MORAL GROWTH THROUGH ART

The Cognitive and Moral Value of Perspectives

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Submitted to Central European University - Private University
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In partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of Masters of Arts

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Vienna, Austria
2024

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INTRODUCTION

It is and has been a common phenomenon in education and society at large to presuppose that moral education through the arts is not only possible but perhaps even necessary. We value the arts not only for their cultural significance or historical worth but for an implicit sense of pedagogical importance as well, specifically as a means for moral learning. However, in recent times, it is not uncommon to find a range of issues that bring a challenge to the common assumptions about the value of art as pedagogical and morally relevant such as the supposed death and hence banality of the classics, the failure of the humanities to have humanized us, the massification and oversaturation of the artforms, among others. Although these are in some sense modern re-evaluations about the role of the arts, the questions that these issues inspire are rather a resurfacing of perennial problems regarding the value of art in general. This line of questioning comprises reflections about the relationship between art and morality, art and knowledge, and the value of the arts[1] in general.

Considering the relationship between knowledge and morality in art, my line of inquiry in the following dissertation, raised in the broadest formulation possible, can be summarized as: "Can art offer significant cognitive content that can potentially contribute to moral development?" Assuming that moral growth requires the acquisition of some sort of substantially relevant knowledge that can be taken as morally relevant, answering this question in the affirmative would require delving into two aspects of the nature of art: the first being whether or not artistic engagement provides a kind of knowledge, further delving into what kind

[1] When referring to the arts I'm exclusively referring to representational art forms.

of knowledge is available, and secondly that this possible knowledge is morally relevant and substantially present in artistic form.

What appeared to be a fairly straightforward and perhaps uncontroversial assertion about the nature of art thus finds a couple of key objections which can be raised based off of the two aspects outlined previously: against the knowledge claims of artistic engagement, some authors (chief among them Jerome Stolnitz) pose that artistic cognition is trivial since there is very little found in art in terms of actual verifiable and ascertainable knowledge and the knowledge that is found can be attained through other more straightforward means and methods such as science, history, or simple verifiable experience; secondly, against the moral relevance of such knowledge, if there is any, is the formalist's claims of the moral irrelevance of art in aesthetic engagement, that is that artistic engagement is primarily concerned with its aesthetic components and can be engaged without moral considerations coming into play, making a clear separation between the formal elements of an artwork and its content.

The first objection concerns a discussion of cognitivism and the difficulty of defining what kind of knowledge art purportedly provides. I take cognitivism to be what James Harold terms weak cognitivism, that is, the kind of cognitivism about art that proposes that "the kind of knowledge we can acquire from literature is not, or at least not centrally, a kind of propositional knowledge" (2015, p.6) and hence my strategy against the triviality objections will be by way of proposing non-propositional practical knowledge as the object of artistic cognition.[2] The main argument for the cognitive triviality of art is based on the assumption that

[2] A clarification is due: in claiming that artistic knowledge is non-propositional practical knowledge, I do not claim that this is the only form of knowledge gained from art, but I do argue that it is the one that is most prominent and relevant when engaging the arts and more importantly, that it is this kind of knowledge that helps the cognitivist to avoid objections of triviality.

artistic knowledge must be akin to propositional knowledge. Its main proponent is Stolnitz who proposes that artistic cognition can be trivialized by what can be understood as a problem with paraphrasing the knowledge garnered through artistic engagement. The argument essentially boils down to the fact that the noetic content of an artwork is highly elusive and that it is a nearly impossible task to narrow it down to something akin to a proposition. Furthermore, even if it were possible to derive it and propose it as a proposition by someone authoritatively claiming something along the lines of "x artwork gives us propositional knowledge claim y", i.e. the *Iliad* gives us the proposition "pride goes before a fall", or even better, "by reading the *Iliad*, the reader gains the knowledge that pride goes before the fall", then there would be no need to engage with the artwork at all since we could easily glean the knowledge it affords through simpler, more straightforward means, like being acquainted with a set of moral maxims or something of the sort.

The second objection, specific to the moral value of artistic cognition, regards a broader discussion of the moral relevance of art, namely a discussion between formalist theories of art and moralist theories, in which the formalists assume that the formal elements of artworks with clearly identifiable moral stances remain somehow independent of content and that the aesthetic experience is autonomous of such considerations of content. My theory will defend a moralist position by way of proposing that our cognitive engagement with the moral content of the artwork is inextricably tied to its formal elements by way of perspectives or points of view which are manifested formally and cannot be hence divorced from the content they present, at least when being cognitively engaged with as knowledge. In the case that art does provide knowledge and that this knowledge is relevantly moral, as I will set out to argue, then my stance on the kind of knowledge provided by art will address the discussion of the moral importance of art, taking a moralist stance against the thesis of the formalist, that is that morality is disconnected from aesthetic experience and can be dismissed as secondary at least in valuations

of artistic experience. The cognitive engagement with art precludes this if it is to make sense of the kind of knowledge we gain.

Within this context of the wider debate of art's relation to morality, I propose that the particularity of the cognitive engagement with art through perspectives can carry the weight of the argument in the direction of moralism, perspectives being "an open-ended disposition to characterize: to encounter, interpret, and respond to some parts of the world in a certain way" (Camp, 2019, p. 24). If art is to be cognitively rich enough it is because of its role as a purveyor of perspectives that are conducive to non-propositional practical knowledge or know-how knowledge. I will further argue that these perspectives are tied to both content and form and are not solely dependent on one or the other. As a consequence, judgments about the value of art, at least in cognitive terms, are not only focused on its aesthetic virtues and vices but on moral ones as well.

Given the assumption that moral growth acquired through the arts requires a morally relevant kind of artistic knowledge, if there is no such thing discernible in an artwork then there is no moral relevance to be held by the artwork, and any kind of moral content that is distilled from it is secondary and can be dispensed of when considering its overall value. This could point to a more formalist analysis of artistic experience. However, if the antithesis is affirmed and there is indeed a kind of artistic knowledge, clearly discernible, then this defense of cognitivism could also by consequence defend the moralist's position by proposing that art is in fact morally relevant given that the kind of knowledge it provides is through perspectives and these are conducive to morally charged know-how knowledge. The main issue will then be defending that perspectives are substantial instances of knowledge that can provide the possibility for moral growth.

Clearly stated, my positive proposal is the following: Art provides perspectives—"open-ended ways of characterizing the world" (cf. Camp, 2019, p. 24)—that audiences engage with to interpret their own experiences. Through these perspectives, the audience learns to engage with the world, adopting new viewpoints for understanding. These perspectives are deeply relevant to moral learning, offering salient information crucial to moral judgment, such as the characteristics of individuals, the significance of contextual elements, and the consequences of actions. Given that these are the kinds of cues gained, the learning done via the arts does not require a strict endorsement of the perspectives presented; even morally deviant perspectives are useful, as they provide information conducive to moral learning and can be relevant for moral judgment.

This account of artistic knowledge provides a rich cognitive picture for the cognitivist to defend his position without having to adopt a restricted propositional vision of knowledge acquisition through artistic engagement since this broader account of knowledge allows for the acquisition of substantial know-how knowledge relevant to moral practice. Furthermore, a second line of argumentation is that due to the nature of perspectives, the manifestation of these requires not only the content of an artwork but the formal representation of that content. This account of knowledge acquired through perspectives will be the framework within which we can sidestep the objections of cognitive triviality based on propositional forms of knowledge in art and can additionally give an optimal account of moralism, one "that recognizes an inherent link between what is represented artistically and moral understanding" (Kieran, 1996, p. 337), since what is represented artistically (the manifestation of the content through the form) can be optimally linked to perspectives and these to moral understanding and the possibility for moral growth through aesthetic experience.

The thesis is divided into four parts. The first part is dedicated to expounding on the cognitive problem, that is whether or not artistic knowledge is strictly propositional, proposing

that an optimal account of knowledge gained through artistic engagement requires a broader account than a strictly propositional one to also include non-propositional practical knowledge. The second part examines the moral relevance of artistic knowledge and delves into the need for a broader account of knowledge in order to make sense of the relationship between form and content in artworks pointing to perspectives as a possible solution for an integrated vision of both in their role of becoming conducive to know-how knowledge. The third part will suggest non-propositional practical knowledge through perspectives as the object of artistic cognition. In doing so, I will defend that perspectives in art involve not only the content of an artwork but the form it is expressed through since it is precisely this manifest form that affords it its unique nature (i.e.: the way that a story is told does not only serve as a vehicle for moral content, but it is an essential part of it: the way the plot is presented, the narrative elements that highlight specific ways of interpreting the values latent in a story). The fourth part will be focused on artistic knowledge as a route to moral understanding. Thus, indirectly contributing to the fuller discussion of art's relation to morality, positing moralism by asserting that if the knowledge we gain from artworks is moral in nature, the moral value of an artwork has a direct influence on its aesthetic value.

CHAPTER 1: THE COGNITIVE TRIVIALITY OF ART AND THE PROBLEM OF PARAPHRASE

A brief overview of cognitivism will help determine the possible knowledge claims made by the cognitivist and narrow down which ones are problematic and open to the scrutiny of the defenders of cognitive triviality. Cognitivism about artistic value is the idea that the value of an artwork "does partially reside in knowledge" (Lemarque, 2019, p. 326). As a consequence, the cognitivist proposes that there are truths learned through engaging with the arts and that these are in good part what gives value to artistic engagement, the possibility of knowledge acquisition.[3] As Lemarque proposes, "any defense of the view that art can teach or impart knowledge must appeal to the truths learnt or imparted" (2019, p. 327), which is why a good starting point is defining the parameters of what account of knowledge provides an optimal explanation of the noetic takeaways of artistic engagement, that is what kind of knowledge we gain through art. A first requirement is that it must be broad enough to stay clear from narrow conceptions of "artistic knowledge" such as a merely propositional account, for example. This point will be laid out in a later part of this chapter since, as I will go on to present, Stolnitz's own objections to cognitivism are built around this kind of conception of knowledge which raises a strong set of problems for the cognitivist position, namely, the difficulty in ascertaining what exact bits of propositional knowledge an artwork provides since these are in a constant state of interpretation, and the challenge that the problem of paraphrase presents, reducing the propositional knowledge gained through the arts to a triviality on account of it being more easily accessible through paraphrase.

[3] Of course, it would be an unusual assertion with regard to such things as sculpture, architecture, or even music, which is why cognitivism has a more central focus on art forms with representational or narrative characteristics.

There are many conceptions of knowledge that the cognitivist may invoke to propose what it is that art provides such as propositional, which is the case of the cognitivism that Stolnitz poses his arguments against. Given that an analysis can be made in terms of artistic knowledge being posited as propositional, it is a viable and perhaps fruitful albeit heavily contested option when exploring cognitivism. In my proposal, a better cognitivist strategy requires a broader conception of knowledge than one that is narrowly presented as propositional or reducible to something along the lines of a fact. Perhaps a better account of artistic knowledge could be achieved by positing that we gain knowledge other than propositional, not limited to a "know that" type but something more akin to "know-how", or "non-propositional practical knowledge" (Farkas, 2018, p. 5). This will be explored in further detail as the chapter goes on, but for now, the central desideratum is an account that allows for a richer cognitive achievement than "knowing that" can provide.

Supposing a narrow account of artistic knowledge as propositional, the nature of the knowledge-acquisition claims that could be made about something typified as artistic knowledge can become quite elusive. A due clarification though is that the denial of artistic knowledge is not an assertion of an untenable position along the lines of proposing that through engaging the arts we learn nothing or gain any sort of knowledge. We can gain knowledge about nautical knots if we read *Moby Dick* for example, or details of the imperial style of Napoleon through Ingres's *Napoleon on his Imperial Throne*. The desired knowledge claims of the arts are more ambitious than an instrumental or accidental account of art providing mere historical, cultural, or anthropological knowledge. The denial of artistic knowledge is the denial of any unique status of the knowledge gained through engaging the arts such as knowledge in other fields like science which obtains its knowledge through a unique method and with its own scope, or historical facts, or even, as Stolnitz puts it, "garden variety truths" (1992, p. 196). The claim of triviality suggests that any knowledge gained from art can be obtained through other,

more reliable, and substantial means. If this is the case, what makes the arts capable of providing a uniquely substantial kind of knowledge, or one that cannot be more easily accessed through other methods?

The main issue is that a claim about the sui generis nature of artistic truth sounds too loose when considering its counterparts. Stolnitz posits that artistic truths are often seen as "too acute and suggestive, perhaps too tremulous, to be caught in the grosser nets of science, history, or even garden variety experience" (1992, p. 192). Science has rigor to it, history is based on facticity, garden variety experience, or everyday observations, have easily accessed corroboration, but the alleged truths of the arts are considered lofty and harder to access to the point of aloofness. At the same time, they do not require a faith-like adherence. Stolnitz differentiates them from religious truth-claims in that they are “less doctrinaire, less parochial—freer” (ibid.). So we have an intermediate kind of truth, not rigorous enough to exact the same demands that scientific inquiry posits, but at the same time not belief-based with a systematic adherence to one's beliefs about artistic truths. The knowledge claims of artistic engagement are therefore too shaky, and not substantial enough to be relevant.

A plausible option is something akin to psychological truths, especially if we want to regard artistic knowledge as relevantly moral. It is helpful to posit these truths in this way, as lessons perhaps about the nature of our desires and motivations, our actions, and the consequences of those actions. These claims are to be somehow universal and applicable to something as vague as “the human condition” if they are to be regarded as knowledge that is unique and independent from other truths gained through the arts. For example, one could argue that the Iliad’s view on the human condition provides valuable insight into the beliefs and social norms of early Greek society and culture or even the psychology of the ancient Greek warrior, but again these knowledge claims would be sociological or historical or even tangentially psychological, not necessarily and uniquely artistic, but a claim that the Illiad gives us the truth

of “pride goeth before the fall" would be, under this pretense, a universal truth about the human condition. This, of course, seems too vague and too simple, giving us the two main problems with this account: first the herculean task of pinpointing the truths presented in an artwork, and second holding that artistic knowledge is substantial enough to allow for actual knowledge acquisition, and not be better to access through other means, such as simple paraphrase, to the point that engaging with art becomes cognitively trivial.

1.1 The Accessibility of Artistic Knowledge

What certainty does the audience have of the truths of an artwork? Not so many if we consider that even avid scholars of the arts often diverge in interpretations of what a work is about or what its strongest takeaways are. Furthermore, it seems like a very impoverished vision of knowledge if the truths acquired through art result in conflicting interpretations when the supposed significance is nonetheless supposedly universal. This already presents the challenge of finding in a convincing manner what the truths gained are. On whose authority are these knowledge claims correct? It's hard to believe that something that claims to be universal and hence somewhat relevant and accessible to all given that it is about human nature or the human condition of which we are a part could be so vaguely construed as to be up for debate.

Adding to the challenge, interpretations themselves are hard to come by. Stolnitz gives as an example the form of the tragedy in which the familiar takeaway could be stated as "his hybris destroy the tragic hero" (1992, p. 194). He then asks who the tragic hero is and what of him are we to take away. Are we to say that the knowledge gained is unique if the definitions are as blurry as the tragic hero is "a great man in history, not wholly evil, who is suddenly brought low" (Ibid.). This is too vague and not necessarily tied to art, here we could place a huge variety of historical figures: Cesar, Napoleon, Churchill, etc. And what of hybris? Are we to attribute only this to the downfall of a "tragic hero"? What of the myriad of other causes and

circumstances that affected the outcome of their demise? It all seems too accidental, perhaps too banal to be substantial enough to constitute knowledge.

If we settle for such vague explanations of things, then there is very little in the form of knowledge that we can actually ascertain from artistic engagement. Stolnitz gives a cynical review of such knowledge claims: "For such rewards, who needs great art?" (1992, p. 195). The truths we would be trying to gain in knowledge are better accessed through actual experience or factual examination since we find greater and more substantial evidence for these selfsame "truths about the great world in the great world" (p. 196). Art, as the fiction that it is, does not provide good enough evidence to back up its claims, or at least not as good as we could find through simple experience and confirmation. Unevidenced, vague, and hard to define, these issues, in Stolnitz's view, leave artistic knowledge depleted and relegated to triviality and one that is hardly accessible in a trustworthy way at that.

1.2 The Problem of Paraphrase

As if that was not enough, Stolnitz pursues the challenge even further. Assuming that artistic knowledge is accessible and could be easily ascertained and expressed through appropriate interpretation, for example, if we agreed that art gave us moral maxims or something of the sort, derivable from the narrative and easily posited as a lesson to be learned from the happenings of the work, why would need the work in the first place? Can we not simply give out the maxims proposed and perhaps as a form of evidence, give firmer grounding on factual evidence than fiction?

Positing that the truth presented could have been attained otherwise, leaves the arts with no claim of being substantially relevant enough to acquire knowledge in a way particular to the

arts. If we could paraphrase the full extent of the morals of a story, its supposed psychological richness, and its claims about the human condition, then there is no justification for going through the trouble of rendering it vague and obfuscated through artistic expression. After all, we believe the artist to be expressing truths based on his knowledge and experience, but it is not "by virtue of such knowledge that he is an artist" (Stolnitz, 1992, p. 198). There is no apparent reason for an obfuscation of knowledge if knowledge is what can be achieved through art as well.

Even in cases where an audience has been awakened or enlightened in some relevant sense to a truth about the world through engagement with an artwork, “the fiction [is] not enough. The fiction [has] to be shown to be true” (Stolnitz, 1992, p. 197). Such is the case in an example provided by Stolnitz, that of *Tom’s Cabin*, which by way of depicting slavery to a pre-civil war American audience, had the effect of perhaps an awakening to moral reflection on the subject matter and the conscientization of the troubles of the American enslaved people, but it wasn't truly effective until Beecher Stowe published the documentation confirming the facts upon which the novel was based. The knowledge was already available for moral reflection and decision-making to take place before the fiction appeared, and even after it did appear it required a further awareness of the facts of the matter to truly persuade and make a difference.

The problem of paraphrase boils down to a rejection of the particular nature of artistic knowledge, that is whether or not it is substantive enough to present truths on its own, without an easier more straightforward way of acquiring them. Granted that artistic knowledge is not immediately banal on account of the difficulty of ascertaining it, it does not have a strong enough cognitive substance on its own, and the truths or knowledge it can present are simply better left to their respective sources of knowledge transmission if of course one is to defend that artistic knowledge specifically presents something substatital enough to gain when we interact with the arts. Artistic engagement may have various other benefits and it may grant

other kinds of values, but substantially rich knowledge, on this account, is not one of those goods.

1.3 The Cognitive Triviality of Propositional Knowledge in the Arts

These two main problems for artistic knowledge constitute a strong objection to a cognitivist about art that holds to a narrow conception of knowledge, the question is if they present a challenge to a broader account. Stolnitz, when referring to knowledge, seems to have a very narrow conception himself. He begins by comparing artistic truths to scientific ones, specifically by requiring that the former be as "beyond dispute" as the latter, speaking of the scientific method as a clear and firm way with which the sciences arrive at their truths. Then he further compares it to religion, since perhaps artistic knowledge shouldn't be "subject to the same criteria as are satisfied by such prosaic truths as the inverse square law and the date of Cesar's assassination" (Stolnitz, 1992, p.192), but even in this comparison he demands that the arts give recognizable truth-claims, objective propositions that explain the belief state of the religious person. He is of course assuming that artistic knowledge be strictly a kind derived from propositional kinds of truth and to the cognitivist's chagrin "in propositional terms the best they can come up with are usually generalities about human nature of a numbingly banal kind" (Lamarque, 2006, p. 328).

One of the desiderata for Stolnitz is that artistic knowledge builds a body of knowledge, a set of "logically related statements" that can construct a theory built upon "substantial nodes of knowledge" that confirm each other and provide evidence for each other such as in the sciences or even religious dogmatism (cf. Stolnitz, 1992, p. 197). What he is reaching for here is a series of "know that" premises that build on each other and can hold a cohesive body of knowledge. On the individual level, that is, on the building blocks of this body of knowledge, Stolnitz wants to be able to say about art something along the lines of "the reader of the Iliad

knows that pride goes before the fall." Clearly what he wants is to be able to extract propositional knowledge from artistic engagement, but artistic propositions run into the problems outlined previously, they must be evidenced, clear, and well-defined in order to be properly ascertained and they must not be achieved through other bodies of knowledge but be rather relevantly and uniquely artistic, which they are not, as has been argued.

The question then that could potentially lead the cognitivist out of this difficult scenario, not as a copout but as a serious proposal due to the reductive nature of Stolnitz's critique, is: does artistic knowledge have to be necessarily propositional knowledge and could there not be a better positive proposal with a broader account of knowledge which could account for the cognitive takeaways of artistic engagement? The cognitivist then needs a broader account of knowledge to hold his position and stay clear from these critiques. It is in this instance that we can propose non-propositional practical knowledge or know-how knowledge as an alternative to supplant the cognitivist claim. To do so there must be an accompanying theory about the cognitive substance of the artwork that allows for such knowledge to be gained. As I will propose in a further section, this is the task of perspectives in art. The cognitive affordances of a perspectival view of the object of artistic knowledge allow for the kind of knowledge termed know-how knowledge with this know-how being of moral relevance. More on this will be given in a further section.

With this broader account of artistic knowledge, there is no need for the cognitivist to be worried about Stolnitz's claims. Artistic knowledge can be too open to interpretation and perhaps remain vague and undefined if seen as providing propositions regarding the artwork itself, but if the takeaway is rather practical knowledge, one that "involves emotional as well as intellectual activity" and that "gives a certain type of priority to the perception of particular people and situations, rather than to abstract rules" (Freeland, 1997, p. 20), then with perspectives in art providing precisely the perception of particular people and situations through

the fiction of their proposals, the gain is much broader than a set of vague propositions or abstract rules. There is no need for a precise account of these, no need for a description of the maxims acquired to still validate the cognitive import of artistic knowledge. What once appeared vague as knowledge of the human condition, now makes sense as precisely the knowledge of the experience of particular people and situations even if fictional, that are relevant to the way we reflect and gain practical wisdom, that is through experience and observation. The artwork gives these vicarious experiences and observations about what it means for someone to be in a certain set of circumstances, of conundrums and ethical dilemmas or even simple situations in life, and posit what it would mean to act or react in certain ways, view the consequences of such actions and call to attention certain details of diverse viewpoints and worldviews in reference to those actions.

Additionally, the problem of paraphrase and the consequent lack of particular relevance of artistic knowledge through a propositional view has no hold for a non-propositional view, since as an imparter of practical know-how, art is both quantitatively and qualitatively substantive. The sheer volume of vicarious experience accessible through the arts gives one the opportunity for knowledge of human action devoid of real tragedy, or actual access to particular situations or viewpoints that otherwise would remain untapped or hardly accessible. Of course, a quantitative difference would not be enough to dispel the problem of paraphrase, since technically the knowledge would be accessible through other means and hence only be accidentally artistic, but accompanying this weak sense of relevance, artistic knowledge is qualitatively unique as the way that its aesthetic qualities make the content shine through allows for a sense of engagement very different than other forms of knowledge acquisition. The aesthetic experience is phenomenologically unique, and it takes but honest self-reflection of our meaningful interactions with art to know that its attractiveness is unique and powerful.

In summary, a know-how view of knowledge bodes much better for the cognitivist than the know-that variety. A due clarification though is that art is not know-how in the sense of a manual or guide such that it can be again reduced to a series of propositions about its practical gains. In this sense, my claim is not that it's an explicit know-how either, one that we immediately acquire upon engagement such as would be a book on practical knowledge of the usage of a certain device or a compendium on the inner workings of an electric motor. Artistic knowledge is rather a tacit know-how, one that affects practical reason and drives our reflection, motivation, affects, and action, and that carries with it the very real possibility of affecting our way of carrying out this knowledge in cases that require relevant action of the sort that engaging with the arts has provided.

CHAPTER 2: MORALITY IN ART: A COGNITIVE PROBLEM?

As presented in the previous section, a narrow conception of knowledge is problematic for a strictly propositional cognitivist position, but it also presents a challenge for claims of moral relevance about art, namely that if an artwork is to present substantial knowledge claims it cannot be through content alone. Beyond a broader conception of knowledge granted by the arts being a strategy to strengthen the cognitivist position in the face of the previously stated objections, any sort of claim of the moral or pedagogical relevance of art requires a broader conception of knowledge gained as well. Again, we can start with "the central and paradigmatic form of knowledge" (Farkas, 2018, p.1) which is propositional knowledge, the kind of knowledge that is often expressed with sentences such as “S knows that P”.

Prima facie, artistic engagement isn’t carried out as an analysis of moral propositions, literature is not engaged as are how-to manuals or self-help guides with clear step-by-step sets of easily deductible or clearly outlined propositions. In fact, overtly moralizing works are often derided as lesser on account of their lack of artistry, being likened to propaganda of sorts and often eschewed from the echelons of great art. Any attempt to distill an artwork to the moral laws it is governed by would be gerrymandering the totality of the work, slicing up through the beauty of its intricacies and the lacework of its moral dilemmas and challenges. Even if the Muse is compelled to sing about the pride of Achilles in the Iliad, the story cannot be merely distilled to a proposition of the sort "pride goeth before the fall" (Stolnitz, 1992, p. 195) meaning that the person who reads the Iliad should obtain the knowledge that pride goes before the fall as exemplified by Achilles. But then, what of the lust of Paris, the wrath of Hector, or the envy of Agamemnon? Even if these were all considered, no set of propositions would be enough to express the intricate nature of the literal moral of the story, the depth of vision that is being

presented, and most of all the richness of the aesthetic experience of every reader that has come to understand and interpret their interaction with the work.

Even if it were attainable to form an objective, factual, and propositional interpretation of an artwork, it hardly is the case that we approach artworks intending to derive a set of propositions, and yet we often gain something when engaging them. The moral dissection of an artwork would render the aesthetic experience as a secondary value. The fact that the artistic experience reaches beyond mere rational engagement into our affects and that we are drawn to ponder and enjoy the sheer remembrance of these experiences rich with value is reason enough to reject the need for rigorous analysis as the only way of extracting moral value and knowledge from engagement with the arts. All in all, if we wish to posit art as morally relevant a broader account of knowledge is also necessary.

Introducing the possibility of know-how knowledge as a substantive takeaway of artistic engagement, artistic cognition gains possible traction as practical and not just factual, providing a possible set of motives for action and hence resulting in a kind of knowledge that could explain the moral relevance of artistic knowledge as a guide to action of sorts. In a richer vein though, and perhaps more akin to the positive proposal I will present, that of art as providing perspectives that we take in as know-how, Freeland furthers this practical vision of knowledge with the Aristotelian distinction between moral and scientific wisdom, broadening the cognitive scope of the former as involving "the right perceptions, desires, feelings, and habits of action" (1997, p. 13). Here we find not only a practical vision but one that incorporates a wider scope of cognitive possibilities than just theoretical knowledge, one that involves our affective learning and the motivational aspects that guide our action proposing a more action-centered kind of knowledge, one that is very akin to know-how.

This conception of knowledge allows for a cognitivist vision that could possibly maintain not only a substantial knowledge claim about art but also the moral relevancy claim. It no longer solely depends on the content of the artwork to be interpreted and distilled into a proposition regarding its aboutness, but the way it is manifested by the form also takes on a relevant role in purveying that content, affecting not only the theoretical and factual but also perceptions, desires, feelings, etcetera in that the interaction with it is multifaceted and cannot be solely expressed and captured in a single paraphrase, no matter how complete.

This bodes well for a phenomenology of artistic engagement in which artworks have the ability to attract us and pull us into an experience that is totalizing and not just tending toward rational analysis. The artworks that we cherish and engage with are often meaningful in our interaction with them and are not encapsulated in single propositions. If asked to interpret an artwork we have engaged with and have found enriching in some sense, we could give perhaps a set of what at face value would appear to be propositions about the meaning of the piece and yet it would by no means encompass the totality of reasons, motivations, and affective reactions it has provided. Nehamas, for example, compares the aesthetic experience to love and draws parallels to the love between two people in which one could never lay claim to the full knowledge of someone else, a complete interpretation or a finished set of truths about that person. He expresses the idea by stating that, “the experience of beauty is inseparable from interpretation, and just as beauty always promises more than it has given so far, so interpretation, the effort to understand what it promises, is forever work in progress” (2017, p. 105). Perhaps a controversial take, but it captures this idea of aesthetic experience going beyond a set of strict interpretations of the propositions found within. As Stolnitz himself establishes, it's nearly an impossible task to express what the propositions gained from artworks are, but this could very well be because there is more to artistic knowledge than propositional knowledge.

Kieran gives a great example of this when he talks about the film *The Crying Game*, in which it is revealed at a certain point in the plot that the love interest of the character Stephen Rea is in fact a transsexual. The way the plot is laid out and the narrative structure that is used serve to emphasize a specific element of the moral content that wants to be expressed. As Kieran reflects, had the audience been aware of this beforehand, that is if the narrative form had been set out differently then the intended message would not have been as effective. Nevertheless, given that it has the structure it has, it engages in a particular way with the sympathies of the audience and "challenges the application of their moral principles" in a way that if someone from the audience viewed transsexuality as something deviant or hard to empathize with, they are now "forced, to the extent that they take the film seriously, to reflect upon the proper application of their moral principles" (Kieran, 1996, p. 338). Hence, the moral takeaway of artistic experiences "are not themselves articulations of moral principles", but rather they "prescribe us to imagine particular characters, situations, dilemmas, actions, and their consequences" (Ibid.). In the example, even if the takeaway can be rendered in propositional form, “being transexual is not deviant”, it is not the knowledge of this distilled proposition that the audience engages with, but rather the experience of sympathy for a previously un-sympathizable kind of person, presumably. Furthermore, as Kieran emphasizes, it’s not via the content of the story that the audience is challenged to assume something akin to a different principle. It is through the artistic formulation of this experience that they are compelled to make the shift, pointing to the moral learning coming to fruition as a form of interpretation rather than a specific principle.

Cognitivism of this kind, that is, one that allows for a broader vision of knowledge, also provides the possibility of viewing the relationship between ethical and aesthetic values in an artwork as a provider of moral knowledge that is gleaned through this morally relevant interplay of form and content. If this is so then the moralist picture seems to bode better than formalist

theories of aesthetics, at least with regards to the kind of knowledge gained through artistic engagement. In the following segment, I'll give a brief outline of both theories and how they relate to the cognitivist position, before exploring objections against the cognitivist position itself.

2.1 Different views of the moral relevance of art

Given that the dynamism between form and content is what provides the allowance of art to have a cognitive value, it is helpful to delve into the main theories of artistic value and the consequences of their views regarding these. Formalism, for example, posits that aesthetic values and moral values are separate realms, which more importantly means that the aesthetic or formal elements of an artwork are separate from moral considerations and can be judged on their own without reference to moral considerations. As Freeland defines them, they "maintain that the artistic value of an artwork is separate and distinct from any value attached to its contents" (1997, p. 13). The arts have a distinct set of values to be judged by and morality is a secondary and accessory value that can run parallel to the work and perhaps be judged accordingly but on different grounds and for different reasons. Crucial to this separation is that moral content, although present, should not affect the aesthetic appreciation of a work.

Yet it would seem as if the aesthetic experience of artworks with a significantly moral point of view cannot occur in a moral void, a space divorced from any valuations of goodness or wrongness of what is being represented, the content or subject matter of the artwork. As Freeland mentions, it would seem "psychologically problematic and self-deceptive" (1997) to appreciate clearly immoral art without noticing its immoral content. If a work of art contains moral content, it appears essential that we understand and engage with this moral dimension in order to fully engage with the artwork. Art compels us to take a stance, there is a challenge it presents to either value or not what it has to say. Take Leni Riefenstahl's *The Power of the Will*

as an example, even if one were to attempt an engagement with the artistry and groundbreaking documentary filmmaking style, choosing to sideline the depravity of the message presented, that is the glorification of Nazi Germany, is simply untenable. Engaging with it even for its aesthetic values alone presents the viewer with a challenge, one cannot remain indifferent to the moral message especially since it is so tied to the way it is presented, that is a glorification of a set view. Such is the proposal of Mary Devereaux's analysis of the film when she poses that "this conjunction of beauty and evil explains why the film is so disturbing" (2001, p. 227). In any case, the moral reaction surely affects our overall evaluation of the artwork and not as an afterthought or a secondary matter.

There should be no turning a blind eye when engaging in a totalizing experience of content and form, subject matter, and the way it is presented, and it would seem implausibly self-deceptive especially in the case that artistic engagement does provide moral knowledge, to disengage from this and focus only on a sort of morally antiseptic aesthetic evaluation. Arguably, formalism lacks a good explanation of the psychology of experiencing art and hence of how we gain knowledge from artworks, which is not self-deceptive but open to moral understanding. Sure, we can analyze a work for its merely formal aspects, but I say that it is implausible to consider these analyses constitutive of true aesthetic appreciation which involves a personal response to the knowledge being communicated, one of acceptance or rejection. We experience representational art in a way that communicates content, and it is not only in its communication that we find an attraction to which we return time and again. The message itself, with its tints and hues of moral relevance, shines through magnificently as well. Furthermore, if art communicates a sort of knowledge, which I argue it does, it would be myopic to state that we can value the way the knowledge is presented with a disregard for the knowledge itself.

What I am getting at is not that the moral worth renders an artwork less valuable or even that it possibly affects the aesthetic experience, that is better left for a different discussion of the issues with autonomism. What I mean to draw out from the criticism is the fact that inherent to the experience of a work of art, the knowledge that we gain can be and often is relevantly moral and that to posit that the only features relevant to the aesthetic experience are formal ones, is cognitively implausible.

Even from the point of view of the artists and the perspectives and moral understanding that they put into their artwork it would seem fallacious and reductive to say that their work is mainly in favor of presenting us with the formal elements of their craft devoid of a richer experience of content through form, limiting or reducing the possibility of representing some relevantly moral point of view. Artists express and represent value-laden content and this expression has an accompanying morally relevant point of view. For such reasons, a preferable theory for the know-how knowledge cognitivist would be one that gives a more plausible psychological account of our interaction with art, one that is attuned to the phenomenology of artistic cognition and that can explain the relevance that moral intuitions play in the experience of being confronted with a moral perspective through art.

The moralist, on the other hand, proposes a view in which moral content is crucial to artistic function and value by maintaining that "the moral content is relevant—indeed even crucial—to a work's artistic functioning and value" (Freeland, 1997, p. 16). A great work of art ought to be good both in the moral sense and in the aesthetic sense and the detriment of one affects the overall value of the piece. Such predominance of the moral over the aesthetic can be a point of contention, but again what I want to draw from the theory is not the central discussion about the status of the moral and the artistic qualities concerning the value of art. The point I want to focus on with regard to moralism is that within a cognitivist framework that takes stock of a wider noetic experience of an artwork, it works best to include a vision of the relationship

of moral value to an artistic value that posits a tight-knit connection between the two such that our phenomenology of aesthetic experience and the possible knowledge taken from it is not a partial vision of either one or the other set of values.

However, a risk that is to be avoided on the side of the moralist is that of considering the readily accessible moral content alone when assessing the overall artistic merit and assuming that the content alone is morally relevant. If that were the case, the moral value could run the risk of being discernible without attention to its artistic features and consequently be content-like in nature: propositional, paraphraseable, and easily accessible. I have already gone over the problems with this kind of view above when referring to strictly propositional cognitive takes. In the case of moral analysis perhaps content is the most prominent but in proposing perspectival knowledge as the cognitive object of aesthetic experience, it cannot be the only relevant feature if it is to be uniquely artistic than whatever paraphrased proposition we can interpret it as.

CHAPTER 3: PERSPECTIVES IN ART AND THEIR ROLE IN PRACTICAL KNOWLEDGE

The first thing to be done in this section is to clearly define what a perspective is, which I will be taking from the work of Elisabeth Camp. After this, I will go on to propose how these perspectives are present in artworks leading to the possibility of know-how knowledge through our cognitive engagement with them, concluding by defending their moral relevance in order to further defend the proposal that engagement with the arts leads to moral growth through the cognitive engagement of perspectives and the acquisition of non-propositional practical knowledge.

Camp defines perspective as "an open-ended disposition to characterize: to encounter, interpret, and respond to some parts of the world in a certain way" (2019, p. 24). In other words, it's a subjective viewpoint for interpretation, it affects the way the agent perceives and evaluates select features of the world. Importantly, it is not solely effective to a rational understanding, but it encompasses a person's set of beliefs, experiences, and values, shaping their understanding of reality and effecting an influence not only over their judgments but also their reactions to given phenomena, prompting a way of going about life as well.

Characterizations as constitutional parts of a perspective "attribute a set of features to a particular subject, and embed those features in a multidimensional structure of prominence and centrality" (Camp, 2019, p. 24). The way a thing is characterized, that is the features that are made salient about a particular subject, the way it is referenced, contextualized, and posited give it a defined interpretation, a set point of view with which to approach it. These characterizations then form a disposition to understand the subject and its relations in a particular way that then gives rise to a way of interpreting that we can call perspective.

Another central feature of the perspective is that it is open-ended in two relevant ways: first of all “they provide a way of updating a given characterization over time, as new information and experiences come in”, they are not set belief-like dispositions, they change a mutate throughout time shape-shifting and adapting, describable but not dependent on a specific set of propositions; additionally they are open-ended in the sense that “they generate characterizations of multiple, perhaps indefinitely many, specific subjects” (Camp, 2019, p. 26), meaning that once a perspective is adopted, it gives rise to new interpretations based on previous characterizations. Despite this open-endedness and adaptive capability to take into account new subjects or variation of subjects of interpretation, there is still the possibility of holding stable perspectives by way of stability "in the sorts of features the agent tends to notice, the sorts of explanatory connections they tend to draw, and the sorts of predictions and emotional and evaluative responses they tend to have" (ibid.). Perspectives hold and affect the subject’s dispositions to evaluate how a specific set of salient features of a thing, to relate them in this regard to their ways of seeing them, and to respond to them in a given way from then onwards.

3.1 Perspectives in Art

Examples of characterization in art are easy to find, from portrayals of characters in fiction to descriptions of the specifically salient features in portraiture or even landscape painting, art provides a characterization of things, and set points of view with evaluative and interpretative addends. Among the many cases of this, an illustrious example from medieval literature, spanning the collective works of diverse authors and influencing a generation's ideas on love is one taken from the Arthurian lore of Chrétien de Troyes, which exerted a profound influence on the evolution of the concept of romantic love, having shaped perspectives on the subject. In *Lancelot*, for example, Chrétien outlines the character of the knight, and what it

means to be a true *chevalier*, he gives Lancelot a set of salient characteristics and draws attention to them throughout his narrative. The knight is to be abject and humble, at the service of his queen, characterized by Genevieve (cf. Lewis, 1936, p. 2). There is a relationship of love and admiration towards the queen which is at once romantic in the sense of desire with erotic undertones, but at the same time respectful and humble because of her status as a married woman and more importantly as his queen. The knight is then caught in this paradox of love and service, which provides him with a certain set of characteristics, motivates him to action, and curbs certain desires because of the circumstances of his characterization.

C.S. Lewis provides the backdrop to this sort of characterization as revolutionary for its time, a change of perspective granted the given characterizations of Chrétien's heroes in his narratives:

> "Two things prevented the men of that age from connecting their ideal of romantic and passionate love with marriage. The first is, of course, the actual practice of feudal society. Marriages had nothing to do with love, and no nonsense about marriage was tolerated. All matches were matches of interest […]. The second factor is the medieval theory of marriage, […] according to the medieval view passionate love itself was wicked, and did not cease to be wicked if the object of it were your wife" (Lewis, 1936, p. 16).

It is within this context, that Chrétien posits a characterization of both the knight and the romantic love of the knight in a novel way, by way of presenting what Lewis calls "innocent sexuality", leading to a view opposed to that of erotic passion as something that drags down and vilifies, to something akin to the view present in romantic poetry, that of passion being something that purifies the lover and for which he is challenged to become better and more elevated (cf. Lewis, 1936, p. 20). It also reframes this passionate and erotic love as a central feature of relationships, shifting away from a strict view of arranged marriages on the basis of interests and gain by presenting the dichotomy between Arthur and Genevieve and Lancelot and Genevieve. Both the knight and romantic love are "attributed a certain set of features" and

these features are put together in a "structure of prominence and centrality", leading to a characterization of both that then ends up presenting a perspective with which to "encounter, interpret, and respond to" the concepts of romantic love and the role of chivalry in a certain way (cf. Camp, 2019, p. 24).

As exemplified above, art is a prime source of characterizations and hence of presentation and interaction with perspectives. Furthermore, Camp proposes that besides having our own individual interpretative dispositions on things, we also have an "intuitive, sometimes quite nuanced, sense of other people's perspectives" (2019, p. 24). In our experiences of acquaintance with others, we are quite good at assuming what the other's perspectives are and how they affect them: we can often predict how they will react to certain subjects dependent on our understanding of the perspectives they have on the relative matter and we can posit how it is that new information about old subjects of their perspectives will be used to inform the frameworks they already had (cf. ibid.). Bringing to the fore the previously mentioned parallel that Nehamas uses when referring to aesthetic experience, that of interpersonal relationships, we can draw similar conclusions about artistic engagement. The deeper our knowledge of the artwork is, the better we will be at grasping what the perspectives that underlie it are like, and the better we will be at supposing what the given perspective's response would be to new subjects, or how different circumstances and situations may have affected the perspectives, using them as keys of interpretation for new information or new situations that are relevantly connected or under the same framework.

Perhaps a medieval example may be harder to relate to since we are further removed from the considerations of the time, but I propose a look into a more contemporary example which can perhaps be more relatable given the modern perspectives it provides. In Celine Song's film *Past Lives*, we get a portrait of two childhood sweethearts who are separated when the girl must immigrate to the US. They lose touch for twelve years and reconnect online,

develop a budding romance once again, and then realize that due to both of their commitments in life they cannot be together prompting them to once again lose touch until twelve years after that they reconnect for a last time, seeing each other in person for the first time since childhood but once again realizing that due to their life choices, one is happily married and the other in the process of engagement, they must make the definitive internal decision of letting each other go for good. Throughout the film, there is this clear message through the dialogue and the portrayal of the relationship of these two doomed lovers that on occasion true love, that is wanting what is best for the other, requires letting go of the hopes of a romantic partnership.

The characterization of both protagonists articulates well what their main concerns are, for the female lead career development is crucial, living up to her full potential as a writer, having to work in New York since that is where she has better opportunities to live up to her goals in life, etc. The male character on the other hand is idealistic about love, he is the one who has sought after his beloved, but at the same time, he is realistic about his opportunities in life, his modest intellect, and the jobs available to him, staying firm in his native South Korea since that is something he personally values, etc. The characterization the audience is provided with gives a certain perspective on life and allows for the engagement of that structure of evaluation to give rise to ways of interpreting their own lives in view of what has been learned from engagement with the film. While watching the film we can build an intuitive grasp of what the character's perspectives on life are, and we can access those same structures for our own lives applying them to new subjects of interpretation.

As Camp herself posits, "Part of the power of psychologically rich fictions lies in the way that we as readers come to anticipate, not just how events in the fictional world will unfold and be described, but how the narrator or authorial figure would interpret the actual world if they were to encounter it" (Camp, 2019, p. 24). It is my argument that in doing so, that is, in engaging with the way the narrator or authorial figure would interpret the actual world, we come

to gain a practical know-how kind of knowledge that in turn gives us the tools necessary to interpret situations in our own lives giving us relevant ways to encounter, interpret and respond to similar situations in the world around us.

3.2 Perspectives as Tools for Know-how Knowledge

As a parting point, in order to begin positing perspectives as conducive to know-how knowledge, it is important to distinguish them from know-that or propositional knowledge. First of all the open-endedness of a perspective, its ability to update categorizations and to generate characterizations of indefinitely many subjects, distinguish it from propositional attitudes. Perspectives are not describable in terms of know that, believe that, think that, etc. because they are dynamic and not static, meaning that they are "ongoing dispositions to structure one's thought" (Camp, 2013, p. 336), they need not be tied to specific beliefs or contents. Camp states that they lack contents: "Having a perspective need not require endorsing, or even intuitively attributing or connecting, any particular features of a subject" (Camp 2019, p. 25).

Characterizations, on the other hand, do have content but it is complex and often unarticulated, it forms a nexus between a subject and a specific set of features that accompany it and it "embeds those features in a multidimensional structure of prominence and centrality" (2019, p. 25) meaning that characterizations make certain features of the subject salient and central such as in the example of the female lead of *Past Lives*. Her commitment to her career, the ties to a specific location (New York), and the kind of love she has for the male protagonist are brought all to the forefront of who she is as a person. This is the way she is portrayed and hence these are among the features that are made salient and central to an interpretation of who she is as a character. Our understanding of her as a character then develops more than just propositions. Of course, we can with effort and reflection explain these features and specify them in propositional terms but characterization intends more, it develops in the audience an

“intuitive cognitive implementation of the complex structures” of the subject in question (cf. 2019, p. 25). It involves more than a mere endorsement of the propositions derived from it.

Furthermore, perspectives inherit these intuitions and become not thought about the subject, but "tools for thinking" (cf. 2019, p. 25) about the subject and because of their open-ended nature, of a myriad of other relevant subjects further developing intuitive principles for interpretation (cf. 2020, p. 4). In this way, perspectives can take form as tools for the development of further characterizations and as such are attuned to non-propositional practical knowledge. They have the function of interpreting through characterization and then of responding according to these characterizations, they are geared towards practicality, and more attuned to practical wisdom than theoretical or propositional wisdom. Not only are perspectives relevant to thinking as "ongoing dispositions to structure one's thoughts" (Camp, 2013, p. 336) providing ways of interpreting truth-conditional contents but they also aid in shaping our motivational attitudes and feelings towards a subject "as appropriate to feel toward its subject" (cf. 2013, p. 335). This full picture of cognitive involvement with a point of view is what makes the full picture of perspectives as conducive to know-how kinds of knowledge that shape our interaction and response to the world in specific contexts. The way of interpreting the world that a perspective provides can apply to particular situations, leading our acquisition of them to be conducive to our practice of moral judgments. This is how perspectives are conducive to know-how knowledge.

As a consequence, if as I defend, artistic knowledge is primarily concerned with characterizations and hence manifests perspectives that are accessible to the person that engages with artworks, the kind of knowledge accessible through art is of the know-how variety. The cognitivist can then adopt this view of artistic cognition and escape the worries of objections on the basis of art as mainly concerned with propositional knowledge. First of all, since perspectives are not required to be defined in propositional terms then the accessibility of

artistic truths no longer has the issues of definition and specification. One can attempt descriptions and interpretations of artworks, but these cannot capture the totality of the artistic experience and they need not since it is through perspectives that artistic knowledge expresses itself. Secondly, the problem of paraphrase may prima facie still present somewhat of a strain on the particular substantiality of artistic knowledge, after all, can't these perspectives be acquired through other means more readily accessible such as just ordinary experience of life? The lessons of *Past Lives* could be just as relevantly gained through a friend recounting a similar struggle between what makes most sense career-wise and what her romantic interests push her to do.

A defense of the uniqueness of artistic knowledge perhaps doesn't seem so relevant at this stage. After having defined what I take it to be, we can simply sidestep the worry by positing what I mentioned previously of the possibility of vicarious experience, after all, why would I need to expose myself to the experience of a myriad of different scenarios if I have optimal access to the perspectives of many others that share the human condition with me and have reflected upon similar experiences already. Not only this but a common experience in life assumes that preparedness for a situation is better than unawareness and perhaps harder-earned knowledge. If art provides know-how why wait until I need to know how. It surely is better to gain greater perspective and preparedness for appropriate action before the fact, having more points of reference for interpretation and response.

However, a better strategy may be to address the issue head-on. I propose, with the help of Kieran's defense of the moral relevance of art, that the way perspectives are presented in artworks is particularly conducive to reflection and moral cultivation, mainly in the way the aesthetic forms present the characterizations relevant to perspectives and consequently in the way aesthetic forms engage our cognitive capacities. First of all, as Kieran posits, “an artwork’s prescribed imaginative content is partly determined by the way it is artistically shaped and

manipulated" (1996, p.338). The artistic choices of the formal structure of the artwork, the "medium, genre, and artistic conventions utilized" (ibid.) make a unique presentation of the relevant details of the characterization given and the perspective presented. Art is a prime medium of presenting perspectives in the way that relevant features are made especially salient.

It also allows, through the engagement of our imagination, an openness that common experience often does not. It is often the case that artworks present topics towards which we may be opposed or outraged by in usual circumstances and allow for further perhaps more unbiased perception since we are further removed from the perspective while engaging with it through a specifically artistic lens. We allow the artist a liberty of expression that is often not the case in moments of ordinary life that require a change of perspective through immediate interaction with the source of new challenging perspectives. The case could be made that one of the reasons art is so effective in doing this is the aesthetic qualities that often draw us into engagement in the first place. The impactful nature of artistic imagery is usually enthralling and captivating. The common aesthetic experience is one of captivation and attraction. Artistic communication, so to say, embellishes its perspectives in a way that renders them more memorable, and more cognitively rich than ordinary experience. It also allows for a space of reflection in its interaction which is often not the case with experiences from which we are not further removed, like those demanding our immediate attention and apprehension. Again, this is due to the unique configuration of the content-like artistic perspectives and the aesthetic forms they take. For these reasons, artistic knowledge remains a unique form of know-how knowledge, one that has been often chosen as the preferred medium for pedagogical purposes in the realm of moral learning, for example.

This uniqueness of artistic knowledge grants art a particular moral relevancy as an optimal conveyor of perspectives and hence a rich source of practical knowledge. The gains in moral wisdom are ascertained through the reflective engagement of these perspectives and elicit

a response of acceptance or rejection of the characterizations presented, prompting a shift in the audience's view of things. Moral growth can be achieved and prompted by engaging thusly with the arts, a cognitively rich engagement, at once aiding reflection and motivating affectively. The exploration of the ways in which artistic knowledge through perspectives is conducive to moral growth will be explored in the following section.

CHAPTER 4: ARTISTIC KNOWLEDGE AND THE POSSIBILITY OF MORAL GROWTH

Perspectives may have a multifaceted range of functions depending on the context of their usage. If they are, as has been defined: "ongoing dispositions to structure one's thoughts" it is clear that a subset of these can be pregnant with moral significance. The way we judge moral situations including the moral valence of a subject's character, the evaluative relevance of contexts and circumstances, and the outcome of certain actions, are all open to the interpretations given by a certain set of perspectives, affected by them, and judged accordingly. As such, it is often the case that artistic knowledge can be often intended as morally relevant and on occasion may be so despite artistic intentions. After all, the interaction between artist, artwork, and audience is a complex set of relationships and what can appear morally irrelevant for one can be in fact central for someone else. Misinterpretation is rampant as we have posited previously, but the transmission of perspectives and the engagement with them are still present with all of their moral weight. Artworks are points of view, fictitious or not, they have an underlying significance, and they manifest a specific set of characterizations.

In a paper on slurs, Camp shares this bit of reflection on the way slurs are affected by perspectives, "In a general sense, then, my suggestion is that slurs are akin to other expressions part of whose conventional function is not merely to refer or predicate, but to signal the speaker's social, psychological, and/or emotional relation to that semantic value" (2013, p. 335). A parallel claim can be drawn with regards to artistic perspectives, they are not mere representations or attributions of properties to a subject, but rather showcase an entire rich picture of social, psychological, and emotional relations, prompting the perspectives to be not only relevantly moral, but richly so in the information they provide and relate. Honest

engagement with art has the effect of rich conveyance of morally relevant information, prime to affect the way that we perceive, judge, and engage with the world.

In this vision of the moral relevance of the perspectives garnered through artistic engagement, it seems that the wider our sources of information are, the better equipped we are to make appropriate moral judgments. Not only this but our emotions and motivations towards particular ways of characterization are engaged as well. This gives an optimal scenario for talk of know-how knowledge and practical wisdom. As I mentioned earlier in the paper, the kind of perspective on moral understanding coming from Nussbaum's take on Aristotle is optimal for this account of artistic knowledge hinging upon perspectives. She posits that moral understanding "involves emotional as well as intellectual activity and gives a certain type of priority to the perception of particular people and situations, rather than to abstract rules" (Freeland, 1997, p. 20). This view of moral understanding fits perfectly with the role of perspectives as providing saliency through characterizations. Again, the knowledge provided through art is not an ascertainable list of moral maxims, but rather a series of viewpoints with which we can acquire know-how knowledge that can be applied in instances of particular moral judgments.

Practical wisdom is hence attainable through an engagement with artistically provided perspectives. As Freeland defines it, practical wisdom is a "unique rational capacity of humans that depends upon particularity of perception" (Ibid.). With this in mind, the kind of answers we can garner from art concern a broad line of moral inquiry, namely how we should live. In the broadest of senses, artistic perspectives give us an answer in the particularity of their details: the situations presented, the kinds of people that do kinds of things, the consequences of certain actions, etcetera, all morally relevant information that is not only gathered through intellectual assimilation, but that affects and engages our emotions and motivational dispositions as well.

Of course, perspectives are not always assimilated or taken in, but there is also a richness in coming into contact with points of view that may remain alien to us but further our moral understanding and are hence conducive to moral growth. There are two main takeaways about moral growth through engaging with artistic perspectives that I would like to further investigate and develop: one being that of art as hermeneutical advice through which we develop and change our perspectives through a reframing of our moral understanding, and the other is that of art as engaging our sympathetic imagination, which as Kieran puts it, encourages us to "consider and to become open to people, dilemmas, and states of affairs we might otherwise have dismissed out of hand" (Kieran, 1996, p. 338).

4.1 Art as a Source of Hermeneutical Advice

Taking from Paulina Sliwa's work on hermeneutical advice, we can understand it to be a transmission of moral perspectives for a given situation, a form of moral testimony that aids us in affective attunement. As she puts it, hermeneutical advice is "when we adopt a new moral perspective based on a testimonial exchange" (Sliwa, forthcoming, p. 3). Such is the case in the example that she presents in which a stay-at-home mother is talking to her friend about how her husband resents her for not taking an interest in him after he comes home from work and the ensuing irritability of the situation, to which her friend aids her in reframing the situation by proposing a new perspective, that of her labor as a mother to be considered as work as well. If she takes this perspective and adapts it to her situation, she might begin making morally relevant decisions based on the newly gained standpoint.

As Sliwa argues, this gain is not conceptual, it is not simply a linguistic relabeling of the situation, she does not learn a fact, rather "she learns about her experience: what it is about it that is morally significant, how it matters" (ibid., p. 4). Perspectives help the person in her example bring certain features of her situation to the foreground and give them new moral relevancy. All in all, the takeaway for her is not a new belief but rather a new way of organizing her thoughts and feelings around the interpretation of this particular situation, and by doing so provides her with tools for interpretation, "it provides her with metaphors, mental images, and analogies to think about and communicate her situation" (ibid.).

Art has a similar role to hermeneutical advice, it provides us with moral perspectives, giving us tools for interpretation through the metaphors, mental images, and analogies that it presents, and through them gives us a structured way of organizing our own moral reflection. By making salient certain morally relevant information, it presents us with values and validates our judgments through an engagement with the appropriate emotional responses as well. The particularity of the forms of artistic expression in making particular features extra salient and the way it facilitates our emotional responses to it posits art on par with hermeneutical advice as an optimal tool for the transmission of moral perspectives.

4.2 Art and the Possibility of Sympathetic Imagination

A second way in which perspectives can aid moral growth through artistic engagement in cases in which perhaps we do not take in a perspective as our own is by providing us with an openness to consider other's viewpoints and moral circumstances in a way that can be conducive to sympathy and charity towards those with opinions we do not personally espouse. That an openness to other's perspectives can lead to a greater deal of understanding and sympathy is easily acceptable but perhaps an explanation is due regardless.

Hare has an interesting example of the interaction between what he calls ideals, which for my purposes I will interpret as something akin to perspectives. He proposes that to have an ideal "is to think of some kind of thing as pre-eminently good within some larger class" (Hare, 1977, p. 159). He then goes on to exemplify this with car types by saying that if a given person has an ideal about what car is the pre-eminently good one, he does so because of a set of characteristics he assumes are the ones an ideal car would have. This is akin to a perspective on what the best kind of car is, given the fact that the salient characteristics match up with the ideal view of the subject under examination. Now applying that to the moral realm, he talks about the conflict between Nazis and the West during World War II and how the view of the ideal man and society was the central cause of the moral conflict. The main issue in this case was that for the Nazis the main issue was that their ideal was "in contempt and defiance of both the interests and the ideals of others" (1977, p. 160). To be cut off from considering the possibility of value in other's perspectives and viewpoints is of terrible consequence. This by no means is a characterization of the full problem of Nazism, but it helps illustrate a sort of closed approach to perspectives from which one could be freed, not limited to but especially relevant to the engagement with the arts. An openness to view and consider other points of view, other perspectives and other ideals of life allows for a greater sympathy in the approach to views that may have prima facie seemed untenable in our experience.

Granted we may still object to the perspectives taken by others, but it seems to count in favor of a person's sympathetic engagement with others that they are able to grasp the reasons for their held opinions and way of being. It may very well be an antidote to fanaticism and blindsightedness in our conceptions of others. Of course, the examples previously given are a bit dramatic, but it's easily applicable to everyday experience that if we grow to understand a person previously unknowable to us, and perhaps unpalatable for the same reasons, we can at

the least become more sympathetic to them and their previously misunderstood salient features of character. Yet another benefit of artistic knowledge with the potential for moral growth via moral understanding.

CONCLUSION

In answering the broad question of whether or not it is possible for moral growth through engagement with the arts, a simpler answer may have sufficed, a simple yes based on folk intuitions and my own phenomenological experience of rich moral reflection through reflective engagement with artworks. But it seemed pertinent to ask how this moral growth is particularly relevant and rich in the face of claims of triviality and a focus on mere aesthetic value. Throughout the ensuing examination, I feel confident to have found a more satisfying answer. Engaging with the arts provides valuable and morally relevant perspectives through their rich aesthetic manifestations, making art a unique means of acquiring these insights. This dispels concerns about triviality and establishes a moral dimension intertwined with the aesthetic experience, offering a profound understanding of what it means to be human. Such engagement cultivates a broader understanding of diverse perspectives, an attunement to the salient characteristics of a good life, and a disposition towards hermeneutical openness and greater sympathetic capacities. All in all, moral growth through artistic engagement is not only possible but is a uniquely rich exercise, one that we ought not to ignore or sideline for mere aesthetic enjoyment.

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