

Mona Lisa in the Matrix

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F HD

U.S.

- <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=YFtHjV4c4uw>

Irreplaceable value – some examples

- Artworks like the Mona Lisa (value for everyone)
- Personal memorabilia – eg. Butch's golden watch (value for Butch)
- Memorabilia attaching to famous people – eg. Marilyn Monroe's dress (value for everyone)
- Persons

(Mona Lisa has no irreplaceable value?)

If we accept the following Combination of Views:

- the artistic value of an artwork depends on its multiply instantiable sensory properties
- All works of art are multiply realisable, only technology is the limit to the multiple realisation
- All non-instrumental value of the Mona Lisa comes from its artistic value

Memorabilia still may have irreplaceable value

People still have irreplaceable value

A framework to understand irreplaceable value (for objects)

- Gwen Bradford (forthcoming)
- Some properties are un-reinstatiabile (cannot be newly acquired)
- Things have many un-reinstatiabile properties (many historical properties)
- But in some cases, these un-reinstatiabile centrally ground some good-making properties that endow the object with an non-instrumental value
- To clarify: non-instrumental value is not the same as intrinsic value, ie value the thing derives from its intrinsic properties

Virtual objects

- Prima facie: not irreplaceable
- They are data structures, and any instance is genuine

Possibility of forgeries

- A distinction in aesthetics (proposed by Goodman 1981)
 - autographic arts (painting, prints, sculptures and moulded figures) – allow for forgeries. A perfect replica of Mona Lisa is still not genuine
 - allographic arts (literature, musical works) – everything that reproduces the relevant structure is a genuine instance
- Virtual objects seem to belong to the allographic genre
- As long as the code can be reproduced, all instances will be genuine

Virtual irreplaceability

- Mona Lisa in the Matrix (a total virtual world).
- The program specifies that we can see the (virtual) Mona Lisa only in the (virtual) Louvre.
- Any replica (virtually) made or forged in any other (virtual) environment will not be the (virtual) Mona Lisa
- If certain kind of events happen – eg a (virtual) earthquake or a (virtual) fire (virtually) destroys the (virtual) Louvre, then the (virtual) Mona Lisa will (virtually) cease to exist
- I.e. no-one in the Matrix will have an experience that counts as being in contact with the Mona Lisa (as the program runs)

Ersatz or real?

- Is this an ersatz irreplaceability? If we discovered we lived in the Matrix, would we revise our beliefs about the irreplaceability of Mona Lisa?

You can go two ways

- In some sense, if the Mona Lisa was just digital information, it remains to be replaceable
- Even if a program ran the demise of Mona Lisa, if Mona Lisa was a digital object, then with appropriate modifications to the program, it can be regained (no physical impossibility restricts human agents here)
- Alternatively, we need more filling in on the Matrix story. How are the principles of running the program determined? Can they be regarded as equivalent to the laws of nature?
- (But this all sounds made up...)

In any case

- One central example of things with irreplaceable value: people
- Plausibly, the beloved has an irreplaceable value for the lover (see eg Grau 2004)
- People and their relationship to objects fill our world with irreplaceable value
- Digital objects, by their basic nature, are not irreplaceable
- Any virtual world that wants to adopt our values have to take this into account

References

- Bradford, Gwen (forthcoming) “Uniqueness, Intrinsic Value, and Reasons (*The Journal of Philosophy*,
- Goodman, N. (1981) *Languages of Art*, 2nd edn, Brighton: Harvester Wheatsheaf.
- Grau, Christopher (2004). Irreplaceability and Unique Value. *Philosophical Topics* 32 (1&2):111-129.