

Art, Creativity, and Tradition

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1. THE PREJUDICE AGAINST TRADITION

Tradition has had a bad odor among artists of the twentieth century. And as anyone who has ever taught in an art department knows, antitradition rhetoric has seeped into the consciousness of many an undergraduate journeyman (and woman). When I taught film history, a required course for fledgling moviemakers, I was frequently asked by them why they had to take my course – why did they have to study film history? After all, Hitchcock never enrolled in such a course, and he turned out okay. Their basic presupposition seemed to be that somehow learning the tradition of their art form would impede or hamper or stultify the flowering of their natural creativity. This article of faith, moreover, is well precedented in the writings of many twentieth-century artists. Perhaps the Futurists are the best-remembered proponents of virulent anti-traditionalism. In the manifesto entitled “The Futurist Synthetic Theatre,” Filippo Tommaso Marinetti, Emilio Settimelli, and Bruno Corra proclaim:

The Futurist Theatre is born of the two most vital currents in the Futurist sensibility . . . which are: 1) our frenzied passion for real, swift, elegant, complicated, cynical, muscular, fugitive, Futurist life; 2) our very modern cerebral definition of art according to which no logic, *no tradition*, no aesthetic, no technique, no opportunity can be imposed on the artist's *natural talent*; he must be preoccupied only with creating synthetic expressions of cerebral energy that HAVE THE ABSOLUTE VALUE OF NOVELTY.¹

So convinced were the Futurists that tradition threatened the creative potential of their natural talent that they urged: “Set fire to the library shelves! Turn aside the canals to flood the museums! . . . Oh, the joy of seeing the glorious old canvases bobbing adrift on those waters, discolored and shredded!”² One suspects (and hopes) that this rhetoric was intentionally hyperbolic. However, the message is clear: tradition, as accumulated in libraries and museums, is the enemy. The enemy of what? Creativity.

Nor were the Futurists alone in their animus against tradition. Nunism (Nowism), as its very name indicates, also eschewed any connection with the past. In 1916, its polemicist Pierre Albert-Birot wrote:

Do we worship Isis, Jupiter, Janus, Jehovah, Christ, Boudha [sic], Moloch? No. Do we wear tunics, peplums, or armor? No. Do we speak Egyptian, Greek, Rumanian, Hebrew . . . Roman or Chinese? No. So why should our arts be Egyptian, Greek, Rumanian, Gothic, Chinese, or Japanese?

Our idea, our costume, our language, is it the same as in the time of Louis XIV, Louis XV, Louis XVI? No. Why should our arts be the same? Is our ideal, our way of dressing or of speaking, the same as last century's? Does our time resemble that of our parents? No. So let's do as each people has done in each period of time, LET'S BE MODERN; let our works be the expression of the time in which they were born, these works alone are living.

ALL THE OTHERS ARE ARTIFICIAL
TO EACH TIME ITS ART.³

Moreover, this sentiment is, albeit more succinctly and more colorfully, echoed by Vladimir Mayakovsky, who recommends, “Throw the old masters overboard from the ship of modernity.”⁴

It is hard not to detect a residue of earlier ideas about creativity in these twentieth-century manifestos. With their references to the modern, Albert-Birot and Mayakovsky, perhaps unconsciously, recall to mind the famous debate between the Ancients and the Moderns – that is, the eighteenth-century debate between those who emphasized the emulation of ancient models as the road to artistic excellence versus those who championed originality and natural genius.⁵ Intimated by Addison, but then elaborated in greater detail by Edward Young, the Moderns' position contrasted imitation of traditional models with reliance on artistic spontaneity, leaving little doubt of the superiority of the latter approach.

Young writes: "An *Imitator* shares his crown, if he has one, with the chosen object of his imitation; an *Original* enjoys an undivided applause. An *Original* may be said to be of a *vegetable* nature; it rises spontaneously from the vital root of genius; it *grows*; it is not *made*. *Imitations* are often a sort of *manufacture* wrought up by those *mechanics*, *art* and *labour*, out of pre-existent materials not their own."⁶ and: "[L]et not great examples, or authorities browbeat thy reason into too great a diffidence of thyself: Thyself so reverence, as to prefer the native growth of thy own mind to the richest import from abroad; such borrowed riches makes us poor."⁷ Indeed, imitation of the tradition not only makes us poor; but proud, "makes us think little, and write much."⁸ Though born original, Young says, we die copies.⁹ That is, by emulating the canon, artists alienate themselves from their own sources of genius, and originality.

These ideas, of course, were then seized upon eagerly by the Romantics with their extreme emphasis on individuality and, through them, relayed to the twentieth century, when the notion that tradition is inimical to creativity, spontaneously, and originality became a recurring commitment, inspiring wave upon wave of avant-gardists with the conviction to overcome tradition and, as Ezra Pound says, "to make it new."

Undoubtedly, the tendency of nineteenth-century artists to model their own, allegedly Promethean creativity on God's,¹⁰ also reinforced the prejudice against tradition. For if God creates *ex nihilo*, so must the artist; but if artistic creation emerges from tradition, it comes from somewhere and is not *sui generis*. Moreover, God is a creator, not an imitator, where imitation is conceived to be essentially tradition-bound. So a godlike artist should not be tethered to tradition, no matter how sterling the exemplars gathered together in the canon of that tradition be. Likewise, the separation of the artist from systems of patronage placed a premium on the individuality of the artist. No longer charged by commissions from church and state, the artist was free to pursue his or her own aims – ones that expressed his or her own individuality – and to search out consumers with like interests in the marketplace. What the artist had to sell was her own individuality, her own subjectivity, and originality became her calling card. But to be genuinely individual, to be an authentic original, was to be autonomous, not a slave to a tradition, bound to it by imitation. Perhaps that is why

Schopenhauer characterizes genius as akin to childishness – as uncorrupted by the acculturation process which tradition represents. Maybe that is why Mozart is so often represented as a prodigy who remained perennially childlike.¹¹

Insofar as the modern myth of creativity is tied up with ideas of originality, spontaneity, freedom, exorbitant claims to individuality, and the notion of artistic genius as thoroughly self-determining, it has little patience for the idea of an artistic tradition. Tradition stands in the way of creativity and artistic freedom by introducing something putatively not of the artist's own into the mix. If artistic creativity, properly so called, is the spontaneous outpouring of the authentic self uncontaminated by anything else, then tradition is its nemesis.

Instead of freedom, tradition is seen as a form of bondage to the past. Instead of spontaneity and utter self-determination, sympathy for tradition marks the artist as a person with a past, a past to which she is beholden. And whereas artistic creativity is associated with consummate originality, unconstrained by anything, the notion that the artist is beholden to tradition undermines his godlike individualism, his supposed power to give the rule to nature. On this view, appeals to tradition are always, essentially at root *academic* (in the pejorative sense of that term).

Something like this view of artistic creativity is widely abroad even today. It is probably the Ur-theory of artistic creativity in our culture, often masquerading under the name of self-expression. Undoubtedly, connected to this prejudice is the commonplace that art cannot be learned and that artists are born to their vocation rather than trained. And though never stated quite so baldly by professional philosophers, some of these tenets lie submerged in their theories as well. The purpose of this essay is to challenge the opposition that the Ur-theory presupposes between artistic creativity and tradition. I shall argue not only that its metaphysical conceits are outlandishly excessive, but that, in point of fact, tradition is and must be an important ingredient in artistic creativity, properly so called.

2. THE CASE FOR TRADITION

For the purposes of this essay, there are at least two senses of the notion of artistic creativity: the descriptive sense and the evaluative one. In this

section, I will discuss the descriptive sense and argue that tradition is indispensable to artistic creativity of this sort. In the next section, I will briefly examine the evaluative sense of artistic creativity.

In the descriptive sense, artistic creativity is simply the capacity to produce new artworks that are intelligible to appropriately prepared and informed audiences. A creative artist is someone who is able to carry on – to continue to produce new artworks. An uncreative artist, in this light, is someone who lacks the ability to go on producing new works of art – for example, a novelist with writer's block or a plagiarist. In this sense of creativity, the artworks in question need not be especially valuable. When we use the word "creative" to praise an artist or a work of art, we are employing it in the evaluative sense.

In the descriptive sense, an artist is creative if she is able to produce new artworks that elicit uptake from suitably prepared viewers, listeners, or readers; she is creative in the evaluative sense if those works possess a certain type of value (to be discussed later). But clearly to be called creative in the evaluative sense requires being creative in the descriptive sense, since if nothing is produced, then there is nothing to praise.

The pressure to create new artworks comes from several sources. First, inasmuch as art is intended to stimulate, command, and absorb the attention of audiences, some variation and novelty is requisite, lest the artist's work starts to blend, as they say, into the woodwork.¹² The artist renews attention to his production through change. The artist is also drawn to variation insofar as she is involved in a conversation with other artists – in effect, a conversation about the techniques and purposes of her art form – and, as in any conversation, she feels the pressure to add something new to the dialogue.¹³

Furthermore, the artist is virtually impelled toward change, because, as Hegel pointed out, as time goes on, the concerns, emotions, ideals, and so on of her culture evolve, and she must find new ways to express them. And last, the challenge to innovate also arises recurringly as new media and technologies for expression and representation become available. For these reasons, and others, art gravitates toward differentiation, variation, and innovation. Change is the name of the game; artistic creativity in the descriptive sense is the price of entry for the individual artist.¹⁴

This is not to say that every artist is a revolutionary. The kind of variation expected can come in small increments as well as large ones. An artist's output need not mutate enormously from work to work. Nevertheless, some variation from work to work is the norm. Thus, artistic creativity appears to be presupposed by the very vocation of the artist. But whence does this spring?

Because he denied that artists possess knowledge, Plato hypothesized that the source of artistic creativity is divine madness – the artist inspired by the gods or muses. But this conjecture is of little use to us, since there are no gods, and, in any case, Plato forgot to discount the possibility that artists, even if they lack knowledge about war, statecraft, and navigation, nevertheless possess knowledge of their art form. That is, though poets are not generals, as Socrates reminds Ion, they know how to represent generals. As Shakespeare shows in *Henry V*, they know how, for example, to portray the way in which a warrior-leader might go about rousing his troops. Moreover, there is no need to plump for a supernatural explanation of this knowledge. From a perfectly naturalistic viewpoint, one may hypothesize that the artist learns how to do this by studying the tradition of her art form.

Historically, a more palatable explanation than Plato's for the source of artistic creativity appeared in Longinus's *On Sublimity*. Whereas Plato/Socrates situated artistic creativity outside of the artist – in a genie, so to speak – Longinus relocated it inside the artist, in his natural, inborn genius. The artist, in other words, is her own genie. Genius, furthermore, is not taught, and this natural endowment is the prime cause of at least great art.¹⁵ In Longinus, then, we find the germs of the avant-gardist repudiation of tradition rehearsed above, transmitted to the twentieth century through the influential writings of people like Edward Young and then, momentarily, by Immanuel Kant.

Longinus's problematic was to weigh the competing claims of natural genius versus rules and precepts as sources of artistic creativity. In this, he was a trimmer. Though giving natural genius an edge in the matter, he also conceded a role for rules and precepts in the process of artistic creation – notably as curbs or brakes on natural excess. However, as the discussion ensued over the centuries, the rivalry between natural endowment versus rules and precepts as the source of artistic creativity turned into a zero-sum game. The font of artistic creation

was either nature or the rules, inspiration rather than perspiration, genius rather than the artificial or mechanical application of precepts. Moreover, this opposition of natural talent to rules of art explains in large measure the deprecations of tradition in the name of creativity that we hear from avant-gardists and undergraduate art students alike, since tradition, in their minds, is squarely associated with allegiance (generally assumed to be blind) to the rules and precepts of art.

The first argument against rules of art is fairly straightforward. There are no rules of art – no algorithms of composition that guarantee success in every instance. One cannot create artworks by the numbers. So it cannot be that artistic creativity is a product of tradition, conceived of as a body of rules, because there are no rules in the relevant sense. That is why artistry cannot be taught. Artistic creativity must hail from elsewhere. This, then, prompts the hypothesis that it originates in the artist's natural endowment, which should never be hemmed in by alleged, phantom rules.

A second argument looks to the history of art and notes that tradition, with its vaunted rules, has often been an impediment to creativity. Had Shakespeare abided by the so-called Aristotelian unities, we would not have had *King Lear* to enjoy today. Tradition, in this respect, is an obstacle to creativity. It chokes it and attempts to contain it. But history shows that great works of art, like those of Shakespeare and Beethoven, originate in the defiance of tradition and its supposed rules and instead rely upon natural genius, which today might also go under the name of the unconscious.

Both these arguments rest on what I will argue are misconceptions concerning the nature of artistic tradition. Both arguments associate artistic tradition with rules. But if there are no rules, the first argument, which we may call the no-rule argument, maintains, then there is nothing to learn from tradition and no way for tradition to nurture creativity. Moreover, the second argument, which we may call the genius-argument, adds that the things which are advanced as rules, like the Aristotelian unities, are really parochial norms that, as they become obsolete, shackle real creativity.

With respect to the no-rules argument, several things need to be said. First, there do seem to be some rules of art, or, at least, fairly reliable rules of thumb, such as Hume's recommendation that if an author wants to hold the reader's attention, he should make sure that there

is a secret in the story – that is, something the reader desires to learn – which keeps her turning the pages. In each art form there are rules of this sort that an artist may learn that will enable her to secure certain routine effects. Of course, these rules do not have scientific precision. Since artworks are very complicated, such rules have to be subtly coordinated with other factors. The rules cannot be applied mechanically. Their application requires finesse and judgment. But arguably these talents themselves are acquired by studying the tradition and its canon of exemplars.

Of course, the rules the skeptic has in mind may not be rules such as those for promoting effects, like suspense. What the skeptic denies is that there are rules which guarantee the production of masterpieces. This may be correct, and, in any case, no one knows what those rules might be. However, this is irrelevant to a descriptive account of artistic creativity. For such an account is only concerned with the contribution that tradition makes to the creation of new works, whether they be masterpieces or not. And it may be the case that sometimes, even often, traditional rules of thumb, supplemented by judgment, is what enables artists to produce new work – that is, to be creative in the descriptive sense. That is, after all, why visual artists learn color theory.

The no-rule argument may be right in its contention that there are no rules of art that are algorithmic, but this is also true in other arenas, such as morality and the law, where we are not disposed, in consequence, to deny there are rules. Of course, the skeptic may concede this and go on to modify his position by saying that if there are such rules, there are not very many of them, and, in any event, they are not very important. So even if tradition is a matter of such rules, tradition's contribution to artistic creativity dwindles to insignificance.

Now the skeptic may or not be correct about the number and import of such rules. However, even if he were right, his conclusion does not follow from this, because it is not clear that the only thing an artist learns from her tradition is a body of rules. That is, the conflation of tradition with rules, especially algorithmic ones, is invidious. For, as I will attempt to show in what follows, artists learn something more than rote formulas from their tradition and it is this something more that is indispensable to artistic creativity.

However, before turning to this issue, a few points need to be made about the second skeptical argument, the genius-argument. Like the

no-rule argument, it uses masterpieces – works by Shakespeare and Beethoven – as its primary intuition pumps. Thus, it is really concerned with artistic creativity in the evaluative sense, not routine artistic creativity in the descriptive sense. It may be the case that certain masterpieces defy period-specific rules, but that does not imply that period-specific rules do not sometimes abet the creation of new artworks, some of which may be very good, even if others are not.

Moreover, again like the no-rule argument, the genius-argument supposes that artistic traditions are to be construed as a body of rules, indeed, particularly rigid, static, and inflexible rules, rules that stand in the way of creativity as a logjam holds back the torrential, altogether sublime river. But this is the wrong way to conceive of an artistic tradition.

Artistic practices evolve for reasons we have already suggested. This evolutionary process involves expansion in new and future directions and the retention of past aims, values, and strategies that make evolving artistic practices of a piece with their predecessor practices. Tradition obviously plays a role in this process in terms of retention. But tradition also contributes to the expansion of the practice by informing artists about which variations in artistic production are intelligible ones, given the background of the practice.

That is, artistic creativity is not a matter of random variations. Artists need some sense of which variations will count as intelligible or relevant expansions of the same practice. That sense, in large measure, derives from their immersion in a tradition. Tradition, in this respect, is what negotiates the transition between the past and the future of artistic practice.

Tradition, in short, is not an inflexible barrier to change and creativity. It is a flexible resource for initiating relevant and intelligible changes within artistic practices – a resource that enables artists to create new work that remains within the boundaries of the self-same practices. In this regard, it is mistaken to view artistic tradition as an obstacle to creativity; rather it is an engine or catalyst that enables it to unfold.

So far I have criticized the two skeptical arguments that impugn the role of tradition with respect to artistic creativity. I have done so primarily by denying that their conceptions of tradition are accurate. But if this is to be more than a logical gambit, the burden of proof is

upon me to suggest an account of artistic tradition that supports the claim that it is an indispensable contributing factor to artistic creativity in the descriptive sense.

In his book *Ulysses Unbound*, Jon Elster points out that artistic creativity requires a way in which to delimit the number of options that confront the artist.¹⁶ Too many options lead to paralysis rather than creativity: too many possibilities, without some way of narrowing down the field of alternative choices, will stop the artist in her tracks rather than promoting the production of new work. Elster emphasizes the importance of constraints, especially self-selected ones, for performing this filtration function. This is true enough. However, artistic traditions, which are not always best spoken of in terms of constraints, also operate as filtration devices. That is, filtration is requisite for artistic creativity, but self-selected constraints are not the only source of filtration. Tradition is another, indeed, a generally more pervasive one.

Tradition is the living past of a practice. It is indispensable for creativity in the descriptive sense, because it serves to fix the horizon of possibilities that lie before the artist. It focuses the artist's attention upon those options that will be intelligible – to both the artist and her audience – against the historical background of a practice.

Call these options live options. Artistic change and innovation emerge in the course of history. The artistic choices that will be intelligible at time *T*₂ are made possible, in part, by earlier choices in the practice. Presenting an upside-down bathroom fixture as a new work of art would not have been intelligible – would not have been a live option – in the court of Louis XIV, even if it had been signed by an artist. For such a gesture to be intelligible requires a background of doing and saying – of making and theory (or, at least, lore, history, and shop-talk).

That is, for a ready-made like Duchamp's *Fountain* to be intelligible as an artwork, it had to fit into the conversation of art in a way that was relevant,¹⁷ and relevance, in this sense, is in large measure a function of previous stages in the conversation, which stages we may refer to as tradition. Moreover, the tradition not only serves to filter out live options, but since there is generally an array of live options, the artist's understanding of the tradition also enables him to assess them in terms of which ones are most apposite, given his circumstances. The tradition, that is, not only performs a filtration function with regard to artistic creation, but an assessment function as well.¹⁸

Artists acquire knowledge of the tradition in the process of learning their profession. They begin by imitating the past – not only models from the past, but routines, strategies, conventions, rules of thumb, past solutions to recurring problems, and so on. Imitation is the means by which artists are initiated into their vocation. Aristotle pointed out that imitation is a key source of learning; something readily confirmed by contemporary psychology. This is true not only for things like language, morals, and etiquette, but for art making as well.

Artists could not become artists unless they had something to emulate. This is not to deny that natural endowment may make a difference in the degree of facility they achieve. However, it cannot be a matter of natural genius “all the way down,” as the antitradition rhetoric sometimes suggests, since such genius would remain empty and inert without models, strategies, conventions, and routines to imitate. And, of course, the source of these exemplars is the relevant tradition. To suppose otherwise is to buy into a metaphysical view of genius that is frankly exorbitant. It relies on a romantic myth of the individual self apart from society and socialization.

Artists begin to learn how to go on in their practice by imitation. There is, it appears, no other way. But here tradition, it should be noted, is not primarily a body of rules applied mechanically, as the antitraditionalists suggest, but rather a collection of exemplars that include not only artworks as models, but also routines, techniques, solutions to recurring problems, conventions, effects, and so on. That there may not be any algorithmic rules of art does not preclude the importance of tradition to artistic creativity, as the no-rule argument contends, since the tradition is primarily a diverse assortment of models to be imitated, with increasing finesse and judgment, and sometimes to be surpassed as the artist becomes more familiar with her trade. Even revolutionary choreographers begin by learning how to dance, often in the very style they will eventually come to oppose.

The enemies of tradition, of course, deny it a creative role exactly because they are suspicious of imitation. For them, however, the guiding notion of imitation is that of slavish or blind imitation. So, they conclude, if tradition is to a large extent a matter of imitation, then it is more of a manacle on creativity than an enabling factor. If journeymen (and women) are enlisted in their art form by means of imitation, putatively they will never be creative. The tradition will function

like a cast-iron template stamping out copies. But this is where the skeptic's error lies – in the assumption that an artistic tradition is rigid rather than flexible, strictly imperatival rather than suggestive, cast iron rather than plastic.

But how is this possible, if the imitation of exemplars plays such a large role in artistic education? Because an artist is not simply inducted into her practice by the imitation of models and routines. The artist learns more than that. She learns about the rationales behind those routines, techniques, conventions, and strategies, about the history of her art form; about those whom her teachers regard as illustrious predecessors to be emulated (and about those to be despised as disreputable); about the nature of their accomplishments (and transgressions) and the aims and values they embody; about what are taken to be significant breakthroughs and turning points in the practice, and about why those are important; as well as hearing about what are regarded as blind alleys and regressive tendencies in the practice, along with explanations of why this is so. She hears a great deal of criticism, positive and negative, and not only heeds what it says, but takes on board many of its implications and presuppositions.

The blossoming artist, that is, not only learns certain techniques of composition, initially through imitation, but that process is surrounded by talk – often less theory than a mix of history, folklore, art criticism, and practical rumination, though sometimes explicit theorizing as well. In learning about the techniques and routines of an art form, the artist, often indirectly though sometimes overtly, learns about the aims and values of her practice. As she learns, through imitation, the means of her practice, she also comes to understand its purposes, problematics, and points, as those are embodied in exemplars and commented upon by other artists in her circle, including both peers and mentors. Her education is not merely an affair of doing – of imitating exemplars. The doing is also accompanied with sayings, sayings which she hears from her teachers, or reads in commentary if she is an autodidact, and which she learns to say herself and to herself in the process of coming to understand the practice.

In acquiring knowledge of her tradition in this way, she not only learns about a plurality of different means for making artworks, but she learns about the plurality of various aims and values that these diverse means can serve. Different strategies may secure different aims

of an art form. For example, some strategies may promote harmony in music, while others arouse feeling. It is then up to the artist to attempt to amalgamate these disparate purposes, weighing them in variable combinations, or to pursue exclusively one aim rather than the other in her work. These are judgment calls the artist must make, guided, but not mandated, by her understanding of the tradition.

Thus, the artist need not slavishly imitate the past, but rather finds in the past as it is handed on (in Latin, *traditio*) to her a plurality of related but different aims, means, exemplars, and histories – networks of association – that she may employ in order to determine the way in which she will carry her practice and the practice forward. It is from this background of knowledge that she is able to recognize live options in the practice (the filtration function of tradition) and to assess which ones are most appropriate to her context (the assessment function). As she acquires knowledge of the tradition and command of its plurality of means and ends, the possibility of new combinations and new points and purposes opens up. If the artist is able to create spontaneously – automatically and seemingly without effort – that is because she has imbibed the tradition, making it her second nature.

Practices, artistic and otherwise, are “self-propagating histories of activities.”¹⁹ The vehicle for the propagation of artistic practices is the artist who in the process of learning and comprehending her tradition acquires habits – habits of making and habits of mind – that enable her to go on, to continue making new artworks.²⁰ However, since these habits can be acquired variably from different parts of the tradition by different artists, and since even the same artist’s habits may be influenced by different strands of the tradition – strands that may even clash – the practice can and is likely to change, not despite its traditions, but because of them. Artistic practices do not issue forth the same old thing again and again, because the tradition itself is complex, often resounding with clashing voices and examples, and because those voices and examples must be interpreted by different artists, making different judgment calls, often while attending to different strands in the tradition.

Artistic creation involves the production of new works that are intelligible. Intelligibility here faces in two directions. The work must be intelligible to the artist and to his intended audience. In both cases, intelligibility, to a substantial degree, is achieved by connecting the

new work to the tradition – to antecedent exemplars, techniques, conventions, conversations, and purposes. This is most obvious in terms of securing audience uptake. If artworks were absolutely novel, as the Futurists urged, they would be incomprehensible to audiences.²¹

The artist must make contact with the audience in some common place, and that common place is the antecedent history of the practice, a.k.a. tradition.²² But the tradition is also where the artist must look for her own self-understanding of her work, because that is where her habits of making and thinking come from, not from gods and muses as Socrates conjectured (or was he merely joshing Ion?).

Moreover, the artist’s sense of the tradition is typically apt to converge with her intended audience’s, since the artist is not only a maker: she too is a member of the audience – both with respect to the work of other artists, but also with respect to her own work, where she functions as its first viewer, reader, or listener. Stepping back from her own work, she surveys her choices and, using herself as a detector, contemplates its intelligibility and fitness for other audience members like herself, and then adjusts, assesses, criticizes, and corrects her work with these judgments in mind.²³

In the process of becoming an artist, one introjects a tradition, incorporating some subset of its means, ends, techniques, rules of thumb, norms, stories, routines, exemplars, conventions, and so on, which then cross-pollinate and incubate²⁴ in often unique ways, and which afford the necessary background for artistic creativity.²⁵ With regard to some artists, this cognitive and emotive stock may be somewhat systematic and fairly explicit. But for most artists it will be a loose network of habits (of making and thinking), often only tacitly or self-consciously understood, and accessed fluidly and selectively as called for by contextual considerations. That is the reason why, as commentators have pointed out,²⁶ artists typically use the language of correctness – “That’s right,” “It feels right,” or “It clicks” – to explain their choices, rather than adverting to rules applied algorithmically.

Tradition is indispensable to the creation of new artworks. This is most evident when artists work in inherited styles and genres in which they redeploy tried and true structures, varying only the content. For example, in the genre of the buddy film, one may vary or permutate the cast of characters in terms of their professions, races, genders, educational backgrounds, and so on, while still keeping the basic generic

structure of contrasting personalities (the odd-couple format) intact. This clearly counts as artistic creation in the descriptive sense, since it involves the production of new work that is intelligible. But it is also obviously creation within a by-now established tradition whose structural *données* the filmmaker repeats. Call this type of artistic creativity repetition.

At the same time, this is not slavish imitation, for with each repetition the filmmaker will have to make local adjustments, deciding what to emphasize, exaggerate, connect, diminish, balance, foreground, compare, subtract, contrast, and so on. Moreover, this sort of creation by repetition is not only present in the cineplex, but in the avant-garde biennale as well, where politicized installation pieces deploy a panoply of recurring devices – such as lists, videos, quotations, photos – for the same critical (often political) effect. However, the fact that artists often repeat stylistic and generic *données* need not count against the quality of the new artwork, since those traditional *données* can be reworked with varying degrees of ingenuity, insight, grace, facility, and pointedness.

It is also possible for an artist to repeat the traditional content of a genre or style while varying its structures. One of Stephen King's accomplishments has been to take the traditional material of his genre, as typically found throughout much of the twentieth century in the short story and comic book, and to reconfigure and expand it to the length of a full-scale novel by employing extended characterization and iterated suspense sequences. His book *Pet Sematary*, for example, is basically "The Monkey's Paw" made contemporary and replete with much more character psychology and color – not to mention more than over two hundred more pages. *Pet Sematary* is an instance of artistic creativity, but one that exploited King's knowledge of the traditional canon of his art form, while at the same time reinventing its prevailing structure.

Artistic creativity, then, may proceed from repetition – the repetition with variation of the structures and/or themes found in the antecedent tradition. But another process of artistic creativity is hybridization, the yoking together of two or more heretofore distinct styles or genres. For example, in *Apollo*, George Balanchine mixed together movements from jazz dance and from classical ballet, discovering through juxtaposition qualities and possibilities of movement previously unimagined in either dance form. Likewise, much

postmodern gallery art involves melding vernacular imagery with art-world critique. Clearly, artistic creativity of this sort requires understanding not only one's own immediate tradition but adjacent ones as well.

Hybridization is also relevant to the case of Shakespeare, the hero of the genius-argument. Skeptics rightly point out that he did not follow the Aristotelian unities. But he was steeped in theater tradition, from which he borrowed freely, mixing elements drawn from Roman models, including Seneca and Plautus, medieval theater (in terms of its their episodic structures), and Italian *commedia dell'arte*. Shakespeare was exposed to these different genres and styles in his apprenticeship, and after a sufficient incubation period they matured into the magnificent hybrids that, howsoever much they defy the rules, would not have been possible without the input of the theatrical tradition.

Of course, an artist may not only look at the range of different styles and genres in her own art form for creative inspiration; she may also look to the other arts and their traditions. Often artistic creativity results from interanimating art forms – from importing strategies, aims, and values from one artistic tradition (not necessarily of one's own culture) into another, in the way that postmodern choreographers attempted to implement the program of modernist painting in dance. We can label this process of creation "artistic interanimation." Moreover, artistic interanimation and hybridization are frequently recurring strategies when artists feel the pressure to rejuvenate their tradition. This is why, for example, Soviet theater artists in the twenties incorporated silent-film techniques in live performances.

In addition to repeating their generic *données* with variations, hybridizing their art forms by mixing styles, and interanimating art forms, artists also produce new work and transform their tradition creatively by amplifying it – by finding new solutions to enduring problems within the tradition. For centuries, Western artists were preoccupied with the problem of capturing the appearance of things; artistic creativity revolved around finding new ways to approximate the way the world looks. The artists who contributed to this project *amplified* the tradition by providing new means to secure aims already recognized within the tradition.

Likewise, in the film *M*, Fritz Lang solved the problem of how to integrate the fluidity of silent-film technique with the new technological

possibility of sound recording. He achieved this by using offscreen sound asynchronously or contrapuntally – by showing us one thing while we hear something else unseen. In this he was using an editing principle, namely, montage juxtaposition, which had been perfected in the silent-film period as a way of organizing the relation between the image track and the sound track. Lang thus solved a problem that was recognized as such within his practice, while also finding a way of expanding the resources of that practice that continues to influence filmmakers today.

Like repetition, hybridization, and interanimation, artistic creation by amplification also depends on tradition, since the problem and its criteria of solution are relative to the historical background of the practice. That is, tradition is where the problem and the criteria of what would count as its solution come from. In the case of Lang, the importance of tradition was double-barreled, since he not only inherited the problem from his practice, but found the solution there, too, in his creative rethinking and extrapolation of the poetics of montage.

Thus far, the creative processes canvassed – repetition, hybridization, artistic interanimation, and amplification – all emphasize ways in which artistic practices evolve in a continuous fashion. It should come as no surprise that tradition plays a constitutive role in this regard. But what about artistic revolutions – especially revolutions, like Futurism, that claim to repudiate tradition? If tradition is, as I allege, indispensable to artistic creativity in the descriptive sense, doesn't that hypothesis have to accommodate revolutionary artistic eruptions as well? For certainly artistic revolutions count as instances of artistic creativity. Indeed, for some they are paradigmatic cases. And yet many artistic revolutions are heralded as utter breaks from tradition – defiant repudiations of what has gone before.

It is undeniable, as we saw in the opening section of this essay, that revolutionary artists often repudiate tradition. Yet it is a curious fact about these repudiations that they generally repudiate only a selected portion of the tradition, usually the ensemble of techniques and values that congealed in and dominated the art world immediately prior to their own attempted revolution. Moreover, in repudiating that formation of the practice, revolutionaries generally claim the authority of other portions of the tradition – either specific earlier practices or

enduring aims or values of the practice – as a basis for their revolt. The Russian Formalists referred to this as “the knight’s move.”

That is, artistic revolutionaries hypostatize a period-specific coalescence of the tradition as The Tradition and repudiate it under that label, while, ironically, citing other strands of the tradition in their brief for artistic rebirth. This is analogous to the cultural reformer who denounces bourgeois morality as Morality for the sake of actually defending his own preferred recommendation for moral regeneration (such as the call for less sexual repression).

Yet it is not really tradition *tout court* that is being denounced in these cases, but rather a particular configuration of artistic choices. And, in fact, that configuration itself is typically attacked in the name of renewing the tradition, of returning to options and values that have allegedly and lamentably been suppressed, neglected, or forgotten under the dispensation of the reigning style. Thus, German Expressionists appealed to the precedent of expressive distortion found in medieval artists in their war with realism.

As previously noted, artistic traditions are complex in terms of their aims, means, and values. That is, artistic traditions may possess a multiplicity of aims, means, and values. To simplify drastically, theater involves both text and spectacle, word and image. In certain periods, one of these elements, and the values associated with it, may be perceived to have the upper hand, to the virtual exclusion of the other element. That is how Antonin Artaud saw the theater of his time. He regarded it as text- and word-dominated, Apollonian rather than Dionysian. Thus, he called for a theater of images to reinvigorate theater, citing earlier theatrical practices, like Balinese dance. Though vituperating the tradition of theater, his revolt can be better understood as an attempt to get in touch with vital elements of the tradition that he was convinced had been repressed under the regime of the well-made play.

Despite the fury of his manifestos and spectacles, Artaud invokes past practices of theater, and the traditional ends and values he finds embodied in them, to advance his radical innovations. Every avant-garde repudiation brings to light a legacy of ancestors. Often the avant-gardist names these predecessors explicitly, as Artaud did with reference to the Balinese.

But sometimes the invocation of the past is more general, taking the form of an appeal to an enduring, but still live, aim or value of art.

Thus Duchamp resorted to ready-mades to disrupt the art world's overvaluation of manual skill and sensuous beauty for the sake of reestablishing the artistic tradition's commitment to the intellect – to being thought-provoking – an enduring aim of art that Duchamp believed had been forgotten, or at least woefully undervalued.²⁷

Moreover, this sort of process of repudiation and innovation often appears at junctures where a prevailing style or genre is believed to have exhausted its potential for further development. At that point, the artist looks backward – to the tradition – for a way forward.²⁸ But this result, not in a slavish replication of the past, but a reinvention, since the artist will reinterpret the significance of the enduring aims and values of the tradition in light of recent history and his own circumstances.

Although it may seem oxymoronic to suggest that tradition contributes even to the radical revolutionary artistic process of repudiation, it should come as no surprise. For even avant-garde creativity requires intelligibility – both for the artist and her audience. There is no absolute novelty, again pace the Futurists, that is also comprehensible. In order to be understood, the relevant avant-garde innovation must be connected to something familiar to both the artist and the audience. In order to make sense, it must be an innovation relative to a familiar background, and that background, of course, is the artistic tradition. That avant-gardists themselves are aware of this is evinced by the way in which they speak out of both sides of their mouths: tongue-lashing tradition, but then citing traditional precedents and values in support of their cause.

Tradition plays an indispensable role in such processes of artistic creation as repetition, hybridization, artistic interanimation, amplification, and revolutionary repudiation. This entails that the notion that tradition is inimical to artistic creativity is false, since in these cases tradition is a constitutive ingredient in artistic creation in the descriptive sense. Thus, in its strongest version, the Ur-theory of artistic creativity is a romantic myth. The artistic tradition need not be an obstacle to creativity. It is a resource for engendering creativity that enables artists to filter out live options and to assess them. Because the tradition is rich – comprised of many projects and voices – it is a flexible resource, not a cage.

I cannot claim with certainty that the list of creative processes I have provided is exhaustive. There may be others. So I have not conclusively

demonstrated that the tradition is an essential ingredient in every sort of artistic creativity. But my list is comprehensive enough, I think, to warrant provisionally the hypothesis that tradition is indispensable to artistic creativity across the board. The burden of proof, then, is on the skeptic to adduce some process of artistic creation that operates without any input from the artistic tradition. Until then, it is reasonable to presume that artistic traditions are indispensable for artistic creativity in the descriptive sense.

3. ARTISTIC CREATIVITY IN THE EVALUATIVE SENSE

In the descriptive sense, the artist is creative when she produces a new work that is intelligible to the relevant audience. Probably most intended artworks are creative in this sense – that is, they have been created. However, this is not the only sense in which an artwork is said to be creative. The other sense is commendatory. To say an artwork is creative is not just to say that it has been created; it is to say that it is valuable in some respect. “Creative” is evaluative in this sense, because it tracks value.

Perhaps sometimes people use the word “creative” as a synonym for “good” – “The piece is so creative” just means “The piece is so good.” But I presume that “creative” is generally a more specific accolade than “good.” It is an attribution that would appear to have more descriptive content than “good” *simplifier*. In its evaluative usage, “creative” connotes value. To say an artwork is creative is to claim that it should be highly valued. But for what reason? I suggest that it is the value the artwork has for the tradition in which it has been created.

We call innovations like Lang’s deployment of asynchronous sound in *M* creative in the evaluative sense because of its contribution to the history of film (and TV). It was a particularly fecund intervention in the practice because of the resources it made available to subsequent generations of filmmakers. It was creative in the procreative sense – it was generative, it was fertile, it gave rise to many progeny. It was creative, in part, because its influence is so widespread. Lang perfected a technique that the vast majority of filmmakers have relied upon at one time or another in their careers. From a merely quantitative point of view, its significance has been immense. But it is also important from the qualitative perspective, for it made possible wondrous experiments

in the use of asynchronous sound, such as those of Godard. One thing, then, that we mean when we applaud an artwork as creative is that it has been bountiful – its consequences have been both copious and beneficial for the practice to which it belongs. This sort of creativity is obviously calculated retrospectively.

But, of course, this cannot be the whole story, since we are often disposed to call artworks creative in the evaluative sense before we are in a position to estimate their consequences for the tradition. In the case of historical achievements which had plentiful influence on the future that evolved in their wake, we estimate their creativity by attending to the branching lines of development they motivated. But what of works in the present, whose future is necessarily obscure to us, which we are also prepared to call creative? I want to propose that these evaluations, too, are, in an important way, also tradition-relative.

When we call a recent artwork “creative,” we mean that it has recombined elements and concerns of the tradition in an especially deft, original, or insightful way. In this, it shows us the tradition and its possibilities more clearly, expansively, and perspicuously than earlier works. By boldly economizing his means of expression – paring down his cinematic resources primarily to a reliance on point-of-view editing – in *Rear Window*, Alfred Hitchcock disclosed to us in striking relief the central verbiage of the classical mode of Hollywood narration. When *Rear Window* was first released, people were ready to call it creative. They did so, I submit, because it enabled them to see the tradition of filmmaking in a new light. It revealed to us how powerful a device the taken-for-granted structure of point-of-view editing really is.

One would not call *Rear Window* creative simply because it was effective in promoting suspense. Many suspense films do that without meriting the appellation “creative” in the evaluative sense. Nor was it creative in the evaluative sense because it reconfigured the tradition (by subtraction, so to speak); that alone would only warrant calling it creative in the descriptive sense. Rather, *Rear Window* possessed some added form of value. It illuminated a power of cinema that was there all along in the tradition for anyone to see, but which only Hitchcock had the simplifying nerve and discernment to spotlight. After *Rear Window*, we are wont to say that earlier film history never looked the same again. That is why it is appropriate to call *Rear Window* creative. It

not only reassembled the cinematic tool-kit in a novel way, but it made the structure of the tool-kit newly manifest. What was creative about *Rear Window*, indeed breathtaking, was that it enabled us to see afresh the tradition we thought we knew so well.

From the vantage point of historical hindsight, we call past artworks creative in the evaluative sense retrospectively as progenitors of subsequent developments, in terms of both the extent and the quality of what they have influenced. With contemporary artworks, we say they are creative when they re-collect the means and/or purposes of the tradition in a way that clarifies the tradition – in a way that brings its latent possibilities, commitments, and structures into the foreground. Works that stand the test of time with respect to both these criteria are the most worthy of the title “creative” in the evaluative sense. Perhaps when we call contemporary works creative, we are issuing a promissory note – a bet that they will be fruitful – given the clarity they have already brought to the tradition. We suppose, reasonably, that that clarity will have consequences. Though we may be wrong in this, that expectation is not without grounds. Nor need we withdraw the label “creative” from such works if they are genuinely brilliant reconceptions of the tradition, albeit infertile ones.²⁹

The conception of artistic creativity in the evaluative sense that I have proposed centers on the place of the art object in an evolving practice.³⁰ Creativity is relative to the tradition in two different, though frequently related, ways. This view of artistic creativity contrasts with the perhaps more common view that creative artworks are the ones that flow from genius. That conception of creativity correlates it with certain inner, psychological processes – whatever happens when genius does its work. My conception of artistic creativity has more to do with the place of the artwork in outwardly observable social and historical processes – the evolution of the relevant art world. In this regard, my conception seems more plausible, since we have little access to the inner workings of genius. Indeed, our only way of locating artistic genius seems to be to begin by isolating creative works in my sense, and then to go looking for the psychological processes that coincide with them. I am not very sanguine that we would find any distinctive regularities here. But the fact that such an investigation would be parasitic on the conception of artistic creativity in my sense should be enough to take the most ambitious form of the romantic notion of genius out of the

race as a significant competing account of artistic creativity, even in the evaluative sense.

4. SUMMARY

Tradition and artistic creativity are often thought of as contraries by avant-garde artists and art students alike. I have argued that this is a mistake both with respect to artistic creativity in the descriptive sense and in the evaluative sense. Tradition is, I contend, indispensable to the day-to-day artistic creativity we see everywhere around us – the constant production of new works that are intelligible to prepared and informed audiences. As an artist prepares for her vocation, she submerges herself in her tradition, and what she takes from it incubates in ways that enable her to produce new works, works never before seen under the sun, which are, nevertheless, intelligible to her intended audiences.

Where the artist grapples with prevailing problems of the tradition, her creativity is flexibly controlled by critically interacting with prior products of the tradition so as to put herself in contact with recognizable problems and norms for their solution.³¹ Where the artist seeks to revitalize her tradition by repudiating domineering predecessors and setting out in a new (generally rediscovered) direction, she does so by appealing to aims and purposes abroad, alive, and acknowledged in the tradition, albeit as interpreted or reinterpreted, and given determinate content by her in virtue of her concrete circumstances.

Artists use the tradition to locate which options are live options for them to pursue, and to assess which of the possible live options make the most sense for them, given their context. Without such guidance as to how to continue to proceed, there would be no artistic creativity. That is why tradition is indispensable for artistic creativity and not its antagonist, as romantic propaganda might have it.

But tradition is not only relevant to artistic creativity in the descriptive sense. It is also relevant to artistic creativity in the evaluative sense – the sense where we intend to commend a work not simply for having been created rather than plagiarized, but for being an *extraordinary* creation. For the value of a creative artwork is the contribution it makes to the tradition either by its influence, quantitatively and/or qualitatively speaking, or through the way in which it clarifies the tradition,

or both. Artistic creativity is not identified in terms of the effectively occult operation of genius, but by how the artwork behaves against the background of tradition.

It may be hard to convince the art student communing with his own inner spark, like my filmmaking students of yesteryear, of this. But that spark will set nothing aflame unless it is fueled by tradition. So, if any of my former students are reading this essay, let me repeat: "You have to take my film history course. That's the bottom line. It's what you need, even if you don't believe it."

Notes

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1. Filippo Tommaso Marinetti, Emilio Settimelli, and Bruno Corra, "The Futurist Synthetic Theater," in *Let's Murder the Moonshine: Selected Writings of F. T. Marinetti*, ed. R. W. Flint, trans. R. W. Flint and Arthur A. Copporelli (Los Angeles: Sun and Moon Classics, 1991), p. 135. This manifesto was initially issued in 1915.
2. Filippo Tommaso Marinetti, "The Founding and Manifesto of Futurism," in *Let's Murder the Moonshine*, p. 51. This was first published in the Parisian newspaper *Le Figaro* in 1909.
3. Pierre Albert-Birot, "Banality," in *Manifesto: A Century of Isms*, ed. Mary Ann Caws (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 2001), p. 195 (my italics).
4. Vladimir Mayakovsky, "A Drop of Tar," *Manifesto*, p. 234. Mayakovsky's manifesto dates from 1915.
5. For an excellent discussion of this debate, see Peter Kivy, *The Possessor and the Possessed* (New Haven, Conn.: Yale University Press, 2001), ch. 3.
6. Edward Young, "Conjectures on Original Composition," in *A Collection of English Prose: 1660–1800*, ed. Henry Pettit (New York: Harper and Brothers Publishers, 1962), p. 394.
7. *Ibid.*, p. 402.
8. *Ibid.*, p. 400.
9. *Ibid.*
10. George Steiner, *Grammars of Creation* (New Haven, Conn.: Yale University Press, 2001), p. 22.
11. Kivy, chs. 5 and 6.
12. Colin Martin Dale, *The Clockwork Muse: The Predictability of Artistic Change* (New York: Basic Books, 1990).
13. The notion of art as a conversation derives from Jeffrey Weiland, "Putting Forward a Work of Art," *Journal of Aesthetics and Art Criticism* 41 (1983): 618.

14. Some artistic traditions may encourage more change than others. Some may even discourage change. My point is that, given the considerations rehearsed above, some change in all artistic traditions is virtually inevitable. The evidence for this is that even traditions that devalue change exhibit variation from work to work, from generation to generation, and so on. The preceding two paragraphs attempt to explain why this is.
 15. Admittedly, Longinus was concerned with art of a high level of accomplishment and not routine creativity. However, since many people tend to use the notion of art honorifically, regarding as art only works of palpable achievement, it is understandable that the genius account is often appropriated as a description of the processes of ordinary artistic creation.
 16. Jon Elster, *Ulysses Unbound* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2000), pt. 3. Elster's work is discussed at greater length by Jerrold Levinson in Chapter 10 of this volume.
 17. See Wicand, following Grice, on conversation.
 18. Tradition performs a filtration function for the artist by sorting live options from non-options. For example, painting in the manner of Bouguereau – that is, non-ironically, non-reflexively, or “straight” – is not a live option for a painter entering the art world today; it is an option foreclosed by the evolution of the tradition. However, the same tradition allows that appropriating Bouguereau's work allusionistically or reflexively is a live option; though this, of course, is not the only live option (the only non-non-option) available to the contemporary artist.
- In this regard, the tradition presents an artist with a gamut of live options at any given moment. In order to proceed, the artist must elect some of those live options over others. A contemporary artist may ask herself, “Should I explore postmodern pastiche or painterly abstraction?” To answer that question, the artist must reflect upon which live alternatives best serve her interpretation of the tradition. That is, the tradition enables the artist to assess which live artistic options most suit her understanding of and commitments to the tradition. The filtration function selects out live artistic options; the assessment function then enables the artist to weigh those live options in terms of what she finds most worthy of pursuit.
19. Theodore R. Schatzki, *Social Practices: A Wittgensteinian Approach to Human Activity and the Social* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1996), p. 137.
 20. See Stephen Turner, *The Social Theory of Practices: Tradition, Tacit Knowledge and Presuppositions* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1994), p. 121.
 21. The claim that the intelligibility of artworks depends upon a backdrop of tradition raises the question of how the first artworks could have been intelligible, insofar as, *ex hypothesi*, there was no antecedent artistic tradition. I am very uneasy speaking about “first art,” since I suspect that it is a logical fiction. However, supposing there was a moment when art first appeared on the scene, how would it have been intelligible, given the preceding account?

- It does not seem controversial to conjecture that art, as we know it, emerged from related practices, such as ritual. These proto-artistic, overlapping practices – involving symbolism, representation, expression, decoration, and so on – themselves possessed traditions of making and thinking. Consequently, it is in virtue of the traditions of these proto-artistic practices that first art, if there was such a thing, would have been understood. See my “Art, Practice, and Narrative,” in *Beyond Aesthetics* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2001).
22. This is why artistic creativity cannot be simply a matter of self-imposed constraints. Self-imposed constraints can be completely arbitrary. Like Georges Perec's avoidance of the letter *e* in his novel *La Disparition*, but the more arbitrary the self-imposed constraint is to the audience, the less likely will be its intelligibility to audiences. Inasmuch as audience intelligibility is involved in artistic creativity, common bonds need to be established, and shared traditions are the most natural means of securing them. Consequently, insofar as such bonds are necessary, and insofar as they are not available solely through arbitrary, self-imposed constraints, tradition is indispensable for artistic creativity. Nor does it seem correct to assimilate the notion of tradition to that of a constraint, since constraints are primarily negative, whereas traditions are generative.
 23. The notion that the artist has a special aptitude for communicating intelligibly with her audiences by doing something that they do, only more effectively, appears in the theories of genius of Dubos, Gerard, and arguably Kant. But, whereas they think that this communication is universal in its reach, I would relativize it to prepared or informed audiences – the target audiences of the author, who, because they are like the author in pertinent respects, including sharing a tradition, enable the author to use her own responses to anticipate theirs. For relevant information about Dubos, Gerard, and Kant, as well as a penetrating genealogy of the concept of artistic genius, see Paul Guyer, Chapter 4 in this volume.
 24. If creativity is vegetative, as Young suggests, then tradition provides the seeds.
 25. What Gotz calls the preparation and incubation stages of creativity are clearly bound up intimately with the artist's immersion in her tradition. Insofar as these stages are necessary to the creative process, tradition is indispensable to artistic creativity. See Ignacio L. Gotz, “Defining Creativity,” *Journal of Aesthetics and Art Criticism* 39 (1981): 299–300.
 26. Ludwig Wittgenstein, *Lectures and Conversations on Aesthetics, Psychology and Religious Belief*, ed. Cyril Barrett (Berkeley: University of California Press, n.d.), and Monroe C. Beardsley, “On the Creation of Art,” *Journal of Aesthetics and Art Criticism* 23 (1965): 291–304.
 27. Perhaps the interest of contemporary artists in exploring beauty once again is a reciprocal reaction to the success of Duchampian anti-aesthetics and intellectualism.
 28. As Artaud did with *Les Centi*, through which he attempted to restore the Jacobean revenge play as a way of revitalizing the theater of his time.

29. One case I have not explicitly discussed is that of artwork which, because it is ahead of its time, goes unappreciated in its own day and, consequently, has little or no influence on subsequent developments. Given what has been said so far, must we deny that it is creative in the evaluative sense? I think not.

There may be two different cases here. Let me take them up one at a time. The first case is when the innovative work in question is a precursor of some other work (or works) that does (do) have a significant influence on what follows. In this instance, the relevant work is creative in the evaluative sense, because it is fecund, though its fecundity may be somewhat indirect. Nevertheless, it has a pertinent causal role in bequeathing the tradition benefits that were popularized by one of its descendants.

The second case occurs when the innovative artwork has no influence whatsoever. Such a work may still be called creative just in case it reworks the tradition and illuminates its possibilities in a particularly perspicuous manner. This may happen even if these possibilities are not exploited by subsequent artists. That the work is not appreciated in its own time does not preclude our calling it creative in the evaluative sense, if, with historical hindsight, we can see that it was, unbeknownst to its contemporaries, a particularly discerning reworking of the tradition. But, of course, it must be at least this. An unintelligible "original," both in its own time and ours, hardly counts as creative.

That is, I propose that we call this example creative on the same grounds that we call contemporary works creative whose consequences are yet unknown to us. Moreover, I prefer this solution to the case at hand—rather than going counterfactual and saying that the work is creative on the grounds that it would have had great influence if only it had had a sympathetic audience—because the complexity of the variables in play in art history render any such predictions little more than arm waving.

30. Other approaches that emphasize the value of creativity in terms of the place of the object in evolving practices include those of L. Briskman and Dale Jamieson; however, the weight given to the value of the object in relation specifically to tradition is my own. See L. Briskman, "Creative Product and Creative Process in Science and Art," in *The Concept of Creativity in Science and Art*, ed. D. Dutton and M. Krausz (The Hague: Martinus Nijhoff, 1981); and Dale Jamieson, "Demystifying Creativity," a lecture given at the NEH Institute on Philosophy and the Histories of the Arts, San Francisco State University, 1991.
31. Briskman, p. 148.