artwork cannot survive a radical change in composition, and thus it is clear in a ship of Theseus scenario what the original artwork is.

What would be an example of 7)? Let us assume that Earth was inhabited by aliens before we and elephants came into existence. The aliens created a statue of one of their gods, who looks like an elephant. The statue later was lost and only recently discovered by archaeologists. The artworld conferred art status upon that artefact, which is clearly a statue of an elephant. So the artefact has not changed in its long period of existence, but it once was the artwork: statue of a god and later the artwork: statue of an elephant.

To sum up, when we say that singular artworks are physical objects, this means that they are constituted by material matter, but not identical with it. Additionally, they have art properties. That does not mean that the artwork is

an extra entity, but rather means that an artwork is an artefact possessing the temporary property of being art.

The answer to the question about the persistence of singular artworks thus is that artefacts, which are art, can remain the same artworks in spite of the loss or replacement of some of their parts if their art properties are not affected by this change. Furthermore, an artefact that possesses the property of having art status can change into one of the following: ceasing to be at all; the same artefact without art status; a new artefact without art status; a new artefact with art status; the same artefact, but a different artwork – or it could persist as the same artwork.

FINAL REMARK

This concludes my analysis of the ontological status of artworks. I have argued that multiple artworks are abstract objects – types – that can be realised in physical objects. They are created at a certain point of time and thus have a temporal extension, but cannot be perceived by the senses and cannot enter into causal relations. Artworks are created by bringing a physical object into existence and can also cease to be again if it is not possible to realise them anymore.

For an object to be a token of an artwork-type, it has to comply with the structure of the work and has to historically descend from it. The identity of the work itself is not only determined by its structure, but also by the context in which it was made. Not all of these contextual properties are also essential, though. There are strong intuitive grounds for thinking that some aspects of a work's production process could have been different, and the resulting work would still have been the same. Only those properties are essential that are relevant to the meaning of a work.

Not all artworks are multiple. There are singular artworks as well, despite claims to the contrary. Whether a work is singular or multiple depends on the artist's successful intentions. If his intentions fail, the work is to be categorised according to the prevailing conventions. Someone who claims that the *Mona Lisa* is multiple has not understood the *Mona Lisa*, because artists' successful intentions are part of the meaning of a work, and the *Mona Lisa* was not intended to be multiple.

Singular artworks are physical objects. They are not identical with the matter they are made of, but constituted by it. A change in that matter, for example because of restoration, does not affect the identity of a singular artwork as long as it does not lose the property of being art.

I understand the theory that I have presented as part of a broader effort to understand art. The overall goal of such an effort would be to come up with a theory that also explains what defines art, how to interpret artworks, why it is valuable to have art, what makes good art, what art must or must not do, what role art plays or should play in our lives. An ontology of art is only a small part of a project like this, but it could be a foundation for it. That is because, first, ontology answers one of the fundamental questions about art – What is it? – and is able to satisfy the puzzlement and curiosity that thinking about this question evokes. A theory about what kind of things artworks are could then, second, serve as the starting point for further ventures into the broad project of understanding art. For example, one possible next step with my theory as its basis could be to investigate fiction. Works of fiction are abstract objects, so does this have consequences for some problems concerning fiction? One point of interest here is the nature of fictional objects. An obvious thing to say would be that, like works of fiction themselves, fictional objects are types. But the standard objection to a theory of fictional objects as types is that then somebody who accidentally possesses the properties ascribed to, say, Sherlock Holmes, would be an instance of Sherlock Holmes. Can this problem be avoided? The ontology of works would strongly suggest that fictional objects are abstract, so can a coherent theory be formulated here? Does such a

conception of fictional objects have any consequences for the debate about the truth-value of fictional statements?

Another point that could be pursued and elaborated in more detail starting from my theory is the interpretation of art. I have said that the history of production is part of the identity of a work. I have also said that the identity of the artist and his intentions can be essential properties of a work, because they can be part of the meaning of the work. Though I was not able to argue for them, I expressed my sympathy for theories that state that in order to properly understand a work, one has to know about the context of its making. So an ontology of art that emphasises the role of the history of production of a work could be evidence for the correctness of theories of interpretation that attribute a central role to the intentions of artists and to the context in which artists work. In order to come up with a theory of interpretation that is based on a contextualist ontology of art, it would also be appropriate to delve deeper into the notions of intentions, understanding, and meaning. What role exactly do artists' intentions play when creating art? What does one have to know about them if one tries to understand a work? What is there to be understood about a work? What is the meaning of a work and how is that connected to the previous questions?

This is just to say that the ontology of art is not only of interest and value in itself, but also as part of a more comprehensive programme. What I hope to have done is to have offered a plausible account of being art. The aim was to answer some puzzling questions that arise once one wonders about what kinds of things artworks are; and to create some clarity by providing categories and

concepts that might be useful and allow for more accuracy in discourse about art. □

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BJA = The British Journal of Aesthetics

JAAC = The Journal of Aesthetics and Art Criticism

