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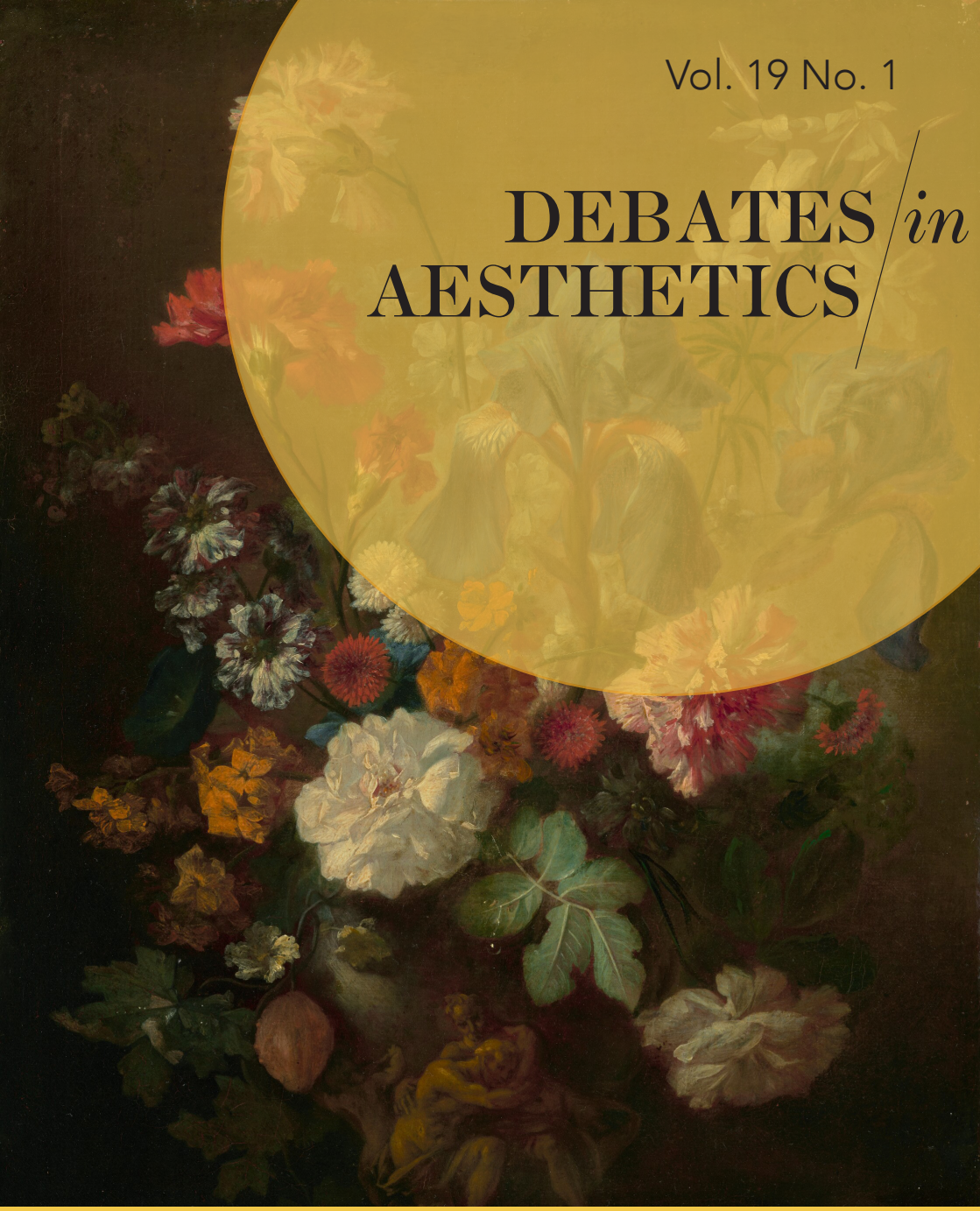

Debates in Aesthetics is a peer-reviewed, open-access journal for articles, interviews and book reviews. The journal's principal aim is to provide the philosophical community with a dedicated venue for debate in aesthetics and the philosophy of art.

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EDITORS' INTRODUCTION

Harry Drummond & Christopher Earley

We are pleased to introduce Issue 19, Vol. 1., of *Debates in Aesthetics*. This is the first general issue under the co-editorship of Harry Drummond and Christopher Earley, with significant input from our outgoing editor Sarah Kiernan. We would like to thank Sarah for her contributions to this issue, and for all her work over the course of her tenure at *Debates in Aesthetics*. We wish her all the best with future projects.

This general issue is one of the largest the journal has published, containing five original articles, a book symposium, and two interviews. We believe it exemplifies the breadth and depth of innovative work being undertaken by both emerging and established scholars. We begin with articles from Ryan Wittingslow, Alistair Macaulay, and Colette Olive. All three provide novel interventions into canonical debates about the definition, value, and ontology of art. Wittingslow draws upon social epistemology of science to provide a new approach to defining art. Drawing on the work of Helen Longino, Wittingslow proposes that what makes something art is not just the fact that it is of high aesthetic value,

but rather the fact that we engage with it in socially and institutionally mediated settings where we expect the things we engage with to be art objects. Macaulay focuses on an often overlooked category of artworks: jazz improvisations. As he claims, these artworks pose a challenge to the standard understanding of the ontology of musical works. Macaulay puts forward the novel claim that jazz improvisers do not just author the sound organisation of their work – they also create its 'improvisational space.' Like Wittingslow, Olive takes a similar interest in drawing connections between science and art. However, Olive's project is to consider whether empirical studies of learning from literature undermine philosophical defences of literature's cognitive value. Against critics, Olive argues that much empirical evidence points towards literature's being able to enhance our understanding.

While Wittingslow, Macaulay, and Olive seek to innovate on longstanding positions in aesthetics, Lauren Stephens and Mélissa Thériault seek to question the ethical legitimacy of our philosophical and curatorial engagement with art. Focussing on the British Museum's (contested) ownership of the Parthenon marbles, Stephens considers whether moral philosophy might offer any insights into their ethical curation. Aligning cultural internationalist and cultural nationalist positions with consequentialism and deontology respectively, she shows that cultural internationalist's consequentialist protests for keeping the Parthenon Marbles in the British Museum also serve to undermine their position. Ultimately, Stephens concludes, "when the good and the bad are weighed for the case of the Parthenon marbles, the scales tip more towards their return". Thériault turns our attention towards Inuit art, asking whether the methods of non-Inuit (Qallunaat) philosophers of art can properly study these objects without misunderstanding and harm. Thériault advocates 'radical epistemic humility', showing us that rather than apply existing Western philosophical categories to this work, we should instead strive to meet this work on its own conceptual terms. Nonetheless, Thériault shows us that, for Qallunaat philosophers,

this is not an easy task. Both Stephens and Thériault thus take us right to heart of ethical dilemmas with our field.

We are also pleased to publish a symposium and interview on Thomas E. Wartenberg's *Thoughtful Images: Illustrating Philosophy Through Art* (OUP, 2023). Sam Heffron, in conversation with Wartenberg, introduces us to the book's key arguments, claims, and concepts, before responses from Claire Anscomb and Derek Matravers. The interview and symposium reveal the depths of Wartenberg's work, and the expansive thinking that it provokes.

Finally, we have two interviews with leading philosophers of art and aesthetics: Noël Carroll and Richard Shusterman. Both have, in different ways, reshaped the field and are regular interlocutors for many authors published in *Debates in Aesthetics*. We thank Valery Vino and T. J. Bonnet for their thoughtful, penetrating questions, which bring out many overlooked aspects of both Carroll and Shusterman's philosophical projects.

We thank all our authors for their contributions, and we thank the various referees who have helped us reach editorial decisions. We also thank our proofreader, Olivia Oddofin, and the British Society of Aesthetics for their support of this journal.

CRITICAL CONTEXTUAL AESTHETICISM

Ryan Mitchell Wittingslow
University of Groningen

In this paper I offer a way to reconcile 'functionalist' and 'institutionalist' definitions of art. Inspired by Helen Longino's 'critical contextual empiricism', I argue that art arises from social epistemic procedures that encompass both aesthetic functions and institutional practices. Within these procedures, aesthetic functions are developed, validated, and enforced through institutional practices rather than being solely tied to the artistic outcomes of those practices. I call this approach 'critical contextual aestheticism'.

1 Introduction

According to Thomas Adajian (2018), modern definitions of art typically fall into three categories: (1) 'functionalist' definitions, which argue that what makes something an artwork is whether it provides a distinctive aesthetic experience; (2) 'institutionalist' definitions, which argue that artworld institutions, rather than aesthetic experiences, baptize something as art; and (3) hybrid theories that combine functionalist and institutionalist aspects.[1] Functionalist and institutionalist definitions of art *prima facie* conflict. Functionalists assert that artworks must possess aesthetic properties, which are essential in deciding if something is an artwork. In contrast, institutionalist definitions maintain that aesthetic properties are not critical for determining if something is an artwork.

Both perspectives have faced considerable criticism. Functionalist theories are criticized for being both too broad, as they may include objects that possess aesthetic properties (beautiful sunsets, for instance) but which are not typically considered artworks, and too narrow, as they may exclude the possibility of bad art because aesthetic properties account for both artistic status *and* artistic goodness (see Hanson 2017 on 'definition-evaluation parallelism'). Institutionalism faces different issues, specifically about defining the appropriate boundaries of who and what should be properly considered part of the artworld. However, both theories also have obvious merits. Functionalism acknowledges and argues that artworks are a privileged category, distinct from non-art objects insofar as their aesthetic properties give rise to some function—e.g., eliciting an aesthetic experience—while institutionalism recognizes the inherently social nature of artmaking, artworks, and the artworld.

Given the tension between the merits and drawbacks of these positions,

[1] Adajian is by no means the first to speciate definitions of art; Stephen Davies makes a similar, influential, distinction between 'functionalist' and 'proceduralist' definitions of art in his "Functional and Procedural Definitions of Art" (1990).

I cautiously propose a reconciliation. This alternative—which is presented here as a summary of an argument I advance in Chapter 5 of my monograph, *What Art Does: Using Philosophy of Technology to Talk about Art* (cf. Wittingslow 2023)—is in principle similar to previous attempts to reconcile functionalist and institutionalist perspectives on art, such as Gary Iseminger's appreciation account (2004), Francis Longworth and Andrea Scarantino's disjunctive properties account (2010), or Dominic McIver Lopes' network account (2018). All try to account for both the social and the aesthetic features of artworks, albeit in different ways. However, my tack also significantly deviates from these approaches, as it draws from recent research in philosophy of science rather than philosophy of art. Inspired by Helen Longino's 'critical contextual empiricism', I argue that art arises from social epistemic procedures that encompass both aesthetic functions and institutional practices. Within these procedures, aesthetic functions are developed, validated, and enforced through institutional practices rather than being solely tied to the artistic outcomes of those practices. I call this approach 'critical contextual aestheticism'.

2 Three Approaches

In philosophy of art, the term 'art' is used in at least three distinct ways. These include: (1) artmaking, referring to the processes and methods by which artworks are created; (2) art identification, focusing on how to distinguish artworks from non-artworks; and (3) the artistic canon, encompassing the collection of objects considered as art. Functionalists and institutionalists approach these aspects differently.

1. Artmaking

Functionalist and institutionalist perspectives diverge on the processes involved in creating artworks and the extent to which these processes are necessary or sufficient for determining something as an artwork. For example, Nick Zangwill — a philosopher I take to be broadly represent-

ative of the functionalist view — argues that it is the function of artworks to have aesthetic properties, and that these aesthetic properties supervene upon the non-aesthetic properties of those artworks (2001, pp. 9–23). Zangwill then proposes a normative theory of art based on a process guided by meeting specific success criteria. This process consists of three principally distinct stages. First, the artist must have the insight that it is possible to evoke desired aesthetic properties by creating non-aesthetic properties. Second, the artist must intend to achieve these desired aesthetic properties through the identified non-aesthetic properties. Finally, the artist must successfully fulfil their intention to produce the desired aesthetic properties using the identified non-aesthetic properties (Zangwill 2007).

Institutionalists, on the other hand, focus on art-making practices that account for how objects are accepted as artworks by a given public. Institutionalists typically emphasize the role of the 'artworld', a term coined by Arthur Danto (1964) and further developed by George Dickie (1974, 1997) and others, in determining art status. Danto introduces the 'artworld' to clarify how we distinguish art objects from seemingly identical non-art objects. How else can we make sense of Andy Warhol's *Brillo Box* being considered art, for instance, despite being visually indistinguishable from a non-art Brillo box? Danto believes we need a story that prevents Warhol's *Brillo Box* from merging with the actual Brillo box: something that accounts for the unique identity of artistic recognition. This 'something', Danto (1964) suggests, is the artworld. Dickie develops Danto's account further. Further reducing Danto's account, Dickie argues that to be a work of art is to be an artist-created artefact of a kind created to be presented to an artworld public.

For institutionalists, art-making practices are unrelated to the successful expression of aesthetic properties. Rather, the process of artmaking is founded on a productive relationship between an artist's intention to produce an object of a specific class, the object itself, and an artworld

public's readiness to accept the object as part of that class. Within this productive relationship, artmaking is unencumbered by the processes and normative criteria that functionalists like Zangwill require. Instead, artworks are merely artefacts of a type created for presentation to the appropriate audience, with no additional requirements concerning meeting evaluative or substantial aesthetic standards.

2. Art Identification

The second meaning of art is 'identification'—that is, how an individual can distinguish art objects from non-art objects. Identification is a three-term relation involving a subject or subjects, a theory by which artworks can be accurately identified, and an art object. Through this relation, we emphasize a virtuous interaction between a subject's (p) beliefs about an object's art status, the artwork (w) itself, and the art theory by which the subject can justify holding those beliefs. Fulfilling these three conditions signifies that 'p identifies that w is art'. While this general characterization applies to both functionalists and institutionalists, they each handle the matter of justification differently.

Functionalists assert that the correct identification of aesthetic properties justifies the attribution of something as an artwork. This is evident in Zangwill and other functionalists' work on art (besides Zangwill 2001, 2007, see Beardsley 1982; Eldridge 1985; DeClerq 2002; for a general overview of both functionalist and institutionalist definitions of art, refer to Adajian 2018 and Davies 1990). If the function of artworks is to possess aesthetic properties, and if the presence of those aesthetic properties is what makes something an artwork, then accurately identifying aesthetic properties is a necessary condition for properly identifying an artwork as an artwork.

Institutionalists, on the other hand, adopt a position about art identification that is neutral concerning the proper identification of aesthetic properties. Instead, justification is linked to an artwork's relationship with a specific artworld public. Firstly, the artwork must be the sort

of thing intended to be presented to an artworld public. Secondly, the artworld public in question must be "prepared in some degree" to understand the thing intended for presentation, per Dickie (1997, 81): "A public is a set of persons the members of which are prepared in some degree to understand an object which is presented to them".

Without shared aesthetic criteria against which artwork status can be attributed, this means that the public in question is entirely responsible for creating and enforcing the definitional and evaluative criteria by which potential art objects are assessed and validated. A consequence of this assertion is that, if artworld publics are fundamentally accountable for the standards under which artworks are recognized as artworks, and these standards are not tied to normative aesthetic criteria, then there is no requirement for theories of art to be consistent between communities. As a result, institutionalists tend to be pluralists about justifiability in a way that functionalists are not.

3. The Artistic Canon

Lastly, the third aspect of art is the artistic canon. This is the complete collection of artworks available to us, encompassing paintings, sculptures, dance, literature, poetry, theatre, or anything else we might commonsensically describe as art. This canon cannot be attributed to a single individual, nor is it associated with a specific time or place. Instead, it is simply the sum of all things included in the category of artworks, including everything housed in museums or private collections, every winner of any award, every work recorded in auction records or possessing copyright protections, and so on. For the functionalist, this collection is the total of all things identified through the normative art-producing and identification processes mentioned earlier. Meanwhile, for the institutionalist, the artistic canon consists entirely of whatever a particular artworld public believes to be art.

3 The Problem

Neither functionalism nor institutionalism adequately address the complexities presented by artworks. Functionalism neglects the importance of art's connections to histories, institutions, and egos, while institutionalism fails to fully capture the intertwined nature of normative aesthetic criteria and our understanding of art objects and their functions (indeed, one major criticism of institutional theories is that they do not give us an account of why or how we value art see, e.g., Abell 2012). However, both theories get some parts of the story right.

Functionalists appreciate that, for us to have a definition of art that captures the way we talk about art in ordinary language, we need a robust and non-relative conception of discussing the role of normative aesthetics in art. This is because aesthetic experience is a fundamental part of how we describe and evaluate artworks. Moreover, we ask these aesthetic questions of those artefacts precisely because they are artworks rather than some other kind of artefact. The very 'art-ness' of art invites us to reflect on its aesthetic nature. Without trying to make too much of this claim, I think it's clear that recognizing something as an artwork is to be invited to reflect on its aesthetic qualities.

However, the institutionalist narrative holds real power. By characterizing art as a thing with a social ontology—a thing produced and ratified by the complex web of individuals, galleries, universities and schools, governmental organizations, private institutions, and many other components that make up the artistic enterprise in its entirety—institutionalists can become sensitive to social facts about artists and artworks that are either invisible or irrelevant to functionalists. This may be facts about race, gender, social inequality, education, technique, capital (whether institutional, political, or economic), or anything else. These social facts can and should be considered as part of a comprehensive analysis of an artwork, given that they influence both the creation and reception of works of art.

Institutionalists are also much better equipped to deal with the problem of 'bad art'. It would certainly contradict ordinary language use of the word 'art' to claim that artefacts must meet certain normative aesthetic criteria to be properly considered artworks. In common sense, an object need not be intentionally beautiful, elegant, grotesque, or anything else, to be deserving of the attribution. Instead, when we talk about bad art, we are not discussing objects that have failed to meet the relevant aesthetic success criteria and thus fail to be art. Rather, we mean that, while the object in question is very much an artwork, it is just not a very good example of an artwork. Failure to meet normative aesthetic criteria compromises an object's quality as an artwork without compromising its character as an artwork.

I have mixed feelings about this issue. I am inclined to endorse the functionalist view on the importance of aesthetic experience, as I take it to be the case that any definition of art that downplays the significance of aesthetic interpretation misses the trees for the forest. What is art, if not an aesthetic enterprise? However, I also think that institutionalism is essentially correct about the social ontology of art. This is not only because it is evident that different communities have different standards for what constitutes art, but also because institutionalism is better equipped to account for the contingent facts underlying the creation and reception of artworks.

4 A Solution

Helen Longino offers an approach that might help to resolve this issue. In her works *Science as Social Knowledge* (1990) and *The Fate of Knowledge* (2002), she contends that philosophy of science is marked by a similar divide between 'rationalizers' and 'sociologizers'. Rationalizers focus on the normative epistemic criteria used to evaluate whether an observation or prediction should be deemed scientific knowledge. Sociologizers, meanwhile, argue that scientific knowledge is a social fact, or a socially mediated product of certain knowledge-making institutions

(2002, 77–89).

These factors lead rationalizers and sociologizers to hold radically different views on knowledge and on how these perspectives interact (cf. 2002, 89–96). Generally, rationalizers support an individualist (knowledge doesn't require community sanction), monist (assuming there is a single correct, complete, and consistent account of facts), and non-relative (justification is not arbitrary) conception of knowledge. In contrast, sociologizers broadly believe that knowledge is non-individual (ratified by groups), non-monist (no assumption of a single correct, complete, and consistent account of facts), and relative (justifications are arbitrary but socially mediated).

Longino believes both the rationalizing and sociologizing perspectives on science are incomplete. The former overlooks the idea that science is fundamentally a human endeavour, driven by histories, institutions, and egos as well as facts, observations, and measurements. The latter fails to capture that science is as much about normative standards as it is about social facts. More precisely, Longino doesn't think sociologizers are wrong in characterizing scientific knowledge as something sanctioned by the complex web of entities that comprise the scientific enterprise in its entirety. Nor does she think sociologizers are wrong in stating that knowledge is non-monist; she believes it is possible for different communities to have equally valid yet irreconcilable descriptions of a given situation. However, rationalizers get one part of the story right: the scientific enterprise, when properly understood, requires a non-relative conception of what makes science unique.

Longino suggests the solution to this dilemma lies in the procedures governing scientific communities. Although science is indeed a social practice, it is also a social practice in which epistemic norms are *part of that practice.*

More specifically, she argues that normative epistemic criteria are not applied to scientific outputs. Contrary to the rationalist perspective,

there are no procedure-independent criteria for assessing the justifiability of a given claim. We do not, for example, reach the end of the peer review process and then check if the normative epistemic criteria have been applied. Instead, the critical discursive interactions that typify science – procedures like peer review – integrate the desired normative epistemic criteria into the very fabric of the social procedures by which scientific knowledge is produced and sanctioned. In this way, Longino's 'critical contextual empiricism' is a productive blend of rationalizer and sociologizer positions. Science is a non-individual, non-monist, and non-relative enterprise conducted by a knowledge-producing community.

So, what can Longino's critical contextual empiricism reveal about the qualities, procedures, and institutions of art? I believe it can teach us a great deal. While I do not wish to diminish the real differences between science and art, I think this narrative can offer insights when developing a definition of art. Not only does Longino's account provide a valuable understanding of how the scientific enterprise is both normative and social, it can also help to unpack the ways in which the artworld is both aesthetic and institutional. Although science and art are clearly subject to different normative criteria and are constituted by different entities, there are meaningful parallels between Longino's philosophy of science and the conventions and norms governing our successful production and identification of art objects.

I argue that while art and science are subject to different normative criteria (i.e., epistemic versus aesthetic criteria) and possess distinct institutions, histories, and methods, they share procedural similarities. Just as Longino (2002, 124) posits that scientific knowledge is not merely ordinary knowledge 'except better' artworks are not simply non-artworks 'except beautiful.' Instead, artworks constitute a privileged class of objects. This privilege is not a result of the aesthetic virtues of the artwork in question. Rather, it manifests in the ways we interact with

artworks—we interrogate, analyze, and are moved by them in part because we expect to engage, scrutinize, and be affected by objects of this privileged class.

This process succeeds or fails depending on whether a given public recognizes a given artwork as art. The process by which we recognize something as art is multifaceted and influenced by a confluence of overlapping factors: whether we can place the work within the history of art (that is, whether it resembles or has some causal relationship with other works of art); the institutional context in which the work is encountered (whether the work is found in an art gallery, a motel, or a nightclub bathroom); what artworld tastemakers (critics, curators, collectors, etc.) think of the work; the artist's perceived intentions, and so on. These procedures are fundamentally socially and institutionally mediated.

However, the fact that these procedures are socially and institutionally mediated does not mean no aesthetic criteria are involved in creating and subsequently recognizing artworks. If that were the case, this would be little more than a conventional institutionalist account. Aesthetic purpose is not independent of the procedures by which artworks are ratified as artworks. Instead, for an artefact to be understood as an artwork by an art public, that artefact must, on some level, align with what the art public considers aesthetically purposive about works of art. In my view, the aesthetic criteria to which artworks are subject are built into the institutional, historical, and social procedures governing the production of artworks, much like epistemic criteria are built into the procedures governing the production of scientific knowledge.

Consequently, I propose a productive blend of the functionalist and institutionalist positions. While art has a social ontology, this social ontology is rooted in commonly shared notions of aesthetic purpose. I call this position (via Longino) 'critical contextual aestheticism'.

5 Conclusion

What I put forward here is obviously not a fully developed theory of art. For now, at least, it is too vague and imprecise to fulfil that role properly. It also, I believe, raises intriguing questions for specific types of work that we conventionally might regard as artworks, despite not being considered artworks at the time of their creation—certain religious or sacred objects, for instance. Nevertheless, I trust that the account I have presented here is adequate to clarify what a modified form of Longino's critical contextual empiricism can contribute to a theory of art: a new hybrid theory of art that can capture the strengths of both functional and institutional theories of art.

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IMPROVISATIONAL SPACE: BETWEEN ACTION AND ARTWORK

Alistair Macaulay
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With its aptitude for spontaneity and variation, improvisation challenges the standard theory of action and the ontological status of musical works. Responding to this dual problem, I propose a conception of improvisational space: a loosely demarcated field of musical material from which the sound organization is spontaneously produced. Drawing on Taylor's characterization of negative and positive liberty, I argue that an improvisational space presents a series of musical opportunities in which an improvisor exercises and extends their skilled behaviour. An improvisor is held authorially responsible for the sound organization because they deliberate engender, and work to cultivate, the improvisational space. With this distinction between improvisational space and sound organization, and through an analysis of the doppelganger album, Blue*, I illustrate how improvisations persist as artworks.*

1 Introduction

Jazz improvisation challenges the standard theory of action and the ontological status of musical works. Responding to this dual problem, I propose a conception of *improvisational space*: a loosely demarcated field of musical material from which the sound organization is spontaneously produced. This distinction appreciates both the improvisation's dynamic production and the coherency of the sound organization, explaining how improvisors are authorially responsible for the sound organization without having a clear idea of what will unfold. A consideration of this space indicates the sense in which improvisations persist as artworks and how they serve as platforms for further improvisation. Improvisational space ties together the problematic of liberty and novelty, linking action and artwork. In improvisation's claims to novelty, I contend that this is not exclusive to the sound organization but the improvisational space as well.

Standard theories of action hold that actors control an action via their intentions, specifying goals they work to accomplish. Improvisation, however, demands that intentions cannot be specified in advance of their execution. They must be spontaneous. Furthermore, an improvisor's intentions are outstripped by the demands of the action. Burke and Onsman (2018, 32) note that an improvisation's spontaneity is underpinned by a myriad of factors – the improvisor, band members, audience, wider performance contexts, and the improvisor's relationship with the performance as it is being performed. Improvisation is not a simple process in which a sovereign actor executes an action. Rather, improvisors respond to and are changed by the performance.

Challenged by and open to external factors outside their control, improvisation is enabled by trained habits and extensive know-how. Gallagher explains, "Performers, based on their well-trained skills … are able to move beyond controlled engagement to the point of not-knowing", embracing a selective uncertainty (2022, 8). Similarly, Peters (2017,

118-120) supposes an improvisor scrambles to preserve rehearsed patterns and aesthetic decisions to make sense of the complex and unfolding musical terrain. What is unclear is how known patterns produce this uncertainty. Further, this openness to the unforeseen and uncertain obfuscates the improvisor's liberty and the conferral of agential responsibility. There is a link between freedom and novelty that remains to be explicated.

Improvisation has become almost synonymous with jazz due to its centrality in the idiom, typically taking the form of theme and variations. Paradigmatically, improvising musicians take jazz standards as little more than a starting point, extending and transforming melodic, harmonic, and rhythmic motifs. Jazz bands typically begin by playing a tune before a soloist begins to improvise. The rest of the band accompanies the soloist, offering harmonic and rhythmic material so they can improvise new melodies. This is done over the song-form, sticking to the basic harmonic structure of the tune. Certain chord substitutions can be used, but these follow a certain harmonic pattern. Improvisation is not chaotic, nor is it accidental, but enabled by intense listening and training.

With its variation, Kania (2011, 400) observes that an ontology of jazz improvisation cannot consist in the same "work-performance tradition" that characterises Western classical music. Here, instances are separated from the musical work to evaluate the performance's success. But improvisors who only recite what has been played before do not seem to be improvising. Improvisors are compelled to differentiate their improvisations. Besides raising questions about the novelty of improvisation, this muddies the delineation between musical work and performance instance. Conversely, doppelganger albums, like *Blue*, by Mostly Other People do the Killing—a note-for-note sound recreation of seminal album, *Kind of Blue*, by the Miles Davis Sextet—pose questions about what happens to improvisation after performance.

In this problematic, there are two senses of improvisation, denoting both a noun, an artwork, and a verb, a music-making process. Improvisation does not challenge the ontological status of musical works because it deviates from a score, but instead because it obfuscates whether the artwork is the determinate sequence of musical notes or its dynamic processes. Considering instances where a listener might think an improvisor failed to render a particular tune adequately, Lewis (2019, 106) compellingly contends that the performance is the musical work. While I concur with this analysis, explaining the relationship between action and artwork is necessary.

This article outlines the features of improvisational space and then expands this conception with Taylor's categorisation of positive and negative liberty. This makes several claims. To count as an improvisation, improvisors cannot know precisely what they will perform. Describing a complex field of opportunities in which an improvisor exercises their faculties, improvisational space accounts for their positive activity. An improvisor is authorially responsible for a spontaneously produced sound organization because they engender an improvisational space. In my view, improvisations exist as artworks both as the sound organization and the dynamic processes of opportunity and exercise that saw its performance. Finally, this indicates how doppelganger scenarios like the album Blue, are novel, outlining how improvisations persist as musical works and how they serve as platforms for further improvisation.

2 Improvisational Space

An improvisational space is a mobile complex of musical material that offers opportunities in which improvisors can exercise their faculties, trained skills, and thinking. Before and during the improvised performance, improvisors set parameters around what is to be performed. The musician calls a tune and begins in a particular key at a certain tempo, dictating, at least for a short while, speed and a tonal centre. In other

free jazz idioms, an improvisor might offer a phrase before investigating less rigidly codified elements. Burke and Onsman (2018, 29) summarise that improvisors are actively cultivating a "sonic environment" that accords with their aesthetic tastes. Intuitively, they improvise with material they want to play with and explore. The improvisor does not know what will unfold, but in this loose demarcation, they delimit and direct future opportunities. An improvisor is authorially responsible for an improvisation because of their cultivation of the improvisational space, despite being affected by and responding to the demands of the action.

After this initial selection of musical epithets that they want to improvise with, an improvisational space becomes increasingly cluttered with disparate musical material. The improvisor oscillates between selecting particular patterns that delimit opportunities and relies on their trained habits to navigate the now uncertain terrain. I discern five interrelated features of improvisational space. First, an improvisational space is deliberately propagated by an improvisor. This involves a selection process which impacts what they can then perform. Second, improvisational space relies on a shared expressive media in which an improvisor is immersed. Third, the border of an improvisational space is fluid, although formally constituted by various embodied habits and patterns of musical elements. Fourth, improvisational space is not static but shifts as the sound organization is produced. Lastly, improvisational space provides a buffer zone between music and noise.

The bass and piano introduction to the song "So What" opens the album *Kind of Blue.* Specifying a swinging D Dorian scale, this song sets the tone of the rest of the album, establishing it as the harbinger of modal jazz. This engenders a complex improvisational space, corralling musical material together – an easy swing with some basic harmonic information – for the other bandmembers to play with. "So what" is composed in a way that encourages a melodic style of improvisation and

exploration rather than the precisely executed chord changes of bebop. In order to stay musically coherent, the bandmembers, habitually and intentionally, respond with complementary patterns rather than antagonistic or unrelated motifs. Similarly, during the famous trumpet solo, Miles begins by loosely outlining the musical material he wants to play with, subtly specifying in his lilting swing and sharp staccato what sort of rhythmic accompaniment he is after.

By directing his bandmembers on how they can contribute, we witness that improvisational space relies on the notion of shared expressive media. An improvisor does not possess a birds-eye or external point of view of the musical material amongst the material. The determinate set of sounds that are produced in the improvisational space changes its landscape and affects the improvisors. Davis insisted on little to no rehearsal prior to recording; he wanted to capture the dynamism of improvisation with the improvisor's initial responses. Intuitively, the sudden influx of musical information would make it more difficult to communicate, but the bandmembers are able to appreciate each other's varied contributions. They move within the improvisational space, navigating the various combinations of musical elements that comprise the space. Recognising relationships between musical material, improvisors affect these elements, dislocating musical phrases from a history of sedimented usages to another context and transforming the musical material. However, the improvisor is also affected—their faculties are extended to make sense of the unfamiliar territory.

The third property of improvisational space concerns what is *in* an improvisational space, stipulating that it does not have a well-defined edge. An improvisational space is comprised not simply of musical material in the performance but also of its relations to various musical opportunities. This concurs with Maldonato's supposition that improvisation lies "between accuracy and inaccuracy; rationality and irrationality, completeness and incompleteness" (2018, 168). "So What"

is a simple tune in the form AABA. Because it consists in two Dorian scales, rather than a series of fast chord changes, it presents a wealth of musical opportunities harmonically and melodically. Improvisors do not need to simply spell out the chord tones of an arpeggio—they can investigate how the notes of the modal scales relate to each other. As such, although an improvisational space is deliberately engendered and indicates certain aesthetic goals, it remains open to unexpected interjections, accidents, and mistakes.

The ill-defined edge of an improvisational space is inextricably linked to the fourth trait of improvisational space, which concerns its dynamic rather than static nature. An extra comping chord affects the rhythmic information offered to the soloist, resulting in different melodies being performed. As improvisation continues, more relations between musical elements can be explored. There are safe, well-trodden routes of traversing the musical material at the centre but also riskier, obscure, and unclear musical opportunities at the periphery. This is seen in Miles' trumpet solo in "Flamenco Sketches". Moving from the C Ionian to the A^{b} Mixolydian scale, Miles takes increasingly large intervals that are commensurately difficult to play. Tricky to pitch, Miles' muted trumpet obscures the imprecise tuning. Yet, both the use of the mute and the lead-up to the intervallic leaps warp the constellation of relations in the improvisational space. Had some other note or phrase been played instead, some other musical opportunities would have been realised—a different improvisational space and sound organization. As Miles plays an ascending phrase, the top note becomes increasingly expected as the climax. Originally on the periphery of the improvisational space, it suddenly comes to the fore. The parameters around an improvisational space are not fixed but move according to the markings of the sound organisation.

If this were a performance of classical music, Miles' tuning would be derided as a skill error. Despite the supposed inaccuracies, Miles never

sounds out of tune. The improvisational space functions as a safety net between music and noise. By virtue of its indeterminate edge, an improvisational space is open to unexpected contributions and so-called errors. These contributions are codified and interpreted by the existing material and patterns within the improvisational space. Removed from such an improvisational space, this kind of playing would expose tuning inaccuracies. Yet Miles' playing engenders an improvisational space so that these inflections are heard as bluesy, introspective, and harmonically ambiguous.

3 Opportunity and Exercise

These five characteristics explain the dynamism of improvisation, outlining the sense in which an improvisor is authorially responsible for the sound organization. Distinguishing between improvisational space and sound organization also illustrates how improvisations persist as artworks. The sound organization is the constellation that points to the intersecting patterns of the improvisational space. Once sounded, it serves as a springboard for other possibilities to be explored – a continual process of transformation of musical material that reciprocally extends the faculties of the improvisor. While the improvisor is changed by the demands of the action, they can be held authorially responsible for the sound organization. To explore the relationship between liberty and novelty, I turn to Taylor's conceptions of opportunity and exercise.

Taylor (1979) expands Berlin's separation of positive and negative liberty, cogently arguing that negative liberty is an opportunity-concept while positive liberty is an exercise concept. To avoid the aporia of negative liberty as the absence of constraint, Taylor reimagines this as a maximization of opportunities. With fewer restrictions, an agent has a greater number of opportunities available. Positive liberty is described as an exercise concept, involving some sort of self-realization. For Taylor, freedom does not stem from the absence regulations, but is founded in an individual's ability to recognise their motivations and their capaci-

ties to execute them.

Taylor asserts that negative liberty insufficiently describes why someone is motivated towards a specific action. He writes, "you are not free if you are motivated, through fear, inauthentically internalized standards, false consciousness, to thwart your self-realization; … you have to be able to do what you want, to follow your real will, or to fulfill the desires of your own true self" (1979, 180). People are not typically held authorially responsible for their actions when there are mitigating circumstances. Taylor's point is that one does not realise what they are doing and why from a list of opportunities.

To my mind, Taylor incorrectly grounds negative liberty in the individual rather than the background of the action. Situating opportunities in the background of the action exhibits how improvisation embraces both a positive and negative liberty. As musical elements and patterns overlap, musical opportunities arise. How opportunities are interpreted and realized is contingent on the musician's abilities and education and are further delimited by what an improvisor can feasibly exercise. However, a history of sedimented usages also direct the improvisor to execute particular phrases over others. From the prior analysis of the first trait of improvisational space, an improvisor cultivates certain musical opportunities by the performance of a sequence they can exercise. As the improvisation goes on and the improvisational space becomes increasingly complex, an improvisor cannot foresee what musical opportunities will arise as they exercise their faculties. This clarifies the sense in which improvisation is open to the unexpected, and the sense in which improvisation is novel.

Describing a link between the improvisor's activity and the musical opportunities that arise, understanding improvisational space in this way also appreciates how opportunities outstrip the performer's control. Although Taylor argues that negative liberty does not involve self-realization, it seems that improvisation does. Altered by the very

doing of the action, improvisors learn how and why certain musical opportunities arise. However, as their habits and faculties are extended and tested, they also learn about themselves – the dynamism that Miles wanted to record. An improvisor opens up musical opportunities, investigates what can become of their abilities, learns about patterns in musical material and in themselves, and how and why they arise.

Explicating liberty in terms of opportunity and exercise indicates the improvisor's activity and how their contributions affect the improvisational space and the sound organization. Having expanded this distinction with opportunity and exercise, I now turn to the ramifications for novelty by considering how the doppelganger album, *Blue,* relates to improvisational space. Ordinarily, this sound-for-sound reproduction is not considered a new musical work because the concrete musical material is the same. On this view, it is just an homage to *Kind of Blue.* In their repetition, Mostly Other People do the Killing reduce the original to a composed score. *Blue* is not an improvisation and, perhaps worse, has turned an improvisation into a composition. While this poses intriguing questions about what happens to an improvisation after it is has been performed, locating the aesthetic import of an improvisation only in sound organization fails to capture the differences in its production. This leads reviewers like Magnus (2016, 182), who is neutral on whether this is an instance of an existing musical work or a new work in its own right, to conclude that the difference between the two albums is in their aesthetic evaluation.

In 1959, the Miles Davis Sextet went into Columbia's recording studio in New York and, with some sketches of tunes from Miles Davis, engendered an improvisational space. The sound organization that emerged was the album, *Kind of Blue.* As a constellation of musical material, it details information about the improvisational space, recording studio, aesthetic and economic attitudes towards jazz, and skills of the bandmembers. While the sound organization is only trivially different, *Kind*

of Blue and *Blue* emerge from different improvisational spaces. Produced in another era, Mostly Other People do the Killing embraces different social and cultural norms around jazz music. With their accuracy in replicating the original sound organization, *Blue* does not innovate a new musical style, but is produced out of reverence for the great jazz improvisors on *Kind of Blue.*

Magnus observes that *Blue* comes with a booklet of Jorges Luis Borges' famous story of Pierre Menard, an author who strives to replicate *Don Quixote.* Menard's aim is not reproduction, "but to put himself in a state of mind where he would write words that coincided with the words in Cervantes' original" (Magnus, 2016, 180). Here, the significance of this Taylorian explanation of improvisational space is realised. While cultivating an improvisational space, an improvisor learns about musical material and themselves as certain musical opportunities are realized. For the analogy to Menard, Mostly Other People do the Killing, when in the same state as the band that produced *Kind of Blue,* are re-learning not just their instruments but how they think about music.

Producing in another era, Mostly Other People do the Killing embrace different social and cultural norms around jazz music. By accurately replicating the original sound organization, *Blue* does not innovate a new musical style; it was produced to revere the great jazz improvisors on *Kind of Blue.* Mostly Other People do the Killing cannot realize all the same musical opportunities as those of the Miles Davis sextet. The goal of *Blue* was to examine the opportunities that arise from their predilections, and what they had to relearn and change in themselves so as to produce the same sound organization as that of *Kind of Blue.* While not presenting a novel sound organization, *Blue* presents a novel improvisational space with a different set of opportunities.

Kania rebuts the notion that improvised performances are musical works. This would mean having to call performances of classical music novel musical works as well. As such, "In classical music, performances

are precisely distinguished from the works they are of" (2011, 398). The reasoning cannot be faulted here. The notion of improvisational space is useful because it demonstrates the relationship between action and artwork. Knowing the sound organization in advance, it is unlikely that *Blue* was spontaneously improvised, but its improvisational space is one in which the performers were trying to unlearn their skills and relearn those of the Miles Davis sextet. Such doppelganger scenarios illustrate how improvisations exist as musical works, both as the sound organization and as the dynamic interplay between opportunity and exercise in an improvisational space. This relationship explains how, once performed, an improvisor can launch into other improvisations.

Calling a tune and drawing particular musical material together delimits its musical opportunities and creates an improvisational space. While this closes certain avenues, how an improvisor exercises their faculties will beget other opportunities. In this way, improvisors learn about musical material and themselves. While an improvisor cannot have concrete ideas about the sound organization, they are nonetheless responsible for it because of how they cultivate the improvisational space. Improvisational space thus describes a relation between action and artwork. With this distinction, novelty in improvisation is either in the sound organization or the constellation of opportunities that make up the improvisational space – these same opportunities indicating how it is then used as a platform for further improvisation.

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MORE THAN METAPHOR: UNDERSTANDING THROUGH LITERATURE

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The debate over whether we can learn from art is as contentious as it is enduring. With the debate often centring on literature, recent theories claim that literature can deepen and enrich our understanding in novel and valuable ways. Contrary to this, Peter Lamarque accuses the neo-cognitivist of relying on empty metaphors of illumination and enrichment to spell out literature's cognitive import. This paper links philosophical and psychological research to defend the neo-cognitivist against Lamarque's charge. It highlights some of the processes and mechanisms central to experiencing the cognitive impact of literary reading. These processes help the neo-cognitivist tell a robust and empirically informed story about how 'enhanced understanding' manifests in the experience of reading.

1 Introduction

Neo-cognitivism, a phrase coined by John Gibson (2008), refers to a cluster of recent theories denying that the cognitive value of art is reducible to its capacity to furnish us with knowledge or truth. Neo-cognitivism locates the cognitive value of literature, the artform at the centre of the debate, in its capacity to deepen, enrich, and enhance understanding. Whilst moving away from knowledge allows the neo-cognitivist to bypass some canonical anti-cognitivist objections, the theory runs into problems. Peter Lamarque (1997, pp. 19-20) objects that the neo-cognitivist "constantly resorts to metaphors" such as "illuminating experience" without explaining how this so-called 'enhanced understanding' is supposed to "manifest". Lamarque is not explicitly denying that literature can yield cognitive value, but casting doubt about the feasibility of the neo-cognitivist account by pointing to a perceived lack of detail and explanation. This paper proposes a response to Lamarque on the part of the neo-cognitivist, incorporating established psychological literature. There are multiple robust, empirically informed stories the neo-cognitivist can tell about how enhanced understanding manifests, and there are numerous established metrics for tracking potential cognitive uplift. To clarify, using empirical literature is not intended to 'prove' that the neo-cognitivist story is correct. Instead, it forms the basis of a response to Lamarque's objection by demonstrating that the neo-cognitivist story can be much more than metaphor.[1]

In §2, I introduce neo-cognitivism and a canonical counter-argument, here called the *epistemological objection*. §3 identifies a different objection, Lamarque's objection, which accuses the neo-cognitivist of relying

[1] The methodology of the paper is intended to resemble similar empirically informed approaches that do not treat the psychological literature as definitive evidence for a given position, but treat it as a jumping-off point for philosophical thinking. I have in mind Derek Matravers' (2014) work on fictionality and narrativity, Amy Coplan's (2004) account of empathic engagement with narrative fictions, and Kris Goffin and Stacie Friend's (2022) research on how we acquire biases and problematic assumptions from literature.

on metaphor instead of giving an informative account of what and how we learn from literature. §4 attempts to challenge this by canvasing some results from the empirical research, which could furnish the neo-cognitivist with productive explanatory resources. I address some limitations and upshots in §5.

2 Neo-Cognitivism

Literary neo-cognitivist theories claim that we can have genuinely cognitively valuable experiences when we read literature, but that this epistemic value is not necessarily reducible to the acquisition of new knowledge, facts, or true beliefs. By expanding cognitive value, we can side-step canonical worries about whether artworks can convey truth or knowledge—for example, Jerome Stolnitz's (1992) claim that the only truths we could glean from art would be banal or already known to us. Similarly, we need not worry about whether artworks can justify their claims, a requisite for knowledge that a medium like literature might struggle to fulfil (Gibson, 2008). Instead, what can be cognitively valuable about literature is its ability to enhance our understanding of ourselves and the world by altering, expanding, or mobilizing our existent beliefs in epistemically valuable ways (Gibson 2007).

There are various suggestions for how this epistemic value might manifest in literary contexts.[2] Some have suggested that literature is cognitively valuable in an analogous mode to thought experiments (Carroll, 2002; Elgin, 1993, 2002; Vidmar, 2013). Elgin has explored the resemblance between literary fictions and philosophical or scientific thought experiments, arguing that they are all 'exemplifications', serving as instantiations of features of the real world that can yield insight without stating a particular propositional truth. Such exemplifications can function as vehicles for exploration and discovery by presenting recognizable features in new (fictional) contexts (Elgin 1993, 2002). As Car-

[2] For an excellent in-depth overview and classification of recent neo-cognitivist theories of fiction, see Green (2022).

roll (2002) echoes, literary narratives mobilize our existent beliefs and concepts in fictional settings, which allows us to clarify and condition them. Stecker (2019) offers an agnate account, which claims that literary narratives offer us hypotheses which we can hold up and test against the real world, much like in philosophical enquiry. In juxtaposing a feature of the world with the literary conception of it on offer, we might come to articulate our knowledge of that feature more clearly, form new connections between related propositions or concepts, foreground some aspect of it, or clarify our existent beliefs about this feature, all of which can help to form a more comprehensive and coherent picture of ourselves and the world.

Eileen John (1998) argues that works of fiction can have conceptual results, which is to say, they can affect how we use a given concept and alter our understanding of its conditions of application. Put another way, our engagement with some fictional narratives takes on the character of conceptual inquiry. As conceptual inquiry, literature can yield similar epistemically-valuable results to philosophy. Vidmar-Jovanović (2019b) goes further, arguing that literature can produce both direct cognitive benefits in the form of knowledge acquisition and indirect cognitive benefits such as deepened understanding or refined perception, a capacity it shares with philosophy. One method through which literature achieves this is by encouraging readers to attend to and reflect upon themes within the text, which can lead to a "an intensified awareness of the nuances of the concept at stake or as a more refined perception of what is involved in a given problem and/or its solutions" (ibid, p.159).

This represents only a small sample of the varieties of approach to explaining the different kinds of epistemically valuable gains we can make from our engagement with literature that are not exclusively tied to knowledge-acquisition. Key commonalities across the board include the claim that literature can be valuable for how it puts our beliefs into

action, encouraging us to be better users of concepts or more perceptive in situations, as well as the idea that literature can stimulate reflection, wherein we can come to evaluate, refine, or reassess our beliefs about ourselves and the world. In such instances, the claim is that fiction can feed into fact.

Although neo-cognitivism might avoid some of the classic worries about literature's ability to disseminate propositional knowledge, it faces its own problems. Here, two specific objections are identified within the literature, bifurcated into what will be called the *epistemological objection*, and then *Lamarque's objection*. Michael Hannon (2021) worries that neo-cognitivists appear to take for granted that enhanced understanding is something distinct from increased knowledge or that understanding is in a crucial sense irreducible to knowledge, which is not a given in the epistemological debate. Baumberger et al. (2017) point out that the conditions for understanding appear to track conventional conditions for knowledge, namely justified, true belief. We take it that to understand x, we must have a representation of x, where we have good reasons for forming said representation and where this representation does "fit the facts" or track truth (Hannon 2021, 271). If understanding is reducible to knowledge or faces similar requirements to it, then the neo-cognitivist is back to having to deal with sceptical worries about literature's ability to disseminate knowledge, such as its lack of justificatory resources. Numerous neo-cognitivists have taken on the epistemological challenge including Baumberger (2013) and Vidmar-Jovanović (2013, 2019a, 2019b, 2023). Broadly, the popular move is to defend the irreducible and knowledge-independent value of understanding, as Elgin does, which can be bolstered by supporting work in epistemology such as that of Jonathan Kvanvig (2003) or Linda Zagzebski (2001, 2019). Ultimately, whether one finds this approach compelling will come down to one's own epistemological commitments.

3 Lamarque's Objection

Here, a different objection is identified; call it *Lamarque's objection.* Lamarque's objection highlights that even if we grant the epistemic value of understanding, the neo-cognitivist will still face problems which suggests vindicating neo-cognitivism on epistemological grounds will not be enough to defend the position. Lamarque's basic concern is that the neo-cognitivist "constantly resorts to metaphors" when describing how literature might enhance understanding, for want of any concrete account of what this 'enhanced understanding' actually amounts to. He objects that the stock phrase 'enhanced understanding' "yields very little" when it comes to spelling out the "cognitive payoffs" of literature (Lamarque 1997, 19). Lamarque grants that there may well be ways of cashing out 'enhanced understanding' that are not reducible to knowledge acquisition, which would vindicate the neo-cognitivist on the epistemological front, but objects that it remains difficult to get a grip on what the actual cognitive gains are. Even where metaphorical language of 'illumination' or 'crystallization' is not invoked, neo-cognitivists will often stress the holistic and somewhat ineffable quality of understanding. Elgin (1993, 14) has it that "understanding need not be couched in sentences" and that sometimes understanding may be "inarticulate". Lamarque worries such claims leave us with little to go on when it comes to explaining how and what we learn from literature.

Can the neo-cognitivist spell out the cognitive effects of literature without resorting to metaphor? Is there anything more informative that the neo-cognitivist can say about the ways in which literature intervenes in our understanding of ourselves and the world? The last two decades of psychological research leave the neo-cognitivist better placed to answer this sceptical question. There are now a number of different metrics for tracking perceived cognitive benefits from literature, and some promising results that appear to support some of the neo-cognitivist's key contentions. The next section will canvas some developments in the

empirical literature that suggest changes to our conception of ourselves and the world can be impacted by different kinds of reading-experience, including empathic engagement and reflection induced by both fictional and literary texts. Both empathic engagement and reflection might serve as good markers for tracking and identifying 'enhanced understanding' in literary reading. Whilst substantial consensus on the link between these kinds of literary engagement and perceived cognitive impact is not yet established, there is enough evidence to suggest Lamarque's objection is not insurmountable.

4 The Psychological Perspective

The empirical research on cognitive enrichment from reading suggests that there are two key methods through which literature can affect and alter our understanding of ourselves and the world: by engaging us empathically in a form of 'role-playing' that allows us to simulate situations and can lead to self-modification of our beliefs, or by stimulating reflection that can lead to interrogation or revision of our existing beliefs. Both methods chime with some of the proposed epistemically-valuable processes that were outlined by the theories discussed in §2. Eva-Maria Koopman and Frank Hakemulder's (2015) meta-analysis of the psychological literature concludes that changes to a reader's empathy and reflection are central to understanding learning from literature. They stress that we ought not to conflate narrative, fictionality and literariness as concepts, and subsequently develop a framework that dissects the specific cognitive mechanisms associated with each kind of text. In this context, they define narrative texts as "texts presenting a sequence of events in which one or more characters are involved" (ibid, 83) and claim that literary texts involve "unconventional, novel, and deviating ways of representing" (ibid, 83) including features like unusual imagery or complex linguistic features. The framework developed by Koopman and Hakemulder finds that the existing research supports two complementary contentions a) that our empathic engagement with

narratives can lead to "self-modifying feelings" which can in turn lead to changes in concepts/beliefs and b) that appreciating literary features of texts can lead to self-reflection. Thus, there are at least two key ways in which literature can bring about cognitive benefits: via engaging us empathically which in turn can stimulate changes in self-perception, or by leading us into reflective activity which creates space for various epistemically valuable activities like questioning, refining, or expanding our beliefs and concepts.

The first part of this framework concerns our empathic engagement with narratives. The main test used for measuring empathic responses was the "Reading the Mind in the Eyes" test, which is a widely accepted measure of empathy. In this test participants are shown 36 photographs of people's eyes as if they were looking through a letterbox, and then, for each photograph, they pick one out of four possible words to describe the eyes. In repeated studies, it was found that engagement with fiction, as opposed to non-fictional or expository texts, lead to higher RMET results (Mar et al. 2006, 200; Hakemulder 2000; Djikic et al. 2009, 2013). Mar et al. (2006) found exposure to fiction correlated with greater social ability and self-reported empathy on several empathy tests including a revised version of RMET and the Interpersonal Reactivity Index (IRI) which tracks empathy according to four subscales: (1) Fantasy, (2) Perspective-taking, (3) Empathic Concern and (4) Personal Distress. Kidd and Castano (2013) found that exposure to literary texts led to higher scores on several cognitive and affective empathy tests compared to popular fictional texts, albeit these positive effects were limited to the short term and not connected to life-long exposure to literature.

Kidd and Castano's explanation for literature's potency over fiction in enhancing theory of mind (the ability to identify and understand the inner emotional state of others) was that literary representations of social situations were less likely to be governed by convention or ste-

reotype, and more likely to deviate from our everyday expectations of social behaviours. Similar results were reported by Djikic et al. (2009), who found that readers of Anton Chekhov's "The Lady with The Little Dog" reported statistically significant changes in the self-evaluation of key traits such as conscientiousness and emotional stability, whereas readers of a reiteration of the story in a non-fictional style did not.

Keith Oatley (1999, 2016) argues we should understand our empathic engagement with narrative fiction as involving 'role taking'. Role taking is a simulation where we make a mental model of the world, take on the goals and plans of the protagonist, and subsequently experience emotions in accordance with the success of these goals and plans. Oatley argues that self-identifying with characters and their engagement with the social world can lead to both pro-social attitudes and what is termed in the literature as 'self-modifying feelings'. We can understand 'self-modifying feelings' as emotional states which lead to changes in how we understand the world of the text, which can then be "carried forward as an altered understanding of the reader's own lifeworld" (Miall and Kuiken 2004, 176). Koopman and Hakemulder's conclusion, based on these studies and analyses, is that empathic identification with the narrative was crucial for changes in conception of either oneself or the depicted subject matter. They explain this phenomenon in terms of narratives as thought-experiments, wherein we take up the perspectives of characters, which in turn "can result in a broadening of readers' consciousness" (Koopman and Hakemulder 2015, 91). This conclusion was recently tested again in the context of young adult readers, where it was found that exposure to both young adult and adult literature correlated with perspective-taking and increased social and moral cognition (Black and Barnes 2020). Rather than testing for empathy and moral cognition after exposure to a text, Black and Barnes used the Author Recognition test, which gauges exposure to literature by getting participants to identify known authors from a list of established writers, with foils to offset cheating or socially desirable responding.

Whilst D.R Johnson (2013) found that fictionalised narratives involving Arabic Muslim female characters elicited longer-lasting pro-social attitudes toward Arabic Muslim women than equivalent expository texts, Koopman and Hakemulder's (2015) assessment is that the lack of systematic comparisons between fictional, literary, and expository texts should dissuade us from concluding that fictions or literary fictions could be more persuasive than purely expository texts (c.f. Green et al. 2012). Given this hesitation, an initial worry might be, then, that the neo-cognitivist with the aid of the psychologist cannot establish anything particular to literature about enhancing understanding; they can only establish that literature is cognitively valuable by virtue of its narrativity or fictionality. The second part of Koopman and Hakemulder's (2015, 82) framework provides resources for thinking that there is something more specific to literature which is that literary or aesthetic features of a text have been show in some research to stimulate what they call 'self-reflection', by which they mean "thoughts and insights on oneself, often in relation to others, and/or society (in the present context of course evoked by reading)". There is also some research that suggests the greater the literariness of a text, the more likely it is to yield self-reflection (Sikora et al. 2009). This is said to be the result of a process called defamiliarization: the process of becoming unsettled by deviating linguistic features found in literary texts that causes a change in how the subject perceives a concept (Miall and Kuiken, 1994, 1999, 2002). Striking linguistic features of a text defamiliarize by getting readers to take up a new perspective on familiar things. Miall and Kuiken (1994) note that reported defamiliarization was associated positively with both experienced readers and readers who found the text to be striking or beautiful. From a philosophical point of view, we would say that self-reflection occurs predominantly when the aesthetic experience with the text is fruitful and rewarding.

Van Peer et al. (2007) explored this phenomenon in relation to poetry. After giving readers one of six different lines of poetry that were of vary-

ing complexity and supplying a questionnaire which asked participants to rank their agreement with statements like "It makes me stop and think", "I think it introduces a new perspective", and "I find it striking", they found that the lines which deviated from everyday language (for example by virtue of being considered more beautiful, more complex or elaborate as well as use of simile and metaphor) generated greater perceived cognitive impact. Koopman and Hakemulder cite Van Peer et al.'s experiment as evidence that literary features of a text such as novel metaphors, rhyme, and style contribute to higher levels of cognitive reflection. Sikor et al. (2011) found that readers responding to Coleridge's *The Rime of the Ancient Mariner* reported a similar experience, where stylistic features like complexity or striking imagery prompted readers to self-implicate themselves in the text, which in turn lead to self-reflection. The team termed this kind of reading 'expressive enactment':

> In this mode of reading: (a) stylistic features give narrative objects, characters, and places a sensuous and engaging presence; (b) mutations of the sensuously present "other" occur across striking or evocative reading moments; and (c) the reader becomes metaphorically identified with these transformations in ways that deepen self-perception. (ibid, 135)

In fact, readers with prior grief experience were more likely to experience this type of reading experience, suggesting a potential overlap or interaction between empathic/self-implicating mechanisms as well as aesthetic features and reflection. Koopman and Hakemulder conclude from the research on defamiliarization that encountering novel, complex, or striking features of a literary text can halt the ordinary flow of our thinking, which in turn creates space, which they call "stillness". In stillness we can reflect, alter, refine, evaluate, or interrogate our beliefs about ourselves and the world.

5 Upshots and Limitations

Lamarque's objection is motivated by a scepticism about whether the neo-cognitivist has anything informative to say about how and what we learn from literature, a scepticism echoed in the recent work of Gregory Currie and Stacie Friend. In *Imagining and Knowing,* Currie forcefully argues that fiction is more closely intertwined with the value of imagination than it is knowledge. For Currie, pretence is the central feature of our engagement with fiction, and it is precisely this pretence which undermines our ability to jump from beliefs about the fictional world to beliefs about the real world (Currie 2020). In a recent empirical study attempting to recreate an experiment by Djikic et al. (2013) that found that reading fiction was associated with a lower need for closure, where need for closure was thought to track decreased creativity, open-mindedness and imagination, Currie, Friend, and colleagues found that exposure to literature did not correlate with increased imaginative capacities (Wimmer et al. 2022). Further, Wimmer et al. (2021) failed to replicate research that suggested fiction's ability to encourage transportation and identification had positive effects on social and moral cognition. This research fuels Currie's scepticism about cognitivism (see Currie 1998) and of course would call into question some of the contentions discussed in §4.

This highlights the need for caution when drawing lessons from the empirical literature. Broad and general claims such as 'literature makes us more knowledgeable' or 'fiction makes us more moral' will be extremely difficult, if not impossible, to substantiate empirically, and the conclusions we should draw from the existing research should be narrower. However, the question of whether fiction or literature can make us more morally and socially adept does not necessarily invalidate the research that suggests literature can inspire reflection or get us to take up the perspectives of characters. Neo-cognitivists such as Elgin, John, or Vidmar Jovanović claim that literature can prompt us to reflect

and guide our attention in such a way that we can form new beliefs or reshape existing ones in ways that add depth and complexity to our understanding of ourselves and our social world, and Koopman and Hakemulder's metanalysis certainly suggests that reflection is a crucial mechanism through which literature can bring about changes in concept. Thus, rather than conclude that literary readers are cognitively superior, we can offer empirical support to the more focused claim that reflection plays a central role in our epistemic engagement with literary texts. We can value literature for its ability to create opportunities for cognitive enrichment without being committed to the claim that it necessarily cultivates understanding in all instances. Further, the explanatory resources available in the empirical literature, particularly the models invoking role-taking and reflection, help the neo-cognitivist push back against Lamarque's claim that the neo-cognitivist account is purely metaphorical. Even if we're not in a position to make claims about whether literature invariably leads to better empathy scores or long-term social effects, we do have ways of explaining the methods through which literature can alter the way we think about ourselves and others that go beyond empty metaphor.

Without blindly accepting the results of the various studies discussed, we can still maintain that there are various well-documented mechanisms that can be absorbed into the neo-cognitivist framework to further substantiate their claims about the cognitive benefits of literature. For example, the phenomenon of role-taking/transportation in fictional and literary reading is now very well-documented, and it also bears a striking resemblance to the neo-cognitivist claims that works of literature can function as thought experiments in ways that can yield epistemically valuable results. It is possible that the psychological literature could provide greater insight into how we can come to learn from thought experiments, as well as the role that empathy and self-implication play in this process. Similarly, there is a substantial amount of empirical literature that cites the importance of complexity and nov-

elty in language, structure, and imagery as relevant to the stimulation of reflective activities. It may well be of interest to the philosopher to pursue this line of thought and consider how these particular aesthetic features can be linked to enhanced understanding. Rather than treating the existing data as definitive or conclusive, we can look to it for inspiration for future philosophical investigation.

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RESTITUTING ART: AN ETHICAL ANALYSIS OF THE PARTHENON MARBLES DEBATE

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Attempting to make clear different theories of cultural ownership, cultural property scholars have divided dominant views into two categories: cultural nationalism and cultural internationalism. Although not discussed in the relevant literature, I claim it is useful to understand these two categories as comprised of the ethical views of deontology and consequentialism. I claim cultural internationalists believe they have good independent reasons against returning problematic cultural heritage like the Parthenon marbles. However, I will demonstrate their arguments are based on consequentialist ethics, and there are just as many consequentialist reasons to return the marbles as there are for them to remain in the British Museum, undermining cultural internationalist arguments against their return.

1 Introduction

The debate surrounding the Parthenon marbles in the British Museum best illustrates the ethical positions behind cultural nationalism and cultural internationalism.[1] Although not discussed in the relevant literature, I claim it is useful to understand these two views as comprised of the ethical views of deontology – the view that moral actions align with our duties – and consequentialism – the view that moral actions maximize beneficial outcomes. As a brief overview, the Parthenon has stood on the Acropolis of Athens in Greece for two and a half millennia. Four centuries of Ottoman occupation combined with transformations of the Parthenon into churches, mosques, and an ammunitions store caused notable damage to the ancient marble structure. From 1801 to 1812, Thomas Bruce, the 7th Earl of Elgin, removed parts of the Parthenon's frieze, metopes, and pedimentary sculpture to be shipped to Britain (Banteka 2016, 1237; Rudenstine 2021, 378). Substantial damage occurred during this removal, causing further irreversible structural damage to the Parthenon. When later debating their purchase in 1816, Parliament primarily questioned whether Elgin had actually obtained written permission from the Ottomans to take the marbles from the Acropolis, and whether their subsequent purchase by Britain would condone looting art. Those in Parliament who were for or against the purchase of the marbles echo the arguments made today in contemporary debates. An important question concerning the ethics behind the Parthenon marbles' acquisition asks whether the Ottomans had a right to sell another culture's art. Is it ethical for conquering nations to sell the cultural heritage of a conquered people? Further, is it ethical to purchase cultural heritage from the occupier of an occupied nation?

These questions were debated and later dismissed by Parliament (Rudenstine 2021, 410). After Parliament approved the purchase of

[1] Many thanks to Vid Simoniti and Panayiota Vassilopoulou for their comments on an early draft of this paper.

the marbles in 1816 and sent them to the British Museum, the marbles continued to suffer damage. During 1937-38, conservators at the British Museum scoured sections of the marbles with wire brushes and corrosive bleaching chemicals, scraping away ancient traces of paint and artistic details from their surface (Rudenstine 2021, 451). More recently, a United Nations Educational, Scientific, and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) committee met in early 2021 and expressed concerns about the display conditions where the marbles are kept (Solomon 2021). In August 2021, heavy rainfall in London led to water leaking into galleries in the British Museum, highlighting again the growing concern over the safety of the British collection of the Parthenon marbles.

In 2021, UNESCO officially recommended the Parthenon marbles be returned to Greece. A UK government spokesperson rejected this, saying: "We disagree with the Committee's decision… Our position is clear — the Parthenon sculptures were acquired legally in accordance with the law at the time" (Chow 2021). While UNESCO recommends their return, the UK remains firm on their disagreement. This lack of official consensus further complicates the persisting ethical problem of the Parthenon marbles in the British Museum. In October 2022, the British House of Lords debated the 1983 National Heritage Act concerning whether certain major UK cultural institutions should be able to return objects with questionable histories (Bailey 2022). If this act were amended, it would provide unique legal opportunities to return some objects to their cultural origins since there is currently no law enforcing such action for museums. However, the Parthenon marbles cannot be returned until the British Museum Act of 1963 is amended (Harris 2021).

Addressing this legal impasse within cultural heritage literature, cultural property scholars have divided the debate into two categories: cultural nationalism and cultural internationalism (Goldsleger 2005, 109; Kiwara-Wilson 2013, 396; Banteka 2016, 1252; Losson 2021, 387). I argue it is important to understand these claims are supported by either

consequentialist or deontological ethics since there seems to be a stalemate between these nationalist and internationalist claims in cultural heritage literature, as evidenced by the British Museum and UNESCO's different judgements about the present location of the Parthenon marbles. As such, an analysis in the terms of moral philosophy may assist in both understanding and adjudicating between the positions.

2 The Ethics of Cultural Restitution

When seeking to justify responses to moral dilemmas, artworld interpretations of museum ethics typically use a combination of consequentialist and deontological theories (Edson 2005, 51). Deontological theories propose that even if bad outcomes occur, a cultural institution's actions remain ethical if the institution intended to act in accordance with duties. In contrast to this view, consequentialists believe moral action for cultural institutions is dictated by pursuing the best possible outcomes of an action. When considering the ethical frameworks of deontology and consequentialism alongside the concepts of cultural nationalism and cultural internationalism, it must be noted the former are established and recognized ethical systems, while the latter are theories within the context of museums. It has not yet been considered in extant literature that these views are underwritten by consequentialist and deontological ethical theories, but I argue it is important we consider them in this light to provide the supporting ethical ground for cultural nationalism or cultural internationalism.

While 'nationalism' typically means the promotion of a particular nation, in a cultural heritage context it has a slightly different meaning. Cultural nationalism in this case claims the value of cultural heritage can only be fully realized in its original cultural context (Banteka 2016, 1253). Cultural nationalism places importance on originating contexts, claiming cultures who produced a certain object instill within it emotional qualities binding it to the originating culture, leading to a great loss when removed. For cultural nationalism, the proper context for cultural heritage is within the culture of its origin, with importance placed on nation-oriented principles of nationalism, legality, and morality (Kiwara-Wilson 2013, 397).

This description best supports the claim that cultural nationalism has parallel moral views to a deontological, duty-based ethic, especially through focusing on specific principles when deciding on moral action. Cultural nationalist views consider nationalism, legality, and morality as moral obligations that should be followed, regardless of whether a majority benefits from this view or not. This view's focus is on advancing the interests of a particular group of people rather than benefiting a wider group. The return of objects to their original context then becomes an ethical act righting the wrongs of past unethical action against a particular cultural group (Goldsleger 2005, 109).

Cultural nationalism could call for all cultural heritage to be returned to its original context, even if there were no wrongs with regard to rights of ownership. Taken to its extreme, cultural nationalism might serve as a foundation for *museum scepticism*. Museum sceptics believe not only that an object's original nation best serves our understanding of it but also that an object's being situated within cultural institutions destroys its contextually dependent purpose (Carrier 2006, 52). Museum scepticism, therefore, claims art needs its original context in order to be best understood, and so, cannot thrive within any museum context. Although museum scepticism is an extreme position with similar aims as cultural nationalism—namely, the return of cultural objects to their originating cultural contexts—there is little literature suggesting the return of all cultural objects is a solution for specific dilemmas within the art world, even when advocating for conceivably cultural nationalist approaches. Those in the literature who use cultural nationalist claims usually support it within contexts of looted cultural heritage.

In contrast to cultural nationalism, cultural internationalism is the idea there is universal interest in the preservation and display of cultural property no matter where it is situated (Kiwara-Wilson 2013, 397). The claim I wish to tease out is that defending a cultural internationalist view is really defending a consequentialist ethic. What is missing from cultural internationalism, by its favouring of concepts like universal

interest (i.e., the maximization of it through utilitarian calculation), is cultural nationalism's emphasis on universal principles and laws. Those in the artworld who uphold the importance of cultural internationalism describe themselves as belonging to the idea of the universal museum. In 2002, a 'Declaration on the Importance and Value of Universal Museums' was signed by eighteen directors of leading museums within Europe and the United States (Thompson 2003, 251). The aim of the Declaration was to justify the presence of objects with questionable provenance within leading museums, stating: "The universal admiration for ancient civilizations would not be so deeply established today were it not for the influence exercised by the artefacts of these cultures, widely available to an international public in major museums," (Karp et al. 2006, 248). This Declaration outlines the strongest argument for the international museum: the display of cultural heritage, even if questionably looted, serves the people of all nations by maximizing the appreciation of past people. It is crucial to note the emphasis on maximizing a particular good despite a perceived wrong. Emphasis on maximizing the good indicates an underlying consequentialist ethic, signifying the ends of maximizing cultural appreciation justifies the means of looting cultural heritage.

The Declaration asks, does the good resulting from the display of cultural heritage outweigh the bad of its dubious origins? This is akin to the question asked in ethical discourse whether the ends justify the means. Deontological ethics would not support an argument which treats a looted culture as a means to the end of the enjoyment of cultural heritage, while a consequentialist ethic could conceivably support this. For deontology, the looted culture should be seen as an end in itself, and there is no moral duty or justification for looting cultural heritage. Further, if a deontological maxim stating it is ethical for museums to purchase looted heritage were created, the universalization of this maxim would be self-defeating, undermining the ethical legitimacy of the artworld. If cultural institutions claim to "serve society and its

development" (Edson 2005, 3) yet condone the looting of heritage by purchasing and displaying such looted objects, this would defeat the goal of the service and development of society since looting a society's objects is antithetical to its development. Conversely, a consequentialist framework could claim there is moral justification for purchasing and looting cultural heritage: the good produced from its display, like the maximization of aesthetic pleasure or knowledge of other cultures, outweighs the bad of its questionable origins. The Declaration ends by emphasizing universal museums are in service of "not just the citizens of one nation but the people of every nation … To narrow the focus of museums whose collections are diverse and multifaceted would therefore be a disservice to all visitors" (Karp et al. 2006, 248). Which is the greater disservice to visitors, restituting looted art or allowing visitors to believe looted art is acceptable for museum collections?

Adopting restitution policies for looted cultural heritage does not mean all cultural heritage in all museums should be returned (Goldsleger 2005, 116; Losson 2021, 381). Not all cultural heritage has been looted; for those that have, each instance of looting and its return will be unique and unlikely to set precedents for other cases. Different considerations will be applied to each case. Nazi-looted art, for example, will be treated differently than cultural heritage acquired through colonialism. This will not lead to the complete emptying of museums, but rather the removal and return of select items in collections determined as looted cultural heritage.

Although the 2002 Declaration was signed by many directors of large international institutions, it was not signed by the British Museum director at the time. Despite this, and according to several statements made by Neil MacGregor, director from 2002 to 2015, the British Museum can be considered a universal museum (Kiwara-Wilson 2013, 398). Further, MacGregor claimed the Parthenon marbles "have played a vital role in the Museum's purpose to be an encyclopedia of knowl-

edge and a material record of human history" (quoted in Rudenstine 2021, 381). What typically underscores internationalist predilections is an emphasis on terms like 'encyclopedia' and 'human history'. On their official website, the British Museum states they are "working in partnership for the benefit of the widest possible audience… for this interconnected world collection" (British Museum 2023). The phrases "benefit of the widest possible audience" and "interconnected world collection" are notably cultural internationalist descriptions. Commentators further underscore this stance by saying the British Museum's position on restitution debates is not about ownership but about displaying "everyone's culture" in one place for "maximum public benefit" (Challis 2006, 39). International and universal museums believe safeguarding and promoting universal values benefits audiences, which justifies imposing limitations on cultural property restitution rights (Thompson 2003, 258).

Cuno (2014) especially praises the British Museum as the "archetypal encyclopedic museum" and defends cultural institutions against restitution claims. While Cuno's views are culturally internationalist, I claim the arguments he uses also reflect consequentialist ethics. He explains the promise of encyclopedic museums as encouraging cultural exchange, curiosity about the world, and a cosmopolitan worldview (Cuno 2014, 120). What matters most for Cuno is not how artworks were obtained by museums, but the alleged total good they can produce. Losson (2021) responds to Cuno's cultural internationalist claims against calls for restitution, calling them at best ironic since most universal museums were created and continue to reinforce nationalistic ideas of the superiority of their host nation. The Louvre reinforces the superiority of France, and the British Museum reinforces the superiority of Britain (Losson 2021, 387). The encyclopedic, internationalist museum protests against nationalistic views when restitution claims are made but remains at its core nationalistic.

3 Ethical Debate

There are codes of professional ethics by which most UK museums abide. At the national level is the Museum Association (MA) code of ethics, and at the international level is the International Council of Museums (ICOM) code of ethics. If a cultural institution follows a code of ethics, it stands to reason it believes duties and principles should be upheld. If a cultural institution claims to be in the service of communities, then it stands to reason it believes in the widest benefit for all when deciding to act. As mentioned earlier, cultural institutions usually incorporate both deontology and consequentialism when deciding on ethical action (Edson 2005, 51). Operating with both consequential and deontological ethics typically does not cause conflict by itself, but these ethics are in conflict when assessing artworks with problematic histories like the Parthenon marbles. Cultural internationalists aim for the best outcomes for the largest number of people. To operate a cultural institution under this theory of the greater good does not, at face value, seem ethically problematic. Where there is no evidence of questionable provenance, a consequentialist ethic works well for universal museums if, in fact, they are in service of the people of every nation.

However, if cultural internationalist consequentialism is aimed at producing the best outcome for the largest number of people, how could the present state of the Parthenon marbles be the best outcome for the most people? After all, even if Elgin did legally purchase the marbles from the Ottoman Empire, is it ethical to obtain cultural heritage from occupying powers? It cannot be in the best interests of the citizens of every nation to defend artworks' provenance as obtained from an occupying power. It is a weak argument that a greater good occurred overall when weighing the loss of the Parthenon marbles for Greek culture – a loss still felt today – against the overall aesthetic experience of their display in the British Museum. I argue if cultural internationalism uses a consequentialist ethic to defend its views on the problem of the Par-

thenon marbles, then a consequentialist ethic can just as easily be used to call for their return.

The principle of utility is key here: a consequentialist ethic would claim the greatest amount of good would see the reunification of the Parthenon marbles in the Acropolis Museum in Athens. Since Melina Mercouri's campaign in the 1980s as Cultural Minister of Greece, the British Museum has argued Greece lacked the necessary resources to display the marbles. However, this argument was challenged by the construction of the new Acropolis Museum in 2009. Today, the Acropolis Museum not only showcases the sections of the marbles it owns, but also highlights missing sections still held by the British Museum. The gallery, which has outer glass walls facing the Parthenon, serves as a touching reminder of the obvious omissions in the display. Since 2009, the argument that Greece lacks what the British Museum can provide no longer stands. Additionally, the return of the marbles would see the British Museum gain greater ethical standing within the artworld, while the Acropolis Museum would gain a more comprehensive collection of what is considered the most important marble sculptures in the world. Scholarship of the marbles would improve, and political relations between Greece and the UK could improve as well.

If an ethical calculus were performed, all these goods combined would outweigh the return of the Parthenon marbles from the British Museum collection. If the ethical goal is the maximization of good consequences of an action, I claim consequentialist ethical reasons could call for the marbles to both remain or leave the British Museum. Cultural nationalism argues for their return based on principles of restoring looted cultural heritage, while cultural internationalism presents mixed perspectives, supporting and opposing their return for the greater good. It is unclear which perspective within cultural internationalism is correct, as both could argue for either action. In contrast, cultural nationalism unequivocally advocates for the Parthenon marbles' return.

4 Conclusion

In October 2022, the British Parliament debated amending the 1983 National Heritage Act, eventually deciding against providing a legal route for the return of objects with problematic provenance in major UK cultural institutions (Bailey 2022). Claims made on either side of this debate correspond to cultural nationalist or cultural internationalist arguments. As seen through the relevant literature, there is an interesting relationship between these two views for the case of the Parthenon marbles. What I have tried to show is cultural nationalist views are rooted in deontology, and cultural internationalist views are rooted in consequentialism. It is crucial to recognize restitution cases can differ due to context, and how consequences are assessed may always be open to some degree of interpretation. The outcome of consequentialist ethics does not recommend the return of all objects in all cases, but what I have shown in the Parthenon marbles case specifically is that consequentialism would recommend both remaining and their return. I argue, once cultural internationalist views are analyzed through consequentialist ethics, there are no more good reasons to keep them than there are for them to be returned. By cultural internationalists' own standards, their arguments do not work: when the good and the bad are weighed for the case of the Parthenon marbles, the scales tip more towards their return.

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CAN THE QALLUNAAT SPEAK ABOUT INUIT ART PROPERLY?

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While there have been recent improvements, there is still very little diversity in aesthetic teaching, research, and debates among experts, despite such variety in art. In addition, we do not hesitate to make aesthetic judgements (taken in a very broad sense) about artifacts whose cultural anchors we do not know, acting on the premise that our views and concepts are universally shared. This paper takes a closer look at the Inuit art view to show how Inuit cultures may help us broaden our aesthetic views by questioning the Western opposition between tradition and originality. Why Inuit art? Inuit cultures have been the subject of prolific scientific writing and, thus, abundantly observed and studied. However, it is still misunderstood and exoticized by the Qallunaat or the "non-Inuit people" in Inuktitut.

For discussion purposes, I raise and discuss a few tensions in how we approach and understand Inuit art. I also discuss the impact this may have on a possible "aesthetics of Inuit art". I then focus on the reception of Inuk visual artist Annie Pootoogook (Kinngait [Cape Dorset], 1969 - Ottawa, 2016) and discuss it as both a case study and a tribute. Her visual artwork is an excellent example of misunderstood work (or, should we say: a work approached with the wrong hermeneutic reading). Inuit art fits no (Western) category, and Pootoogook's stunning artwork adds to the puzzle by not even fitting the category of 'Inuit art'. Therefore, we will try to answer the question: How can philosophical aestheticians adjust to Inuit art so as not to sink into either exoticization or misunderstanding?

Despite recent improvements, philosophers tend to formulate their aesthetic views based on a very narrow range of artworks. Although there is variety in art, the same canonical examples are used repeatedly (*Guernica*, *Brillo Boxes* or Pollock's *Number 5*), as if it would be dangerous to pick a different one. This can, of course, be explained by the desire to be understood, as a famous example will be known to all. However, it also shows something else. Philosophy experts usually see their own culture as a point of reference, yet do not hesitate to make value judgements (taken in a very broad sense) regarding artefacts whose cultural anchors they do not know, acting as if their views and art-related concepts were universally shared.

This paper takes a closer look at the Inuit perspective on art to expose how Inuit cultures[1] may broaden views on aesthetics, namely by questioning the Western opposition between tradition and originality. Why Inuit art? It has been documented for a while, as Inuk scholar Heather Igloliorte and art historian Carla Taunton states: "While the writing and framing of Indigenous art histories—arguably a diachronic project of linking past and present—is not a new initiative, it continues to be an urgent one" (Igloliorte and Taunton 2017, 5). Abundantly observed and studied, Inuit cultures have been the subject of prolific scientific writing by ethnographers, anthropologists, and linguists (Duchemin-Pelletier 2015, Graburn and Stern 1999). However, it is still misunderstood and exoticized—i.e., seen as *strange*, simply because it is foreign—by experts (Fanon, 1952; Root 2007) and the *Qallunaat*, or the "non-Inuit people," as they are called in Inuktitut. While some improvements can

[1] Colonial history of 'Canada' is far more complex than it may look from the outside. In the Canadian Constitution, Indigenous people are grouped legally into three distinct categories: Inuit, First Nations, and Métis. Each category bears a very specific history: First Nations and Inuit People have had cultural contact only relatively recently and have been impacted very differently by European colonization, so they cannot be lumped together under one category. However, for the sake of readability, I will use the term "Indigenous" as a general category. Discrimination against Indigenous people is intertwined with other forms of colonialism and discriminations (for example, economic discrimination between French and English settlers' descent). See also (Guimond 2019).

be observed, there is still a lot of work ahead. As Higgins (2017, 340) states, "Few in academia would defend the idea of Western cultural supremacy [...] Most Western aestheticians in my experience happily acknowledge that the aesthetics of other cultures should be studied and taken seriously. There is a gap, however, between that conviction and standard practice within the field."

Inuit cultures may enrich contemporary aesthetic debates, namely by questioning the opposition between tradition and originality through various cultural exchanges. I will argue that decolonial aesthetics is not merely a matter of adding new categories, but instead requires assessing and revising existing categories. In particular, as I will show in the next section, the distinction between art and craft, problematic from the start, might be one key to a better understanding of the full value of Inuit art. For discussion purposes, I will end with some remarks on Inuk visual artist Annie Pootoogook (Kinngait [Cape Dorset], 1969 - Ottawa, 2016), discussing it as both a case study and a tribute. If Inuit art fits no (Western) category, but is, without any doubt, stunning art, Pootoogook's work adds to the puzzle by not even fitting the 'Inuit art' category. This singularity has led to a misunderstanding of her work: Pootoogook's drawings have been treated with a double bias (racist and sexist), which has prevented the public from perceiving their relevance. Nevertheless, the good news is that we can learn from this.

Art versus craft: a wrong distinction from the start

We often have a stereotypical view of Inuit art, namely the one seen in tourist stores: soapstone-carved animals. However, as Graburn and Stern (1999) note, "commercial art" (the objects Inuit artists began crafting at the request of Southern tradesmen) is grounded in Inuit traditional techniques, but this craftsmanship is the result of recent socio-cultural changes that also address gender issues. Since the 1950s, Inuit women have developed new production opportunities in commercial crafting, in which both men and women have been very successful.

This grew into a phenomenon of competition and emulation that led Inuit artists to discuss the aesthetic dimension of art forms and the place of modernity in their practice.

In fact, our portrayal of Inuit "craftsmanship" is distorted by the fact that many of the so-called traditional objects were originally made smaller to be given as toys or exchanged as gifts for the South.[2] They were not supposed to serve as a yardstick for gauging the state of the advancement of visual arts in Inuit culture. However, the commercial demand generated by the "exotic charm" of these artefacts has changed community practices. To ensure economic development, artists were forced to adapt to a conceptual and institutional framework that did not necessarily suit them but in which they were integrated. Thus, the contact with Southern cultures greatly impacted what we believe (misleadingly) to be traditional Inuit craftsmanship. Even the relation between men and women within the communities was affected due to the assigned gendered role in art production.

Moreover, outside Inuit communities, another major change in Inuit art production occurred when Inuit artists began to widen their practice to commercial art and attend Western art schools in the South. While the need to "distinguish 'craft' as a process and practice from 'craft' as a category of disciplines" (Shiner 2012, 232) may still be relevant in some ways, this label remains pejorative: *ethnic art* is often seen as a synonym of *craft* and a euphemism for *naïve* or *primitive*.

Inuit increasingly made their own the Western concept of "ethnic arts", for they had not much other option. After all, any artist, whoever they may be, belongs to an ethnic group—including the great Western masters. To identify with this label "ethnic art" means to endorse the

[2] On that point (the effects of commercialization on so-called traditional artistic practices), see: Burns Coleman, Elizabeth. 'Appreciating "Traditional" Aboriginal Painting Aesthetically'. *The Journal of Aesthetics and Art Criticism* (2004) 62, 235-247, <https://doi-org.biblioproxy.uqtr.ca/10.1111/j.0021-8529.2004.00156.x>

precedence of Western art as the reference point over "non-Western" art (the "other"). Inuit artists were stuck—until recently, they had no voice to contest such labels in academia or art-related institutions, as the epistemic power relationship was biased.[3] However, with a decolonial approach to their own craftsmanship, Inuit artists have no other label to endorse than that of "Inuit" if (and only if) they wish to claim it.[4] But this does not protect them from the risks of cultural marginalization (Hitomi and Loring 2018).

Contact between Inuit art and the West has been, in some cases, an opportunity for creativity (Bouchard 2006). However, it has also come with backlash:

> [The] persistence of Indigenous conceptions of art and the local investment of Western artistic criteria make it clear that contemporary Inuit art has not been emptied of its cultural substratum. Far from having submitted entirely to the diktat of the Western art market, artists have been able to negotiate openings for the expression of their artistic understanding. Or rather, [...]: they have incorporated Western limiting criteria into their practice, trying to do the best they can with or against their will. (Duchemin-Pelletier 2015, 54, our translation)

The relation between the dominant group and the artists themselves was, indeed, unbalanced. The Inuit had already produced for Western buyers since the middle of the 19th century as whalers and then mis-

[3] "[T]he "coloniality" and all the concepts that we have introduced since then are concepts created not in Europe but in the "Third World". This means that all these concepts come from the experience of coloniality in the Americas. They are certainly closely intertwined with modernity, but no longer 'apply' the categories born in Europe to "understand" the colonial legacy. On the contrary, we have converted Europe into an area of analysis rather than a provider of "cultural and epistemic resources" (Diallo 2014).

[4] See also: Igloliorte, Heather, et al., "Killjoys, Academic Citizenship and the Politics of Getting Along." *TOPIA: Canadian Journal of Cultural Studies* 38 (2017): 187-208. <muse.jhu.edu/article/709227>

sionaries, trading post managers, and other visitors until they formed a self-managed association (Duchemin-Pelletier 2015, 60, footnote 2). Hence, their art was stuck between two labels: 'exotic' or 'naïve'. Not because they are, but because of our inability to question our conceptual framework and to see Inuit's contribution to aesthetic and artistic debates; their views about it were not transmitted by Western institutional means (until recently, see: Igloliorte 2017).

Research in aesthetics is still reluctant to consider anything that comes out of the usual canons and categories, even when the data exists. In other words, having documentation is not enough to conclude that a culture is integrated into the field of knowledge. Knowing things about a given culture does not guarantee that those things will be interpreted at their fair value. Moreover, the data collected show that Inuit artists living outside their communities must often identify their work as "ethnic art" in order to establish themselves as professional artists, as if they would not be fully-fledged artists otherwise. But this label, as noted above, does not fit their production, for the relation between tradition and innovation is far more interesting than the blunt dichotomy used in Western theory.

Inuit & the Qallunaat's Dilemma

The Qallunaat [non-Inuk] dilemma occurs when I, a Westerner, want to try to understand, enjoy, and speak about Inuit art by fitting it into my own conceptual network.[5] It happens when I try to appraise its value, originality, and so on, with the theoretical background and vocabulary that usually describes it as traditional (non-original), naïve (basic) or amateur. 'Inuit art' (as a label) is a vibrant example of a concept that does not fit the categories. In other words, even if I love Inuit art, I am

[5] See also the work of Indigenous scholar Margaret Kovach, who proposes to reframe epistemology as conversations between paradigms: *Indigenous Methodologies: Characteristics, Conversations, and Contexts* (University of Toronto Press, 2nd edition, 2021).

likely to see anything through the filter of my previous learnings and thereby approach any artwork expecting it to be original according to the standards of my own cultural tradition, that is, by *cultural imperialism* (Coulthard 2014). As Higgins (2017, 344) asks, the question remains: "How do we assert our views as scholars without presenting our own perspective as though we took it to be authoritative and without substituting our own words for those whose work and tradition we wish to engage with?"

Getting out of cultural imperialism: easy to say, not easy to do

As "we have manifold reasons to extend our attention to the entirety of the globe," any philosopher of art could ask, with reason, "[w]hy then have we as a field not done this?" (Higgins 2017, p. 342), while it has been done elsewhere. Following Fanon's (1952) influent work, the concept of decoloniality was developed in Latin America by intellectuals[6] in reaction to debates on postcolonial societies (Boidin 2009). They called for a major change in the intellectual posture[7] because, while recognizing the existence of a distant (or recent) colonial past, postcolonial theorists would leave the situation intact: they would make observations rather than call for corrective action. They recall that:

> [T]he coloniality remains in force in public and civil institutions of a social nature (governments, schools, the Church, museums, etc.). Society and its production space (the city in its contemporary form), with their systems of transmission of values (learn-

[6] Intellectuals like Peruvian sociologist Anibal Quijano (who developed a critique of Marxism linking systemic racism to capitalism), Argentine philosopher Maria Lugones (who developed a theory of mixed identity influenced by Black Feminism), essayist Gloria Anzaldua, or Argentinian curator and researcher Walter Mignolo (who proposed to apply it to aesthetics) are all examples of abundant, rich, autonomous and critical complex thought outside paradigms imposed by Western intellectual centers.

[7] If the labels "North" and "South" are convenient to distinguish between rich countries from emerging ones, it is somewhat ironic that for the inhabitants living in the Arctic Circle, "the South" refers to the rich cities and capital where many of the decisions that concern them are taken.

> ing), give up other knowledge, so-called endogenous (Indigenous, African, Arab, feminist, queer ...), which they consider "primitive", "old", "obsolete", "backward". Or, they assimilate them and transform them into exotic or nostalgic goods. (Benfield et al. 2012, 36[8])

Inuit cultures perfectly exemplify this tendency since they have dealt with both 'primitive' and 'exotic' labels. Since the Arctic Circle looks geographically remote from Europe, observers apply the qualifier to the culture itself and are then surprised—because it does not fit their narrative—when they notice that Inuit cultures were in constant evolution far before they had any contact with Western colonizers (Petersen 1995).

Decolonizing aesthetics requires more than adding excluded artistic manifestations to the field of aesthetics (Gómez et al. 2016, 104-105). It requires changing its vocabulary and challenging current models (for example, the historicist reading of the evolution of art from Hegel to Arthur Danto) and curatorial practices of museums of so-called ethnic art. This includes rethinking "the amount of authority entrusted to big-time collectors and dealers" (Price 2010, 15). To address this flaw of contemporary aesthetics requires accepting that criticizing the claim to universality bared by modern and contemporary aesthetics does not mean falling into the scourge of sophistic relativism. It also requires particular attention to misleading or useless concepts, for example, 'craft', when intended as pejorative or as opposed to 'real art' (Thériault 2015; Bastenier 2007).

When realizing that so many cultures are absent from aesthetic teaching and curatorial practices, one risks generating a "decolonial aesthetics" that frames non-Eurocentric artefacts through Eurocentric art concepts. Scholars must acknowledge there is no miracle cure: simply adding new concepts (e.g., 'ethnic art') is no help if the traditional concepts are maintained and the necessary critical work to question the

[8] Translations from the original French are mine.

foundations on which they are erected remains unresolved. Decolonial aesthetics must lead to action (Mignolo and Tlostanova 2012; Tuck and Yang 2012, 2).

Decolonial aesthetics is not a rejection of centuries of artistic production, but a call to put this heritage in a critical continuity to cover the blind spots, per what is required by any honest philosophical approach. After all, the distinction between manual craft (devalued) and liberal arts (prestigious and legitimate) is conventional from the start, something that the Inuit knew all along (Graburn and Stern 1999; Xhingnesse 2018). Decolonizing aesthetics requires scholars to be willing to accept a profound critique of the outstanding figures in the history of art and aesthetics and to be able to escape the hegemonic framework. In fact, the power relationship between those who hold cultural legitimacy (i.e., those who are able to confirm and maintain the rules and explicitly disqualify anything that derogates from them) forces others to give up their own perspective. From there, the *other* must bend before that of the strongest:

> One must know, of course, that excluded manifestations [...] must always accept the precepts of aesthetics to be included; in other words, obey these rules. This is the logic of modernity that requires the excluded to "bleach", so to speak, epistemically and aesthetically. This is how coloniality has operated historically, first offering a religious salvation, followed by access to culture and civilization and, finally, to development. (Gómez et al. 2016, 104-105)

In short, even a so-called openness to artistic practices outside the usual canons of institutionally recognized works maintains a hierarchy; the forces that forge these hierarchies are precisely what must be questioned. For this reason, the mission of decolonial aesthetics is colossal, but the potential value is well worth it, for power issues appear in many

different forms (racism, patriarchy, Eurocentrism, and sexism). Taking a decolonial turn in aesthetics requires being concerned with how aesthetics operates as a powerful regime that, through the art/non-art distinction, exerts an ontological classification that has an impact on human lives (Gómez et al. 2016, 104).

There is still so little diversity in introductory aesthetic classes, a context where institutional aesthetics has access to significant data and literature that, unfortunately, we know –and care– little about. The main reason we rarely discuss so-called 'non-occidental art' is not a lack of data or relevance. It is, in many cases, a lack of moral and political commitment—many scholars do not seem ready to give up on the implicit belief that the only valuable art is the one recognised by Western institutions. They are not willing to do the work required to fill their field of ignorance, even if "a growing body of anthropological, art-historical, and psychological evidence [that] indicates that our concepts of art and art-kinds reflect entirely arbitrary historical interests with a limited range of application" (Xhingnesse 2018, 194-195). Some scholars are unaware of the extent of their ignorance; they are well-intentioned but lack expertise. This is why a decolonial shift is mandatory.

Given the abundant literature—ethnographic, anthropological, linguistic—on Inuit art, such expertise is readily attainable. Sustainable and amazingly inventive (the proof is in the effectiveness of their techniques to live in complete self-sufficiency in frozen territories), they are also getting credit for productions with a unique aesthetic of great symbolic richness. Noting that the concepts traditionally associated with Western aesthetics, such as 'beauty,' had not been precisely studied, scientists collected the already existing data on beauty in order to enrich their reading of Inuit's view of their own traditional and contemporary arts:

> The Inuit are probably the most thoroughly described and written about native people in the world [...], yet almost nothing

> has been written about their indigenous concepts of beauty. *We can only speculate why this is the case*. Nonetheless, the Inuit did and continue to have a well-articulated understanding of beauty. (Graburn and Stern 1999, emphasis ours)[9]

One possible answer to this void is, sadly, the fact that scientists may have taken for granted that Inuit's view on beauty and art was not worthy of (scholarly) interest. Though Graburn and Stern do not stress the difference between "art" and "beauty" (two very distinct concepts often wrongly used as synonyms by non-specialists in aesthetics), their observations nonetheless reveal the relevance of adopting an Inuit perspective on these issues. Among their observations is that the Inuit have had, of course, a very precise conception of beauty close to Western 'goodness'. Their ethnographic data, as well as others, indicate that only the Inuit concept of goodness, *piujuk*, corresponds closely to the Indo-European notion of beauty and overlaps many domains of both traditional and modern Inuit culture. At the very end of their article, Graburn and Stern (1999) also underline some apparent similarities between the Inuit conception of beauty and the Platonic principle of goodness. But they also underline a point of tension since, for Plato, goodness and beauty are ideal, non-sensible forms, whereas, for the Inuit, they are part of our everyday interaction with the world.

Anni Pootoogook's Case

A sadly eloquent example of the difficulty we have in integrating works from non-Eurocentric cultures into fair critical discussion can be observed in the trajectory of the Inuit artist Annie Pootoogook (1969-2016). Art critics and scholars have noted that the work of the artist born in Cape Dorset (Baffin Island, Nunavut) does not belong to what might be called "Inuit traditional art" because of its great contempora-

[9] The article was originally published in French but an English version is available online: <www.academia.edu/9077658/_Goodness_its_beautiful_a_look_at_beauty_amongst_the_Canadian_Inuit_`, accessed May 22, 2023.

neity, but remains firmly anchored in it:

> Culture has always been mixed, contradictory, difficult. Pootoogook's work illuminates many of these issues, reminding us again that one of the reasons people make images is to exemplify the world they inhabit, and to show how this world works in new and unexpected ways. Contemplating Pootoogook's images of Northern life, the viewer sees that the old, discrete categories "Inuit art" and "contemporary art" are no longer relevant. (Root 2008)

So-called non-Western cultures are often wrongly considered immutable, and the dichotomy between European cultures (associated with progress and originality) versus indigenous cultures (perceived through a folkloric distortion when apprehended as an external eye) reinforces the belief in the superiority of art recognized by the representatives of the Eurocentric institutions. Thus, an inattentive eye that cannot perceive the subtleties of Inuit cultures, especially the way Pootoogook puts her finger on the challenges posed by the cohabitation of traditional ways of life and the sedentary life imposed by colonization (Galloway 2016).[10]

Such an eye would not hesitate to describe the drawings of Annie Pootoogook as naïve, but *Bringing Home Food* (2003–2004) and *Cape Dorset Freezer* (2005) are anything but naïve. *Cape Dorset Freezer* shows people living in the Arctic lining up in front of freezers to buy frozen industrial food, which is quite ironic. This expression of the disruption of lifestyles and its aberrant results seems naïve because of the bright colors and materials used (for example, crayons, usually used by children). However, it is fiercely lucid and frankly directed at those respon-

[10] On the self-representation of cultural identity among Inuit youth, see: de la Sablonnière, Roxane, Donald M. Taylor, Fabrice Pinard Saint-Pierre, Jason Annahatak, 'Cultural Narratives and Clarity of Cultural Identity: Understanding the well-being of Inuit Youth', *Primitivism: A journal of Aboriginal and Indigenous community health* (2011) 9:2, 301-322.

sible for this situation.

Unfortunately, the artist had to deal with much worse than poorly sound art criticism, since she was *de facto* stigmatized by blunt racial and sexist stereotypes,[11] which shadowed her artwork (and shows the entanglement of intersectional discrimination). During a troubled period before her death, the value of her art, though recognized in Canada and abroad, was sometimes overshadowed by elements of her personal life revealed by sensationalist media treatment. A Western male artist with the same background and lifestyle would probably have been labelled as a 'rebel' or 'troubled artist', in accordance with the genius stereotype and would have gained more notoriety as a result. Some art specialists have noted that, had it not been for the Inuit origin of the artist, such elements would not have been published[12], as if her artistic condition was secondary to the stereotypes associated with its culture and above all, improbable. Yet, Pootoogook, from a lineage of Inuit artists herself, was able to distance herself from her original culture and develop her own aesthetic language, making a lasting impression on Inuit visual arts:

> Although still firmly rooted in Northern experience, [the] drawings reflect broader — and more personal — concerns. [...] Annie Pootoogook's drawings, [...] are characterized by a more detached quality. In their uniquely deadpan presentation, however, they communicate a similar kind of connection with the artist's inner world and reveal something of the conflicts that arise from

[11] There is a growing literature of the under-representation of women in the artistic and critical tradition, following the founding essay by American art historian Linda Nochlin. See also: Zeglin Brand, Peg, "Glaring Omissions in Traditional Theories of Art", *Theories of Art Today*, Noel Carroll, ed. (London: The University of Wisconsin Press, 2000, 175-198).

[12] Commissioner Jason St-Laurent spoke on this subject in a radio interview whose report is available online: 'Stereotypes plagued Inuk artist Annie Pootoogook in life as in death, says gallerist', *As It Happens*, CBC Radio, September 28, 2016, <https://www.cbc.ca/amp/1.3780850>.

> the confrontation of that inner experience with the outer reality of life in the modern North. (Bingham 2013)

The artistic and critical circles would describe her work as naïve or amateur, which is, as I will expose, a clear case of testimonial injustice (Fricker 2018). However, a closer look at Pootoogook's artwork, I assert, should lead to a better understanding of Western bias. In the end, it should appear that Inuit aesthetics (which include both Inuit artists' views on their own productions and some data collected by external observers) offer a significant contribution to aesthetic debates. The Qallunaat misunderstand the value of Inuit art but can learn to broaden their understanding and improve their aesthetic judgment through a process of self-criticism of their own shortcomings.

In "Inuit Art and the Limits of Authenticity", art critic Deborah Root recalls that *authenticity* is a "floating category, able to migrate and legitimize or de-legitimize certain kinds of images", a phenomenon that can be observed in the reactions to Pootoogook's art.[13] The critics did not appreciate her drawing technique, let alone the subjects she chose:

> Inuit work depicting contemporary objects, such as snowmobiles or helicopters, was very much a minority taste. Most buyers preferred the sublime images of the natural world and traditional ways of life that Southerners have come to associate with Inuit art, she said, because there are more authentically and recognizably 'Inuit'. For such buyers, authenticity resides in what is sometimes termed the "ethnographic present," a timeless place untainted by modernity. (Root 2008)

Similarly to Maori scholar Linda Tuhiwai Smith, Root points out that it

[13] On this element, see the exhibit catalogue edited by Inuk curator and scholar Heather Igloliorte: SakKijâjuk: Art and Craft from Nunatsiavut (Goose Lane Editions, and St. John's: The Rooms Corporation of Newfoundland and Labrador, Provincial Art Gallery Division, 2017).

is expected for Inuit artists to "exis[t] in an eternal past". In other words: the Qallunaat attempt to keep Inuit artists in the "authentic" category, which is sometimes a constraint (a form of orthodoxy) and pejorative label. But, adds Root, "[t]he question always remains of *who is deciding* what is genuine" (2008, my emphasis):

> As a category, 'Inuit art' is simply too broad, and too culturally determinant, implying a unified aesthetic vision that does not exist even within work that takes traditional life as its subject.[…] And "Inuit art" is too restrictive a category for the work of Annie Pootoogook, whose contemporary vision transcends older limitations. (Root 2008)

Inuit art curator Nancy G. Campbell draws a similar conclusion, stating that the "unenthusiastic reception of these artworks [Pootogook's] points to the ways that notions of exoticism, ethnic novelty, and an exploitation of difference continue to permeate today's contemporary art world" (Campbell 2020, 15). When realizing that so many cultures are absent in aesthetic teaching and curatorial practices, one risks promoting a 'decolonial aesthetics' that forces Inuit art into ill-fitting, pre-existing Eurocentric aesthetic categories.

Scholars must acknowledge there is no miracle cure. The conceptual foundations on which they are erected remain unresolved (Mignolo and Tlostanova 2012). As we are reminded by Littlechild, Finegan, and McGregor, integrating concepts and knowledge of Indigenous and Inuit cultures requires "an approach grounded in transformational change, not one focused on an 'add Indigenous and stir' pedagogy" (2021); it requires us to "ethically engage" with it. Additionally, the "efforts to 'Indigenize' the academy requires an emphasis on anti-racism, humility, reciprocity, and a willingness to confront ongoing colonialism and white supremacy" (Littlechild, Finegan, and McGregor 2021). So, despite trying to do some justice to cultures that have been left out, a qualification is

that any error on my behalf may add to the injustice (Kovach 2013).

Conclusion

What does Inuit aesthetics reveal to scholars willing to develop a decolonial perspective? First, it shows that tradition and originality are not incompatible (as Pootoogook's art has shown), nor are commercial art and creativity. Then, it shows that we need to continue critical work and the inclusivity approach, which first requires accepting a more modest attitude (Gómez et al. 2016, 105). It displays the need to embrace the complexity and diversity of the many coexisting artworlds. Learning to see how wrong our theoretical framework can be is a necessary step to get on a better track.

From there, what do we know for sure? Nothing, actually. But by taking a closer look at the historical narrative on Inuit art, we can see that the conceptual distinction between traditional and original art relies on a set of potentially misleading Western art concepts. Additionally, sometimes, some experts are no help at all. If I am not doing classic aesthetics, that *is* a start: not being able to achieve a literal 'decolonial shift' but leaning into it (even if it means "failing better every day") is already something. Learning from the flaws of theory that, ultimately, I really know very little is the real Socratic irony. Yet, at least I do not have an all-white-all-male syllabi anymore. So yes, as a Qallunaat, I can talk about Inuit art, but at some conditions, namely:

1) To look at with a suspicious eye any "expertise" on Inuit art that comes from the outside;

2) To accept that I will remain, at best, a "well-intentioned ignorant" and never be an expert;

3) To accept that being the best ally I can is the best I can do.

This conclusion may look disappointing, but that little spot where *I can* do something right is something. What the academy (and aesthetic

theory) needs is more people willing to take the risk to approach Indigenous artwork, at the risk of failing, sometimes. These mistakes are less damaging than the status quo, for "Indigenizing' the academy can better encourage humility, reciprocity, and a deep commitment to anti-racism. Thus, universities need more than new Indigenous-centered content" (Littlechild, Finegan, and McGregor 2021).

How can we even try to change a whole system? First, by changing the language we use and recognizing that the current concepts inherited from classical aesthetics are not adapted to an inclusive aesthetic. Scholars must acknowledge there is no miracle cure: simply adding new concepts (for example, 'ethnic art') is no help if the traditional concepts stay in place, for the necessary critical work to question the foundations on which they are erected remains unresolved (Mignolo and Tlostanova 2012). What is at stake here is not only to make aesthetics more comprehensive for ethical and political reasons (Fricker 2003). Aesthetics that is silent on anything but a narrow slice of art history has meagre cultural or pedagogical value. This is a long path, but decolonial shift may happen when we look closer at our own research methodology and teaching habits, one step at the time.[14]

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THINKING WITH IMAGES: AN INTERVIEW WITH THOMAS E. WARTENBERG

Sam Heffron

In his most recent book, *Thoughtful Images: Illustrating Philosophy Through Art* (2023), Thomas E. Wartenberg explores the variety of ways in which visual art has illustrated philosophy. Employing a new framework for thinking about the nature of illustration, Wartenberg surveys a wide variety of cases which, he argues, show not only that philosophical concepts can be illustrated but that such illustrations have the capacity to do philosophy in a substantial way.

I sat down with Professor Wartenberg to discuss the book and its central themes, including the nature and aesthetics of illustration, how art can cultivate philosophical understanding, and how it can contribute unique philosophical insight.

Sam Heffron: In your most recent book Thoughtful Images you reveal there to be a rich tradition of illustrations of philosophy that has received more attention from art historians than philosophers, even philosophers of art. Why do you think there has been so little attention paid by philosophers to the visual arts' relationship with philosophy?

Thomas Wartenberg: In general, I think philosophers are pretty sceptical of the idea that the visual arts can illustrate philosophy. More generally, I think there's scepticism about the relationship of visual arts and philosophy so that philosophers tend to be interested in the question of specifying what it is for something to be a work of art and various questions having to do with the ontology and epistemology of artworks. They have not paid as much attention to the issue of art as a way in which philosophy can be done. I think a lot of them think that that's just not possible.

In my own case, it was really the work of Arthur Danto that first put me in touch with that pos-

sibility, specifically when he discusses Andy Warhol and what he thinks Warhol's innovations were. That made me start thinking more generally about the relationship between art and philosophy, and then specifically the question of whether visual art can actually illustrate philosophy.

SH: Can you clarify the sense in which you're talking about illustration throughout the book?

TW: I think one of the problems with the notion of illustration is that people just assume that illustration is a specific art form, so they might think of it as the sort of thing that's done in comics and advertising, etcetera. What I argue is that illustration is not a specific art form, but rather has to do with a sort of logical connection whereby an illustration is something that's derived from a source. If we look at that sort of structure as definitive of what it is to be an illustration, then it can mean that works of art in all sorts of different genres or art forms can be illustrations. For example, early in the book, I argue that paintings can count as illustrations, and that saying a painting is an illustration doesn't subtract from or conflict with it being a great work of art. Rather, it has to do with the fact that the painting is actually derived from a source. I think that the fact that people don't analyse illustration in this way accounts for some of the reasons why illustrations are not regarded as something that can have philosophical content.

SH: You classify illustrations into four types which relate to different sources: text-based, concept-based, theory-based and quotation-based illustrations. Can you briefly explain these types of illustrations?

TW: I began investigating different ways in which philosophy has been illustrated and I found that the type of illustration that's most generally acknowledged is one where you have a piece of text and then you have a visual image that illustrates it. So, if you take a children's picture book or an illustrated novel, it's almost always the case that there's a piece of text with an accompanying illustration that illustrates the text. That's also true in philosophy. In introductory textbooks, for instance, you often have the image of Plato's cave alongside the text in which Plato describes The Cave. So, you have a visual image that puts the information into visual form.

I then started looking at other

types of illustration and seeing that artists had attempted to illustrate philosophical concepts or theories. For example, I discovered a fourteenth- century French manuscript translation of Aristotle's *Nicomachean Ethics* (1985) and *Politics* (2017). It's an interesting case because what you have are Aristotle's three types of friendship illustrated by three pairs of individuals in an image, and so I thought of that as a concept-based illustration. Although, you could also argue it's really a theory-based illustration and go back and forth about which way to categorise it. In any case, it's a clear example of an illustration which doesn't link to a specific piece of text, but rather to generalise a discussion in Aristotle's work. What's also particularly interesting about this example is that the French language didn't have certain concepts to articulate Aristotle's philosophical terminology, and so when it came to translating the original texts from Latin, new French terms had to be introduced. So, the illustrations actually served the function of helping readers figure out the meaning of terms that didn't have an ordinary use in French.

You also mentioned quotation-based illustration. The first examples that I found of these were by, broadly speaking, conceptual artists in the 1960s. What they did was take sentences or phrases from the works of philosophers and make works of art that featured those sentences. The first one that I discovered was Bruce Nauman's sculpture *A Rose Has No Teeth* (1966) which takes its name from the sentence "A rose has no teeth" in Wittgenstein's (2009) *Philosophical Investigations*. So I call it a quotation-based illustration. Now, of course, in a certain way it is a text-based based illustration, but it's a particular type of text-based illustration because it's not illustrated in the text: it's using the text as the work.

SH: You draw a parallel between successful illustrations and translations, given that they share similar aims of what you say as being 'faithful' and 'felicitous' to their source material. Can you say a bit more about what those aims are?

TW: Let me answer that question a little bit indirectly. What happened was that after I'd done a fair bit of work on illustration, I started to realise that I didn't have any theoretical account of illustration, so I tried to figure out where I could find one. As we said earlier, philosophers haven't done very much work on illustration and

so I couldn't find any theoretical work on what made something an illustration. However, after hunting around a bit, I discovered 'translation theory', which seemed relevant because it appeared to me that an illustration is a type of translation where you're taking something not from one language into another language, but from one medium into another medium. In translation theory, they talk about what I call norms of *fidelity* and *felicity*. The basic idea is that translations ought to always be faithful to their source, and yet, on the other hand, perhaps surprisingly, not every translation has to be a word-for-word translation of its source. This is particularly true in poetry. For instance, one interesting case is Dryden's approach to translation where he basically proposes that to create a work where if the original poet was writing in the language that he [Dryden] was writing in at the time, this is what they would have created. That's using the norm of felicity. You can violate the literalness of a translation in service of creating a work that accords with the spirit of the original.

SH: There tends to be a value distinction made between works of art and illustration, where illustration is taken as inferior to 'proper' art. You refer to this as the 'denigration of illustration'. You argue, however, that works of art can be illustrations, and that the two are not mutually exclusive. What do you think illustration has to contribute to our understanding and appreciation of art?

TW: I think that there are certain works of art – let's just stick to oil paintings for the moment – that I think are clearly illustrations. I think it's very important to understand them that way because, if we think again of fidelity and felicity, you can get a better conception of what the artist is trying to do if you see that there are elements of the work that are faithful to the source and other elements that the artist has chosen to employ in service of felicity. I think a good example is David's *The Death of Socrates* (1787), which is clearly based on Plato's dialogue, *Phaedo* (2010). If you don't see the painting as an illustration, you won't raise the question, for example, of why, right before the French Revolution, David chose to paint this picture of Socrates about to take hemlock. I think seeing the painting as an illustration helps us think about what David is trying to use this portrait of Socrates for. I think the answer is something along the lines of: he wants the model of

Socrates not fearing death, but instead continuing to teach and perform his life's work in the face of death, as a model for his contemporaries. I think seeing the painting as an illustration highlights that feature of the work. I don't want to say someone wouldn't have seen it that way if they didn't think it was an illustration, but I think it helps us comprehend the artist's aim in creating the illustration.

SH: You discuss art that has been made to illustrate the ideas and theories of philosophers, in particular art that took inspiration from the work of Ludwig Wittgenstein. What do think it was about Wittgenstein's writings that inspired so many artists?

TW: One of the things that I think made Wittgenstein attractive to artists was that his aphoristic style meant that they didn't have to follow a long complex argument in order to think about producing art that was influenced by him. In the book I talk about Mel Bochner's work *Counting Alternatives: The Wittgenstein Illustrations* (1991), where what he was doing was thinking through his own reaction to and understanding of Wittgenstein's book *On Certainty* (1969). So, one of the reasons that artists like Bochner might have found Wittgenstein inspiring is that they could focus on an aphorism or a shorter section of text rather than, for example, trying to understand Kant's transcendental deduction of the categories. If you wanted to try to illustrate Kant, good luck! That's a lot harder to understand, especially given the protracted way Kant writes. So, I think artists just found Wittgenstein's style inspiring, and that inspiration led them to want to create art that somehow reflected that.

We should also bear in mind that Wittgenstein was not the only philosopher who inspired artists. Interestingly, the other philosopher who did is also a master stylist: Plato. Perhaps he also inspired artists because, again, you read the Allegory of The Cave and it's such a great linguistic image but in just a few pages. The brevity of his style allows you to think about drawing or making something involving that image a lot easier than if it was across lengthy passages of text.

SH: It's also interesting that both philosophers you mention – Plato and Wittgenstein – are associated with philosophical ideas that are based on, or at least heavily reference, images. Wittgenstein's picture theory of meaning or use of the duck-rabbit drawing to illus-

trate his theory of seeing 'aspects', and Plato's Allegory of The Cave…

TW: On that point, it's really important to distinguish a visual image from a linguistic image. People often get confused between the two and say that Plato contains lots of images, so of course philosophy can use images! And I say, well, *visual* images are not the same as *linguistic* images, which I think is very important to bear in mind to avoid confusion.

SH: You say that one purpose illustrations can serve is to clarify an idea because, unlike lengthy verbal descriptions, they show their contents, which makes their information easier to access and understand. However, some of the examples you discuss are incredibly complex and can be as difficult to understand as written text. In those cases, what is the benefit of an image over text?

TW: The examples you are referring to were illustrations made for students studying for exams that required them to reproduce a lot of the details of Aristotle's philosophy. They are very beautiful and incredibly complex engravings that use a very basic metaphor of a garden to present Aristotle's ideas. It turns out that around the time these engravings were made, formal gardens had just been introduced. I imagine that the students were really interested in the novelty of these gardens, and so presenting Aristotle's philosophy as a formal garden acted as a heuristic aid, like a visual mnemonic. It allowed the students to remember the relationships that you would have to memorise if you were to just read the text, whereas the image provides you with a visual guide, and so it's the visual relationships that made it easier for these students to remember the features of Aristotle's philosophy that they had to reproduce in an examination. That's a case in which I think the image is a visual mnemonic. It's not so much about understanding as remembering, but the image being a stimulus to your memory.

I think the preference for image over text also depends on who the person is that has to read the text. For instance, when I first encountered Plato's literary image of the Divided Line as a sophomore in college, I remember being incredibly confused. I couldn't remember which section was what and basically had to produce my own visual image of what Plato was describing, because he's describing something that's purely visual. There's a case where a more sophisticated

reader of philosophy would be able to read the text and visualise the concept: they could essentially perform the work of illustration mentally. But I think for people who are less schooled in philosophy, a visual image of a text like that would enable them to understand it. So, it would seem to me that it really depends on the sort of status of the person who's reading the text and what would be helpful or not helpful to them, what they can imagine or not imagine.

SH: Sometimes philosophers employ narratives to illustrate an idea, as we see in Plato's Allegory of the Cave. Do you not think that film would be a better medium in which to translate the text as it has a temporal dimension to convey the narrative, whereas still images seem less suitable since they have to reduce the narrative down to static segments?

TW: One of the things I think that's true for is if you wanted to go through the whole trajectory of the Allegory of The Cave. Then it would work better with a sequence of images, like a graphic novel, where you have a series of images conveying the course of events that happen in the story. But for certain aspects of that, it seems to me that a static image is preferable because a graphic novel lets you attend to one image at a time, whereas a film just goes by and you can't go back. For example, if you look at the situation of the prisoners in The Cave, it can be helpful to just have a static image there because you can look at all the different elements of the scene and see what's going on. Compare this to Bertolucci's film *The Conformist* (1970) where the central character recites Plato's text and Bertolucci does an amazing job with the lighting to make you feel like you're in The Cave, but you don't get to sit there and figure out all the elements of the story since it goes by so quickly. In that case, having a static image might help you better understand certain elements than seeing them in a film. What this shows is that there are ways in which the static image can do something that the film can't, although the film can obviously do things that the static image can't.

SH: Not only do you claim that visual art can illustrate philosophical ideas, but also that it can make a substantive contribution to philosophy. In what way do you think illustrations are capable of contributing to philosophy?

TW: One of my favourite examples

of a work that illustrates philosophy is Joseph Kosuth's *One and Three Chairs* (1965). It seems like for most people it's an illustration of Plato's metaphysics, namely his theory of Forms, because you have a physical chair, a photograph of its chair, and a dictionary definition of a chair in an installation. It's a perfectly good illustration of Plato's theory that ideas are the basis of the physical world and that works of art – in this case the photograph in the work - stand at two removes from reality, given that it is a copy of the physical object that is identifiable through its idea, or in this case its definition. Most of the things that I've read seem to stop at calling the work an illustration and don't consider the further fact that you have an artwork that's actually presenting you with a metaphysical view. In Book XI of the *Republic*, Plato (1974) basically says that this is something that art can't do: it is philosophy that is more closely aligned with the truth than art. But here's Kosuth saying that this is not so true. He's saying that, as an artist, I can make a critique of Plato by creating an artwork that embodies truth. Of course, there are other people who criticise Plato's conception of art, but here's an *artwork* that's doing it. So that's a case which shows how art is capable of doing a lot more philosophically than simply taking a preestablished metaphysics and providing a visual image of what is basically a literary image or literary description.

SH: You dedicate a chapter to the discussion of comics that illustrate philosophical ideas, which you term 'graphic philosophy'. In it you claim that some comics are actually 'doing philosophy'. What is it about comics that enables them to do philosophy?

TW: First of all, the reason that I call it 'graphic philosophy' is because I think the notion of a graphic novel is a misnomer. These are not novels. If there's going to be a generic term for them, they're really graphic memoirs for the most part, although there are notable exceptions to this such as Scott McCloud's (1993) book *Understanding Comics*. That's a work in which the images show McCloud giving a lecture about the nature of comics, so that would be the sort of thing to which I think most people say: "that doesn't really count because it's the words that are doing the philosophising and he just happens to be putting speech bubbles around himself". But what I try to do is to say that's true for a large majority of the text, but then there are certain plac-

es where his argument relies on using images to make his point. One of them has to do with his claim about how comic images are abstracted from realistic photographs. He proceeds to show us through a sequence of images the process of abstraction by which we get to a comic figure like Charlie Brown, for example. He shows you how there is a series of steps that create the process of abstraction by which we get to the comic image. That is doing something that the words alone can't do. It allows us to actually see the process that he's talking about. That's a case where he's actually doing philosophy through the visual images, and that's what I want to say is a unique philosophical contribution that the comic makes.

SH: People might be surprised then when you claim that despite being able to illustrate philosophical ideas in this way, the images that we find in comics should not be considered illustrations.

TW: Well, that goes back to my original claim about what makes something an illustration: that it is something that's derived from a source. In most comics, but not all, there is no story that's told independently of the images. Of course, there are counterexamples such as Classics Illustrated comics, where basically the text tells you the story, and then the pictures just illustrate what's being said in the panels. But like in McCloud's discussion, that's not true. I don't think those images are really illustrations because there's no pre-existing story that the images illustrate.

SH: The examples of graphic philosophy you discuss show that there are a variety of ways in which philosophy can be done in comics that extend beyond the analytical method that is generally adopted as the framework for academic discourse. Do you see this as having implications for how we conceive of the role of philosophy as a discipline and practise?

TW: I think the implications are that we shouldn't restrict philosophy to the work of professional academic philosophers. There's a lot of philosophical work being done in a lot of other sites in our culture, and graphic novels are very good example. Some graphic novels are done by professional philosophers who are trying to illustrate, for example, the failure of the project of logicism. That's something that only a philosopher would have come up with. But McCloud is not a philosopher, and neither is an

author like Alison Bechdel, whose work *Fun Home* (2006) I also discuss. But in different ways they're both doing or using philosophy in their work in ways that I think are really instructive. For example, with Bechdel, I was surprised when I explored the philosophical ramifications of her book. Despite it being a mega success, it seemed to me that it was filled with philosophy and that she had clearly thought about and used certain philosophical ideas as a way of clarifying her own life. That's a very different use of philosophy than what we see from McCloud, where he's got a thesis about the nature of comics that he's trying to prove and show to you, or *Logicomix* illustrating the history of logicism in the 20th century philosophy of mathematics (Doxiadis and Papadimitrious 2009). Broadly speaking, what I hope people take away from this is that there's philosophy all over the place. You just have to be aware of it or allow yourself to notice it and you'll see that it's not just in those academic journals that very few people read, but that people are interested in and are doing philosophy in lots of different places.

SH: Your research has looked at the capacity of film and visual art to not only contain philosophical themes, but to actually provide philosophical insight. Are there any other art forms that you think have the capacity to do philosophy, and that you think require further attention?

TW: I think the question of whether music can do philosophy is an interesting one. I've begun thinking about whether there could be musical illustrations of philosophy. Leonard Bernstein composed a piece which he said illustrated Plato's *Symposium* (1989) with the different movements associated with different characters. But there's a lot of talk associated with it to help you understand that. If you just heard the music, I don't think you would necessarily notice that. But even with the talk, is it doing philosophy in some substantive way? I don't know the answer to that, but I think it's an interesting question. Ultimately, I hope what happens is that people don't just think that philosophy occurs in different places and look at how it's being illustrated, but think about whether we can find philosophy in other art forms. Who knows what the next one will be?

Conclusion

The typology of illustrations that Wartenberg develops provides an invaluable framework for thinking about the philosophy of illustra-

tion. Yet, despite the distinctions that are drawn, questions still arise. Consider cases of theory-based illustrations where philosophers have appropriated pre-existing artworks to illustrate their philosophical ideas.[1] In such cases, does focusing on the capacity of artworks to illustrate philosophical theories perhaps misplace our interest in the use of such works? For example, Nietzsche used Raphael's *Transfiguration* (1516-20) to illustrate a key conceptual distinction in his theory of history and culture. However, is the most striking fact about the use of Raphael's painting that it can illustrate this distinction, or is it the fact that Nietzsche chose the painting to illustrate his theory in the first place? If our interest lies in how the painting has been used by Nietzsche, to what extent - if any - does this threaten to undermine the ability of such works to stand as illustrations that function independently of their use? Indeed, given that the painting existed prior to the theory that it was used to illustrate, I wonder whether it is 'doing philosophy' in the same way as an image that was created with the specific intention of illustrating a particular concept or theory?[2]

In our interview we briefly touched upon how illustrations can contribute to philosophy. Throughout the book, Wartenberg highlights various ways in which artworks can engage with philosophical ideas: some by directly illustrating a particular claim, others by helping us understand a concept or theory through more indirect, expressive means. How a work engages with an idea is significant in how it affects the nature of its contribution. Some works, for example, contribute directly to the ideas of particular philosophers, with the artwork essentially being instrumental to the idea it illustrates, whereas others can contribute by helping us to understand a particular claim or theory through an artwork. We would be missing something if we saw Kosuth's *One and Three Chairs* as simply reducible to the theory it illustrates. A full appreciation of the work requires that we not only see it as an illustration of Plato's metaphysics but also as a unique instance of the theory being realised in an artistic context. Attending to how the theory is mani-

[1] See Chapter 5, where Wartenberg discusses the work of Friedrich Nietzsche, Martin Heidegger and Michel Foucault.

[2] See Chapter 4, where Wartenberg discusses images that were created with the intention of illustrating specific philosophical works.

fested within the work not only enriches our aesthetic appreciation but also aids our understanding of its philosophical content. In this sense, the art of illustrating philosophy and philosophising itself can sometimes be one and the same thing.

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COMMENTARY ON THOMAS WARTENBERG'S *THOUGHTFUL IMAGES*

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Consider the question 'can the visual arts – painting, drawing, etching, sculpture etc. – produce works that function as illustrations of philosophical texts?' (Wartenberg, 2023, xi). Tom Wartenberg has produced a book that answers that question in the affirmative. The subject is a rich one, and, as Wartenberg says, it is slightly puzzling that there is so little written on it (9). Wartenberg's *Thoughtful Images* covers philosophical reflections on the history of illustrations of philosophy; a theory of illustration; the use of illustrations to clarify aspects of a particular theory; a peculiarly modernist use of illustrations to further an ongoing discussion in philosophy; the use of images to explore the work of a particular philosopher (in this case Wittgenstein); and the use of the comic form to write philosophy ('graphic philosophy').

The book is fascinating, and full of insight. I have no complaints about the project and hence no grand claims about how it can be undermined. Responses such as this, however, are required to focus on points

of disagreement which I will do in a rather journeyman approach. I shall focus primarily on the theory part (that is, Chapter 2); say a little about Greenberg and Modernism (Chapter 6); and express a little scepticism about Wartenberg's claims about what we as the audience can learn from illustrations of Wittgenstein (Chapters 7 and 8).

The theoretical task requires clarification on the nature of 'illustration' before we can clarify what it would be to 'illustrate philosophy'. As Wartenberg says, calling something an 'illustration', or calling someone who produces pictures an 'illustrator', seems to come with an implicit value judgement (41-51). Many years ago, I asked a noted theorist of Modernism how his theory could accommodate artists such as Lucien Freud. The reply came back that it did not have to; Freud was not an artist, but 'a mere illustrator'.[1] Wartenberg's reply to this goes via him giving a descriptive account of what it is to be an illustration that begs no value questions. As we shall see, once this has been done any argument for the artistic weakness of illustration will have to take place on other grounds.

Let us focus for the moment on pictures that illustrate a text: 'text-based illustrations'. Wartenberg's account of this is done via analogy with translation. In translation, there is a source text (that which will be translated) and a target text (the translation). Analogously, there is a source (the text on which the illustration is based) and there is a target (the illustration) (23). However, and obviously, 'an illustration, unlike a translation, *transforms* a written text into something visual' (25). I shall return to this, and the various additional norms that govern these practices, in a moment. However, we already have enough to trouble those who denigrate illustrations for being illustrations. For centuries, artists have drawn on classical sources as content for paintings. Wartenberg's example is Titian's *Rape of Europa* (1560-62), which has as its source the Greek myth – in particular, as told by Ovid. This has a source, it is a tar-

[1] Wartenberg gives a further example of this locution on p. 44.

get, and has transformed the text into something visual. Hence, it is an illustration. There is nothing in this, as Wartenberg says, to detract from artistic greatness (47).

The argument has a simple form: an account of what it is to be an illustration, and a claim that there is nothing in that account to suggest that illustrations cannot be great works of art. I find the account of illustration convincing and hence, if there is a dispute, it must be about the claim.

To evaluate the claim let us look at an additional three norms that Wartenberg claims govern illustration. The first two are, once again, drawn from translation. The first is fidelity or faithfulness. Here is how Wartenberg describes them:

> On the one hand, a translation might seek to provide the most accurate rendering in the target language of a text written in the source language. The norm of fidelity clearly derives from such a goal. On the other hand, one could view the goal of translation as providing a reader of the target text with as close an experience as possible to what they would have experienced had they been able to understand the source text in its original language. Here, the norm of felicity would come into play as what would enable the reader to have the requisite experience. (24-25).

These have clear analogies in the case of illustration. First, 'a text-based illustration exhibits fidelity to a written text just in case all or most of the elements of the text are visually reproduced in the illustration' (25). As an example of felicity, Wartenberg turns to illustrations of Plato's cave. Plato is giving us an allegory. Hence, the point of an illustration will be to convey (the experience of) the allegory, rather than fidelity to the features as described (33).

This brings us to a problem with the claim that illustrations 'transform' the text into something visual. Visual images are more informationally

dense than descriptions. Lewis Carroll's description of the white rabbit includes no information about whiskers. However, Tenniel, in illustrating the character, had to include a depiction of whiskers. Hence, 'visual illustrations must supplement the verbal description with features that are not specially mentioned in the description but that the depicted objects have to have to be recognisable in their visual form' (27). Such supplementation is constrained by 'the similarity heuristic': that when there are features included in a visual representation that are not specifically determined by a literary text, then those features must be as similar as possible to those that the object would have in the real world' (32).

What, then, of the claim that there is nothing in that account to suggest that illustrations cannot be great works of art? Is there something about operating within these norms and constraints that precludes producing great art? If there were, it would need to be that the norms and constraints somehow make it impossible for the artist to externalise their mental states in such a way that makes for an expressive object.[2] I cannot see that they would make it impossible – which is just as well given the vast number of pictures hanging in the world's best galleries that are, by Wartenberg's definition, illustrations.

Am I in complete agreement with Wartenberg? Not quite. My quibble is about the similarity heuristic. Recall that Wartenberg claims that, when an illustrator needs to add things to the picture that are not mentioned in the text, what gets added is governed by the features that the things being drawn would have in the real world. This does not seem generally true. Take, as an example, the 'conceited man' in Antoine de Saint-Exupéry's story, The Little Prince. The text only specifies two facts about the conceited man: that he is a man and that he is wearing a hat. Thus, the illustration should feature a hatted man, perhaps wearing the visual appearance of conceit. All other features of the illustration should be

[2] I am presupposing a broadly Wollheimian account of artistic creativity (Wollheim 1987).

as similar as possible to the appearance a hatted conceited man should manifest in the real world. However, this does not seem to be the constraint governing the illustration, which is of a man in a top hat (with an ear of wheat protruding from the band), bow-tie, and frock coat (De Saint-Exupery 1992, 38). I have met a lot of hatted conceited men in my time, but none have looked anything like that.

What, then, does constrain supplementation? I suspect the constraints are fairly loose. In as much as there is something akin to the similarity heuristic, it will be that the features must be as similar as possible to those the object would have in the world of the story. This will, of course, often be the real world. However, it will not always be (not even in philosophy texts). Stories which are set in worlds other than the real world will be, by their nature, indeterminate (written stories particularly so). Hence, there will be a great deal of latitude as to what features can be added. Choosing which features will be, in part, determined by the creative tastes of those who get to have a say – particularly, the illustrator. Such illustrations are also in the enviable position of being able to themselves determine what is an appropriate illustration of the text. What conceited men look like in the world of The Little Prince is partly (indeed, largely) determined by the actual illustration of the conceited man. However, that does not mean that prior constraints are entirely absent. The look needs to be consistent across the book; it would be no good if, among all the other drawings, the conceited man was a pencil sketch of Nigel Farage. Furthermore, the naïve, knockabout world of The Little Prince does suggest a sort of visual style. I might be deceiving myself, but I think I understand why St Exupery drew the conceited man as he did. He does sort of look how one would expect a conceited man to look in the world of The Little Prince (and not in the real world).

My second discussion moves on from text-based illustration to 'concept-based illustrations': those which illustrate an abstract philosophical concept or idea' (Waternberg, 2023, 5, 35-40). Wartenberg discusses

these with reference to a discussion from Dom Lopes, concerning Tom Phillips' picture that illustrates the notion of contrapasso – where the nature of the punishment fits the nature of the crime. The illustration is tied to Canto XXVIII of Danté's Inferno concerning the fate of the schismatics: those responsible for breaking up social cohesion. Phillips gives us a 4 x 6 lattice of paper figures, some with body parts missing, which Lopes (quoted by Wartenberg) describes thus:

> The schismatics are not mutilated because they rend the fabric of society; they are mutilated because to rend the fabric of society juts it to rend themselves. Phillips' picture expresses the idea visually. (Lopes 2005, 175) (Wartenberg, 2023, 38)

I agree with Wartenberg (and Lopes) that this is a particularly good example of philosophical concept-based illustration (Wartenberg is happy to admit there are other, that is, non-philosophical, sorts of concept-based illustration as well). Wartenberg goes on to discuss various other examples, which are always interesting and enlightening. A discussion that particularly caught my eye was that of Greenberg and Abstract Expressionism.

I shall briefly recap the story (or, at least, one version of the story – the matter is contested). In his influential paper, 'Modernist Painting', Greenberg argued that each art should 'entrench itself more firmly in its area of competence'. This was interpreted as claiming that each art should focus on foregrounding that property (or those properties) that differentiated it from any other art: 'Because flatness was the only condition painting shared with no other art, Modernist painting oriented itself to flatness as it did to nothing else' (Greenberg 1961, 308-309). That is, flatness was essential to paintings as paintings. There is certainly some concept in the offing (even if it is not clear whether this is a claim about their nature, a claim about their value, or a claim about what needs to be in place to ensure a continuity of high art) and, the claim is,

artists produced works of concept-based illustrations. As Wartenberg says:

> It is important to recognize that the Abstract Expressionists made their philosophical point by creating concept-based illustrations. The concept that these painters illustrated was, not surprisingly, flatness. In creating their revolutionary paintings, the Abstract Expressionists not only undermined traditional assumptions about the nature of painting, but they did so by illustrating their understanding of what the essence of painting was and, in so doing, philosophized in paint. (152)

However, as Wartenberg says, Greenberg was wrong: 'the attempt to provide a definition of painting that would lay bare its essential nature was a mistake'. However, we now seem to have a tension. On the one hand, the claim that Greenberg is mistaken, and on the other hand, the claim that following Greenberg, the Abstract Expressionists were successful: they 'undermined traditional assumptions about the nature of painting … and, in so doing, philosophized in paint' (152). Let me grant immediately that some painters were explicitly following the Greenbergian programme; they were self-consciously foregrounding flatness. My question is whether this is concept-based illustration or whether it is attempted concept-based illustration that failed.

Greenberg's theory, if not just mistaken in its misplaced essentialism, is mistaken at its very core. Wollheim put the point pithily:

> To talk of the use of a surface and to contrast this with the fact of the surface, and to identify the former rather than the latter as the characteristic preoccupation of modern art, attributes to modern art a complexity of concern that it cannot renounce. (Wollheim 1970, 125)

In other words, what is being foregrounded is not just the fact of flat-

ness (as we would, say, with a billiard table) but the role of a flat surface in a painting. We are essentially stuck with the flat surface *of a painting* and are thus stuck with the 'complexities of concern' that characterise paintings: complexities that Modernist paintings share with all other paintings. In short, it was a mistake to attempt to foreground flatness in the way that Greenberg mandated. It cannot be done. Hence, if that was the philosophizing in paint that the Abstract Expressionists were trying to do, it was a failure.

What kind of failure was this? Here are two options. The Abstract Expressionists were (a) philosophizing but the content of the philosophy was wrong (this would make what they were doing analogous to what Greenberg was doing) or (b) the very attempt to philosophize was a failure.

Here are two rational reconstructions of what a viewer might think that reflect each of the two options.

> (a) I see what Rothko is trying to do here. He is trying to foreground the fact of flatness. However, that attempt has failed because my experience of flatness is irreducibly the experience of the flatness of a surface of a painting.

> (b) I see what Rothko is trying to do here. He is trying to foreground the fact of flatness. However, he is simply barking up the wrong tree because the experience of flatness is, necessarily, irreducibly the experience of the flatness of a surface of a painting.

If Wollheim is right that there is a complexity of concern that *cannot* be renounced, it looks as if we are forced to the second option. Rothko (on this reconstruction) was trying to do something that cannot be done; he was attempting the impossible. That is, he was not philosophizing, but attempting to philosophize and failing.

Finally, I turn to Wittgenstein. As Wartenberg says, it is easy to forget that there was a time when the Avant Garde of the day looked to Anglo-American philosophy for its theoretical grounding. Joseph Kosuth, a major Conceptual Artist discussed by Wartenberg, has an extended discussion of Wittgenstein and Ayer in his classic paper, 'Art after Philosophy' (Kosuth 1969). Wartenberg gives examples of artists whose work draws on Wittgenstein (Le Witt, Kosuth, Nauman, Bochner, Johns, Bussman, Paolozzi, and Bochner) before devoting a full chapter to Bochner's illustrations of *On Certainty*. Wartenberg has a deep knowledge of Bochner's work, having curated an exhibition for which he wrote the catalogue.

Wartenberg makes some strong claims for these works. He says that Kosuth 'undermines viewers' received understanding of the notion of colour analogous to that which Wittgenstein achieves in the passage displayed in the work' (it is a new category for Wartenberg: 'quotation-based illustration') (178-179). Nauman 'produces a work of philosophical significance' (185); Bochner's work succeeds in 'engaging its audience in reflecting on the truth of the distinction Wittgenstein makes' (189) and, in his illustration of *On Certainty*, he is able to 'achieve a philosophical depth…with visual works whose interpretation reveals insights similar to those developed by Wittgenstein' (237).

It seems clear to me that artists are able to illustrate Wittgenstein, whether that is text-based illustration, concept-based illustration, quotation-based illustration, or even 'concept-based analogical illustration' (229). It also seems clear that artists can produce beautiful works inspired by Wittgenstein. The contentious issue is whether philosophers can manifest philosophical insight, of the sort achieved by Wittgenstein, in their art. As Wartenberg surely realises, we are straying into the contentious area of how best to construe those elements of the value of art that are in the domain of the cognitive. Let us take an example he discusses at length: Bochner's *Range* works. Wittgenstein made the

point that there is a difference between global scepticism and making a mistake; the latter only makes sense in the context of a rule. Bochner's works exhibit regular sequences of numbers (with variation in colours) which contain 'errors'. The errors can only be seen as errors within the context of seeing them as a series of numbers. To ask whether that is really an achievement is to align oneself with Jerome Stolnitz's challenge to those who claim that cognitive elements form part of the value of *Pride and Prejudice*. What, Stolnitz asks, do we learn, apart from that 'stubborn pride and ignorant prejudice sometimes keep attractive men and women apart'? (Stolnitz 1992, 198). Plenty of ink has been spilled showing that we don't to have to construe those elements of the value of art that fall within the domain of the cognitive in this way. However, outlining how we construe those elements is a challenge, and it is interesting to see how Wartenberg meets it.

Wartenberg cleverly ties Bochner's achievement back to Wittgenstein's distinction between showing and telling.

> It is important to my appreciation of Bochner's *Range* works that they are *concept-based illustrations* of Wittgenstein's claim. Wittgenstein makes a conceptual claim in *On Certainty* about the nature of doubt and its relation of its possibility of error. And he does try, to use one of his oft-quoted distinctions, to *show* us rather than *tell* us why this is so. Still, it is a difficult claim to justify and one of the virtues of the *Range* works is that they really do *show* that a mistake can occur only in the context of a rule, one that can be followed either correctly or incorrectly. This claim is shown to us with clarity and vividness in Bochner's works, whose illustrations illuminate the rationale for Wittgenstein's claim. (Wartenberg 2023, 236)

The claim, then, is that the global scepticism/error distinction is difficult to justify and that Bochner's works 'illuminate the rationale' for the claim. Let us grant that Bocher's work gives us an instance of the

claim that for something to be a mistake in a series of numbers only makes sense given that there is a correct way to go on with that series. Wartenberg says that the featured anomalies 'provide an illustration of the problem with the skeptic's claim that all our empirical beliefs could be mistaken' (235). However, it is difficult to see how one can get from the one to the other. Wartenberg's view faces a dilemma. If the viewer has prior knowledge of Wittgenstein's claim, he or she could fill in the background and see the possibility of a mistake as presupposing the falsity of global scepticism. In such a case, however, the *philosophical* contribution of Bochner's view seems fairly minimal. If the viewer does not have knowledge of Wittgenstein's claim, it is difficult to see how the leap from a single instance of a mistake to a problem with global scepticism could be made.

In thinking through these issues, I am surprised to discover that I am gently sceptical of the claims to painters being able to do a great deal of philosophical work. I do not claim to have justified this view. Readers of the book will need to look at Wartenberg's discussion – which is supported by the high-quality colour prints – to see if they are convinced.

I have picked and chosen those bits of the book on which I felt I had something to say, and completely neglected other parts. One lesson of this is that Wartenberg has opened a whole new field – complete with sub-divisions. In particular, I have had nothing to say about the history, paintings that illustrate philosophy, or graphic philosophy. I would not want my doing my job as a commentator (to find points of disagreement) to prompt any doubt that I thoroughly enjoyed the book, which I can recommend as consistently interesting and enlightening.

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COMMENTARY ON THOMAS WARTENBERG'S *THOUGHTFUL IMAGES*

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In *Thoughtful Images*, Thomas Wartenberg presents the first systematic study of the role of illustration in philosophy. Wartenberg begins his enquiry by posing the question of whether the visual arts produce works that function as illustrations of philosophical texts. In what follows, Wartenberg not only affirmatively answers this question, but, more ambitiously, also makes the case that visual artworks can make innovative contributions to philosophy. This is a welcome line of enquiry and receptive to the rich tradition of interaction between visual arts and philosophy, which I have the privilege of seeing daily in my capacities as a Lecturer in Fine Art, practicing visual artist and philosopher. In this commentary then, I shall seek not to critique but to expand on some of Wartenberg's ideas and provide more solid foundations upon which to support his more ambitious claim (and my own predilections) about the contributions to philosophy that visual artworks can make.

Wartenberg develops his account by means of an impressive historical survey. He starts with images of philosophy and philosophers in ancient mosaics and medieval manuscripts, moving then to 17th century broadsides and frontispieces, before arriving at Modernism in the visual arts and conceptual developments in contemporary art, finally ending at what he terms 'graphic philosophy' (that is, the use of the form of a comic to present important issues in philosophy). Through this vast survey, Wartenberg distinguishes between four different kinds of illustration: *text-based, concept-based, theory-based, and quotation-based.*

Text-based illustrations present pictures whose central features are specified by the text (2023, 5). For example, a 14th century French manuscript translation of Aristotle's *Nicomachean Ethics* and *Politics* features images that illustrate aspects of Aristotle's philosophical theories, such as his account of friendship (Wartenberg 2023, 58-60). Concept-based illustrations, by contrast, do not attempt to illustrate segments of text but, rather, an abstract philosophical concept or idea (Wartenberg 2023, 5). Such ideas may pertain to the nature of art itself as is the case in Modernist paintings, like Jackson Pollock's *White Light* which, Wartenberg remarks, illustrates what Clement Greenberg claimed to be painting's essential nature, flatness (2023, 159). Wartenberg also identifies another type of concept-based illustration: *analogical illustration*. Works that fall within this category illustrate philosophical ideas by way of analogy. For instance, Wartenberg proposes that Mel Bochner's *Fourth Range* consists of a 'numbers game', analogous to what Wittgenstein termed a 'language-game' (2023, 292).

Theory-based illustrations, however, are images that are appropriated by philosophers to illustrate significant ideas from philosophy in a manner that makes those ideas more easily accessible than they generally are taken to be in the philosophers' texts (2023, 14-15). For example, Foucault uses Velasquez's *Las Meninas*, emphasising *representation* as the subject of the painting, to illustrate the nature of the Classical *episteme*

(Wartenberg 2023, 124). In the final category, quotation-based illustrations, contemporary artists illustrate philosopher's ideas by including the philosopher's actual words in the work, such as Joseph Kosuth's *276.* (*On Color Blue*), which renders the following words from paragraph 276 of Wittgenstein's *Philosophical Investigations* in blue neon tubing: "But don't we at least *mean* something quite definite when we look at a color and name our color impression?' It is virtually as if we detached the color *impression* from the object like a membrane. (This ought to arouse our suspicions)".

Within these kinds of illustration, Wartenberg enumerates two strategies that have long been used for illustrating philosophy to make it more accessible and memorable: analogical illustration of an abstract theory and personification of it. In addition to the example cited earlier, an example of analogical illustration is given through a 17th century engraving – which Wartenberg refers to as the *Descriptio* print – where Aristotle's logic is interpreted to present the creation of a proposition through two palm trees shown with their branches entwined, producing "a new type of entity, a piece of fruit, which is the *analogue* of a proposition formed from two parts of speech" (2023, 70; my emphasis) By contrast, in the 14th century French manuscript translation of Aristotle's *Nicomachean Ethics* and *Politics*, Aristotle's concepts of friendship are *personified*. For example, as Wartenberg writes:

> two priests shown on the right exemplify a complete friendship. Since this type of friendship exists only between two good people, according to Aristotle, it makes sense to use priests to illustrate it, since it was widely assumed that priests were ethical people. They are shown engaged in conversation, each with their right arm raised and both wearing identical outfits, a simple white gown with a black robe over the gown. (2023, 60)

What is interesting about this passage is the use of the word 'exemplify'.

In fact, as Wartenberg's language reveals, this illustration is one where a philosophical theory is both personified and exemplified.

Considering the wide range of cases Wartenberg surveys in the book, it is surprising to see that he enumerates only analogy and personification as strategies for illustrating philosophy, particularly as he uses the term 'exemplify' later to discuss how Kosuth's quotation-based illustration *276.* (*On The Color Blue*) works:

> Looking at *276.* (*On The Color Blue*), we see three sentences from the *Investigations* executed in neon tubing. The tubes give off a blue light. The blue forms a sort of penumbra that surrounds the quotation and exemplifies the topic of the quotation, namely, the nature of color. The light also casts a shadow on the wall in which most of the words from the quotation are legible. (Wartenberg 2023, 177)

As this passage indicates, exemplification appears to be doing a lot of heavy lifting in conveying the cognitive content of this work. So, while Wartenberg uses the notion of exemplification sparingly in the book, I think there is a clear case to be made that this should be elevated as a distinctive strategy to explain the philosophical aspirations and contributions that Wartenberg claims many of the works he examines have achieved.

To better understand why exemplification is an important resource for Wartenberg's account, we can look to Catherine Elgin's theory of exemplification. Like scientific experiments and models, Elgin argues that epistemically rewarding artworks function via exemplification. This "is the referential relation by means of which a sample, example, or other exemplar refers to some of its properties [...] An exemplar highlights, displays, or makes manifest some of its properties by both instantiating and referring to those properties" (Elgin 2018, 29). A fabric swatch, to use Elgin's example, of herringbone tweed is an instance of the pattern

that refers to the pattern (2018, 29). Likewise, in Kosuth's *276.* (*On Color Blue*), the blue, penumbral properties of the piece are an instance of, and reference to, a display of colour that is clearly visible but not as an aspect of an object's surface.

Exemplars, if properly interpreted, afford epistemic access to those properties in virtue of referring to some of their properties so that by attending to an appropriate exemplar we can learn, for instance, to recognize herringbone tweed or the ubiquity of unresolved tensions in human lives (Elgin 2018, 31). An exemplar of the latter may be Haydn's *Symphony No. 45*, which is in the difficult key F$^{\#}$ minor, and can be interpreted as exemplifying the difficulties surrounding the extended stay Haydn and the musicians were obliged to take at the remote summer palace of their employer, Count Esterhazy, in 1772 (Elgin 2018, 30).

Elgin argues that the arts and sciences use these same symbolic resources to achieve much the same symbolic ends: to embody, convey, and often constitute understanding (2018, 27). Indeed, by exemplifying the content of Wittgenstein's ideas through his chosen visual means, Kosuth provides viewers "with the experience of seeing a colour that is not identifiable as existing on the surface of any object" (Wartenberg 2023, 178), and so embodies and conveys Wittgenstein's understanding of this topic. Importantly, the experience of Kosuth's *276.* (*On Color Blue*) also problematizes viewers' understanding of colours (Wartenberg 2023, 178), which chimes with Elgin's suggestion that the effect of exemplification can be Socratic – a work of art can unseat our complacency by exemplifying that we do not know what we thought we knew (2018, 36).

While both artworks and philosophical texts can convey propositional knowledge – something we readily see in quotation-based illustrations – the former are extremely well-placed to convey non-propositional knowledge, which, as Michael Newall highlights, may inhere in their visual or sensory character (2018, 174). This experiential element can,

then, help us to further account for the distinctive contributions that visual artworks can make to philosophy. Based on Wartenberg's discussion of works like Bochner's *Fourth Range*, we could go further still and make the case that working out or recreating the artist's creative decisions while beholding the visual manifestations of these can serve as a means to convey experiential knowledge that is cognitive in content. In this case, by working out the rules of the 'numbers game', which exemplifies Wittgenstein's claims about language and knowledge, viewers can come to understand the basis for Wittgenstein's claim that mistakes require the presence of a rule, the basis for his undermining of scepticism (Wartenberg 2023, 292-293).

The quotation-based illustration *276.* (*On Color Blue*) and analogical illustration *Fourth Range* are certainly not the only cases or kinds of illustration that Wartenberg examines where exemplification seems to be playing a key role. As we saw earlier, the text-based illustration for Aristotle's concept of complete friendship personifies and exemplifies this idea, while concept-based illustrations that employ this strategy include Pollock's *White Light*, which exemplifies the flatness and all-over effect of Greenberg's Modernist vision. However, it is perhaps theory-based illustrations that benefit most from being considered through the lens of Elgin's account of exemplification.

As we have seen, not all properties are exemplified at once. Some, for example, can be highlighted only by diminishing others. Exemplification is thus selective, such that in different contexts the same object can exemplify different properties (Elgin 2018, 29). Moreover, anything can be turned into an example simply by being treated as one. Properties can be pointed out or stage-setting may be needed to bring usually overshadowed or subtle features to the fore, and so exemplification "lends itself to intellectual opportunism." (Elgin 2018, 29) Such intellectual opportunism is amply demonstrated in Wartenberg's category of theory-based illustrations.

For instance, to illustrate his philosophy and contrast between the Apolline and the Dionysiac cultural tendencies that he saw as fundamental to the historical development of Western civilisation, Nietzsche used Raphael's *Transfiguration* (Wartenberg 2023, 107-114). The painting depicts a unified vision of Jesus' transfiguration in the top half of the painting and a boy healed from demonic possession through the miraculous intercession of Jesus in the bottom half. In his use of the painting, Nietzsche downplayed the Christian content and foregrounded the relationship between the scenes of agony and transcendence presented in the two parts of the picture. By focusing on these properties, Nietzsche used the painting to exemplify the Dionysiac and Apolline, or the truth of the inevitability of suffering and the illusory optimism of human rationality, and the relationship between them.

Such acts of appropriation make theory-based illustration perhaps the most contentious of Wartenberg's categories because these are works that were not intended to be illustrations by their creators. Nowhere does this come out more clearly than in the case of Wartenberg's second example of theory-based illustration, where Heidegger referred to 'a well-known painting by van Gogh who painted such shoes several times' (1964) to illustrate his claim that art is *the setting-into-work of truth* (Wartenberg 2023, 115). As Heidegger does not specify in his text which painting he is actually referring to, we might question whether this is really an instance of illustration in Wartenberg's sense. However, what this case perhaps makes salient about this kind of illustration is that the viewer need not necessarily have direct access to a visual work for it to illustrate some significant ideas from philosophy. In this case, it is phenomenological sketches of encounters with paradigmatic artworks like one of van Gogh's paintings (Thomson 2019), that are doing much of the work for Heidegger as he attempts to demonstrate their

disclosure of how art itself works:[1]

> …as long as we only imagine a pair of shoes in general, or simply look at the empty, unused shoes as they merely stand there in the picture, we shall never discover what the equipmental being of equipment in truth is. In Van Gogh's painting we cannot even tell where these shoes stand. There is nothing surrounding this pair of peasant shoes in or to which they might belong, only an undefined space. There are not even clods from the soil of the field or the path through it sticking to them, which might at least hint at their employment. A pair of peasant shoes and nothing more. And yet. From the dark opening of the worn insides of the shoes the toilsome tread of the worker stares forth. In the stiffly rugged heaviness of the shoes there is the accumulated tenacity of her slow trudge through the far-spreading and ever-uniform furrows of the field swept by a raw wind. On the leather lie the dampness and richness of the soil. Under the soles slides the loneliness of the field-path as evening falls. In the shoes vibrates the silent call of the earth, its quiet gift of the ripening grain and its unexplained self-refusal in the fallow desolation of the wintry field. This equipment is pervaded by uncomplaining anxiety as to the certainty of bread, the wordless joy of having once more withstood want, the trembling before the impending childbed and shivering at the surrounding menace of death. This equipment belongs to the earth, and it is protected in the world of the peasant woman. From out of this protected belonging the equipment itself rises to its resting-within-itself. (Heidegger 1964, 662-663)

As Wartenberg mentions in passing (2018, 118), Heidegger's interpretation of the painting's subject as a pair of shoes belonging to a peasant woman led to a famous dispute. While for Wartenberg this disagree-

[1] For Heidegger, "to see a being in its truth is not to see its correspondence to an idea of it that we have in our minds but to see it for the very thing that it is, to disclose its being." (Wartenberg 223, 116)

ment appears to be a minor detail, it is worth reflecting on it in more depth, given Elgin's proposal that "with different backgrounds, different features will be exemplified and different insights will emerge" (2018, 31). Indeed, this is arguably what happened when, among others, Meyer Schapiro and Jacques Derrida took Heidegger to task for his interpretation and use of the painting as an example to serve his theory.

Art historian Schapiro complained that Heidegger, although aware that van Gogh had painted such shoes several times, did not actually identify the particular painting he had in mind (1968, 136). Narrowing down the suspects in the systematic fashion favoured by his discipline, Schapiro instead affirmed that "they are more likely pictures of the artist's own shoes, not the shoes of a peasant" (1968, 136). By "replac[ing] a close attention to the work of art" (1968, 138) and projecting his own interpretation upon the painting, Schapiro went on to argue that Heidegger missed "an important aspect of the painting: the artist's presence in the work" (1968, 139). Running with this point, Schapiro wrote:

> For an artist to isolate his worn shoes as the subject of a picture is for him to convey a concern with the fatalities of his social being. Not only the shoes as an instrument of use, though the landscape painter as a worker in the fields shares something of the peasant's life outdoors, but the shoes as "a portion of the self " (in Hamsun's words) are van Gogh's revealing theme. (1968, 140)

Wading in with a characteristically unwieldy text, Derrida found these two positions instructive, highlighting the uncharitable way in which Schapiro conducted his dissection of Heidegger's work while also arguing that Heidegger's interests weren't in the shoes as painting (1978). Instead, Derrida highlighted that neither thinker could resist determinacy and brought a Freudian twist to the discussion of the depicted boots:

> And these shoes look at them. They look at us. Their detachment is evident. Unlaced, abandoned, detached from the subject (porteur, bearer, wearer, holder, or owner, indeed author-signer) and detached in themselves (the laces are untied, détachés). —detached from each other, even if matched, but with un supplément de détachment, a detaching supplement, if we suppose that they don't make a pair. For where do both of them (I mean Schapiro on one side, Heidegger on the other) get the certitude that the question involves a pair of shoes? What is a pair in this case? (1978, 4)

Each of these parties in the debate used the painting to exemplify different properties that were salient to their own theoretical positions. For Heidegger, van Gogh's painting exemplified how phenomenological encounters with art are capable of helping us to transcend modern aesthetics – the target of his critique – from within (Thomson 2019). For Schapiro, however, the painting exemplified the concept of the artist's presence, while for Derrida it exemplified philosophical ideas relating to detachment.

As these different interpretive positions demonstrate, given the relative repleteness of aesthetic symbols, disagreement may be interminable (Elgin 2018, 39). However, with the generative potential of exemplification, which is "not always a matter of making manifest antecedently known properties" (Elgin 2018, 31), we are well-placed to account for the contributions of these illustrations to philosophy. The versatility of exemplification, I suggest, is key to the explanatory power of Wartenberg's category of theory-based illustrations and this is particularly pronounced in the case under discussion.

Heidegger's use of the painting brought the formal ambiguities of the work to the fore and helped to constitute his philosophical understanding, but it is perhaps the broader debate that ensued which solidifies the contributions of this artwork to philosophy. Each subsequent thinker

responded to others by highlighting properties that they felt exemplified more significant insights, and in doing so shed new light upon, and advanced, philosophical understanding of the issues under discussion. These contributions were not necessarily intended by van Gogh but afforded by his skilful handling of materials and curious compositions.

In relation to this last point, I invite Wartenberg to consider how his account sits in relation to matters of artistic value, which we hear surprisingly little about. Perhaps the most pertinent question in relation to artistic value, given the topic of the book, is how do Wartenberg's claims relate to those of *aesthetic cognitivism*, the view that cognitive value – the capacity to convey knowledge – often contributes significantly to an artwork's artistic value? There are hints at an answer in many of the cases that Wartenberg examines, such as his consideration of the extent to which works like Kosuth's *Intellect to Opinion* (2017), which features a quotation in white neon tubing from the Divided Line section of *The Republic* (534a), are epistemically successful. As Wartenberg writes, this work seems to lack "the profundity" of *276.* (*On Color Blue*):

> While it does provide its viewers with a perceptual experience of the distinction between an object—in this case, a neon tubing version of Plato's text—and its shadow cast on the wall where the work is exhibited, I don't see it as shedding light on or criticizing the metaphysical view Plato illustrates in the displayed passage. (2023, 180)

Given that it is the relationship between the form of the work and how it conveys its content that Wartenberg foregrounds, we might gain the impression that this is at once an epistemic and aesthetic judgement. Moreover, given the emphasis on the work as not shedding light on or criticizing the metaphysical view, we might take it that Wartenberg implicitly holds that works, such as Kosuth's, which function as illustrations of philosophical texts are better as art for not only being able to

convey, but to contribute to, knowledge. This is a question that seems relevant to all the types of illustrations Wartenberg discusses, and it would be intriguing to hear his response. In sum, Wartenberg's *Thoughtful Images* is a thoughtful reflection on the dialogue between the visual arts and philosophy, and I hope that what I have said in this short commentary is an aid to his account of the contributions that these disciplines have made to each other.

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FURTHER THOUGHTS ON VISUAL ILLUSTRATION: A RESPONSE TO MATRAVERS AND ANSCOMB

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Let me thank Derek Matravers and Claire Anscomb for their thoughtful and incisive comments on *Thoughtful Images*. They have given me a great deal to think about. I am very grateful that they have responded to my book in such interesting and challenging ways. I hope my responses do justice to at least some of their concerns.

Both Matravers and Anscomb focus on two themes: issues concerning my theorization of illustration and the question of their cognitive significance. I will discuss each of these issues in my responses to each of them.

1. Response to Matravers

1.1. The Theory of Visual Illustration

Matravers expresses concern about my advocacy for what I call *the similarity heuristic*. I introduce this principle as a constraint on the nature of

illustration. It is necessary because visual illustrations of written texts—Matravers initially focuses on text-based visual illustrations—necessarily include many features not specified by the source text on which they are based. The first page of Maurice Sendak's *Where the Wild Things Are*, for example, consists only of the following phrase, "the night Max wore his wolf suit and made mischief of one kind," so there are only a few facts that the illustration on the facing page is required to include: a boy named Max wearing a wolf suit who is somehow making mischief. The illustration shows a frowning young boy standing on some books pounding a nail into a wall to create a cord upon which his blanket is hanging, perhaps to create a hiding place. Although my description of the illustration leaves out many details, it is sufficient to demonstrate how a visual image will include many elements left open by its source because a visual image is *informationally dense* in a way that a linguistic description is not. Creating a visual image for a text requires the artist's creativity in supplementing the description.

The similarity heuristic was an attempt to specify a guideline that explains what an artist does in creating a visual illustration of a text. Matravers thinks that the heuristic limits the creativity of the illustrator too much and uses the example of the conceited man from *Le Petit Prince* to prove his point. The illustration of the conceited man shows a man wearing a hat with a feather in it (though Matravers characterizes it as a straw). Matravers' objection is that the conceited man in the illustration does not look like any conceited man he has met, but that's not what I think the similarity heuristic requires. The features of the illustration Matravers mentions—that the man is wearing a top hat, bow-tie, and frock coat—are all images derived from real things. The elements of the illustration are all based upon reality and hence can satisfy at least one aspect of the similarity heuristic.

Matravers goes on to suggest two other constraints on visual illustrations of texts. The first is a variation of the similarity heuristic, only it

specifies that the world to which an illustration's features correspond is the fictional world of the story. The problem with this constraint is that we don't gain access to that world except through the text and its illustrations, so it's unclear how such a constraint would operate. Matravers' second constraint is that the illustrations need to be consistent across the book which is their source. This constraint can only apply to *series* of illustrations such as those found in picture books and not to single illustrations of which I give numerous examples in the book. But, in any case, I wonder if this might also be too constraining on the illustrator who might chose to vary illustrations for an artistic and imaginative purpose.

A constraint (or norm) that I would endorse is that of *aptness*. Given a text, a visual illustration of it must be appropriate (or apt) to the world created by the story. Returning to *Where the Wild Things Are*, Max's wolf suit is a sort of onesie, that is, a pajama that a young child might wear. It is not a realistic wolf costume such as an adult might wear on Halloween. This is appropriate to the story, for none of the images in the book picture scary creatures, despite the wild things being described that way.

Focusing on series of illustrations biases the case. It certainly is true that illustrations in a series normally exhibit consistency both to all of the other illustrations in the series and the fictional world being created. However, the more basic question with which I was concerned was what is true of single illustrations such as Titian's *Rape of Europa*, an example Matravers cites.

1.2. The Cognitive Import of Visual Works of Art

In his 1992 paper, "On the Cognitive Triviality of Art," Jerome Stolnitz criticized the claim that the novels of Jane Austen contained significant philosophical truths. Instead, he argued that works of art only make banal cognitive claims, such as "Stubborn pride and ignorant prejudice keep attractive people apart." Matravers says that he is surprised to

find himself supporting Stolnitz' position, but this is the import of his objection to my claim that works of visual art can be philosophically significant.

Before looking at Matravers' specific concerns, let me put forward a couple of examples of philosophically significant works he does not discuss. The first is an etching, *Artificiosa totius logices descriptio*, made by Martin Meurisse and Leonard Gaultier in 1614. As Susanna Berger (2017) argues, the work makes a contribution to logic by showing two palm trees entwined and producing a fruit. The work visually asserts that a judgment is not just an association of two terms, but a synthesis that is something over and above the two terms.

A second example of a philosophically significant work of art is Joseph Kosuth's *One and Three Chairs* (1985). The installation consists of three chairs: an ordinary wooden folding chair, a photograph of that chair displayed on the wall to the left and slightly above it, and a dictionary definition of the chair on the wall to the right of the physical chair. The work is an illustration of Plato's metaphysics, with its three-fold categorization of reality: appearances, mere semblances, and real things or forms.

Matravers is critical of my claim that a work like this is philosophically significant. He creates a dilemma: perceivers of the work who are not familiar with Plato will not understand its philosophical significance while those who are acquainted with Plato's ideas will not learn anything from the work. The two horns of the dilemma are meant to demonstrate that the work is philosophically trivial.

In framing his dilemma, Matravers does concede that the work is an illustration of a philosophical idea. This puts art and philosophy on a par in so far as each is able to present a complex philosophical theory, viz. Plato's metaphysics, even if interpreting the work in that manner requires previous acquaintance with Plato's philosophy. But there is

another dimension to this work that I think secures its philosophical significance. It shows that Plato's denigration of art in relation to philosophy is unjustified. In Book X of his *Republic*, Plato (2007) argues that art is inferior to philosophy because it deals with appearances rather than reality. But Kosuth's installation shows that art, because it is capable of displaying philosophical truth, does not deal only with appearances. This is the work's philosophical significance.

Clearly, it takes philosophical sophistication to interpret the work in this way. But the perceiver of the work who does so can learn something, for the acquaintance with Plato's metaphysics required for understanding the work does not include the critique embodied in the piece. It is a creative piece of philosophizing done through a work of art.

Something analogous is true of Mel Bochner's drawing, *Fourth Range* (1973). That work is able to show a perceiver the truth of Wittgenstein's contention that an error can only exist in the context of a rule (Wittgenstein, 1969). A perceiver of the work who knows that Wittgenstein made that claim might not accept it until they had seen how Bochner illustrates it. Such a knowledgeable person could still learn something from the work. (More on this work and its cognitive significance below.)

What I have said so far does not respond to Matravers' denial that Modern Art, especially Abstract Expressionism, does "philosophy in paint", as I contend. My account of Modern Art is dependent on Clement Greenberg's account of the trajectory of such art as creating works of art that exhibited the flatness he took to be painting's essence. For Greenberg (1982), the only property that all and only paintings had to have is flatness, for paintings involved applying paint to a plane surface. Although I criticize Greenberg's essentialism, I still maintain that Modern Artists were doing philosophy.

Is Matravers correct to reject the claim that the Abstract Expressionists were doing philosophy in paint? I don't think so, and part of the reason has to do with the complexity of the notion of flatness. In what sense might it make sense to say that an Abstract Expressionist like Jackson Pollock attempted to create paintings that embodied flatness?

First of all, paintings are not flat in a purely physical sense, though their canvases may be if they are stretched correctly. This is because the paint upon the surface of a painting is not perfectly smooth but has peaks and valleys, so to speak. Perhaps Helen Frankenthaler's color field paintings, which involved thinning the paint so that it would be absorbed into the canvas, come close to eliminating this feature. But the point is that flatness is not a physical property of a painting. Rather, to say that a painting is flat is to say that it is not amenable to what Richard Wollheim (1980) called "seeing-in," that is, taking a nearly two-dimensional object to depict a three-dimensional scene. All traditional Western paintings are not flat in this sense, for their flat surface also gives rise to a 3-dimensional view of the world. Pollock created paintings that are flat in their denial of any representational, 3-dimensional content.

Is this doing philosophy in paint? I think so. Recall Arthur Danto's (1993) claim that Andy Warhol did philosophy by creating a work that posed the question, "what makes something a work of art?", in a manner that philosophers had failed to grasp. Warhol posed the question "why is this object a work of art when its perceptually identical counterpart is not?" In a similar vein, I take Pollock and his fellow Abstract Expressionists to have created works that challenged the assumption that works of art had to be more than flat, that is, to indicate a three-dimensional world by means of paint of a "flat" surface.

Even if the claim that flatness is the essence of painting has been shown to be mistaken, that does not entail that the Abstract Expressionists were not doing philosophy in paint. Many philosophical theories have been disproven, but that does not mean that their authors were not

doing philosophy. Early in my career, I co-authored an essay with David Ross (Wartenberg and Ross, 1983) claiming that Quine's thesis of the indeterminacy of translation was self-contradictory. But that claim, even if true, did not entail that Quine (1960) was not doing philosophy in *Word and Object* (or, indeed, that we were even if our claim was false.)

The same holds for the Abstract Expressionists. Although subsequent developments in painting revealed that it was a mistake to take flatness to be the essence of painting, creating works that exhibited that property was a way for the artists to do philosophy in their chosen medium. The fact that a theory has been disproved does not mean that those who articulated it were not doing philosophy.

2. Response to Anscomb

As a visual artist and philosopher, Anscomb is less skeptical about the philosophical potential of art than Matravers. Her comments are extremely useful because they point out some shortcomings in the theoretical framework I proposed for discussing visual illustrations of philosophy.

2.1. The Theory of Illustration

The deficits in the framework I develop in *Thoughtful Images* are more complex than Anscomb notes, though her comments got me thinking about how to modify what I presented in the book. I am grateful for her suggestion that I need to supplement my account. So, let me try to present a more satisfactory framework for discussing illustrations. It turns out to be more complex than it seems.

As I note in the book, illustrations have a *basic logic.* There is always a *source*, that which the illustration visualizes. The illustration itself is often conceptualized as the target, i.e., that at which the illustration aims. I don't find this term very illuminating. I prefer to talk simply of the art object, the illustration itself, that visualizes its source. The basic point is that an illustration is always related to a source to which it can

be traced.

The second element of the theoretical framework is one I emphasized in the book. It consists of the different *types of source* to which visual illustrations of philosophy can be related. In the book, I discuss four different types: text-based, concept-based, theory-based, and quotation-based illustrations. I would now describe these four types of illustration as distinguishing the different sources to which the works are related.

When people think of illustrations, they often think of a visual image that is related to a verbal description in a written text. *Texts* are a prominent source for visual illustrations including those of philosophy. Textbook illustrations of Plato's Allegory of the Cave are one example of illustration based on a textual source (see, for example, Plato, 1999, 316). Such visual illustrations will of necessity *supplement* the information provided by the text because of differences between language and images. They also will conform to the *similarity heuristic* I discussed earlier.

A second type of source is a variation on illustrations based upon a text. These illustrations are artworks that embody a *quotation.* This type of illustration was developed by conceptual artists beginning in the 1960s who created works that consisted of quotations of a philosophical work rendered in an artistic medium. The first such work I was able to discover is Bruce Nauman's *A Rose Has No Teeth* (1966), in which Nauman made a lead cast consisting of a phrase from Wittgenstein (2009). Unlike a text-based illustration, a quotation-based illustration takes a phrase from a written philosophical text and renders it in an artistic medium.

There are two other sources for works that visually illustrate philosophy: concepts and theories. Although I treat these as two different sources, in practice it is often hard to differentiate them. Consider, for example, a 15th century manuscript illustration of the three types of friendship Aris-

totle distinguishes in Book VIII of his *Nicomachean Ethics*.[1] On the one hand, the illumination can be taken to be an illustration of Aristotle's concept of friendship, but it also seems possible to treat it as an illustration of Aristotle's theory of friendship. The difference is this: sometimes a work can illustrate a philosophical concept used by a philosopher without incorporating further aspects of their theory. This makes its source a philosophical concept. Other times, the work incorporates further aspects of the theory, making its source the theory and not just a concept.

What really distinguishes these two sources is that, in some cases where the source of an illustration is a philosophical theory, the illustration does not have to be intended to illustrate that source. Instead, a philosopher can *use* the artwork to illustrate a philosophical theory. I argue that this is the case for a number of prominent philosophical discussions of artworks. The one Anscomb focuses on is Martin Heidegger's discussion of Vincent Van Gogh's painting, *Vieux souliers aux lacets* [Old Shoes with Laces] (1886). Since Heidegger's theory of equipment (*Zeug*) antedates the painting, Van Gogh could not have intended it as an illustration of Heidegger's theory. Nonetheless, Heidegger treats it as such. I will return to this work in a moment.[2]

As Anscomb notes, in order to create an illustration, an artist needs to use a specific *strategy*, making this another element in the framework for theorizing illustration. This is required to transpose the source—be it text, concept, theory, or quotation—into a visual artwork. It indicates the manner in which the artist presents the philosophical idea visually.

I discuss two strategies for illustrating philosophy in the book: *personi-*

[1] https://www.bridgemanimages.com/en-US/m-seemuller/the-three-species-of-friendship-miniature-from-ethics-politics-the-economy-by-aristotle-manuscript/nomedium/asset/515485.

[2] Anscomb notes that I do not discuss the debate about Heidegger's claims. The reason for this is my focus on the nature of theory-based illustrations, not the validity of Heidegger's interpretation.

fication and *analogy.* The illustration of Aristotle's theory of friendship is an example of personification, for the illustration shows the three types of friendships through depicting three distinct pairs of friends. The three types of friendship—friendships of utility, those of pleasure, and complete friendship—are personified by the three different pairs of friends.

An example of an analogical illustration is Meurisse and Gaultier's illustration of Aristotle's logic and metaphysics mentioned earlier in which Aristotle's theory is presented in the form of a formal garden. I will return to this work in a moment, explaining the rationale for using the analogy.

There are other strategies employed by artists to illustrate philosophy. *Picturing* is one. Consider the textbook illustration of Plato's Cave. It is a straight-forward picture of Plato's description of the cave. As such, it embodies a third strategy for illustrating philosophy. There probably are other strategies, but for now I think acknowledging three of them helps supplement the account provided in the book.

Anscomb points out that I do not discuss the notion of exemplification despite using it to describe some of the illustrations of philosophy in the book. This concept is part of what I call the *semantics* of visual illustration, the fourth element in my framework. A visual work can *refer* to its source, *exemplify* its source, or *embody* its source. These conceptualize different semantic relationships between a work and its source. I will return to a discussion of exemplification once I have finished discussing the framework for a theoretical understanding of illustration.

One feature of the framework that Anscomb does not discuss are the *norms* governing illustration. The primary ones I discuss are *fidelity* and *felicity*, norms derived from a theory of translation. An illustration needs to be faithful to its source but may also modify its source due to the shift from a verbal to a visual medium. Both of these norms are evaluative.

There are other norms that play a different role in the theory. Two of them are *aptness and adequacy.* A visual rendering of philosophy must be apt. Presenting Aristotle's logic and metaphysics as a garden is apt, even if quite unexpected. In the garden so pictured, all the different elements of Aristotle's philosophy have a place. I'm not sure that other objects would work as well. Perhaps, one could use an automobile engine to illustrate Aristotle's philosophy, but it's not at all obvious that this would be an apt way to do so.

Adequacy is the final norm I see as necessary for understanding illustration. An illustration must be an adequate version of its source, that is, it must contain all the elements present in the source. An illustration that fails to include significant aspects of its source would not satisfy the norm of adequacy. Dominic McIver Lopes' (2005) criticism of Gustav Doré's illustrations of Dante's *Divine Comedy* for failing to represent *contrapasso* treats Doré's work as failing to satisfy the norm of adequacy.

Let's return to the element in my framework that Anscomb emphasizes, exemplification. Anscomb quotes Catherine Elgin explaining exemplification as "the referential relation by means of which a sample, example, or other exemplar refers to some of its properties [...] An exemplar highlights, displays, or makes manifest some of its properties by both instantiating and referring to those properties" (Elgin 2018, 29). A paint sample of a particular color, say Navajo white, not only refers to that color but has the very property it refers to. Anscomb thinks using this concept for discussing illustrations of philosophy is important for it explains various aspects of illustration that require a theoretical explanation.

Perhaps the central one is the cognitive significance of certain illustrations. She has in mind two works that I discuss: Mel Bochner's *Fourth Range* and Joseph Kosuth's *276. On Color Blue* (1990). In discussing both of these works, I suggest that viewing them yields important cognitive benefits in relation to the philosophical ideas they illustrate. Both these

works are analogical illustrations. *Fourth Range* uses a numbers-game analogous to Wittgenstein's language-games (2009). *276. On Color Blue* gives the viewer an analogous experience to that described by Wittgenstein (1977) involving looking at the blue sky. I will discuss this latter work further in a moment.

Anscomb argues that "working out or recreating the artist's creative decisions and beholding the visual manifestations of these, can serve as a means to convey experiential knowledge that is cognitive in content." I agree. It's also true that both of these works exemplify one of their properties.

I'm not so sure that Anscomb's extension of the notion of exemplification to other works is equally successful. I don't think that Van Gogh's painting of shoes exemplifies the properties Heidegger finds in it, interesting as that claim is. Relativizing the properties that a work exemplifies to an interpretation also requires more justification.

In any case, in response to Anscomb's discussion I have developed a more adequate framework for understanding illustration. The categories in this framework are: type of source, visual strategy, visual semantics, and norms. I believe this newly articulated framework advances our understanding of visual illustration.

2.2. The Cognitive Value of Illustrations

Anscomb invites me to say something about the cognitive and artistic value of illustrations of philosophy. First, we should acknowledge that many illustrations of philosophy have heuristic value. This is clear, for example, in the 17th century broadsides of Aristotle's philosophy, for they were used by students to help them prepare for their examinations. By presenting the key notions in Aristotle's philosophy by means of an analogy with a formal garden, these works functioned as mnemonics that assisted students in remembering the key concepts in Aristotle's metaphysics and their relationships to one another.

There is more to the cognitive and artistic value of illustrations of philosophy than their pedagogical and heuristic value. As Anscomb suggests, I think that the cognitive value of illustrations of philosophy can enhance their artistic value. The best example is one that she quotes from my book: the different attitude I have towards two very similar works by Joseph Kosuth. Both of these works are quotation-based works that render a quotation from a philosophical work in neon. The first is *276. On Color Blue* (1990). The quotation in that work comes from Wittgenstein's *Remarks on Color* (1977): "276. But don't we at least mean something quite definite when we look at a colour and name our colour impression? It is as if we detached the colour impression from the object, like a membrane. (This ought to arouse our suspicions.)" This quotation is rendered by Kosuth in blue neon tubing. In the quotation, Wittgenstein is discussing the philosophical temptation to think of color as something that exists in our minds. To counter this, he suggests we look at the sky. When we do so, he says, there is no temptation to think of the blueness of the sky as something in our mind. The remark in paragraph 276 follows this thought experiment.

The cognitive value of Kosuth's work is that it gives its viewer an analogous experience to that suggested in the thought experiment: Anyone looking at the intense blue of the electrified neon tubing will not be tempted to think of blue as, in the first instance, a property of one's sensations. To do so would be to "detach the color impression from the object." (Wittgenstein, 1977, 276). The artwork supports Wittgenstein's view by providing a viewer with an experience that accords with the philosopher's claim.

Kosuth's *Intellect to Opinion* (2017) is a very similar work. The work consists of "warm white" neon tubing shaped into a quotation from Plato's Divided Line section of the *Republic* (2007) (534a):

> As being is to becoming, so is pure intellect to opinion. And as intellect is to opinion, so is science to belief, and understanding to

> the perception of shadows. But let us defer the further correlation and subdivision of the subjects of opinion and of intellect, for it will be a long enquiry, many times longer than this has been.

The pure white of the neon in this work is striking. One might see it as an analogue to the "brightness" that comes from viewing the world with the intellect, so different from perceiving "shadows." But on the whole, I don't think that perceiving the work sheds much light on the claim Plato makes about the distinction between intellect and opinion because it doesn't present a visual analogue to Plato's distinction. As a result, I think that this work does not have the same cognitive value as 276. On Color Blue. It also has less artistic value despite the similarity between the two works and the striking color emitted by the neon in them both.

My feeling about the relationship between the cognitive and artistic values of these two works is confirmed by my experience of Fourth Range. As I studied that work and came to understand how it illustrated Wittgenstein's contention that Cartesian hyperbolic doubt was impossible, I not only realized its cognitive value: I came to appreciate it more fully as a work of art.

So, in answer to Anscomb's question, I am an artistic cognitivist in regard to illustration. And the works that have the greatest cognitive value are ones that provide their viewers with experiences that allow them to better understand philosophical theories.

3. Conclusion

Both Matravers and Anscomb raise significant issues about the claims I make in Thoughtful Images. I have not addressed all of their concerns, but I hope I have made some headway in resolving the disagreements between us. Once again, I am grateful for the attention they have paid to the book and their assessment of its significance. I have been able to clarify my views as a result of their astute discussions.

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NOËL CARROLL: CRUELTY AND HUMOUR

Valery Vino

Philosophical discussions about humour go back to ancient aesthetics, to laughing Democritus and the aporia of Socratic self-irony, to Diogenes the Dog performing tricks on the streets of Athens, and to the lost second book of Aristotle's Poetics. Dramatized in texts and the arts, the comic emerges not only in popular literature and public events, like Dionysia and Saturnalia, but also in the lives of eminent philosophers in antiquity, the Renaissance, and today. Recently, humour has seen a resurgence in aesthetics, in part owing to the titanic efforts of Noël Carroll. Desiring to learn first-hand about the risky aspects of philosophical wit, Valery Vino invited Noël to engage with a series of remarks and anecdotes borrowed from dead authors, led by Michel de Montaigne, about the nexus between humour and cruelty. In what follows, we consider why humans laugh (sometimes at themselves), what social function cruel humour plays, why a callous sense of humour may be of benefit in the face of life's horrors, and whether we can hold each other morally culpable for vicious jokes.

Valery Vino: Our dear guest is Noël Carroll, and we are discussing cruelty and humour.

Noël Carroll: Thank you for the invitation. I feel honoured.

V: We begin by paying homage to the tradition of humour in philosophy. Michel de Montaigne created Essays (1965 [1580-1592]) while the Renaissance had already been out of shape, in a time of early colonialism and capitalism, the wars of religion, plagues, and famine. In the essay "Of Democritus and Heraclitus", Montaigne (1965, 303) entertains the philosopher's appropriate attitude to our ordeals and folly:

> *Democritus and Heraclitus were two philosophers, of whom the first, finding the condition of man vain and ridiculous, never went out in public, but with a mocking and laughing countenance. Heraclitus, having pity and compassion on this same condition of ours, appeared always with*

a sorrowful look, his eyes
full of tears.[1]

I am wondering if you feel an affinity with Democritus, Noël, or perhaps Heraclitus, or both, or neither?

N: A very interesting question. Well, one thing that Montaigne seems to be getting at is that humour is a coping mechanism (Carroll, 2016), a naturally endowed capacity to enable us to endure the hardships that existence bequeaths us – what Hamlet calls, the slings and arrows that flesh is heir to. We can see that confirmed in our everyday life; think of the jokes told regularly by people confronted with desperate situations – emergency workers, ambulance drivers, the police, firemen, soldiers, doctors, especially surgeons – people who use humour to dehumanize the people they are helping because they need to short-circuit empathy in order to get the job done. If they are going to cut a patient open with a knife, empathy is apt to get in the way. So, they try to detach themselves from the situation and benumb their humane feelings with laughter.

V: I must add politicians to the list—for example, Alexey Navalny's prison tweets.

N: Humour is a kind of emotional armour—'functional callousness' you could call it—and in that sense, it is or involves a kind of cruelty. Human cruelty against nature's cruelty. Of course, Aristotle says that we not only naturally laugh, but nature has made it such that we are creatures to be laughed at (1999, 65; 2004, 69). And this observation acknowledges the complexity of the situation. The cruelty that human existence entails is not only a product of nature, but also of other humans; the cruelty of humour itself is an ineliminable feature of the nature of humour.

In Aristotle's theory of comedy, for example, the objects of comedy are people who fail to live up to the norm—comic butts who are not as smart, not as graceful, and not as strong as they think they are (*Poetics*, §5). In this context, ridicule, laughter, or cruel humour serve as a corrective, a social means of getting people to abide by the norm. To avoid abusive laughter, we strive to conform.

This idea in Aristotle, and also in Plato (e.g., in *Philebus*, 1906, 156),

[1] Translations of Montaigne are Valery's.

is the origin of what is sometimes called *superiority theories of humour*: theories that argue that humour is about applauding ourselves for being superior to others. We abide by the norm while others fall below it, thereby becoming the objects of ridicule. Hobbes (1914 [1651], 27), maybe most succinctly, states that all laughter is a matter of the sudden glory that we feel when we compare ourselves to others, or even to ourselves at an earlier date. Sometimes, we laugh at the dumb things we have done from the perspective of the present, where we think of our current selves as superior to our fallible past selves.

This idea is recurrent through comic theory. For example, Bergson (1914, 5) talks about humour as a corrective, one whose application requires a certain anaesthesia of the heart. Again, this brings us back to the notion that humour requires neutralizing ordinary empathy or sympathy. Think of slapstick comedy, where we laugh when someone slips on a banana peel as a result of not paying attention to what he is doing. We laugh at him for the embarrassing situation that he has gotten himself into by not looking where he is going, as the enshrined cliché recommends.

Again, this laughter, for Bergson, has a social function; it is a behavioural corrective. What does that mean? Well, many of the mistakes—the objects of our laughter—are comic butts who, as a matter of their absentmindedness, inattentiveness, or inelasticity of thought, get themselves in absurd situations. For example, they get stuck in their routines. This gets them into trouble. Think of the unobservant ditch digger who automatically continues to shovel dirt over his shoulder into a wheelbarrow that is no longer there. We greet him with cruel laughter rather than sympathy because it is his own fault. Our mirth, at his expense, is designed to make him behave in the attentive, elastic, and context-sensitive way that human nature demands.

V: In the words of Bergson himself:

> *Doubtless a fall is always a fall. But it is one thing to tumble into a well, because you were looking anywhere, but in front of you, and it is another thing to fall into it, because you were intent upon a star. It was certainly a star that Don Quixote was gazing.* (*1914, 13*)

N: That sort of absentmindedness is what Bergson thinks humour corrects. So, there is a way that cruelty operates in terms of ridicule—in terms of laughing-at—that is an element or ingredient of an essential feature of humour and amusement.

These superiority theories apply to a lot of cases, but as is typical of philosophical theories, they are not as general as they would like to be. A lot of humour does not seem to be about superiority. Many comedians specialize in humour at their own expense. And much humour is harmless, such as the puns that we make that do not appear to show us to be lording our superiority over other people.

Nevertheless, maybe there is a grain of truth in these superiority theories. Maybe that grain of truth is exemplified by ordinary jokes. Ordinary jokes are like practical jokes (Carroll, 2021).

To see what I mean, let me tell a joke.

There's a line up to the podium, St. Peter's podium in heaven—it's a long line. And there's a doctor way back in the line. He runs up to St. Peter and says, "Look, I'm a doctor, I was an important person, I should be given an advanced place in this line." St. Peter says, "No, no, no. Heaven is democratic; you have to take the place back in line." Half an hour later, a big black car pulls up, and a man gets out holding one of those black bags that doctors carry. He walks up to the podium, winks at St. Peter, St. Peter winks back at him, and the man from the black car walks through the pearly gates. The doctor, way back in the line, sees this, runs forward, and says to Peter, "Hey, I'm a doctor, too! You let that doctor in; let me in." But St. Peter says, "That was not a doctor. That's God, He just thinks he's a doctor."

V: … It's like a rendering of "Julius Excluded from Heaven" by Erasmus.

N: Notice that the joke made a kind of sense, but it is really nonsense. You, the listener, have been tricked into accepting as an explanation of the situation something that is utterly absurd. In this way, the listener is always the butt of a joke. And that may be the grain of truth in the superiority theory, supplying some evidence that a kind of calculated trick—a kind of cold-heartedness—at the expense of the listener is a regular or recurring feature of everyday humour.

V: Now, if you don't mind, we return to Montaigne. On closer in-

spection, the figures of Democritus and Heraclitus represent different worldviews, the comic and the tragic, intimately linked through our contradictory history. Let me assume that many may find the laughing countenance of Democritus to be counterintuitive, and yet Montaigne is taken by it:

> *I prefer the first temperament [of Democritus] not because it is more pleasant to laugh than to weep, but because it is more disdainful, and condemns us more than the other. And it seems to me that we can never be sufficiently despised according to our true merit. Pity and compassion are mingled with some esteem and value for the thing we bemoan. The things that are laughed at, are considered to be of no worth.* (1965, 303)

To be sure, the world of the ancient Greeks, of Montaigne and Bergson—our world is home to much futile suffering that philosophers, traditionally, are to alleviate. Hence, any thinker who is in a position to take this bizarre, bittersweet pleasure in global misery may come across as cruel or callous, as you have it. One contemporary example of this attitude is George Carlin:

> *I see it from a distance, I give myself a divorce. George, emotionally, you have no stake in this. You don't care one way or another – have fun.*
>
> *You know what, I say it this way, when you're born in this world, you're given a ticket to the freak show. When you are born in America, you're given a front row seat.*[2]

And if there is a grain of truth in this punchline, then, here in Australia, we get to see the show on a balcony.

N: It is true that Montaigne is advocating a position which, even if we don't call it cruel, we can call it callous or defensively callous. We

[2] In a pre-mortem interview: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=EkTeZLiNCoM&ab_channel=ZiLBERLaND

can see that there is a necessary place for that in life. If we were to contemplate all of the potential trouble—all of the possible sources of sorrow in the world—it would be impossible to move. If we were totally open to not only the misery in our neighbourhood and country but in every country in the world, we would be paralysed. No one would be capable of taking in all of it. Anyone who tried would be completely so overwhelmed that they would not be able to do anything helpful in assuaging it. In order to go on, you need a comic attitude; you need a kind of callousness in order to armour yourself, if only to be able to sympathise with some of those people who have been laid low by suffering. In order to be a person who has compassion, maybe a certain degree of callousness—oddly enough—is required.

You can think of Montaigne as an eminently reasonable, realistic person who is trying to propose the truism that some degree of compassion calls forth a proportionate measure of callousness.

Of course, there is a place for the recognition of tragedy in life. Think of an end of *Oedipus Rex*, which says, "Call no man happy, until he is dead." We all have to realize that fate can cut us down at any moment. That's a terrifying fact of life. Though we forget it during our everyday activities, we need to be reminded of it by things like tragedy. But to get through the day, we need comedy, however callous, to help hold the terror of existence at bay.

V: It is the German language that has a special word to designate that biting pleasure, Schadenfreude, taking delight in the misfortunes of people or the world.

N: There is a wonderful Slavic joke that exemplifies this. A genie appears to a peasant farmer and says, "I'll give you whatever you wish for, but I should tell you now, whatever I give you, I'm going to give your neighbour twice over." The man thinks for a second and says, "Blind me in one eye."

V: … The social and ontological roots of laughter are central to our conversation, and it seems respectful to give voice to Friedrich Nietzsche. In The Will to Power (1975, 56), the author of golden laughter returns to Aristotle:

> *Perhaps I know best why a human being alone laughs: he alone suffers so deeply, that he had to invent laughter. The*

unhappiest and most melancholy animal is, as fitting, the most cheerful.

N: Nietzsche was initially very influenced by Schopenhauer, who thought that all human existence was a matter of pain and suffering. Schopenhauer recommended several ways to deal with the pain of life. One was to become an ascetic, which is really beyond most of us. So, he advocated that we pursue aesthetic experience, which would at least give us momentary relief or escape from the troubles of life. Arguably, Nietzsche may have construed humour as a kind of aesthetic experience.

V: Confronted with pessimism and nihilism, Nietzsche would naturally try to correct one of his masters.

N: Upon reflection, he thought, in *The Birth of Tragedy*, that tragedy should not be apprised as a way of escaping from the pain of life but should be something that emboldens us to confront life head-on. Nietzsche divides a tragedy into two elements. The Dionysian, which is the aspect that acknowledges primordial dissolution, and the Apollonian, the form-giving aspect, an illusion that we need, he believes, because it is life-affirming. And that, I think, is what he is getting at in this quotation: we invent laughter as a way to go on, as a way to survive the pain and terror of life. Humour is not an escape from human existence; it is a way of empowering human existence—and, returning to discussion of Montaigne and Democritus, I think they, too, are getting at something like that as well.

V: I have an apt anecdote about Sigmund Freud. In 1938, a year before dying, while fleeing from Vienna to London, the Jewish doctor was stuck at customs, requested to sign a form stating that he had not been mistreated by the Nazi regime. Reportedly, Freud wrote down: "I can thoroughly recommend the Gestapo."

N: That is a very good example. Humour can be a means of fighting back, while also being able to feel a little superior—here, that you have gotten off one at the expense of the Gestapo without them realising what you have done.

V: One's sense of humour reflects their moral standing and milieu. In any society, there are things that we cannot communicate directly, for fear of violating a chain of normative barriers. In the arena of humour, however, jests commonly draw from prejudice, taboos,

and fears, which thereby become laughable and thinkable. In this context, I cannot resist quoting America's previous and, possibly, future president, Mr. Trump: "They're bringing drugs, they're bringing crime, they're rapists, and some, I assume, are good people." The humorous contradiction aside, what we are left with is racist reasoning. This is a dangerous dimension of laughter, since a cruel judgement, particularly one enjoying influence, can incite destructive thoughts and passions toward beings that are not exactly like us.

N: It is a very complicated issue. On the one hand, as represented by another comic theory, the incongruity theory, humour requires that the teller of the joke and the listener share some norms; and humour will be based in breaking those norms. For example, a silly joke is: "Why did the moron stay up all night?" The answer is: "He was studying for his blood test." Well, you do study for tests, but you don't study for blood tests. That is a violation of common sense or rationality. Many jokes rely on violating moral norms. That is why it makes sense to say that you can see, among other things, the morality, etiquette, standards of hygiene, and intelligence of a society reflected in its humour, because for the humour to proceed, there must be shared norms of these sorts that are violated and transgressed.

That is one aspect. But it is complicated by the fact that what is said in humour is not usually considered to be an assertion of one's belief. If I say, "The Earth orbits around the Sun", I believe it, and I want you to believe it. But when I say, "Do you know the joke, or I'm going to tell a joke", you know that it is going to be nonsense. Like the joke that I told earlier—the one where God believes he is a doctor. I am not asserting that; I am just kidding. In fact, in ordinary life, when, say, our partner in life or friend gets angry at something we said, the first move we make is to say, "Oh, I was just joking", (thereby trying to absolve myself from the charge that I am asserting something). But now you begin to see the layer of complexities involved here. Framing something as a joke is an attempt to absolve ourselves from responsibility, from what we call seriousness—that is, from the realm of assertion. Joking is the realm of silliness, not seriousness, and supposedly we should not be held accountable for that.

But we are pulled into two directions. On the one hand, are

people culpable for their jokes? Well, since they seem not to be asserting, they do not seem to be culpable. And yet, we do think that some jokes and other comic remarks can be vehicles for things like homophobia. But how, on the one hand, can it be the case that jokes are non-assertive, and, at the same time, that people can be culpable for them?

Perhaps this way. Think of how many jokes depend on the notion of hyperbole, or exaggeration. Let's take an example, a joke I can make because I am of Irish descent.

"How do you know that an Irish man has been using your personal computer? There's a white-out on the screen." Of course, no Irishman is so stupid that they would make corrections in their emails with white-out—at a certain point, you would not be able to see what is on the screen. So, it is hyperbolic, an exaggeration, but it is a way of getting across an assertion without making an assertion. It is a way of saying, well, Irishmen are not really that stupid, but they are very, very stupid.

V: … So, despite the fact that a joke is not making an assertion, nonetheless, it suggests the endorsement of a belief.

N: Yes, exactly—by asking you by way of your laughter to join in endorsing that belief. And to return back to your general claim, it is not only the case that humour will rely on the righteous morality of a culture. Humour will also reveal—because it will presuppose agreement—vicious views that are alive and abroad in your culture.

V: Truly. It is worth touching here on aesthetic education as a cultural matter. Concerning the rules of comical discourse, we take it that another person is getting our joke— understands us—so far as they laugh. Ultimately, it is through smile and laughter (or suspension of these somaesthetic responses) that we engage with humour philosophically. As a global community, alas, we pay little attention to aesthetic praxis. With respect to our topic, I feel shy to laugh on public transport on my own, not to mention that when it is vital to weep, out of nature, it is hard to find an innocuous space. It is not an exaggeration that, in Australia, the public is more likely to associate aesthetics with the art of plastic surgery, than with the philosophy of art, with the cosmetic, rather than cosmic aspects of

human beings.

N: I do not know how things stand in Australia. In the United States now, at least with respect to humour, there is more scrutiny being paid. Think of criticisms of comics like Amy Schumer for making jokes about Mexicans as rapists, or Dave Chappelle remarking negatively about transgender people. In the USA, there is now more scrutiny being paid to the sources of legitimate and illegitimate humour, to what humour may imply. There is scrutiny about the possible differences that have to be respected. Many people do not think that Amy Schumer has racial prejudices against Mexicans, that it was not meant in the same way as when Trump said that Mexicans were rapists. Debate and discussion have arisen: are there ways that violate moral norms that are not to be taken "seriously" versus ones that are saturated with vicious or harmful intent? There are some people who say, look, comedy is a free-zone or, to steal a saying: what happens in comedy, stays in comedy. I am pointing out that, at least in the United States, there is a kind of lively discussion about this issue, and some other issues in aesthetics that are becoming a matter of public discussion.

By the way, I think that this is an opportunity for philosophers to join the public discussion, and, if not leading it, at least contributing to it by drawing from centuries of discussion from Plato to Danto.

V: Hard to disagree with you. In the first year of the pandemic, under severe lockdown restrictions, including a curfew, I was fortunate to deliver a semester-long course, "Wit and Laughter", at the Melbourne School of Continental Philosophy.

N: We should bring these discussions into our classes. You should not think: "Oh, Spinoza wasn't talking about jokes, so should I be talking about jokes?" These are things that will engage our students, that they will have opinions about, opinions that they can sharpen by being in discussion with fellow students. We should take aesthetics out of the domain of intellectual journals and bring these kinds of issues that people care about to our seminars—that is, things they would discuss after they went to a comic performance in a club, for example, with their friends over a beer. We should bring these conversations into the format that most of us have, which is the classroom. It will make for better classes, classes that students care about because it

touches their lives, and it is something that they have a view about. In his biography of Wittgenstein, Norman Malcolm (2001, 28) says that Wittgenstein once said to him that you could conduct philosophy solely in terms of jokes. We should try that out in our teaching.

V: Let's outline our discussion so far. Owing to Aristotle and Bergson, we have identified the corrective function of cruel humour, and thanks to Montaigne and Nietzsche, we have found a special place for callous laughter in our lives. With respect to contemporary debates in aesthetics, we have ascertained the relation between pejorative jokes and one's moral standing, and also, appealing to your telescopic knowledge, Noël, alluded to the need for teaching classes inspired by philosophies of humour.

In closing, could you help me understand the comical dimension of a line once heard on the grapevine? I love it, and do not understand why: "Denis Diderot died in the summer of 1784, over lunch, reaching for a serving of cherry compote."

N: I suppose the first thing we need to think about is: why is it incongruous? Think of the deaths of other philosophers we know of. Wittgenstein: tell them I had a good life. Hume: the same. You know, those are the send-offs we usually like to quote because there is something edifying about them. Someone reaching for the dessert—that breaks the pattern, that breaks the formula. One thing to think about here is that in the expected context of edification, a cherry compote brings any pretence of lofty sentiment down to earth.

V: Yes, to a taste of cherry.

N: Or go to the next step. Diderot died reaching for the dessert and, then, imagine that his brother asked, "What happened to the compote?"

V: …

N: That was what he cared about! Here we have staged a clash between the absolutely trivial with one of the greatest moments in life, especially for philosophers, supposedly a summary moment, and what issue comes up: who got the compote?

V: … Do you think that this response brings us full circle to Democritus and Heraclitus?

N: Yes, that is one way to armour us against the overwhelming

horror of the end of all things,
to reduce it to a matter of what
happened to the cherry compote.

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RICHARD SHUSTERMAN: LOOKING FORWARD LOOKING BACK – REFLECTING ON 30 YEARS OF PRAGMATIST AESTHETICS

T. J. Bonnet

While I was searching for PhD programs that might allow for studying American Pragmatist philosophy and aesthetics, but with a comparative edge that would encourage me to bring in potentially anything I wanted into the conversation, it was recommended to me that Richard Shusterman may be the best person to study with. That recommendation was profoundly correct. The impact of Richard Shusterman's aesthetic and philosophical writings has proven to be substantial and influential. His articulation of a distinctly pragmatist form of aesthetics with a focus on embodied subjectivity, alongside the emergence of the multidisciplinary project of somaesthetics, announced his work to be the next great innovation in pragmatist philosophy. Pragmatism is considered an original philosophy unique to the United States. It was first formulated by Charles Sanders Peirce (1839-1914) as a method to clarify statements by looking at their practical consequences. William James (1842-1910) broadened Peirce's analytical approach into a general philosophical attitude which looked to the 'cash value' of philosophy, demonstrating an overriding concern with practical action and the consequences and influences of our ideas. Finally, John Dewey (1859-1952) further expanded on the pragmatism of Peirce and James. Importantly, Dewey produced the first articulation of a pragmatist theory of aesthetics, *Art as Experience*, in 1934 (though he hesitated to call his theory 'pragmatist' for fear of misunderstanding). Shusterman will explain the influence of this work on his own thinking below, along with the personal input of another pragmatist philosopher, Richard Rorty (1931-2007).

This interview depicts how Shusterman came to formulate the ideas in his second book, *Pragmatist Aesthetics*, and how it looks forward to his work in somaesthetics. Somaesthetics is an original field of research which Shusterman often defines as 'the critical, meliorative study of the experience and use of one's body as a locus of sensory-aesthetic appreciation (*aisthesis*) and creative self-fashioning. It is, therefore, also devoted to the knowledge, discourses, practices, and bodily disciplines that structure such somatic care or can improve it' (2000, p. 267). While somaesthetics proper is a somewhat ancillary topic in this interview, the discussion covers core ideas that constitute the fundamental approach of somaesthetics, including philosophy as a way of life, the continuity between art and living, pluralism, and meliorism.

This interview with Shusterman, it turns out, was timely, coinciding with the Moholy-Nagy University of Art and Design's conference celebrating the thirtieth anniversary of *Pragmatist Aesthetics*' (1992) initial publication. For the reader unfamiliar with Shusterman's aesthetics, this interview will serve as an introduction to these ideas and how they mesh with his more recent projects. For those familiar with Shusterman's work, this interview will, hopefully, allow for discovering clarifications, expansions, or anecdotes previously unknown.

T.J. Bonnet: Previous interviewers have focused on your work in inaugurating the multi-disciplinary field of somaesthetics, the study of the lived body, or what you call the soma. But somaesthetics is predicated on the philosophical work you've done with pragmatist aesthetics, beginning with your book, Pragmatist Aesthetics *(2000, originally published 1992), which celebrated its thirtieth anniversary this year with a four-day conference at the MOME, the arts and design university of Budapest. The subtitle for that book is* Living Beauty, Rethinking Art. *I understand this subtitle was originally your main title for the book. What were you trying to express with that title, and how did you settle on* Pragmatist Aesthetics *as the main title?*

Richard Shusterman: You are right that my project of somaesthetics derived from my work in *Pragmatist Aesthetics*. It seemed to me a necessary consequence of key ideas in that book, which argued that the soma or lived, sentient, purposive body (with its multiple and transmodal sensorimotor capacities) is essential to the experience both of making and appreciating art and other aesthetic objects. If

we want to improve these forms of aesthetic experience that depend on the soma, one way to do so is to improve our somatic knowledge and skills by improving our somatic awareness. Hence, somaesthetics as a field of study. However, there was also another, though somewhat related, philosophical topic of my research that made somaesthetics seem important to me. This was my research on philosophy as an art of living that I treated in *Practicing Philosophy: Pragmatism and the Philosophical Life* (1997). Here again, the turn to somaesthetics seemed a natural consequence. Since one lives one's life through one's body, one can live it better (ceteris paribus) through better bodily skills and somatic awareness. This interest in philosophy as an aesthetic way of life (that I absorbed from philosophers as different as Kierkegaard, G.E. Moore, and Michel Foucault) was already present in *Pragmatist Aesthetics*, which is why the original title was *Living Beauty, Rethinking Art: A Pragmatist Aesthetics*, thus signalling that beauty was something to be lived – not just observed in museums – and that art and aesthetics should be reconceived more broadly to include the arts of living (fashion, culinary arts, *ars erotica* etc.).

My Blackwell editor, Stephan Chambers, however, suggested I reverse the titles. Through his shrewd marketing instincts and superior publishing knowledge, he convinced me that the main title I proposed, though attractively evocative, was far too vague to function successfully in the system of categories and cross-listings through which the book would be principally marketed, whereas the title 'Pragmatist Aesthetics' instead defined a recognizable yet intriguingly new philosophical genre derived from the established fields of pragmatism and aesthetics. Moreover, a generic title like 'Pragmatist Aesthetics' could build on the success of my recent Blackwell book *Analytic Aesthetics* (1989) by implying the existence of an exciting alternative that could challenge analytic philosophy of art and thus enrich aesthetics. I believe he was right, not only because of the title's efficiency for book catalogues of that time but also, presciently and now primarily for today's internet search engines (the likes of which did not exist in 1992). In any case, the book has done well with this title, but in some other languages, it also did well without it. The book appeared simultaneously in French

(published by Minuit) with the title *L'art à l'état vif: la pensée pragmatiste et l'esthétique Populaire* (2018), and in German it appeared as *Kunst Leben* (1994), but most of the book's 14 translations have 'Pragmatist Aesthetics' as the main title.

T.J. B: The first thing you do in the book is distinguish pragmatist aesthetics (primarily represented by John Dewey) from analytic aesthetics. You came from a background in analytic aesthetics. In general, what convinced you to back the aesthetics of Dewey, and how do you broadly characterize his aesthetic philosophy?

RS: What brought me to pragmatism, initially, was not Dewey but neopragmatist philosophy of language and interpretation in the writings of Richard Rorty and Joseph Margolis.[1] Interpretation was a key topic in my work in analytic aesthetics and literary theory, beginning with 'The Logic of Interpretation' (1978), which I published as a graduate student at Oxford. My interest in Dewey and his experience-focused theories came only in the late 1980s when, having moved to Philadelphia's Temple University (situated in the midst of a North Philly ghetto), I became fascinated with hip-hop culture and the democratic potential of popular art, as well as becoming more appreciative of the liberational somatic pleasures of dance. I found analytic aesthetics at that time too elitist and detached from the political and the embodied. I liked the democratic, experiential, embodied dimensions of Dewey's aesthetics. I did not like his style of argument, which I felt lacked the tightness and focus of analytic philosophy, and I found his views lacking on issues of interpretation, compared to what I found in neopragmatism (Rorty, Margolis, Stanley Fish) and analytic philosophy.

T.J. B: One central quality in Dewey that sticks out to me is what you call the 'continuity thesis.' Can you explain what that is?

RS: The key idea of continuity for Dewey's (2008, p. 16) aesthetics is that we should appreciate not only the difference but also the continuity between the aesthetic experience of the arts and ordinary experiences of life, or as he puts it, 'the continuity of esthetic experience with normal processes

[1] Shusterman recently published two papers reflecting on his engagements with Rorty and Margolis. See 'Pragmatist Philosophy for Our Times: Reviewing Rorty's Legacy' (2022) and 'Pragmatism and Interpretation: Radical, Relativistic, but not Unruly' (2022).

of living'. Aesthetic understanding must not forget that the roots of art and beauty lie in the 'basic vital functions,' 'the biological commonplaces' that man shares with 'bird and beast.' In buttressing this continuity of art and life, Dewey insists on the underlying continuity between a whole series of binary notions, whose long-assumed oppositional contrast has structured so much of aesthetics and philosophy more generally. In aesthetics: the fine arts versus the applied or practical arts, the high versus the popular arts, the spatial versus the temporal arts, the aesthetic in contrast both to the cognitive and to the practical, artists who create art versus the 'ordinary' people who appreciate art. With respect to philosophical binaries, more generally, Dewey argues for continuity between the alleged dichotomies of body and mind, material and ideal, thought and feeling, form and substance, culture and nature, self and world, subject and object, means and ends.

The idea of continuity is likewise important to other pragmatists. For example, Dewey's key concept of aesthetic experience, I have argued, draws heavily on William James' arguments for the unity of consciousness and the presence of continuities in experiences that appear to be unconnected, such as the sudden roar of thunder breaking the continuity of silence. For C.S. Peirce, the acknowledged founder of pragmatism, continuity was a key ontological principle, which he called synechism.[2]

T.J. B: And this connects to your critique of what you call the 'wrapper' model for a definition of art, correct?

RS: It can, in a way, be connected. My aim was to critique the then-current analytic obsession with trying to define art in terms of necessary and sufficient conditions that would precisely capture all but only objects that people consider art. That definitional goal was perfect coverage of art's extension but without clarifying why art is valued and how we can improve our understanding and experience of art. The point of my critically describing such attempts as 'wrapper definitions' was to suggest that, like food wraps, which simply present, contain, and conserve their object, these definitions do not really deepen our appreciation of art or improve art's practice. The meliorative, transformational aims

[2] Peirce explains this concept in his paper 'The Law of Mind' (1992). Also found in *CP* 6: 102-63.

of pragmatist aesthetics could not be satisfied with purely wrapper definitions.

T.J. B: The concern with continuity makes it seem that pragmatist aesthetics is dedicated to unity instead of difference.

RS: That would be drawing a wrong conclusion, false to my pragmatist pluralism. Dewey's one-sided dedication to extreme unity in aesthetic experience (namely, not only unity as coherence but unity of wholeness or completion) is one of the key places where I find his aesthetic theory flawed and his artistic sensibilities limited. He produced his masterpiece, *Art as Experience* (2008; originally published 1934), after the emergence of cubism, surrealism, and Dada, but pays no attention to them or their aesthetics of disunity, division, or shock. One reason I insisted on devoting a long chapter to rap music was to celebrate its aesthetics of sampling and fragmentation. For me, unity and difference are both important; indeed, they are conceptually related. Any meaningful aesthetic unity is a unity involving difference, a unification of different elements. Beauty itself has often been characterized as unity in variety. Unity and difference constitute an essential complementarity, something like night and day. Chapter 3 of *Pragmatist Aesthetics*, 'Organic Unity: Analysis and Deconstruction', focuses on this issue of unity and difference, relationality and individuality, by analysing the antithetical views of analytic philosophy and Hegelian-Nietzschean deconstruction before proposing a mediating pragmatist approach that recognizes both unity and difference, relations and individuals, as co-originary.

T.J. B: I'd like us to turn to interpretation, another area in aesthetics you've devoted a lot of thought and writing to. What is your pragmatist position regarding the interpretation of artworks? What's the goal of the interpretation?

RS: My pragmatist position on interpretation is pluralist, and I maintained a pragmatic pluralism regarding interpretation already as a young analytic philosopher, indeed as a graduate student. My very first essay on that topic, 'The Logic of Interpretation' (1978), which I mentioned earlier and which was nourished by my readings of Wittgenstein, Austin, and a host of literary critics (Samuel Johnson, Joseph Addison, Walter Pater, T.S. Eliot, F.R. Leavis), argued that there was no single valid logic of

interpretation. Instead, there were a number of different language games of interpretation, having different logics, employing different forms of reasoning, involving different contexts and traditions, and pursuing different interpretive aims, not all of which were focused on truth or knowledge. Some practices instead privileged aesthetic enhancement or maximizing meaning, emotive force, or pleasure.
I later rearticulated this position while responding to various critiques of my interpretive theory in a chapter of my book *Surface and Depth* (2002) that I titled 'Logics of Interpretation' in order to highlight its pluralist message. So, to answer your question about the goal of interpretation, my view is that if one looks closely at the history of interpretive practice in literary and art criticism, one sees more than one goal implicit in the conventional idea that the goal of interpretation is the meaning of the work. One can immediately ask whether this meaning is the author's intended meaning (and at what stage in or after her composition of the work) or is it the (possibly changing) meaning of the poem's words or perhaps the meaning the work has for the reader or the meaning endorsed by the consensus of an interpretive community. Moreover, I also caution against viewing an artwork's meaning as a sort of object already existing somewhere, fixed and ready to be revealed. Instead, I would follow the Wittgenstein idea that meaning is simply the correlate of understanding the work; therefore, it is better to describe interpretation as making sense of the work so that it is properly understood rather than as revealing the work's 'true' meaning. I elaborate the details of this pragmatist theory of interpretation in chapter 4 of *Pragmatist Aesthetics*, while chapter 5 of that book argues for the importance of understandings beneath the level of interpretation. Such understandings guide interpretive practice but also, more broadly, guide our everyday perception and conduct of life. Some of these understandings that exist beneath the level of explicit interpreting are nondiscursive understandings. I focus on the importance of these noninterpretive and nondiscursive experiences in a French-language book significantly titled *Sous l'interprétation* (1994). The existence and role of such understandings helped bring me to a greater appreciation of immediate, non-reflective somatic understandings that then led me to somaesthetics, which recognizes not only the crucial role of non-reflective somatic consciousness and

action but also the value of critical somatic reflection.

T.J. B: What we have been talking about is getting us to perhaps the part of your work that has received the most criticism, which is your defence of popular art and specific forms of music like rap, rock'n'roll and country musicals. Why does popular art need to be defended?

RS: To be frank and blunt, I don't think that today it needs a defence. But the situation was different in the late 1980s when I began working on the aesthetics of popular music, particularly hip-hop. Rap music was then associated with criminality, was not eligible for Grammy consideration, and was under various forms of surveillance and repression. In 1991, when I first published 'Form and Funk: The Aesthetic Challenge of Popular Art' and 'The Fine Art of Rap', I had to face the very influential and vehement arguments against the aesthetic validity of popular art or even against the very idea of a popular aesthetic; such arguments dominated academic discourse. The arguments articulated by Adorno and Horkheimer[3] from critical theory, and Pierre Bourdieu from social theory held sway in progressive philosophical circles, while conservative elitist thinkers like Alan Bloom similarly denigrated popular art (particularly popular music).

I'm very happy that today's young scholars and students do not remember those times when popular art and everyday aesthetics were not welcome in academic seminars and scholarly publications. At that time, popular art needed a defence of its aesthetic potential, and it is important to recall here that my defence of popular art has always been a *melioristic* rather than an exonerating one. It recognizes popular art's flaws and abuses, but also its merits and potential. The meliorist position holds that popular art should be improved because it leaves much to be desired, but that it can be improved because it can and often does achieve real aesthetic merit and serve worthy social goals. Moreover, meliorism insists that if popular art is simply dismissed as unworthy of aesthetic nurturing, it will be more vulnerable to degeneracy and exploitation by the crudest market forces. This meliorism means that popular art deserves serious critical study to expose its flaws as well as its merits. Thanks

[3] For more on Shusterman's engagements with critical theory, see 'Pragmatist Aesthetics and Critical Theory: A Personal Perspective on a Continuing Dialogue' (2022).

to the progressive democratization of the academy, the battle for popular art's legitimacy has been won, and there is now considerable critical aesthetic attention devoted to popular art. *Pragmatist Aesthetics* was an early contributor to that winning battle, and that victory is one reason why, after *Performing Live* (2000), I've not written much about popular art. I still believe it needs critical attention, but there are many people doing that, so I've turned my attention to other aesthetic topics beyond the fine arts, such as somaesthetics, fashion, gastronomy, and ars erotica. There is an understandable tendency to associate these practices with the popular arts because they are obviously not part of the traditional pantheon of high art or fine art, even though some forms of these practices display aspects of elitist refinement that seem remote from the popular when that term is construed in terms of 'the common' or 'the ordinary.'[4] I have noted in my work the vagueness and ambiguity of the term 'popular', but there was no good way to avoid using it in debates about popular culture.

T.J. B: I think it's safe to say you're interested in pushing aesthetics into new and even controversial areas. In 2021, you published a well-researched book on the arts of sex called Ars Erotica: Sex and Somaesthetics in the Classical Arts of Love*. Do you see your defence of the aesthetic value of ars erotica to be continuous with your work with popular art?*

RS: My aim in philosophical writing, including aesthetics, is to be helpful and honest, not to be controversial or provocative. But some ways of trying to be helpful and honest can result in controversy. One way of being helpful is to explore topics that have been largely neglected, but that seem likely to reward more attention. One way to be honest is to write about what one existentially cares about. When I began exploring the aesthetics of rap music, it was a neglected topic that I also cared about. I was deeply absorbed in listening to the music and discussing it with other fans; I went to rap concerts and even had a column in a North Philly rap fanzine, where I bore the moniker of 'Rich Frosted.' When I began to work on somaesthetics, the body was a largely neglected topic in Anglo-American

[4] An Italian collection of Shusterman's essays, edited by Stefano Marino, bears the title *Esperienza estetica e arti popolari: Prospettive somaesthetitiche sulla teoriae la pratica* (2023).

philosophy. Analytic philosophy's linguistic turn resulted in a disregard for nondiscursive experience, while contemporary pragmatism's most influential philosopher, Richard Rorty, rejected the nonlinguistic as totally irrelevant and detrimental to philosophy. So, the project of somaesthetics was designed to explore how attention to somatic experience can be useful for philosophy, and especially useful when one considers philosophy as more than a collection of texts but rather as an art of living. I should add that my turn from analytic to pragmatist aesthetics can also be explained as partly deriving from the same aim of being helpful by treating a relatively neglected topic or orientation. In the 1980s, analytic aesthetics was blessed with a host of distinguished senior philosophers: Danto and Goodman, Beardsley and Dickie, Scruton, Urmson, and Margolis. In addition, there was a cohort of very talented younger figures, such as Walton, Carroll, and Levinson, slightly older than I was. The aesthetics of pragmatism, on the other hand, was largely neglected. Dewey's aesthetics (which he adamantly refused to consider pragmatist) had been eclipsed as old-fashioned, and so pragmatism needed a contemporary aesthetic theory that was not afraid to call itself pragmatist aesthetics.

To return to the book referenced in your question, my philosophical exploration of *ars erotica* similarly sought to be helpful by exploring a subject whose aesthetic dimensions philosophy has traditionally ignored. Roger Scruton's instructive book on *Sexual Desire* (1987) might seem a rare contemporary exception, but it focuses more on the moral dimension of sex and deploys analytic methodology, whereas my *ars erotica* is genealogical in its approach and pragmatist in orientation. When I began thinking philosophically about *ars erotica* (because it was an obvious topic for somaesthetic inquiry), I was surprised and disappointed that the pragmatist tradition completely neglected it. This was especially disappointing because pragmatism, with its Darwinian background, melioristic thrust, and concern for the practical problems of men and women, has every reason to treat the topic of sex in a substantive and detailed way. After writing *Ars Erotica*, I explained the reasons for pragmatism's neglect of this topic in an article on 'Pragmatism and Sex: An Unfulfilled Connection' (2021).

To answer, finally, your question. In one way, my work on the aes-

thetics of *ars erotica* is continuous with my defence of the aesthetic value of popular art: in both cases, there is an attempt to explore and thus redeem the aesthetic value of practices whose aesthetic dimension has been denied or dismissed. However, in another way, the treatment of *ars erotica* in my book is discontinuous with popular culture because the texts I study in that book belong essentially to upper-class culture. These texts, stretching from ancient Greece to the Renaissance, were written by and for the elite of those patriarchal cultures, which essentially meant they were written by upper-class, cultured men and for the pleasure and power of other such privileged men. Sexism and misogyny are rampant in these texts (implicitly when not explicitly). This meant that much of the book's labour involves exploring what aspects of (and to what extent) those aesthetic erotic theories and practices are nonetheless ethically acceptable and perhaps even potentially ennobling so that the power of desiring love (i.e. eros) could perhaps serve us today as a positive engine for ethical and aesthetic fulfilment through pleasurable, meaningful interpersonal and social harmony. A study of the influential past errors and oppressive misdirections in the history of the aesthetics of erotic love might also be helpful in navigating the uncertain, turbulent waters of sexual relations in contemporary culture with its promising openness to pluralism and transformation in gender identity.[5]

T.J. B: Through this interview, we have been able to touch on a handful of key ideas in Pragmatist Aesthetics*, its continuities with Shusterman's earlier work in analytic philosophy, and what would become his subsequent projects. Shusterman's always lucid and detailed answers to my questions are productive. I deliberately feigned the false idea that his pragmatist aesthetics insists one-sidedly on unity in order to elicit his firm*

[5] Shusterman's Ars Erotica was the focus of two substantial print symposia. The first was in *Foucault Studies*, 31 (December 2021) and the second in the philosophical journal *Eidos.* (Volume 5: No. 4/2021). The full collection of these two sets of papers, including Shusterman's responses, can be accessed, respectively, at https://rauli.cbs.dk/index.php/foucault-studies/issue/view/845 and https://eidos.uw.edu.pl/issue-4-2021/. In a recent paper, Shusterman uses the poetry and prose of Rilke to explore the aesthetics of sex and transgender identity. See 'Self-Transformation as Trans-formation: Rilke on Gender in the Art of Living' (2023).

response that '[u]nity and difference constitute an essential complementarity, something like night and day.' That false conclusion and the charge of hedonism have been recurring misconceptions in the scholarly literature about his pragmatist aesthetics generally.[6] *In addition, questions I assumed would get modest and direct responses were expanded on by Shusterman in ways unexpected, yet perfectly fitting. My indifferent use of the word 'controversial' in my last question led to a few remarks on how Shusterman does his philosophical writing, namely 'to be helpful and honest, not to be controversial or provocative.' But, as he says, sometimes, despite one's intentions, crossing boundaries strikes others as provocation.*[7] *Clearly, however, Shusterman's way is not that of the provocateur or contrarian. Instead, it is 'nomadic', as a French interviewer titled him (Droit 2007). Even in this brief interview, that nomadic quality can be found in how we've, indeed, looked backward and forward from* Pragmatist Aesthetics.

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[6] See the 'Introduction to the Second Edition' in *Pragmatist Aesthetics*. I address these and other related misunderstandings in my article, 'Addressing Common Misunderstandings of Somaesthetics' (2023).

[7] Shusterman's latest book, *Philosophy and the Art of Writing* (2022), contains more information on philosophy and writing.

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