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Bringing Back Bamiyan's Buddhas

JAMES JANOWSKI

ABSTRACT *Bamiyan's Buddhas, long the treasured centrepiece of Afghanistan's material culture, were blown up by the Taliban in 2001. Since then controversy has arisen regarding whether — and, if so, how — the sculptures might be resurrected. One option — possible in principle because of careful 20th century survey work — would be to reconstruct exact replicas. I argue this would be a mistake. Reconstructing the sculptures, though it might serve useful ends, is inappropriate on aesthetic, moral, and metaphysical grounds. I then consider restoration, arguing that it is appropriate on these same grounds. Unlike reconstruction, restoration stands to (partly) resuscitate the artistic, cultural, and historical value that now lies, inaccessible, in piles of rubble. And while restoration stands to achieve this worthy end, it would contribute as well to the economic and political well-being of Afghani citizens. In short, I argue that restoring — and thereby resurrecting — Bamiyan's Buddhas, both metaphysically possible and morally appropriate, is a win-win proposition. Afghanistan deserves our support to make this happen.*

1. Introduction

Over a two week period in late February and early March of 2001, the Taliban, Afghanistan's ruling government at the time, set about the thorough and systematic destruction of artefacts it deemed idolatrous and a challenge to its interpretation of Islam. While much of Afghanistan's cultural heritage had been under quiet pressure for years, these acts of destruction were very public, carried out in front of video cameras and making a world-wide splash on the internet. Most prominent among the casualties were two sculptures of the Buddha, dating back some 1,500 years. Bamiyan's Buddhas, long the peaceful guardians of an historically important crossroads for religious pilgrims, had suffered real damage, both wilful and environmental, across the millennia. Thus, for example, the face of one Buddha had been obliterated and the legs of the other amputated, while the freeze-thaw cycle had deleteriously affected both. But when the dust settled in the spring of 2001, these two sculptures, arguably the most highly prized pieces of Afghanistan's material culture, were quite literally in pieces. And it did not take long for remnants of the Bamiyan Buddhas to show up in bazaars in Pakistan, where, reportedly, they were being sold as paperweights.

Predictably, the Taliban's actions occasioned a great hue and cry, both in the West and elsewhere. Almost without exception, nation-states and institutions decried the destruction as a crime against culture and history, and the Taliban's behaviour was said to display its callous disregard for international standards of civilized behaviour, further distancing the religious government, deemed by many illegitimate in any case, from a place in the community of nations. Put simply, the world rose up to accuse the Taliban of 'cultural terrorism'.[1]

While looters had been plundering Afghani artefacts for a long while, the sculptures' destruction put challenges to Afghanistan's cultural heritage on the radar screen in a way unknown heretofore. And action followed. In May 2002 the interim Afghan government, in concert with UNESCO and other institutions charged with preserving the world's material culture, convened an international conference aimed at agreement concerning the artefacts damaged and looted by the Taliban. Center stage at the conference was the question of what ought to be done about Bamiyan's Buddhas. Paul Bucherer-Dietschi, an unswerving advocate of Afghanistan who in 1998 had helped to found a safe-haven museum for its antiquities in Switzerland, argued that the Buddhas should be rebuilt.[2] Indeed, Bucherer-Dietschi has asserted that reconstruction is the predominant wish of Afghani villagers as well as Afghanistan's elite. Bucherer-Dietschi and Afghanistan's Cultural Minister, among others, go so far as to say that there is well-nigh 'universal support' for reconstructing the sculptures. And Bucherer-Dietschi reports that Afghani citizens, apprised that reconstruction of even one statue might cost as much as 30 bridges, respond thus: 'The bridges we can rebuild ourselves, and we will anyway. But the Buddhas must also be rebuilt — it's our heritage'.[3]

In the end, conference participants — archaeologists, conservators, Ministers of Culture, UNESCO officials, and the like — opted to put reconstruction on hold. They agreed that reconstructing the sculptures was a lower priority than shoring up their immediate environment — huge cliff walls containing a series of intricately latticed caves, themselves artistically and historically significant — or rebuilding the ransacked Kabul Museum. That said, conference delegates left open the possibility of reconstructing the Buddhas later. And they were not evaluating pipe dreams. Indeed, several different models have been proposed for the resurrection.[4] And fundraising has already begun: countries and institutions alike have committed significant sums to the project, estimated to have a price tag of $50 m per sculpture.

Now, a number of years later, the sculptures' future remains hotly contested. Many different people, representing a host of different interests and speaking (sometimes past one another) in a cacophony of voices, have descended on Bamiyan. The area has been declared an endangered World Heritage Site; the world's 'cultural authorities' — UNESCO, ICOMOS, NRICP, etc. — have sponsored annual working groups aimed at establishing conservation priorities; the sculptures' niches have been (at least partly) stabilized; and the Buddhas' remains have been pored over, analyzed, catalogued, and stored for safe-keeping. To be sure, then, progress has been made by way of sorting out the facts and — quite literally — sifting through the debris. In one sense, however, little has changed. Numerous proposals concerning the Buddhas' future — some quite imaginative, others summarily ruled out by officialdom — have been floated.[5] But no decisions have been made about the Buddhas' fate. A 2006 *New York Times* article puts it well: 'The fragments have been carefully stored while the main task continues: to gather all the rubble so that the Afghan government and experts can decide what to do with it'.[6]

Can Bamiyan's Buddhas be brought back to life? Can the rock be reconfigured so as to affect a resurrection? If so, how might this best be accomplished? And would it be, as it were, both metaphysically and morally appropriate to seek to reanimate the Buddhas? Trying to make some headway with these questions — trying to sort out what ought to be done with these badly dismembered centrepieces of Afghanistan's material culture — is my aim here.

2. Modes of Resurrection

Let's think first about Bucherer-Dietschi's suggestion. After all, Bucherer-Dietschi is a staunch supporter and unfailing friend of Afghanis and their culture. He did the nation an immense service by collecting and protecting its material cultural heritage in Switzerland until that heritage could be safely returned, and he claims as well to have the good of the Afghani people in mind in this case.[7] Bucherer-Dietschi suggests Bamiyan's Buddhas can and should be rebuilt, and I take it he intends this literally. (He does not, for example, intimate any doubts about the new sculptures' identity by talking about the 'Bamiyan Buddhas'.) Does this view mark off a sensible, defensible position?

The first thing to note is that there are several different ways resurrection might proceed. Indeed, there seem to be (at least) the following possibilities. The sculptures might be resurrected: 1) on the same site using the same (numerically identical) materials;[8] 2) on the same site using the same type of materials; 3) on a different (presumably proximate) site using the same (numerically identical) materials; 4) on a different (presumably proximate) site using the same type of materials; 5) on the same site using completely different type of materials; 6) on a different site using completely different type of materials.

The force of the discussion by Bucherer-Dietschi (and others) indicates that the sculptures are to be resurrected on the original site. Indeed, by 'rebuilt' I think we can safely assume that Bucherer-Dietschi means either 1 or 2 above.[9] And the first thing to note is that resurrecting the sculptures in either of these ways seems a live option. In fact both reconstruction and restoration are technically feasible owing to simple good fortune. Exacting survey work was completed on a number of occasions in the 20th century — several times alone during the 1970s and 1980s.[10] The studies that were completed (careful analysis of the sculptures' material composition, exacting measurements of their dimensions, photographic documentation, etc.) will allow the sculptures to be either reconstructed or restored in a way that would mimic the originals.

Of course which (if indeed either) of these options is ultimately exercised will turn on whether — and, if so, the degree to which — original materials are used in the rebuilding process. And the possibilities here have been a matter of dispute. Reports in March 2001 suggested that the sculptures had been effectively pulverized. But it is now plain that large sections of the sculptures are intact and nearly all of the original material remains in some form.[11] While conservation scientists will need to determine exactly how much of this material is actually usable, some experts have suggested that the surviving sections might be used as the initial building blocks of restored (not reconstructed) sculptures.

If these experts are correct — if much of the sculptures survived in usable form — then in principle restoration would seem possible.[12] If on the other hand the surviving material is ultimately deemed inadequate for purposes of restoration, it seems reconstruction is the best, and perhaps the only, option. So the fact of the matter *matters*. While in the end, of course, a judgment will be necessary, let's imagine the experts decide that, for various technical reasons and indeed all things considered, it is best to fabricate entirely new sculptures. These experts might, for instance, argue that reconstruction would be less costly, more efficient, and more likely to issue in aesthetically pleasing results than what would likely result if the sculptures were restored (in which case they might look like a hodgepodge). I discuss this option before going on to discuss the prospects for restoration.

3. Reconstruction

One option would be to reconstruct the sculptures, using the same type of materials (stone from adjoining cliffs, matching paint pigments, etc.), in the same place.[13] The data from the various reconnaissance missions over the years would serve as an exacting guide — a blueprint of sorts — and the sculptures would be carefully refashioned in accord with the same. In fact these plans — the survey work, photographic documentation, etc. — will have captured *the nature of the artwork*. On this view, then, 'the artwork' is an ideal, non-physical thing. And the particular material stuff out of which various instances are, or might be, constituted is inessential to the artwork considered as such. After the reconstruction project is completed, the Bamiyan Buddhas *will have been resurrected* — 'the same' sculptures will once again obtain.

Think music. Brahms wrote a score that was later implemented; but it is *the score* that is ontologically important. Thus we find it completely natural — metaphysically unproblematic — to say that Brahms's Fifth Concerto is produced on various occasions, by various symphony orchestras. Some nights the performance will go well — the score will be reproduced exactly, the musicians hitting every note precisely as Brahms intended — and on other nights things will go less well. But while individual performances will be more or less authentic, the artwork as such is in any case an ideal thing. (In fact even if the score were never implemented — imagine the music was never actually performed — the artwork would nonetheless have obtained.)[14]

And one can understand the Bamiyan Buddhas on the same model — with the survey work completed at various points in the 20th century being the analogue of a musical score. On this view any particular physical version of the sculptures is an instantiation of an ideal type — something that, by happy coincidence, was captured by the various reconnaissance missions. In the same manner that Brahms's Concerto is multiply (and more or less perfectly) instantiated on successive evenings by the Cleveland Philharmonic, the Seattle Symphony, etc., a reconstructed Bamiyan Buddha would be ontologically one-and-the-same with its predecessor. What we have, or what we would have, would be a new token of a type, where the type is the all-important thing. Armed with measurements from the various surveys — using them, again, as a sort of blueprint — it is in fact possible to *replicate* the sculpture, at least where what matters is its *appearance*.[15] Indeed, in the case we are imagining the experience of viewing the reconstructed sculptures, understood as a brutely visual thing (as light waves of a particular frequency bouncing off a human retina), would be effectively one-and-the-same with the experience of viewing the sculptures in their original finished state. On this view, then, the sculptures' *look* will determine authenticity.

On this understanding of the sculptures it seems quite appropriate to employ the available technology, along with the historical record, to refashion parts that had been lost or destroyed over the years. Thus if we had a trustworthy account of the sculptures' original appearance (imagine that exacting drawings, detailing the original face and long lost legs, were discovered) the most appropriate reconstruction would be one which mimicked the sculptures at their unveiling in 507 and 554 AD.[16] In short, reconstruction should seek perfection. Eugène-Emmanuel Viollet-le-Duc, intimating this ideal, urges that the restorer seek 'a necessary re-establishment in a finished state [of that] which may in fact never have actually existed at any given time'.[17] The idea is to reestablish stylistic unity, covering up the effects of time.[18] Indeed, the guiding idea here, which certainly has

some plausibility, is to privilege and reproduce the *original artist's intentions*. Where these intentions can be discovered — even after the fact, via survey work, photographs, computer design, etc. — why not replicate them?

This position has merit. Indeed, where the sculptures are understood as *ideal things* — along the lines of a piece of music that seems plainly to admit of multiple instantiations — it is quite right to hold that a reconstructed Bamiyan Buddha would be every bit as authentic as one that was destroyed. In fact, following Viollet-le-Duc, the reconstructed sculptures might be *more authentic* — precisely because more in keeping with the artist's original intentions than were their time-worn predecessors. (On this interpretation of 'the artwork', the sculptures in 2000, dilapidated as they were, were hugely imperfect instantiations of their ideal models.)[19]

This understanding of the sculptures' nature has precedent in allied debates. Thus, for example, Robert Wicks argues that this way of thinking about artworks applies to architecture.[20] According to Wicks, compromised and decrepit buildings can be resurrected. Distinguishing between the 'Platonic' and 'Historical' models of restoration, Wicks argues that architectural refabrications are not mere replicas of an 'original'. Rather, such refabrications issue in 'the same' building — precisely because ' "the work" resides in the building's multiply instantiable "look" '.[21]

Prima facie there is good reason to consider Wicks's view. Why? The sculptures, like a building, are one-of-a-kind artefacts. By analogy, then, one might suggest that Wicks's thinking applies to the case of the Bamiyan Buddhas — or indeed to any unique artwork. Like Viollet-le-Duc, Wicks holds that conservation should seek to replicate an object's original appearance.[22] And, once again, this seems a live option in the present case: the exacting survey work could in principle be used to fashion sculptures substantially akin to those destroyed by the Taliban, thereby *undoing* the damage they had wrought. Indeed, assuming the technology exists there is no reason *not* to replicate the sculptures. On this view, a world with reconstructed Buddhas is plainly preferable to a world without the sculptures — our world, that is.

Can the sculptures be resurrected in this way? I am inclined to think the answer is 'no', and that the position advanced by Wicks and others is problematic because it misfires on the nature, or status, of the artwork — which is neither in principle nor in practice replicable in the way just suggested — and the concomitant notion of authenticity. In my view, an artwork is not an ideal thing, but rather *a particular, historically-informed physical object*. I am going to assume this view here rather than argue for it. For reasons I discuss later this seems to me the most defensible position regarding the ontology of artworks.[23] In brief, my view is that where the original material is altogether lacking — as, *ex hypothesi*, it is in this case — in effect we have a fake, or a mere copy.[24]

This alternative picture of the nature of an artwork — one which stresses the import of the object's physicality and history — implies that it will be impossible to reconstruct (from the ground up, *ex nihilo*) the values lost in March 2001. This owes to something in the nature of the sculptures themselves — the sort of thing they are, or were. Put simply, they were the kind of thing *that had a history*. The Buddhas had spent time on the front line; they had weathered many storms, both literally and figuratively. And with this in mind, it seems to me it will be impossible in principle to recreate the values that went missing when they were destroyed. I believe we should be unblinkered about the fact that the sculptures and their concomitant values are not replicable — and cannot be reconstructed. (More about this in Section 4.) Thus, in my view the 2002 delegates chose

wisely in deferring a decision about reconstructing the sculptures; and it is a good thing that confreres at subsequent meetings have shared this hesitation. Borrowing some terminology from Robert Elliott, it could be that the 'reconstruction thesis' applies in the case of the Kabul Museum and/or some of its artefacts; but however that goes, it does *not* apply in the case of Bamiyan's Buddhas.[25]

Have I shown that reconstruction is indefensible? Perhaps not yet. Someone might argue that in advancing this alternative conception of the nature of an artwork I have conflated two ideas — aesthetic value and artistic value — that ought to be kept distinct. More specifically, someone might say that the new Buddhas are the aesthetic, though not the artistic (-cum-historical), equivalents of the original Buddhas. The objector might urge further that it is the aesthetic equivalence (and aesthetic value) that matters — and that the new Buddhas would display it quite fully.

A quick thought experiment will help make the objector's point. To see the (purported) difference between aesthetic value and artistic value let's assume that artists have used imaging technology and the like to reconstruct the Buddhas. Imagine they have done a marvellous job and the sculptures are visually indistinguishable from those unveiled in the 6th century. Amidst great fanfare and hoopla, a second unveiling occurs in March 2011, marking the destruction's 10-year anniversary. Someone around for the sculptures' debut but not aware of the Taliban's 2001 rampage — a *Super* Rip Van Winkle who was sent into a deep cryogenic sleep soon after the original unveilings — would have no idea (he would lack the pertinent cognitive knowledge) that the original sculptures had been destroyed and new ones fabricated in their place.

Now imagine that, upon being awakened, Mr. Van Winkle is apprised of the refabrication project. After rubbing the sleep from his eyes, Van Winkle might steal another look and contend that the fact that the sculptures have been reconstructed makes no difference. Indeed, he could maintain his position, arguing that what matters is how the sculptures *appear*, nothing more. Thus he might say: 'Why should it matter to me that my cherished Buddhas are the product of your newfound technology? These sculptures are exactly coincident with those I remember before nodding off. My experience in their august presence is one and the same as it was 1,457 years ago — they make me think and feel exactly as the others did — and thus I have no reason to disparage them'.[26] Were he to argue in this way, Van Winkle would be implying that the perception of aesthetic value is, as it were, wholly a visual thing.

The Van Winkle thought experiment helps us understand what is at issue, and is in this respect quite useful. Indeed, it both forces me to clarify my point and draws what looks to be an interesting distinction. That said, I believe the objection goes astray. And this because I do not accept its premise; the distinction is overdrawn and problematic.[27] Why? Well, the idea of aesthetic experience *simpliciter* seems to me a non-starter; simply put, there is no such thing. *All* of our experiences are informed by our beliefs and background knowledge, veridical and otherwise.[28] (Our experience of art, then, is no different — by definition, as it were.) And thus aesthetic experience is more than mere visual (or auditory) experience; the way that aesthetic experience is for us — its phenomenological feel or impact — will be influenced by our thoughts and beliefs.[29] Indeed, our experience of aesthetic value is always cognitively mediated — never a matter of brute, uninterpreted sense data.[30] In the present case, then, knowledge that the sculptures have been reconstructed *affects the nature of the experience itself*. Indeed, that experience is deeply informed, and complex rather than simple. Visual freight does not equal phenomenological payload.[31]

And with this in mind I think Van Winkle would be making a colossal mistake. The origin of the sculptures *is* relevant to our aesthetic assessment of them — more specifically, to the type, or amount, of value that they have.[32] (Recall that 'the reconstruction thesis' assumes that, though designed in accord with the original blueprint, the sculptures are made of something wholly different; no original material is used.) Indeed, our awareness that the Buddhas have been fabricated will, or certainly should, make us judge them differently, the fact that they are 'visually indistinguishable' from their authentic predecessors notwithstanding. Thus I believe that our friend Van Winkle is misguided (at over 1,500 years of age, perhaps his brain has gone a bit soft). And to make a further point, akin to the point I think we are intuitively drawn to make about the 'appreciation' of fakes: if Van Winkle is not apprised of the sculptures' reconstruction — if, that is, he is not disabused of his false belief to the effect that the 'Bamiyan Buddhas' he is now experiencing are the originals — he is being duped. And whatever Van Winkle himself might want to say about this, I *can be* made worse off by my ignorance. Ignorance might be bliss, but it is for all that still ignorance. That is, there can be loss of value without that loss being perceived.[33]

4. Restoration

I have argued that reconstruction assumes a misbegotten understanding of both the nature of an artwork and, correlatively, the nature of aesthetic value. But if reconstruction cannot affect a resurrection, might restoration reanimate the Buddhas?

Before seeking to answer this question, two preliminaries. First, let's note what restoration involves. Most simply, it presupposes the continued existence of the object; the artwork in question may be damaged, but it cannot have been destroyed. Thus, option 1 (see Section 2) assumes that it makes sense to talk about the continued existence of 'the Bamiyan Buddhas' after March 2001. (Obviously the difference between damage and destruction is a matter of degree, and in any particular case the question as to whether restoration is feasible will call for judgment.) For purposes of the argument here I will assume what now seems safe: that field reports from December 2002-on — reports which have given rise to some experts' proposals to integrally restore the sculptures — are well-founded. That is, I will assume that the damage to the sculptures, while obviously very significant, is such that it remains sensible to talk about 'the Bamiyan Buddhas'. (They are [gravely?] ill but not deceased.)

The second preliminary is more difficult. A clearheaded response to the question at hand presupposes clarity as to just what restoration might, or could, *restore*. What is it about the Bamiyan Buddhas that would need to be rehabilitated or recovered — what is it we would need to somehow *get back* — in order for us to say that the process had been successful? Restore *what*, exactly?

In response to Wicks's argument I talked about history and values and the importance of the physical object. It is now time to unpack these thoughts a bit. Just what were the (relevant) qualities of the Bamiyan Buddhas prior to March 2001? What was true of them that would not be true of reconstructed sculptures? I believe the first thing to say is that the Buddhas were the product of deliberate creative activity and they had been touched by the past. (We *knew* both these things, and this knowledge mediated our experience of them.) Indeed, the sculptures' central properties were these: 'the product

of an artist's mind and intentional states' and 'informed by history'.[34] And it was over these properties, or in some sense *in* these properties, that the sculptures' value resided. The idea is that the sculptures had relational properties that propped up value, properties upon which the values inhering in them were founded. In short, the values supervened on the properties.

Our understanding of what is at work here is fostered by appeal to Immanuel Kant's idea of rational pleasure and the appreciation of beauty. The 'beauty' we intuitively recognize in our experience of an aesthetically significant object is intimately linked to our rational nature, to a central human capacity that allows us to 'see' value. Our experience of such an object involves, or presupposes, a sort of deep rational appreciation — an intuitive and cognitive response not reducible to the naked sense datum as such. The idea of *respect* is germane here. The object we see and *respect* could be decayed or deformed (even ugly); its 'beauty' is not a function of its appearance. (Thus, for example, we would rather see the Parthenon in its current state than a 'new' one.) The fact that we can have this sort of experience displays something about our deepest nature — and the fact that that nature requires being confronted with 'the right sort of object' displays the importance of *authenticity* (and related properties like *integrity* and *originality*.)

The point might be put like this: the experience of certain objects gives rise to a kind of higher order (purely rational) pleasure. And this pleasure is valuable because, as Mark Sagoff puts it, 'it is an appropriate and knowing response to what is good'.[35] Sagoff himself asks whether these thoughts 'mean anything definite'. And while the thoughts are indeed obscure, they point to a truth about our way of — to use a hackneyed, contemporary word to try to capture something timeless about our nature — *interfacing* with objects that have genuine significance, whether artistic or historical or otherwise.[36] Kant's own example, though from the natural rather than the artefactual world, makes the point — and the next point, too — well.

> What is more highly praised by poets than the bewitching and beautiful note of the nightingale in a lonely copse on a still summer evening by the soft light of the moon? And yet we have instances of a merry host, where no such songster was to be found, deceiving to their great contentment their guests who were staying with him to enjoy the country air by hiding in a bush a mischievous boy who knew how to produce this sound exactly like nature. . . . But as soon as we are aware that it is a cheat, no one will remain long listening to the song which was before counted so charming.[37]

We value the genuine and spurn the disingenuous. Following out the implications of these Kantian ideas, Sagoff goes on to suggest that an artwork is an object of 'love, or esteem, or respect'.[38] This seems right. And this *is* what we experience in, or how we feel in the presence of, the original Bamiyan Buddhas. We recognize their *worth*, which exerts on us a natural (rational) attraction. Not so, however, for a reconstruction project, however well done. Indeed, this is *not* how we would feel, the best efforts of 21st century computer designers and sculptors notwithstanding, in the presence of replicated Buddhas. And this because the latter, were they brought into being, would lack that crucial relational property — an elusive quality imparted by their creators and by history — that the originals exemplified.

I think that this something, this *X-I-know-not-what*, would be lacking even if new sculptures were reconstructed to 'replace' the originals and these sculptures were then

'appreciated' many millennia out — in 12,000 or 22,000 AD, say. That is, even if the temporal interval during which the sculptures were missing were vanishingly small, it nonetheless would be crucial. It would not be an interval, or an absence, that was picked up by our sensory apparatus (our descendents 10 or 20 thousand years down the road would detect no visual difference). But it *would* be an interval, or an absence, that was captured by, or perceptible to, our (and their) *Reason*. In short, the experience of reconstructed Bamiyan Buddhas would be an *affront* to this rational nature.[39] Contra Wicks et al., we would, or certainly should, find the experience of reconstructed sculptures deeply troublesome from the perspective of a rational, ordered experience of the world. Reason simply balks at the idea that reconstructed Buddhas would be as valuable as the originals.

Thus someone who says, à la Bucherer-Dietschi, that the Bamiyan Buddhas can be 'rebuilt' has a lot of work to do to make their case. The *value* that this rational nature zeroes in on is simply not replicable. And hence, to the properly discerning intellect, the experience of reconstructed Buddhas will necessarily be lacking in an important way. The thing that will be lacking is captured, though it is for all that still not fully explicable, by appeal to the notion of *authenticity*, a quality of an object that appeals to, or makes itself known to, our rational nature.[40]

Now of course the question is: will we feel this sense of rational violation, this same affront, upon experiencing the *restored* Bamiyan Buddhas? Will the aforementioned quality of authenticity, and our capacity to appreciate the value that presupposes it, be lacking if the sculptures are restored? Indeed, would restored sculptures give rise to the sort of deep rational appreciation alluded to earlier? In short, will restoration effect resurrection?

The answer, I think, is: it depends. In principle, I believe the answer is 'yes'.[41] Experience suggests that artworks can accommodate some amount of restorative work without loss of meaning. (People still admire Michelangelo's *Pieta*, for example, despite the fact it has been integrally restored.[42]) But I am also tempted by the idea that we perhaps cannot say very much antecedently and without thinking hard about the artefact in question; whether, in some particular case, restoration is practically possible will depend on the facts.

So what about the Buddhas? Can restoration reanimate them? Quite possibly, though I think we need to know more before we can answer this question definitively. Indeed, the experts need to do more work — disagreements about the facts and possibilities still obtain, and hence the jury is still out — and then we need to attend to the results and positions they ultimately advance. Among other things, whether or not restoration might be successful will depend on exactly how much original material actually remains (again, things look good on this score); on the condition and potential usefulness of the material in question (some experts are hopeful here too); on how effectively the restoration work might be carried out, etc. And the answer to these empirical questions, whatever it is, will influence the answers to some of the other (properly philosophical) questions that need to be answered as well: is it possible to rehabilitate the value(s)? And is it possible to rehabilitate the relevant qualities or properties? Are the properties gone?[43] If so, it seems that the value will be gone (irretrievably?) as well. If on the other hand the properties are not gone — or if they could be resuscitated — then it seems possible, in principle, to resuscitate the value(s) as well.[44] To put some of these questions differently: can restoration restore the properties?

Can restoration restore the values? Indeed, what exactly does the restorative process *work on* — the properties or the values or both?

5. Reconstruction Reconsidered: Some Complications and a Conclusion

I have suggested that reconstruction is unjustified — on the grounds that it would give rise to a *fake*, and thus to something other, something less, than the original sculptures. I have also suggested that restoration — while possible in principle — may or may not be justified, and may or may not bring Bamiyan's Buddhas back to life. Which way we go here will depend on the experts' last word regarding how much original material remains, the condition of that material, the conservators' level of acumen and skill, etc. (Restoration will not be easy. How do you lift a 90 ton boulder — reportedly, there is no crane adequate to the task in the entire country — and hold it in place while the glue sets?)

But I would not expect to have persuaded everyone yet. Defenders of reconstruction are legion — a number of different models have been proposed and their supporters are undoubtedly well-meaning — and we need to give their objections a fair hearing. To push ahead with the argument, then, let's think about whether there might be reason to proceed with the reconstruction project — even against the backdrop of the discussion in the last section. Was my argument against reconstruction too quick?

Why revisit the prospect of reconstruction? Well, an objector might accuse me of value myopia, or axiological one-sidedness. Indeed, one might argue that countervailing values — values that, presumably, the reconstruction work would bring into existence — are the type of values that, all things considered, ought to be realized. These values would not, because they cannot, compensate for the type and degree of value that was lost in March 2001. That said, it is at least plausible to suggest it would be better to have these new values than not have them. Thus one might acknowledge from the outset that the sculptures' original properties and supervening values — authenticity, most prominently — are irretrievably lost, while yet arguing it is nonetheless appropriate to reconstruct the Buddhas.

Indeed, it is not unnatural to think the story is more complex than I have suggested thus far. After all, authenticity, though undeniably important, is one among many different values, and it seems plain the latter deserve a voice in the debate. Reflection seems to suggest that an all-things-considered judgment will require weighing the good and bad of the new values to be created (and also weighing these values against the value of authenticity), and then doing what, on balance, is best.[45] What other values need to be factored into the mix, and how do we go about weighing them? This is a difficult question, and I will not try to generate an exhaustive list here. Rather, risking oversimplification I will focus on two values that seem undeniably central — values that have been cited by supporters of reconstruction and restoration alike.

First, it seems appropriate to consider Afghanistan's economic interests — and, most especially perhaps, the economic interests of those in and around Bamiyan whose livelihood, tenuous as it was, has been further compromised by the Taliban's rampage. Bucherer-Dietschi's polling indicated that locals wanted to rebuild for financial reasons. Indeed, most Afghanis, it seems, see the reconstruction project as a way of attracting tourist dollars — and, by implication, increasing what is by nearly any measure a very

meager standard of living. Most Afghanis live lives that are economically impoverished, and it seems plain that reconstructing the sculptures would be a great boon in this regard.

There is a second reason to support reconstruction as well: doing so would promote self-respect and self-determination among Afghanistan's citizens. Indeed, there are what we might label broadly 'ideological' reasons for resurrecting the sculptures. Bringing back Bamiyan's Buddhas would be symbolic of the Afghanis' desire to reclaim control of their political and historical destiny. Responding to the Taliban and Al Qaeda by reasserting the country's will obviously would be an important thing from a psychological and historical perspective, and indeed from the perspective of political autonomy.

While other values might be cited, even this brief discussion shows that authenticity is not the only consideration at work. Indeed, to see how these various values interplay — and conflict — consider the following (not-so-wild) thought experiment. Assume that you are an Afghani in Bamiyan. You find the rubble piles horrific. They point to a terrible moment in your political history, and to an event that marked off a genuine crisis in your society. In response to your proposal to reconstruct the sculptures, Western art and culture authorities urge that you refrain. They suggest leaving the rubble piles in place, marking off exactly where the pieces fell. Indeed, they assert that this would serve to create a permanent record of the Buddhas' history and life/death. In short, appealing to the ideas of 'inauthenticity', 'mockery', and so on, Westerners argue that your plan to reconstruct (or even restore) the sculptures is deeply misguided and ought not proceed. You, for your part, simply want to do better by your family — by participating in the economic resurgence that would follow upon the sculptures' reconstruction. Furthermore, you want to wipe the slate clean, erasing this horrible memory and wresting back some measure of political self-determination.[46]

This argument is forceful. Isn't it perhaps unreasonable to ask Afghani villagers to continue to live in relative squalor and deny them the chance to respond, politically, to the damage wrought by the Taliban's rule? Where we urge that the site be preserved as-is, not rebuilding because it would violate a principled injunction against inauthenticity in art, aren't we making an excessive demand? Indeed, isn't urging that reconstruction not go forward just another instance of the imposition of Western values? In telling the Afghanis not to reconstruct, one might suggest that UNESCO and other international cultural watchdog organizations — all of which have at their base hegemonic values of the West — are exploiting and undercutting the interests of a disadvantaged population.[47] In fact it seems that when we argue against the wishes of the typical Bamiyan villager — the person who desperately wants to rebuild for the aforementioned reasons — we are (all-too-haughtily) privileging abstract theoretical values and back-seating basic human needs. We are privileging 'art' and 'history' at the cost of the economic and political needs of real, live human beings. One might even suggest we are violating a Western norm of autonomy and self-determination in requiring the local villagers to abandon their project.[48]

All of this seems morally troublesome. But there is more. One might suggest further that, in deciding whether or not to reconstruct, we need to factor in not only the good that would result *now* but also the good that would result in the indefinite *future*. Assume the sculptures are reconstructed. Well, eventually 'the new ones', lack of authenticity notwithstanding, will come to be the status quo. And measured across the millennia, the period in which the sculptures were 'gone' might be very short indeed. Thus, for

example, imagine Bucherer-Dietschi gets his wish and reconstructed sculptures are unveiled in 2011. Imagine further they are lovingly maintained, and our progeny continues to enjoy them in, say, 12,011 AD. (Our descendents might come eventually to think of March 2001 as a blip on the radar screen. They might value the 'new' sculptures in the way we valued the sculptures up to March 2001.) In this case, the temporal interval 'they' were gone is exceedingly brief.[49] Indeed, if rebuilding is 'successful', over time something valuable will evolve.[50] And it seems that this — the value that would result in the future — needs to be considered too. What happens, then, if we crunch all the numbers? What happens if we weigh the positive value (economic, political, and perhaps other sorts of value as well) that presumably would be produced *across the future millennia* against the disvalue reconstruction involves? Well, if we sum all of this up, after the fashion of utilitarianism, it seems we might move in the direction of reconstruction.

This is a powerful argument. Is there an equally powerful response? Well, one argument in favour of not reconstructing goes like this: aesthetic value and its object — beauty — is *separate from*, or metaphysically other than, economic and political value. It is a thing, indeed a hugely important thing, quite unto itself. Intimating this, Sagoff argues that art is above all price.[51] Thus on Sagoff's view, to engage in this sort of value calculus or scorecard-keeping is already to make a deep and unforgivable mistake. Indeed, doing so implies what is not true: that the value of art can be weighed against these other values. Measuring aesthetic value against other values belies a radical misunderstanding; it simply misfires on the nature and status and (incomparable) value of art considered as such. (And, consistent with what I said earlier, in opening up a space for the reconstruction of copies it defiles our rational nature.)

Thus one might argue against reconstruction after the fashion of deontology: certain actions are wrong, full-stop, irrespective of the good that might be realized thereby. The deontologist recognizes that reconstructing the Buddhas is likely to give rise to economic and political good, but denies this is morally (and metaphysically) relevant. Indeed, the deontologist affirms that there are side constraints on morally (and metaphysically) permissible action. Reconstruction of the Bamiyan Buddhas lends itself to inauthenticity and duplicity — it disavows the worth of the original sculptures, while also leading viewers to have false beliefs — and thus falls afoul of these constraints.[52] (Of course a plaque describing the reconstruction project would tell against viewers being deceived and misled. But it would not solve what seems to me a deeper problem — which I note in a moment.) Reconstructing the sculptures is wrong, and the realization of all the economic and political value in the world cannot make it right. According to the deontologist, this is not a matter of weighing values. It is, rather, a matter of understanding what values, moral and otherwise, *are* — and then of acting accordingly, in light of this understanding.[53]

Where does this leave us? Surely the complications noted here are real. I concede things are more complex than I have suggested thus far. Citing economic (and political, though here I focus on the former) considerations, one might try to push the idea that — contra the injunctions of UNESCO officials who high-mindedly privilege 'art' and 'history' over brie and wine at museum openings — the sculptures should be reconstructed and the nation should just get down to business. Refashioning the Buddhas would doubtless be more efficient and less expensive than employing conservators (and cultural historians and engineers and materials scientists and geologists) to piece together the gigantic and utterly formidable puzzle that now lies under tarps.[54] And there

is good reason to believe that reconstruction would help undo the economic damage wrought by the Taliban. That said, given the facts I believe the reconstructionist's position, though suggestive, is ultimately indefensible. Even were it less costly and more efficient to put up 'new' sculptures, this would be a mistake. On the assumption that significant original material remains in usable form — again, the fact of the matter *matters* — reconstruction would be misguided. Why?

As I argued in Section 4, refashioned sculptures would be *missing something* — that indefinable quality of authenticity that, well, *made the Buddhas the Buddhas* (this sounds trivial, but isn't) and makes it impossible for new sculptures to act as their stand-ins. Reconstructing the Buddhas would do a disservice to the originals; to reconstruct 'them' would be to *disrespect* the latter.[55] In effect, reconstruction would add insult to injury, perpetrating another wrong — a different one, admittedly, than that perpetrated by the Taliban, but a wrong all the same. In this case, then, two wrongs don't make a right, and reconstruction is, to borrow a term from Elliott, a value-subtracting or value-reducing property.[56] Indeed, whatever we decide to do about Bamiyan, plainly we are obliged not to *reduce value further*. And I believe reconstructing the Buddhas would do exactly this. Well-intentioned or not, it would amplify the loss already suffered. (Reconstruction would transform Bamiyan into Disneyland. Reconstruction might be cheaper, but it would also cheapen us — and the world. Again, a plaque would forestall outright deception. But 'new' Buddhas necessarily would lack the qualities which were the basis for our appreciation of value in the originals. And, so to speak, the very act of putting reconstructed sculptures forward, the very act of filling the niches' gaps with 'new' Buddhas, would in effect *manipulate* our response. Even if the defender of reconstruction admits that reconstructed sculptures would lack the originals' qualities, stepping in to fill the niches with 'substitutes' is, or would be, a type of seduction — and thus something that fails to respect, indeed sullies, our rational nature.) In short, reconstruction is misguided. And since there is evidently a real chance to undertake a restoration project using significant elements of the original material, it seems to me incumbent on the Afghanis — and, as I'll suggest, the rest of us — to do exactly this.

Thus a response in the spirit of deontology contains a kernel of deep truth and is the basis, I believe, of the right approach to Afghanistan's dilemma: the Bamiyan Buddhas, objects imbued with a not-further-analyzable 'worth', should be restored. And this *because they can be*.[57] The restoration project should go forward because it stands to resuscitate real and important values that are now lying, inaccessible, under a tarp in a pile of rubble.[58] Rehabilitating the values is morally and metaphysically appropriate. And restoration is the only means through which this might be accomplished.[59] (In the case of the Buddhas, then, I believe what conservators simply assume in conducting their day-to-day practice: restoration can rehabilitate value. On the other hand, as I have argued, reconstruction is doomed to fail because it assumes a misbegotten understanding of 'the art object'.)

So I believe that restoration should go forward. But the deontological response supporting this conclusion also overreaches. In clinging so tenaciously to a hard line — in clinging so tenaciously, as for example Sagoff does, to principle — the deontologist too suffers from a sort of value blindness. Art, history, and culture matter, yes. But they are not the *only* things that matter. Indeed, it seems to me strained — and this is a lesson deontological hard-liners could perhaps learn — to too-quickly discount economic and political values from the discussion regarding the possible resurrection of the Buddhas.

The economic and political conditions in Afghanistan are relevant; we cannot simply dismiss them. Indeed, to focus on economic value for the moment, when Afghani citizens lack food it seems morally wrong-headed to devote some very significant percentage of the nation's annual GNP to *reclaiming stone*. (Again, it is just such a prioritizing of the needs of art over the needs of human beings that might have incensed the Taliban, prompting its rampage, in the first place.)

That said, of course 'stone' here is a marker for something much more significant. There are boulders and rubble piles; and then there are deeply meaningful pieces, or remnants, of a people's art and culture and history. (Under one description we have the former; under another description we have the latter. But we *know* the difference.) And of course cultural markers of this sort are an important vehicle for cultural cohesion and national identity. If we appreciate the Bamiyan Buddhas for what they are and as we should appreciate them — as repositories of values, values that are temporarily held in abeyance — we will see that they (still) have the potential to relay meaning and be a source of unity to and for a troubled population. Indeed, restoring the Bamiyan Buddhas has the feel of a gigantically important public works project — a project that in the best case could contribute to the unification of Afghanistan, and put the Taliban's rule in the rear view mirror once-and-for-all.[60] Reanimating the sculptures, a colossal project that doubtless would span many years and require a very large investment of resources, stands a real chance of succeeding. If undertaken with genuine care and if carried out effectively, restoration stands to give rise to resurrected sculptures with significant rehabilitated value.[61] And while this seems an inherently worthy end, the project would do more as well. It would represent a significant international contribution to a country struggling both economically and politically, and — consistent with the trickle-down theory so extolled in the West — make a meaningful difference in the lives of the Afghani people. In short, then, the undertaking to restore the Buddhas, doubtless Herculean in scope, would contribute to Afghanistan's material culture and its human culture at one and the same time.

I take it that UNESCO's cautious purists might well argue against me — and against restoration — here. I think Sagoff, at any rate, would argue that integrally restoring the sculptures would be a travesty. According to the purist, this sort of restoration is inappropriate precisely because at least some of the sculptures' original material has to have been lost and hence non-original materials would have to be employed in the process of restoring them.[62] But even on the (barely logically possible) assumption that none of the original material had been lost, the very process of restoring the sculptures would nonetheless bastardize them. For Sagoff, it would make the team of conservators 'co-artists', effectively destroying the artwork. While UNESCO's purists might not go this far, they are sure to be sceptical — some have been outright dismissive — about the prospects for restoration.

I disagree. Sagoff argues against integral restoration as such. I think this goes too far and effectively consigns art objects, like it would consign the Bamiyan Buddhas, to the dustbin.[63] But my argument, while not as 'principled' as Sagoff's, is nonetheless quite in the spirit of deontology. Like Sagoff and the deontologists, I have zeroed in on a property of the sculptures that *demands recognition*. I differ with Sagoff in believing that that same property *deserves reclamation* — and that answering to this call will have positive externalities.[64] To be sure, a concern for economic and political well-being seems to be in direct conflict with artistic and historical value — and focusing (too narrowly, à la the

myopic deontologist) on each of the latter seems to suggest that there is something fundamentally misguided, even incoherent, about resurrecting the sculptures.[65] But I have argued that integral restoration promises to rehabilitate, at least to some degree, the values that are currently inaccessible. They have popped out of existence, but can be brought back with thoughtful and careful conservation work.[66] Integral restoration *also*, however, contributes to the creation of both economic and political value. It puts people to work, increases the standard of living, and contributes to the badly-needed vitalization of the Afghani economy. Similarly, integrally restoring the sculptures returns Afghanistan to the Afghanis; it marks the repossession of a people's political autonomy and symbolizes the reestablishment of a nation's will to collective self-determination. Thus the conflict here is really only *seeming*, and can be avoided. Integral restoration resuscitates artistic-cum-cultural-cum-historical value; it also maximizes, or at least contributes to, economic and political value. And both sides of this value equation are important.[67]

For these reasons, then, I conclude that Bamiyan's Buddhas should be restored — and, thereby, resurrected. To be sure, people on the ground in Bamiyan — local citizens, government leaders, and the world's culture experts alike — need to cross all the Ts and dot all the Is, agreeing upon and formulating a workable plan. But once this has been accomplished we — where 'we' means the world, and especially the privileged world — should roll up our sleeves and get to work. Sooner rather than later, we should set about returning Bamiyan's treasures to Afghanistan. The Bamiyan Buddhas *can* rise again, and all of us have a role to play in the resurrection.

James Janowski, Department of Philosophy, Hampden-Sydney College, PO Box 42, Hampden-Sydney, VA 23943, USA. jjanowski@hsc.edu

NOTES

1 Given the attendant costs, the question of the Taliban's motivation is an interesting one, and it seems both too easy and even quite misguided to dismiss the Taliban as unthinking zealots. See, for example, Barry Flood's discussion in 'Between cult and culture: Bamiyan, Islamic iconoclasm, and the museum', *Art Bulletin* 84,4 (2002): 641–659. In brief, Flood argues that broadly political motives, rather than a principled disdain for figurative art that is sometimes said to characterize Islam, prompted the Taliban's rampage. He also suggests, plausibly, that the Taliban's actions may have been partly motivated by the West's head-in-the-sand response to the deep humanitarian crisis in Afghanistan. Indeed, there is a certain irony in Westerners' loud denunciation of the decimation of Afghanistan's material culture while the decimation of its human population garnered little response. Finally, it is also possible that Al Qaeda, increasingly the *de facto* power in Afghanistan at the time, simply forced the Taliban's hand. (After all, in 1998 the Taliban had actually displayed its *concern* for the nation's cultural heritage by sanctioning a plan to move objects from the Kabul Museum to Switzerland for safe-keeping.) Flood makes this point; so also does Kristin Romey. See, for example, p. 22 of Romey's 'The race to save Afghan culture', *Archaeology* 55,3 (2002): 18–25.

2 Bucherer-Dietschi, a Swiss scholar, is widely recognized as an international authority on Afghani culture. He is director of the Swiss Afghanistan Institute, and in 1998 the US called upon him to broker a deal between the Taliban and the Northern Alliance.

3 See www.forbes.com/2002/03/06/0306connguide.html. This sentiment — that the sculptures are central to Afghanistan's national identity and must be resurrected in some fashion — is commonly expressed in discussions about Bamiyan. While I make frequent appeal in the essay to Bucherer-Dietschi, I intend his views as a placeholder of sorts; subsequent to 2002, many people, including Afghanistan's President Hamid Karzai, have supported plans to rebuild.

4 See, for example, Martin Bailey, 'Disagreement over possible resurrection of Bamiyan Buddhas', *The Art Newspaper* 131 (December 2002): 6. A number of models are listed here, and a number of different possibilities have been proposed since.

5 One $64 m project would have a sound and laser show, powered by windmills that would supply electricity throughout the Bamiyan valley, casting 'electronic Buddha images' into the empty niches by 2009; and UNESCO has vetoed projects it believes would issue in inauthentic results. See Carlotta Gall, 'From ruins of Afghan Buddhas, a history grows', *New York Times* 6 December 2006; available at http://www.nytimes.com/2006/12/06/world/asia/06budd.html. A slideshow and short video accompany the article.

6 Gall 2006, op. cit.

7 Happily, the artefacts were returned to Afghanistan in March 2007. See 'Afghanistan's treasured exiles come home' at http://www.reuters.com/articlePrint?articleId=USSP14314.

8 Doubtless there would also be new fill material, adhesive, etc. Thus the project necessarily would be what some have dubbed an integral, as opposed to a purist, restoration. Among other places, see Mark Sagoff's 'On restoring and reproducing art', *The Journal of Philosophy* 75,9 (1978): 453–470 and Michael Wreen's 'The restoration and reproduction of works of art', *Dialogue* XXIV (1985): 91–100 for a defence of the purist and integralist positions, respectively. (In the end I will defend the latter. The purist, while deeply principled, seems to me to mark off an incoherent position. Strictly speaking, *there can be no* purist restorations. And less strictly speaking, the view lends itself to untoward consequences — as I will show later.)

9 Thus options 3–6, though they represent interesting possibilities, will not be considered here. In fact options 5 and 6 are not genuinely instances of resurrection at all. Rather they point to the idea of a *memorial*, option 5 being in my view controversial because of the (arguably) sacrosanct nature of *the site*.

10 Nigel Spivey provides a partial list of the surveys in his ' "Shrines of the infidels": The Buddhas at Bamiyan', *Apollo* 156,485 (2002): 28–34. See in particular p. 29.

11 See Bailey op. cit. Christian Manhart, a UNESCO official, is quoted here as suggesting that large sections remain intact. Gall (2006, op. cit.) confirms this. Her report suggests that, judging by volume, substantially all the original material — 60% in large (some very large) pieces, 40% in rubble, even in powder or dust — remains. Evidently, then, the reports about paperweights and Pakistani bazaars were apocryphal.

12 The technical term for this sort of (integral) restoration is 'anastolysis'. Later I will address the question of whether such restoration is justified — which will turn on whether or not it 'works' (that is, whether or not it might serve to rehabilitate, or even recoup, what was lost in March 2001). The prospects for anastolysis are discussed, in hopeful terms, in a June 2008 UNESCO Expert Working Group Report on Bamiyan. See http://whc.unesco.org/uploads/events/documents/event-563-1.pdf.

13 I use 'reconstruct', 'refabricate', and 'rebuild' interchangeably. Each is intended to connote the idea of an entirely new sculpture from new materials.

14 See M. P. Battin, J. Fisher, R. Moore & A. Silvers (eds), *Puzzles About Art* (Boston, MA: Bedford/St. Martin's Press, 1989) for a number of cases that suggest this view of the ontology of music and artworks more generally.

15 See Quirin Schiermeier, 'Computer revives Bamiyan Buddha', *Nature* 417,6886 (2002): 210. Schiermeier reports: 'Researchers at the Swiss Federal Institute of Technology in Zurich are close to completing a three-dimensional computer model of the 2000-year-old statue [sic], using a set of high-resolution images taken in 1970 by Austrian cartographers. "A high-accuracy computer model, which could be used as the basis for physical reconstruction, will be available by the end of the month", says Fabio Remondino, one of the scientists involved in the project'.

16 One result of site-work over the last several years is that carbon dating tests have pinpointed the sculptures' age. The smaller Buddha is the senior Buddha.

17 Viollet-le-Duc, *The Foundations of Architecture*, trans. K. D. Whitehead (New York: George Braziller, 1990), p. 195; cited in Frank Matero, 'The conservation of immovable cultural property: Ethical and practical dilemmas', *Journal of the American Institute for Conservation* 32,1 (1993): 15.

18 Obviously this raises hermeneutical difficulties. Those viewing the sculptures in 2000 did not see them in their pristine state — and hence they will be dumbfounded when the replicas, tracking as they would 'the originals', are unveiled. But note that this model of a 'successful restoration' is sometimes employed in art conservation. Thus, for example, conservators sought to do exactly this in restoring the Sistine Chapel. Cleaning restored Michelangelo's work to its original state, or something much like it, and the dirt that had accumulated across the centuries was deemed inessential to the artwork as such. Indeed, the dirt was thought to mask the artwork. (We might even imagine conservators and curators modifying the building's light sources, say, so as to make the artwork more accessible than it had been previously. Here the curator and conservator is a sort of co-artist.)

19 Thus, for example, see http://www.msnbc.msn.com/id/3067334/. In 'Rebuilding the Bamiyan Buddhas', Babak Dehghanpisheh reports that 'a scale model one-tenth of the actual size will then be constructed to work through technical difficulties. For example, designers will have to figure out how to stand the larger Buddha on two legs, since its own were missing for centuries'. Again, the assumption here is that the survey work, enhanced by computer imaging and the like, would capture or reproduce the artist's intentions. And then restorers would employ the most advanced technology to repair the damage, both wilful and environmental, that had been done over time.

20 Robert Wicks, 'Architectural restoration: Resurrection or replication?', *British Journal of Aesthetics* 34,2 (1994): 163–170. And Wicks is not alone. In related debates about the metaphysical and moral issues that arise in thinking about art conservation, some philosophers have advanced positions consistent with Wicks's position. Thus it seems Wreen (op. cit.), who defends the idea that an art-replicating machine would produce genuine art, would argue that bringing the Buddhas back in this way would be both metaphysically and morally appropriate. I find Wreen's view problematic. By way of contrast, Bucherer-Dietschi's suggestion has a *prima facie* plausibility as against any proposal, à la Wreen's, which has it that art objects might be reproduced *en masse* at will, wherever.

21 Wicks op. cit.

22 Wicks distinguishes two types of reconstruction. The first seeks to achieve 'perfection', the original look, etc. The second seeks to restore objects to the condition they were in just prior to their demise. Wicks labels the latter 'historical', and argues that it is crazy, incoherent. There is something to Wicks's point: if we don't seek to replicate the original look, exactly which temporal instantiation, which 'snapshot', do we privilege? And why? He argues that 'original' is more appropriate than 'latest' and that seeking to reclaim the latter belies a misunderstanding of restoration as an activity. Indeed, he argues that there is a sort of confusion, perhaps even a contradiction, involved in the 'historical approach' to conservation. I believe, and I will suggest as much later, that Wicks himself misunderstands the *aim of conservation*.

23 The issues here are complex, and this is not the place to get sidetracked by this basic question in the ontology of art. I discuss it in J. Janowski, 'The moral case for restoring artworks', in G. Levin & E. King (eds) *Ethics and the Visual Arts* (New York: Allworth Press, 2006), pp. 143–154. Cf. also 'the physical object hypothesis' in Richard Wollheim's *Art and Its Objects* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1980). My view is largely akin to Wollheim's view.

24 A number of distinct ideas — fake, copy, replica, etc. — might be distinguished and unpacked. While these terms arguably connote varying degrees of deception, I will not pause to explore the differences between them here. For present purposes I use the terms interchangeably.

25 For a parallel point about the prospects for reconstructing natural value, see Robert Elliott's *Faking Nature* (New York: Routledge, 1997), esp. chapter 3. Though the analogy between natural value and aesthetic, or artefactual, value is not perfect, Elliott's work has helpfully influenced my thinking in this essay.

26 Imagine that Van Winkle 1) detects no difference; and 2) acknowledges no difference, even after he has been brought up to speed regarding the 2001 events. See also Roger Clark's 'Historical context and the aesthetic evaluation of forgeries', *The Southern Journal of Philosophy* XXII,3 (1984): 317–321. Clark draws a similar distinction between aesthetic merit and artistic merit; his argument is suggestive but I disagree with his conclusions.

27 The distinction between aesthetic value and artistic value is a distinction without a difference. While the distinction is useful in theory, in practice aesthetic value and artistic value coalesce; they are two sides of the same coin.

28 Think of this real-life example: A child eats and seemingly enjoys a pasta dish. But then she learns — horror of horrors! — that the dish contains spinach. Of a sudden, fork poised in mid-air, the pasta no longer tastes good. And this because the sensation of taste is not a simple thing; beliefs can inform it. A spinach-laced pasta dish will, or at least can, *taste less good* if the experience is tainted by the (obviously false!) belief that spinach is undesirable. More to the point, I would be less inclined to enjoy a painting if I learned that it was the product of, say, a Nazi artist or Jeffrey Dahmer.

29 Peg Brand makes a similar point in distinguishing between interested attention (IA) and disinterested attention (DA). See her 'Can feminist art be experienced disinterestedly?' reprinted in D. Goldblatt & L. Brown (eds) *Aesthetics: A Reader in Philosophy of the Arts* (Upper Saddle River, NJ: Prentice Hall, 1997), pp. 532–535. In Brand's language, I am arguing here that all experiences are IA; none are DA.

30 The 'blue' in 'blue here now' in the experience of some art object is itself deeply mediated. It will be experienced and understood not as a simple data point from the senses, but rather as interpreted, as laden with associations, etc.

31 As I suggest elsewhere (see Janowski op. cit.), cognitive knowledge affects the phenomenological perception. Once we *know* we are experiencing a 'fake', we respond differently. In short, *there is no such thing as* a pure or simple phenomenological look — a naked perception that is supposed to 'cleave off' an individual's knowledge of the subject of the visual experience. In my view, this knowledge crucially informs aesthetic experience. For similar points see Elliott op. cit., pp. 85–86 and pp. 178–79 of Sagoff's 'The aesthetic status of forgeries', *Journal of Aesthetics and Art Criticism* 35,2 (1976): 169–180.

32 See Elliott op. cit., p. 97. Elliott urges that our understanding of the origin of a thing, whether an artefact or a natural setting, is important for our judgment concerning its worth. I agree. While the notion of aesthetic value is notoriously elusive, it plainly points to something about, or in, our experience. (I discuss this later.) Sagoff agrees that the nature of aesthetic value is obscure. What is aesthetic value? In response to this question he says: '*I don't know*'. See Sagoff, 'On the aesthetic and economic value of art', *British Journal of Aesthetics* 21,4 (1981): 318–329. Quote is on p. 318.

33 See Elliott op. cit., p. 85 (among other places). If I see a forest that I falsely believe to be 'virgin' — the forest was really replanted — I am worse off for my false belief.

34 An anonymous reviewer for this journal was concerned that I had given short shrift to the specifically Buddhist values that prompted the sculptures in the first place and governed their use while Bamiyan was an active Buddhist site. While I thank the reviewer for the perceptive comment (and others as well), I want to note and emphasize that my 'informed by history' is intended in a rich sense that *includes* the sculptures' Buddhist inspiration as well as the very significant role they played in materially representing the development and dissemination of Buddhism. In fact while Buddhists themselves are likely to be divided about whether resurrection is appropriate, to my mind the fact that the sculptures occupied such a significant place in the history of Buddhism — this, indeed, is part of what I have in mind by urging they are 'informed by history' — would be one reason to restore them. In any case, both properties I cite here are intended in an expansive sense that fully acknowledges the import of what the reviewer calls the 'Buddhist point of view' from which the sculptures originated. A number of interesting and useful discussions of Bamiyan's importance in the history of Buddhism, and indeed history more generally, are found in K. Warikoo (ed.), *Bamiyan: Challenge to World Heritage* (New Delhi: Bhavana Books & Prints, 2002).

35 Sagoff 1981, op. cit., p. 319.

36 Compare the way US citizens experience the original Star-Spangled Banner, its decay aside. Their experience of a replicated banner *would not be the same.*

37 I. Kant, *Critique of Judgment*, trans. J. H. Bernard, (New York and London: Hafner Publishing Company, 1966), p. 145; cited in Sagoff 1976, op. cit., p. 174.

38 Sagoff 1981, op. cit., p. 322.

39 An editor for this journal — smartly and rightly — urged me to clarify this point. There are (at least) two ways to explain or unpack this affront: deception and manipulation. I discuss each briefly in the next section.

40 See Matero op. cit., p. 17. Matero dubs authenticity 'that curious quality'. Matero's suggestion here is on the mark: it seems to me unreasonable to expect that the notion can be unpacked without (a 'mystery') remainder. Authenticity — that curious quality — cannot be fully explained. (See Sagoff 1981, op. cit., esp. pp. 323 and 328. See also Walter Benjamin's discussion of the 'aura' in 'The Work of Art in the Age of Mechanical Reproduction'. [W. Benjamin, *The Work of Art in the Age of Mechanical Reproduction*, trans. J. Underwood (Harmondsworth: Penguin, 2008).]) The notion of authenticity, as it applies in debates of this sort, is properly understood as a (Lockean) simple — it is not further analyzable. (See Elliott op. cit., p. 59 for a parallel point about *naturalness*.)

Curious or not, however, we are right to feel aggrieved where this quality is lacking. Where we interface with reconstructed sculptures our rational nature is defiled, or sullied: that nature is duped and the experience is inauthentic. Again, to say that aesthetic experience is completely explicable by talk about the sense datum — and hence the naked 'look' of something — simply seems wrong. This view of aesthetic experience sells human beings short; it diminishes them. Indeed, it is this aspect of human nature that explains our outrage at the Taliban's actions in 2001. We would not have been so bothered had they blown up copies.

41 Practicing conservators do as well — else, or so one would hope, they would resign their positions. The practice of conservation assumes that the *aim* of conservation is worthy and achievable. Interestingly, however, practicing conservators assume that the aim of conservation is very different from, say, what Wicks believes it to be. In my view Wicks misconstrues the aim of conservation. Witness the following:

Wicks (op. cit.): '. . . the central aesthetic purpose of restoration can fall completely to the wayside'. For Wicks, restoration is, as it were, all about appearance. It seems to me that Wicks misfires on the *purpose* of restoration, which is not a single or univocal thing. Indeed, restoration does not merely, or not only, aim at

the replication of aesthetic value as it is (supposed to be) manifest in the *appearance* of an object, in the 'look' of the object's surface. In fact sometimes restoration abstracts from this completely, seeking instead to preserve integrity. Conservators and restorers are charged with making subtle judgments; and frequently their choices are not in the direction of attempting to simply replicate the original surface of the object. In short, the idea of 'the purpose of restoration' is much more complicated and difficult, both in practice and in theory, than Wicks supposes.

Wicks (op. cit.): '. . . the Historical model proves to be antithetical to the very notion of repair and restoration'. But Wicks assumes here a question-begging understanding of 'the very notion of repair and restoration'. He assumes that both are, as it were, all about appearance — and, more specifically, about replicating a particular look (the original). But this is *not* how conservators would describe their own practice. Obviously the craft of conservation is *in part* about seeking to approximate an object's appearance. But just as often it is about something quite different: maintaining, ensuring, and preserving (what we might call) the artistic and historical integrity of an object. And seeking to do the latter will, in certain cases anyway, involve performing treatments that cut against any simple-minded concern for 'surface appearance'. Indeed, it may involve altering the surface in a way that is quite inconsistent (though reversible) with what a concern for appearance and appearance alone would dictate.

42 I discuss this elsewhere. See Janowski op. cit.

43 Sagoff says 'yes, necessarily so' precisely because new materials will have been added. Against Sagoff, I want to defend the possibility of integral restoration — and will do so in the next section.

44 Interestingly, my interim conclusion here seems consistent with the *practice* of conservation. I have urged that restoration seems possible in principle if much of the sculptures' original material remains. On the other hand, if nothing, or very little, remains of the Buddhas, so that we find it more nearly accurate to speak of reproduction rather than restoration, the project seems illicit. And norms in conservation, paralleling this distinction, dictate different responses to each of these scenarios. Thus the Venice Charter 'permits the reassembling of existing but dismembered parts of a monument (with modern material used to the minimum and clearly recognizable)'. On the other hand, it proscribes reconstruction where damage is, well, more or less total. Thus UNESCO's mandate is to 'conserve sites, not to reconstruct things that no longer exist'. The latter quote, attributed to Lyndell Prott (Director of UNESCO's Cultural Heritage Division), is found in Romey op. cit., p. 23.

45 One could argue that, lack of authenticity notwithstanding, reconstruction would generate more value than exists in the cliff wall's empty niches. In fact where a rebuilding project aims to create something good and does not set out to deceive (as it almost certainly wouldn't), there is *prima facie* reason to consider it, and even perhaps *prima facie* reason to support it. If advocates of rebuilding can make their case, it may turn out that copying is permissible, even obligatory. (To repeat, however: reconstruction would not *recreate* values that have been extinguished, for this is quite impossible. Thus, even where a 'visually indistinguishable' pair of sculptures was fashioned and lifted into the now-empty niches, these would not have the same value the originals had. [See Elliott op. cit., p. 79 for a parallel argument.] Part of my point is that 'the look', pre- and post- destruction/reconstruction, is different. The two looks, old and new, *are distinguishable*, phenomenologically-speaking.)

46 For a real world example of this thought experiment, see Carlotta Gall, 'Sculpture; Tackling a tall order: The Bamiyan Buddha', *New York Times* 23 April 2003. Here's the story in a nutshell. Amanullah Haiderzad, an internationally known Afghan sculptor, argues that the sculptures should be reconstructed. (He proposes that the original outside clay coating be mimicked, but that the core of the Buddha be refashioned with materials that would be less expensive and less labour intensive.) UNESCO officials oppose Haiderzad's plan. And one of them in particular, Professor Ikuo Hirayama, chair of the Japanese National Commission for UNESCO, argues in response that the blasted niches should be left empty 'as a symbolic reminder of the barbaric destruction of culture by human beings'. In his rejoinder, Haiderzad cites the economic good that would flow from the project — it would employ local workers and encourage tourism — and affirms a right of national self-determination: 'Nobody has a right to come from the outside and decide. The Buddhas belong to the people of Afghanistan'. Interestingly, at least for a time Haiderzad won the support of Afghanistan's government officials, including Hamid Karzai.

What to say about Hirayama's suggestion? Well, think about a parallel case. The US did not leave the remains of the World Trade Center buildings in place after 9/11. Why? Powerful economic motives favoured reconstruction. And, obviously, the US was unwilling to be politically undone by Al Qaeda. Indeed, in a sense reconstructing on the very same site 'wins' — or so the US would argue. Why, then, would Westerners not be obliged to say the same about the Afghanis' response to the Bamiyan episode? The suggestion that

rebuilding the Buddhas will be the best way to work through the damage done by the Taliban is eminently plausible. And parity of reasoning seems to demand it.

47 Some element of coercion is involved. UNESCO has said it will rescind the World Heritage Site designation if 'new building' occurs. See Gall 2006, op. cit.

48 Who should decide whether the sculptures ought to be reconstructed? On the one hand, as Amanullah Haiderzad intimates, it seems the local citizenry should be centrally involved in the decision-making process; they, after all, stand to be affected directly. And those advocating reconstruction — Bucherer-Dietschi, Haiderzad, etc. — invariably seek to bolster their position by noting the plan has the support of the vast majority of Afghanis. On the other hand, the 'experts' are not given the title for no reason. What to do where the locals' view and the experts' view diverge?

49 As I have argued, however, this would not change the fact that value was lost, irredeemably, in March 2001.

50 Arguably, anyway. For an analogous point about the evolution of value in reconstructed natural environments, see Elliott op. cit., pp. 108–9.

51 See Sagoff 1981 op. cit., esp. p. 322 and p. 325.

52 For a real-world example of the way in which reconstruction leads to false beliefs, see p. 43 of Hartwig Schmidt's 'Reconstruction of ancient buildings', in M. de la Torre (ed.) *Conservation of Archaeological Sites in the Mediterranean Region* (Los Angeles, CA: The Getty Conservation Institute, 1997), pp. 41–50.

53 The utilitarian, again, suggests a cost-benefit analysis: weighing the various values to which reconstruction would give rise against the disvalue that, arguably, would flow from decades and centuries and millennia of 'deceit'. But the point here is rather different. Such weighing is misguided; side constraints preclude reconstruction, irrespective of whether, over the long run, more value might be produced thereby.

54 Thus, once again, both Afghanistan's President and Vice President, Hamid Karzai and Karim Khalili, have been supportive of Haiderzad's plan to employ locals and rebuild a sculpture in 5 years for $7 m — some $43 m dollars less than the estimate for restoration. See Gall 2003, op. cit.

55 Cf. Elliott's discussion of the idea of blasphemy; see, for example, Elliott op. cit., p. 89.

56 See Elliott op. cit., p. 84.

57 Again, some as yet unanswered empirical questions and issues are relevant here. But the evidence points in this direction, and I am assuming the experts affirm this in the end.

58 One could argue that there is value in the *location as such* — in the rubble pile and the empty niches. Thus another option — aside from either reconstruction or restoration — would be to leave the scene of the crime as-is. Recall that this has been proposed by Professor Hirayama, the Japanese UNESCO representative. It is also intimated in a recent personal memoir by *New York Times* columnist Roger Cohen. For the former see Gall 2003 op. cit.; for the latter see 'Return to Bamiyan', *New York Times* op-ed piece, 29 October 2007. Speaking from the hollow cavities where the sculptures once stood, Cohen affirms that 'absence is presence'. But while there may be something to this oracular suggestion, and while it does tell against restoration, it is also true that a dead person is, well, gone. By way of contrast, a person with a dental implant, an artificial hip, and a pacemaker — somebody shored up by new parts, that is — is for all that the same person. (We do, after all, talk about a person — one-and-the-same person — being *restored to health*.)

59 Why did you climb the mountain? Because it was there. Sometimes we just *see* — *rationally see* — what has to be done. Cf. Sagoff's earlier comment, slightly modified: restoration is 'an appropriate and knowing response to what is [still, at least potentially] good'.

60 The project should be funded, in large part, by wealthy 'art-loving' nations (and the institutions they harbour — UNESCO and the like). Such nations proclaim, sometimes loudly, the value of art as cultural heritage, and they should be willing to put their money where their mouth is. Unlike Afghanistan, these nations are lucky enough to be in the position to prioritize art and culture; and, being in the financial cat-bird seat, they are also in the position to fund this project. If we in the West can find the resources to fight a war in Afghanistan, we can also find the resources to make a positive contribution to its history and culture.

61 Restoration, as against reconstruction, leaves us with 'the real thing' — even if, as I suspect is true, this will be a matter of degree and restoration does not, because it perhaps cannot, *fully reclaim* lost value. But even when restoration is quite imperfect (from the perspective of appearance, that is), and very much less perfect than an exacting high tech reconstruction might be, it is nonetheless preferable, in terms of rehabilitating value, to reconstruction. (Recall my earlier suggestions regarding the Parthenon and Wicks's simple-minded understanding of restoration. We're not after something 'pretty'.) And this because of the value of *authenticity* or *originality*. See for example Elliott op. cit., pp. 104–105.

62 See Gall 2006 op. cit. She reports that the German team collecting the pieces believes that 'nearly all' of the material remains. But while this in itself is quite remarkable, it will not satisfy Sagoff.

63 I discuss this more fully in Janowski op. cit. Against Sagoff, integral restoration seems to me the lesser of two evils.

64 Sagoff would say that this is to 'misprice' art objects, to value them (at least partly) instrumentally when they should be valued intrinsically (and hence not restored). But on my view the unflinching commitment to 'principle' leads Sagoff astray. Indeed, it is worth noting that my argument strikes a reasonable compromise, thereby displaying — against Sagoff and the hard-headed deontologist — that working through moral dilemmas is more an art than a science and that positions in philosophical ethics that suggest differently are misguided for their one-sidedness. (Perhaps we would do well to recall what each of utilitarianism and deontology taken by themselves tend to forget: viz. the Aristotelian dictum that we ought not seek more exactness than a subject admits of. The real world is messy and ethics, at least sometimes, is about compromise; exacting principles sometimes don't apply. See Aristotle, *The Basic Works of Aristotle*, ed. R. McKeon (New York: Random House, 1941), p. 936.

65 Again, Sagoff would argue in this way. Also see the Preface in Elliott op. cit. Elliott notes that, in a paper prefiguring his book, he was too charitable to those who cite economic value as a sufficient trade-off for the loss of value that results from interfering with the natural world. Here, Elliott sounds like Sagoff. (Of course in this case the *interfering* has already been done; what remains now is to make a choice as to how to deal with the plate handed us by the Taliban.)

66 See E. J. Lowe, 'On the identity of artefacts', *The Journal of Philosophy* 80,4 (1983): 220–232. Lowe discusses the idea that artefacts can exist, as it were, *intermittently*. And we might say the same, derivatively, about values. The relevance of Lowe's argument to mine is plain.

67 Leaving the niches empty, though preferable to reconstruction on both metaphysical and moral grounds, would contribute to *neither* side of this equation.