

Aesthetic Cognitivism in the Arts, Theology, Biblical Studies, and Manuscript Cultures:
An Annotated Bibliography

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Aesthetic Cognitivism, Understanding, Knowledge, and the Arts

Aumann, Antony (2014). "The Relationship between Aesthetic Value and Cognitive Value." *Journal of Aesthetics and Art Criticism* 72/2, 117–127.

Aumann inverts the cognitive aesthetic arguments of the likes of Gaut and Graham (see below), suggesting that it is not the cognitive merits of artworks the lead to a greater aesthetic valuation, but that the aesthetic features of artworks can themselves "imply statements or claims" (p. 123). Focusing primarily on this relationship in reference to modern works of analytic philosophy, and building on Carroll's taxonomy of aesthetic properties (expressive, Gestalt, taste, and reaction), Aumann argues that these aesthetic properties can function like nonverbal gestures: "They too function as directives: They prompt readers to approach the semantic content of the text in a particular way. And they get readers to view the text's subject matter with a certain attitude or see it from a certain perspective" (p. 120). This argument rests upon an indelible and reciprocal connection between the aesthetic and the cognitive: aesthetic value both imbibes and is strengthened by cognitive value, even if Aumann's narrow focus on specifically philosophical knowledge does not do justice to more sophisticated perspectives on aesthetic cognitivism.

Baumberger, Christoph (2013). "Art and Understanding: In Defence of Aesthetic Cognitivism." Pages 41–67 in *Bilder sehen: Perspektiven der Bildwissenschaft*. Edited by M. Greenlee et al. Regensburg: Schnell & Steiner.

In a direct and unambiguous justification for aesthetic cognitivism, Baumberger makes a series of nuanced arguments that address some of the philosophical objections raised against this perspective. Drawing upon the work of Gaut (see below), he identifies two key claims of aesthetic cognitivism: an epistemic claim – "that artworks have cognitive functions" – and an aesthetic claim – "cognitive functions of artworks partially determine their artistic value" (p. 41). Baumberger recognises that not all artworks have cognitive functions, that not all cognitive functions are necessarily aesthetic merits, and that the cognitive functions of artworks only *partially* determine their artistic value. But he makes the case for a relevant epistemology that is built on "understanding" instead of "knowledge," distinguishing the two by pointing out that multiple propositions inform perceptions of understanding and that understanding is often non-reducible in its complexity: "the understanding expressed in individual propositions derives from an understanding related to larger bodies of information that include those propositions" (p. 43) and "understanding is holistic. Knowledge can be broken down into discrete bits" (p. 50). This re-positioned epistemology allows Baumberger to then point out the ways that artworks function as mediums for developing understanding. For example, artworks can create new categories that re-organize knowledge and perceptions; they can alter perspectives in non-reducible in terms of viewing objects or ideas; art raises questions, "inviting critical reflection and testing moral beliefs we have uncritically

adopted at some stage or other of our lives” (p. 55); and literary artworks especially can offer phenomenal knowledge – what it is like to have specific experiences or emotions. Moving beyond knowledge, artworks can also improve cognitive abilities and enhance connections between theses we already believe. These cognitive aspects of art are, for Baumberger, modes of understanding.

Benjamin, Walter (1936). “L’œuvre d’art à l’époque de sa reproduction mécanisée.” *Zeitschrift für Sozialforschung* 5/1, 40–68 [Eng. *The Work of Art in the Age of Mechanical Reproduction* (London: Penguin, 2008)].

Benjamin’s essay on changes to art in a period of efficient technical reproduction explores the fundamental changes to artistic expression that occur when media and medium change. In a section exploring the significance of film, Benjamin argues that the technical capabilities of slow motion and frame by frame analysis allows for the merging of art and science. We can learn more about the world around us because of the new technical capacities of a specific art form: “the film...extends our comprehension of the necessities which rule our lives...it manages to assure us of an immense and unexpected field of action” (§ XIII). The larger arc of Benjamin’s essay does not focus on aesthetic cognitivism – and the terminology is of course foreign to him – but he saw in technological change an opportunity to leverage artistic forms for the further development of knowledge about humans and the world.

Berger, Jacob, and Mark Alfano (2016). “Virtue, Situationism, and the Cognitive Value of Art.” *The Monist* 99, 144–158.

Critiquing virtue–vice based forms of moral cognitivism (especially Carroll’s construal), Berger and Alfano argue instead for an “interactionist moral cognitivism” – a view that “art provides us with information about how a situation shapes our characters and actions...[reinforcing] the achievement of realistic virtue” (p. 154). Instead of transmitting knowledge on ideal forms of virtue, vice, or other forms of moral development, artworks educate viewers and readers on the potentialities of the complex relationships between context and character – “much of art’s value consists in presenting facts about the interaction of person and situation” (p. 153), providing both factual and moral information. Berger and Alfano do not discuss the mechanisms of features inherent to artworks that transmit this knowledge, but they acknowledge that artworks have cognitive merits or demerits. The relationship between aesthetics and cognitive value are not examined, but they offer an important nuance to the moral cognitive arguments advanced by Carroll, Gaut, and others.

Carroll, Noël (2004). “Art and the Moral Realm.” Pages 126–151 in *The Blackwell Guide to Aesthetics*. Edited by P. Kivy. Oxford: Blackwell.

Arguing forcefully for an indelible and “commons sense” relationship between art and morality, Carroll rebuts epistemic, ontological, and aesthetic arguments that seek to distance art from morality in varying ways. Within this process, he takes an approach that closely coheres with aesthetic cognitivism, at least as it pertains to forms of moral knowledge with particular attention to narrative literature. For Carroll, artworks can contribute both propositional knowledge (in a way similar to thought experiments in philosophical discourse, for example) and conceptual

knowledge in complex ways. Because narrative works require audiences to engage with the complexities of plot, characterisation, and judgements about fictive action, narrative provides occasions “for practice in the application to particulars of abstract moral principles and concepts” (p. 131). The educative value of art is multifaceted: artworks can enhance skills associated with practical knowledge (knowing how to do something), improve “attentiveness to the kind of nuanced behavioral details that are relevant for delivering accurate moral judgements” (p. 131), and engage our emotions, providing access to alternative viewpoints and perspectives (thereby undermining specific prejudices). Moreover, art exposes people to complex stories and this “mindful exposure to sophisticated life narratives communicates to us the knack of how to begin to tell our own life stories, if only to ourselves, and, in this way, they augment our capacity to find holistic significance and unity in what otherwise may feel like the rush of one god-damned, desultory thing after another” (p. 134). Art can help us remember, deepen our understanding of what we already know, and shape our moral maps in unexpected ways. Carroll also insists that a work’s capacity for transmitting such knowledge is related to its aesthetic value, placing him directly within the broader discourse on aesthetic cognitivism.

Carroll, Noël (1993). “Film, Rhetoric, and Ideology.” Pages 215–237 in *Explanation and Value in the Arts*. Cambridge Studies in Philosophy and the Arts. Edited by S. Kemal and I. Gaskell. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

Carroll argues in this article for a major shift in film studies, questioning the “Althusserian framework” that focuses on the ideological content of film, opting instead for an approach that takes seriously the aesthetics of film. Aesthetic features are rhetorical, contributing to film’s ability to convey knowledge or perspective. Carroll agrees that film “is (often) a vehicle for conveying ideology” (p. 217), but he questions the dominant assumption that aesthetics plays no role in the way that ideology can be transmitted or taken up by an audience. Carroll’s arguments are undergirded by cognitive aesthetics insofar as the aesthetics of film are rhetorical: “rhetoric is a matter of influencing thought – a matter of persuasion, as a consequence of presenting material in a way that is structured to secure an audience’s belief in certain conclusions, or, at least, their favorable disposition toward those conclusions” (pp. 222–223). He goes on to say that “narrative films may be thought of as rhetorical...in so far as they are structured to lead the audience to fill in certain ideas about human conduct in the process of rendering the story intelligible to themselves” (p. 224). In this way, the message and potential ideology of narrative film leads to forms of understanding, based on an audience’s presuppositions and accepted commonplaces.¹

Cecchi, Dario (2016). “Aesthetic Experience – A Pragmatist Perspective in Cognitive Aesthetics.” *Pragmatism Today* 7/1, 82–92.

¹ Carroll’s work is deeply influential and wide-ranging, often touching on issue related to aesthetic cognitivism. See also Carroll, “Art, Narrative, and Moral Understanding,” in *Aesthetics and Ethics: Essays at the Intersection*, ed. J. Levinson (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1998), 126–160; Carroll, “The Wheel of Virtue: Art, Literature, and Moral Knowledge,” *Journal of Aesthetics and Art Criticism* 60 (2002): 3–26; Carroll, “Moderate Moralism,” *British Journal of Aesthetics* 36 (1996): 223–238.

In this article, Cecchi places Kant's views of aesthetic experience into conversation with the aesthetics of John Dewey, arguing that aesthetic experience is essentially cognitive in nature and of significant value. Following Dewey, he suggests that aesthetic experiences – both of artworks and of “ordinary” life – is “an enhancement of our cognitive agency *and* an active and productive interaction with the surrounding environment, an activity which concretely foreruns the work of other, more refined, cognitive practices, like science” (p. 91). Artworks are cognitively valuable because they train the perceptions of viewers or readers and finetune interpretive abilities for understanding the world. Cecchi does not examine the aspects of artworks or the natural world that lead to this cognitive development, but he does muster philosophical arguments that directly link cognition and aesthetic experience broadly construed. The article is also valuable because it offers a point of entry into critical discussions of aesthetics in Italian research cultures.

Conolly, Oliver, and Bashar Haydar (2001). “Narrative Art and Moral Knowledge.” *British Journal of Aesthetics* 41/2, 109–124.

Conolly and Haydar engage with Carroll's argument that literature can clarify our existing moral knowledge (“clarificationism”), rejecting Carroll's limitation that literature cannot instil new propositional moral knowledge. In essence, they confirm Carroll's clarificationism, but push the envelope further, suggesting that narratives do indeed supply forms of propositional knowledge. For example, making new logical connections regarding morals or other issues entails new belief: “if reshuffling beliefs implies giving a new hierarchy to one's moral beliefs...then that too can clearly be expressed in propositional terms” (p. 116). Propositional knowledge inevitably follows from moral development. But the artistic value of artworks is only partially determined by their transmission of knowledge, propositional or otherwise; formal and hedonic values work alongside cognitive ones to determine the aesthetic value of works. This engaged critique of Carroll is a debate entirely internal to aesthetic cognitivism.

Currie, Gregory (1997). “The Moral Psychology of Fiction.” Pages 49–58 in *Art and Its Messages: Meaning, Morality, and Society*. Edited by S. Davies. University Park: The Pennsylvania State University Press.

Currie's form of moral cognitivism articulated in this article places his perspective squarely within the realm of aesthetic cognitivism, both its epistemic and aesthetic claims. For Currie, literary fictions function as guides to moral knowledge because imaginatively projecting ourselves into particular scenarios can inculcate moral knowledge. Literature is a powerful handmaiden in this respect, helping us “to weave together a pattern of complex imaginings by laying out a narrative; they give us, through the talents of their makers, access to imaginings more complex, inventive and colorful than we could often hope to construct for ourselves” (p. 53). The literary aspects of narrative are what transmit knowledge to readers, reinforcing moral education through imagined simulations of events. Moreover, good literature is measured in part by its success in transmitting this kind of non-propositional knowledge in the form of understanding: “if things go well with such a project, the result can be moral knowledge; knowledge of how the adoption of a value would affect our flourishing and that of those we care about. A really vivid fiction might get

you to revise your values” (p. 53). Importantly for Currie, the type of knowledge that literature can transmit is not factual, but something more akin to understanding, including the understanding of self, others, and the consequences of particular actions: “Imaginative involvement plays a special role in developing our moral knowledge which it does not play in developing our factual, descriptive knowledge” (p. 54). Currie’s assertion that one measure of good art is its capacity to transmit (moral) knowledge places his programme within the broader context of aesthetic cognitivism.²

Daiches, David (1981). *Critical Approaches to Literature*. 2nd ed. London: Longman.

In the process of tracing critical approaches to literature from Plato to the modern day (and quoting liberally from primary sources), one of the principal topics of Daiches’ analysis is the value of literature, circling around often to the questions of knowledge and truth. Although not explicitly cognitivist in its outlook, Daiches does accept knowledge as one of literature’s artistic merits and his engagement with literary criticism over a long period shows that issues germane to cognitivism have recurrent currency in debate. Aesthetic cognitivism as a modern theory is not entirely new because, for Daiches, nearly all literary criticism is an attempt to solve the “Platonic problem,” a point that is also a recurrent starting point for aesthetic cognitivists. For example, Daiches points to Sidney’s belief that poetry is a superior moral teacher than philosophy (p. 64), to Dryden’s definition of imaginative literature’s goal to delight “and instruct mankind” (p.75), and to Johnson, for whom “literature is a form of knowledge,” especially knowledge about humanity and human nature (understanding) (p. 84). A cognitivist undercurrent has always been present in literary criticism.

Elgin, Catherine Z. (2017). *True Enough*. London: The MIT Press.

In a work that focuses primarily on the philosophy of science, Elgin argues for the epistemic value of falsehoods and fictions, introducing what she calls a “felicitous falsehood – an inaccurate representation whose inaccuracy does not undermine its epistemic function” (p. 3). Examples of felicitous falsehoods include laboratory experiments, thought experiments, and literary fictions. Art and science both rely to a degree on falsehoods or selective symbols to transmit both knowledge (facts) and understanding (control over a network of related ideas that are not necessarily factive). In this way, Elgin extends Goodman’s aesthetics to the realm of science. Dance, for example, has an epistemic function, enabling “us to understanding things differently than we did before” (p. 205, see pp. 205–220) – “it reveals something to us” (p. 219). Literature, too, can be viewed as an elaborate thought experiment, affording “epistemic access to aspects of the world that are normally inaccessible” (p. 236). But Elgin also adduces arguments that holds that artworks can transmit and embody historical understanding of a causal chain of episodes when they function as artworks – that is, through their aesthetic features. Drawing on Goodman’s typology of aesthetic features, she demonstrates the Maya Lin’s Vietnam War Memorial inculcates complex historical understanding because it functions as a work of art (pp.

² Currie has addressed issues related to aesthetic cognitivism in a number of contexts: see Currie, “Realism of Character and the Value of Fiction,” in *Aesthetics and Ethics: Essays at the Intersection*, ed. J. Levinson (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1998), 161–181.

273–289). Elgin’s philosophy of falsehood is deeply tied in with Goodman’s philosophy of the arts and ideas adjacent to aesthetic cognitivism.

Elgin, Catherine Z. (2002). “Creating and Reconfiguration: Art in the Advancement of Science.” *International Studies in the Philosophy of Science* 16/1, 13–25.

Elgin argues that aesthetic features are inherent to both the arts and the sciences and that the devices of metaphor, exemplification, and fiction in the arts help us to understand the world in new ways. Science and art work hand in hand to advance understanding by reconfiguring, reframing, and subtly altering our default perspectives on particular topics. Cognitive advancement in both the sciences and the arts is not necessarily defined by the acquisition of new nuggets of isolated knowledge, but instead by the ways that reframing allows us to see aspects of a topic or item hitherto unacknowledged. Elgin argues that “by calling assumptions into question, and developing, entertaining, and invoking alternatives to them, we may come better to understand a domain. Reorganizing a domain in terms of novel kinds, highlighting hitherto ignored aspects of it, developing and deploying new approaches to it, and setting ourselves new challenges with respect to it are among the ways we advance understanding” (p. 13). Moreover, “cognitive advancement often consists in reconfiguration – in reorganizing a domain so that hitherto overlooked or underemphasized features, patterns, opportunities, and resources come to light” (p. 14). Elgin’s epistemology is not organized around the processes of knowledge acquisition, but the possibilities of knowledge assimilation: “Understanding comes, not through passively absorbing new information, but through incorporating it into a system of thought that is not, as it stands, quite ready to receive it” (p. 14). The aesthetic features of the arts (deployed also in the sciences) have the inherent ability to instil this form of understanding, changing the way one perceives a particular domain or concept. (Elgin uses the apocryphal story of Picasso’s explanation of his portrait of Stein as an example [pp. 15–16] – literally, the portrait looked nothing like her, but it highlighted aspects of her personality that changed the way people viewed her.) Because art, and to a degree science, traffic in metaphor, exemplification, and fiction, they have the ability to advance understanding in a cognitively valuable way.

Elgin, Catherine Z. (2002). “Art in the Advancement of Understanding.” *American Philosophical Journal* 39/1, 1–12.

Arguing for an epistemology similar to Baumberger (see above) – oriented more toward the idea of understanding than toward the acquisition of bits of propositional knowledge – Elgin points out that artworks have the potential to substantially advance understanding. She strongly supports the epistemic claim of aesthetic cognitivism and implies the aesthetic claim. Art and science are thus intertwined, building from aspects of Goodman’s programme (see below): “a conception of cognitive progress complex enough to account for the advancement of scientific understanding cannot avoid accommodating art...if we understand how art advances understanding, we gain insight into the growth of science as well” (p. 1). For Elgin, art advances understanding in a number of ways, but she focuses on reconfiguration, which she defines as “reorganizing a domain so that hitherto overlooked or underemphasized features, patterns, opportunities, and resources come to light” (p. 1). If the arts are able to reconfigure perceptions, “they enhance understanding

whether or not they disclose new facts” (p. 1). Her working definition of understanding “comes not through passively absorbing new information, but through incorporating it into a system of thought that is not...quite ready to receive it” (p. 2). Artworks and their specifically aesthetic features, like metaphor, allow viewers and hearers to reassess their view of the world and specific items, to reorganize particular domains, to reclassify items and experience that we might take for granted, and to see familiar objects and persons anew. The ways that artworks exemplify afford epistemic access to the particular feature that is exemplified: “a shift in emphasis changes the contours of the intellectual landscape” (p. 7). Works of art “problematize what had previously seemed unproblematic” (p. 9), leading to the raising of new questions and, eventually, new modes of understanding. In summation: “art often operated at the cutting edge of inquiry” (p. 12).³

Friend, Stacie (2007). “Narrating the Truth (More or Less).” Pages 35–49 in *Knowing Art: Essays in Aesthetics and Epistemology*. Edited by M. Kieran and D. M. Lopes. Dordrecht: Springer.

Focusing primarily on Gore Vidal’s *Lincoln: A Novel* (1984), Friend argues, against the grain of many strands of aesthetic cognitivism, that propositional knowledge transmitted by a novel like Vidal’s is cognitively valuable. Fiction is capable of transmitting propositional or historical knowledge, even though the presentation of facts in this way comes with epistemic risks. She ultimately argues that “narrative devices used by Vidal can *enhance* our ability to learn and retain factual information, despite also increasing the possibility that we will form false beliefs; that the information thereby attained is nothing like a list of trivial factoids; and that acquiring propositional knowledge from fiction...constitutes a difficult achievement” (p. 36). Taking on new propositions requires the integration of this information within pre-existing vectors of thought, requiring changes to our understanding of particular situations or the world. Even in light of the epistemic risks inherent in learning from fiction, novelistic devices actually have the ability to improve cognitive processes and learning. Strategies that Vidal deploys like changes in perspective, the reduction of exposition, and the presentation of contrasting viewpoints increase the possibility that readers will gain factual knowledge: “the use of techniques designed to make a work a better story...can actually *improve* a reader’s capacity to acquire propositional knowledge about historical persons and events...these narrative devices are cognitively valuable to the extent that they facilitate this process” (p. 43). For Friend, the “consideration of *Lincoln* indicates that there is no *inherent* tension between the cognitive purpose of transmitting

³ Elgin is a major philosopher of science who regularly draws upon the relationship of art and knowledge (in a Goodmanian framework) as an analogy for the ways that science yields knowledge. See also, Elgin, *Considered Judgment* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1996), which deeply engages the epistemological differences between knowledge and understanding (e.g. pp. 122–134) – a concept central to aesthetic cognitivism – even though she does not engage art and knowledge directly. See also Elgin, “Goodman, Nelson,” in *A Companion to Aesthetics*, ed. D. Cooper (Oxford: Blackwell, 1992), 175–177; Elgin, “Interpretation and Understanding,” *Erkenntnis* 52/2 (2000): 175–183; Elgin, “Construction and Cognition,” *Theoria* 65 (2009): 135–46; Elgin, “Exemplification, Idealization, and Scientific Understanding,” in *Fictions in Science: Philosophical Essays on Modeling and Idealization*, ed. M. Suárez (London: Routledge, 2009), 77–90; Elgin, “Fiction as Thought Experiment,” *Perspectives on Science* 22/2 (2014): 221–241; Elgin, “From Knowledge to Understanding,” in *Epistemology Futures*, ed. S. Hetherington (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2006), 199–215.

information and the aesthetic purpose of telling a good story (p. 49); it is just that telling a good story makes the transmission of knowledge a more epistemically risky proposition.⁴

Gaut, Berys (2007). *Art, Emotion and Ethics*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.

This book explores the ethical implications of artworks, drawing on aesthetic cognitivism to argue, in part, that “the arts, high and low, can express and develop our understanding of who we are and what matters to us” (p. 6). Gaut evaluates ethical values in terms of the attitudes that a work of art manifests, not its measurable effects on real audiences. He evaluates what a work *aims* to do. The ethical qualities of an artwork can be discussed in both cognitive and affective terms, but these distinctions sometimes collapse for Gaut since “emotions are cognitively important when experienced from the correct perspective” (p. 17). The discussion also moves explicitly into the realm of aesthetic cognitivism (pp. 133–202) when he examines the forms of knowledge that artworks can transmit with special attention to the cognitive value of imagination. This discussion leads him to argue that the aesthetic value of artworks is at least in part determined by their ability to convey (non-trivial) knowledge and that aesthetic cognitivism supports his larger programme of aesthetic ethicism.

Gaut, Berys (2006). “Art and Cognition.” Pages 115–126 in *Contemporary Debates in Aesthetics and the Philosophy of Art*. Edited by M. Kieran. Oxford: Blackwell.

This article builds from Gaut’s 2003 article in *The Oxford Handbook of Aesthetics*, explicitly laying out and defending aesthetic cognitivism (his article is followed by an exposition on non-cognitivism by Peter Lamarque). Here Gaut lays out the two conditions for aesthetic cognitivism: (1) an epistemic claim that art has the ability to teach viewers non-trivial information and (2) an aesthetic claim that a work’s capacity for knowledge transfer makes up a part of its aesthetic or artistic value. Aesthetic cognitivism stands at the junction of these two claims. The article then proceeds to analytically defend these claims, since both are required for the theory as Gaut strictly construes it, pointing out nuances in the different possible forms of knowledge available in artworks (focusing mostly on literature) and the possible avenues for aesthetic evaluation. Gaut points especially to common-sense evaluative language and emotional response as cognitive merits that partially determine artistic value.

Gaut, Berys (2003). “Art and Knowledge.” Pages 436–450 in *The Oxford Handbook of Aesthetics*. Edited by J. Levinson. Oxford: Oxford University Press.

Gaut’s couches his exposition of the relationship between art and knowledge explicitly in terms of aesthetic cognitivism. His discussion hinges on two questions: the first is epistemic – “can art give its audience knowledge?” – and the second, assuming an affirmative response to the first, is aesthetic – “if art has the capacity to give knowledge, does this enhance its value as art?” (p. 436). Addressing the first question, the article begins by exploring the many types of knowledge that art has

⁴ See also, Friend, “Believing in Stories,” in *Aesthetics and the Sciences of Mind*, ed. G. Currie et al. (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2014), 227–247.

been said to impart to readers/viewers/listeners, and by partaking in an extended critique of anti-cognitivist positions (pp. 430–444). But Gaut views his second question as more interesting, arguing that although not every “epistemic merit of an artwork is an aesthetic merit...it is enough for the truth of cognitivism that this is sometimes so” (p. 445). He concludes that while the epistemic claim is easier to uphold than many think, the aesthetic claim of cognitivist approaches to art may well be harder.⁵

Gibson, John (2008). “Cognitivism and the Arts.” *Philosophy Compass* 3/4, 573–589.

This article examines the analytical and conceptual underpinnings of cognitivist approaches to the arts, identifying the four main objections of anti-cognitivists and mapping the responses to these objections embodied in prominent cognitivist approaches. Gibson argues that the stakes of the discussion are whether the arts have a place at the cultural table alongside philosophy, science, history, and journalism, and he seeks to preliminarily disconnect the aesthetic question from the cognitive – it is premature to evaluate the aesthetic value of artworks based on their cognitive merits (see Gaut 2007) if we do not understand what we mean by cognitive value. For Gibson, the question of cognitivism is twofold: we must demonstrate that art can transmit some kind of knowledge and show that “what we claim to have learnt from an artwork is a point, insight, or truth, *that is to be found in the artwork itself*” (p. 575). In mapping objections and responses to cognitive approaches, Gibson prefers, not without reservation, “neo-cognitive” approaches that instil understanding as opposed to propositional forms of knowledge: “art, rather than offering knowledge of the world, is of value because of how it transforms the knowledge we *already* possess” (p. 585). The main problem to this approach is that this form of knowledge is difficult to quantify.

Goldie, Peter (2007). “Conceptual Art and Knowledge.” Pages 157–170 in *Philosophy and Conceptual Art*. Edited by P. Goldie and E. Schellekens. Oxford: Oxford University Press.

Goldie argues that, although conceptual art rejects the aesthetic and traditional forms of artistic media, it retains cognitive value. The cognitive value of conceptual art is not tied directly to its deployment of aesthetic features, but to the idea behind the work, even if that work is discourse-dependent in some way. An aesthetic cognitive approach to conceptual art must differ from other traditional forms of the visual arts, but the possible cognitive value of specific instantiations of conceptual art means that it remains a valid medium for aesthetic cognitivism. Responding to the argument of James Young that conceptual art does not provide non-trivial forms of knowledge, Goldie points out that the primary value of conceptual art is not aesthetic, but cognitive. This cognitive value takes the form of “what-it-is-like knowledge” (using Santiago Sierra’s *Space Closed by Corrugated Metal* as an example) that can then in turn “reveal significant self-knowledge” (p. 164), or, in other words, understanding. More significantly, however, conceptual art can “help us to *think about* certain difficult philosophical ideas” (using Michael Craig-Martin’s *An Oak Tree* [1973] as

⁵ Gaut is a major theorist and proponent of aesthetic cognitivism, especially as it related to ethics. See also Gaut, “The Ethical Criticism of Art,” in *Aesthetics and Ethics: Essays at the Intersection*, ed. J. Levinson (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1998), 182–203; Gaut. “Art and Ethics,” in *The Routledge Companion to Aesthetics*, 3rd ed., ed. B. Gaut and D. M. Lopes (London: Routledge, 2013), 394–403.

an example), and this is achieved “*in an artistic way...this is their cognitive value*” (p. 167). Goldie does not limit this cognitive value to propositional knowledge, but to a more expansive idea of self-understanding.

Goldie, Peter (2007). “Charley’s World: Narratives of Aesthetic Experience.” Pages 83–94 in *Knowing Art: Essays in Aesthetics and Epistemology*. Edited by M. Kieran and D. M. Lopes. Dordrecht, Springer.

Examining the fictional aesthetic experience of the character Charley in Somerset Maugham’s *Christmas Holiday* (1939), Goldie explores the complexities of aesthetic experience from the explicit perspective of aesthetic cognitivism. Testing the supposition that perceiving an artwork can help a viewer or reader “gain an understanding of the world – of reality outside or beyond the work itself” (p. 83), Goldie analyses both the cognitive changes to the Charley as he engages a still life by Chardin hung in the Louvre on a trip to Paris, explained to him by a Russian prostitute, and the possible cognitive consequences for readers of the work that narrates this encounter. The experience enhances Charley’s view of the world, offering him insight into the reality of human suffering and the complexities of life, giving readers insight into the aesthetic world of a fictional character. For Goldie, artworks offer “new worldly understanding” (p. 83) and alter aesthetic dispositions, providing “a different way of appreciating art works” (p. 83). The meta-analysis of the article highlights for Goldie the cognitive value of a critic who can explain a possible interpretation or experience of the piece, like the prostitute that explains the Chardin to Charley. In this case, the literary work functions as a critic for experiencing the Chardin (should it actually exist outside the world of the literary work). In this way, art can mediate art, limiting the necessity of direct aesthetic experience as the only way to gain knowledge and understanding from artworks. Learned guides – be they fictional prostitutes or real artworks – are valuable to aesthetic experience. For Goldie, art takes us beyond “dry propositional knowledge” (p. 89); “there is considerable space for a reader of *Christmas Holiday* [for example] to use his imagination to a greater or lesser extent in order to gain an understanding of the world, and to develop a changed aesthetic disposition” (pp. 89–90).

Goldie, Peter, and Elisabeth Schellekens (2010). *Who’s Afraid of Conceptual Art?* London: Routledge.

This volume contextualises conceptual art within a larger discourse related to the art world and art appreciation. Goldie and Schellekens argue that conceptual art (characterised by the idea idea) is not actually anti-aesthetic, but that it is the idea of the work that has aesthetic merit, not its material form (if they exist at all). Shaping their argument in terms of aesthetic idealism, they argue that the aesthetic of the idea of the work is one way to measure is artistic value. They are careful to distinguish between artistic, aesthetic, cognitive, and emotive values, the latter three aspects being a subset of the first. Within this larger discussion, they emphasise the cognitive value of conceptual art, even if a work is discourse dependent. Artworks, including conceptual ones, are valuable in part because and they yield or in some way convey knowledge, both propositional knowledge and experiences that improve or deepen our knowledge, intellectual skills, and virtues – in short, our understanding of humanity and the world (pp. 123–129). For the authors, “conceptual art, like

traditional art, can have cognitive value by *showing* us things about the world” (p. 127). Artworks facilitate knowledge and are cognitively valuable again and again. The “idea of art – needless to say *good* art – helps us to appreciate our own humanity in a special way. That is what they are meant to do” (p. 132).⁶

Goldman, Alan J. (2004). “Evaluating Art.” Pages 93–108 in *The Blackwell Guide to Aesthetics*. Edited by P. Kivy. Oxford: Blackwell.

Although not explicitly advocating for aesthetic cognitivism, Goldman argues that the ways in which artworks engage cognitive processes are central to evaluating the aesthetic value of a work or class of works. Building a case for constructing an “ideal critic” (pp. 98–101), Goldman suggests that great works of art engage many different human faculties, including the cognitive: “Great works of art...engage us on every mental level simultaneously. In them we perceptually appreciate pure sound or color, perceptually-cognitively and perhaps affectively grasp formal structure, cognitively apprehend thematic or symbolic contents and historical import, emotionally react to expression, imaginatively expand upon the material present before us, and perhaps even volitionally share in pursuing the aesthetic goals of the works” (p. 101). Goldman’s theory of art evaluation is not based on a work’s capacity for transmitting knowledge, but it does stand parallel to a robust aesthetic cognitivism insofar as artworks engage and expand human cognitive abilities. Moreover, like other cognitivist approaches, Goldman acknowledges that the moral dimensions of artworks are aesthetically relevant (p. 104).⁷

Goodman, Nelson (1978). *Ways of Worldmaking*. Indianapolis: Hackett.

Building on much of his previous work, including *Languages of Art*, Goodman explores the ways in which perceptions of the world are forged and remade, focusing specifically on the arts, sciences and issues of style, including quotation, perception, and truth. Undergirding these studies is the idea that artworks and the sciences create worlds because they transmit knowledge that is then incorporated into human understanding in conversation with the interest, insights, and experiences of individuals. The knowledge that artworks transmit through their use of symbols and symbols systems make worlds, shaping human perception and understanding: “a major thesis of this book is that the arts must be taken no less seriously than the sciences as modes of discovery, creation, and enlargement of knowledge in the broad sense of advancement of understanding” (p. 102). Goodman does not examine whether the value of the transmitted knowledge impinges on the aesthetic values of artworks, but he argues that all artworks transmit knowledge in different ways, building from his technical and complex philosophical system of denotation, expression, and exemplification first presented in *Languages of Art*.

Goodman, Nelson (1968). *Languages of Art: An Approach to a Theory of Symbols*. New York: Bobbs-Merril.

⁶ Schellekens and Goldie explore these issues further in a number of contexts. See Schellekens, “The Aesthetic Value of Ideas,” in *Philosophy and Conceptual Art*, ed. P. Goldie and E. Schellekens (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 71–91; in the same volume Goldie, “Conceptual Art and Knowledge,” 157–170.

⁷ See also Goldman, “Representation in Art,” in *The Oxford Handbook of Aesthetics*, ed. J. Levinson (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2003), 192–210.

In this foundational and highly technical work on the ways that symbols and symbol systems signify, Goodman makes a number of arguments germane to aesthetic cognitivism, although he prefers to speak of “aesthetic experience.” He points in particular to the deep affinities between science and art, arguing that the aesthetic merits of artworks and other forms of symbolization can be judged by the ways in which they achieve their cognitive purposes – “the delicacy of its discriminations and the aptness of its allusions...the way it works in grasping, exploring, and informing the work...how it analyzes, sorts, orders, and organizes...how it participates in the making, manipulation, retention, and transformation of knowledge” (p. 258). The density of symbol systems means that their aesthetic value and ability to communicate knowledge are never exhausted. The purpose of art is effectively cognitive because other responses to art, like emotion, function cognitively in the way that humans perceive aesthetic objects and allow these objects to inform and change their views of the world. Goodman’s aesthetic writings function as one of the primary philosophical underpinnings of cognitivist thought.⁸

Graham, Gordon (2005). *Philosophy of the Arts: An Introduction to Aesthetics*. 3rd edition. New York: Routledge.

This book explores what it is about art that allows one to judge the value of particular artworks. Graham argues that although art may be pleasurable, beautiful, and engage emotions, the characteristic that makes artworks distinctively valuable is their ability to function as a source for knowledge and understanding. Art need not only be valued because of its cognitive value, but its cognitive value expressed through artistic imagination conveys knowledge about the world and human experience, placing it on par with science and philosophy. After devoting an entire programmatic chapter to aesthetic cognitivism (pp. 52–75), Graham then explores the ways that multiple art forms – sonic art, visual arts, literary arts, architecture, modern art – inculcate and articulate forms of knowledge in their own ways. This book represents a clarion call for aesthetic cognitivism as a normative philosophy of the arts, building on Graham’s substantial track record of related studies.

Graham, Gordon (1996). “Aesthetic Cognitivism and the Literary Arts.” *Journal of Aesthetic Education* 30/1, 1–17.

This article examines the prominent place of the literary arts, especially poetry and narrative, in cognitive theories of artistic value. Graham defends his version of aesthetic cognitivism by arguing that when the artistic features native to poetry (e.g. sound, stress, grammatical distortion, accumulation of imagery, multi-layered language) and narrative (e.g. story construction, perspectival play) are integral to their message, they function as forms of understanding. For Graham, aesthetic cognitivism is the view that “art at its best is a form of understanding” (p. 1), that

⁸ Goodman’s analytical approach to art remains central to many forms of aesthetic cognitivism. See also Goodman, “How Buildings Mean,” in *Philosophy of the Visual Arts*, ed. P. A. Alpers (New York: Oxford University Press, 1989), 248–257 (critiqued by Maurice Lagueux, “Nelson Goodman and Architecture,” *Assemblage* 35 [1998]: 18–35); Goodman, “When is Art?” in *The Arts and Cognition*, ed. D. Perkins and B. Leondar (Baltimore: The Johns Hopkins University Press, 1977), 11–19; Goodman, *Of Mind and Other Matters* (London: Harvard University Press, 1984).

“artistic literature aims to be that which it represents and directs the mind of the spectator to a heightened apprehension of experience in symbolic form” (p. 6). Aesthetic cognitivism is a normative in that it does not seek to determine the essential substance of what constitutes art, but to provide a criterion by which to distinguish serious from less serious artworks. Artworks are judged to be of greater value and import when they “direct the mind,” acting as a kind of “poetic revelation” (p. 10) that cannot easily be reduced to paraphrase. The value of art does not lie in its ability to accurately reflect reality, but in its capacity to reframe, shape, disturb, or otherwise direct perceptions of human experience.

Graham, Gordon (1995). “Learning from Art.” *British Journal of Aesthetics* 35/1, 26–37.

In this article, Graham programmatically lays out his theory of aesthetic cognitivism, leaning heavily on Nelson Goodman to argue against common objections embodied in this case in the anti-cognitivism of Douglas Morgan. He argues that artworks can be evaluated by their ability to inculcate understanding; artworks are cognitive insofar as they “direct the mind,” not necessarily insofar as they communicate propositional truths. Understanding may be deficient but, unlike propositions, they cannot be negated. For Graham, “the principle virtue of aesthetic cognitivism is its ability to provide a better explanation of the value and significance of art and to explain ways in which people actually think and talk about it” (p. 28). Directed by imagination, artworks can lead to deepen human understanding of their experiences, perception, and intellectual reflections. Importantly, however, aesthetic cognitivism does not distinguish “true art” from non-art, but instead allows us to evaluate artworks in relation to other artefacts that claim to be art. The aesthetic value of an artwork is determined foremost, but not entirely, by their ability to direct the mind. We look to art “to see reality afresh, or even, to become properly aware of it for the first time” (p. 34).

Graham, Gordon (1994). “Value and the Visual Arts.” *Journal of Aesthetic Education* 28/4, 1–14.

In a larger effort to find a “deeper” evaluative criterion for judging the value of visual arts, Graham argues that cognitive values – the ability of artworks to embody or function as forms of understanding – are the features that distinguish art of great import from more trivial pieces. Even though representation, attention to the visual, and the level of pleasure that artworks inculcate in viewers informed judgements of the value of artworks, the ability of artworks to enhance the ways that humans understand the world and their experiences through artistic techniques and processes of imagination is the chief aspect that leads to high valuations of artworks: “the best visual art enhances our understanding of experience” (pp. 1–2). Graham again emphasises that the value of art is not in the accuracy with which captures our experiences of the world, but in the way that it “enhances our understanding by providing us with new and original images and perspectives through which experience can be viewed afresh...the principal purpose of painting is not to capture our preartistic visual experience, but to get us to attend to it in certain ways” (p. 9).⁹

⁹ Graham is a prominent proponent of aesthetic cognitivism and this perspective often appears in essays that do not directly take on this in an analytical way. See e.g. Graham, “Architecture,” in *The Oxford Handbook of Aesthetics*, ed. J. Levinson (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2003), 555–571 (esp. 567–569).

Gupta, Anoop (2010). "Rethinking Aristotle's Poetics: The Pragmatic Aspects of Art and Knowledge." *Journal of Aesthetic Education* 44/4, 60–80.

Gupta works to extend Aristotelian understandings of the relationship between art and knowledge by emphasizing the ethical implications of artworks, grounded in a pragmatist view of the role of business broadly understood. For Gupta, the "ethical implications of art and the pragmatic aspects of knowledge are interchangeable" (p. 61). Knowledge and ethics are closely linked because art functions in a number of ways that is relevant to each: it may "correct our affective or cognitive responses to the suffering of others," "reinforce the ethical values we have," "teach us to behave virtuously," "bring about an acceptance of moral luck," or "help us to fit into society" (p. 69). In essence "art may alter the understanding we have of our lives" (p. 69). The epistemological, psychological, and transformative aspects of art allow it to function as a medium of relevant knowledge and understanding (p. 70). In this way, Gupta's analysis affirms the epistemic claim of aesthetic cognitivism and implicitly upholds the aesthetic argument that a work's success in transmitting knowledge is closely related to its value as art. Art is "part of an ethical program, since, under the correct conditions, it contributes to our self-development" (p. 71). And for Gupta these conditions are closely tied to and contextualised by forms of business, which he defines broadly as finding a way through life, negotiating culture, and partaking in economic activity (p. 75).

Honegger, Gottfried (2000). *Kunst is eine Frucht vom Baume der Erkenntnis*. Munich: Chorus.

In this terse book that explores the purposes of art (*Art is a Fruit from the Trees of Understanding*), Honegger asserts (for he does assert and generalize more than argue in this kind of manifesto) that a major goal of artworks is to make known things unseen – to transmit knowledge about self, culture, and the world. In addition to his call for artists to create within their local and regional cultures, eschewing a universal Western culture, he points out that the game of art (*das Spiel, das heißt die Kunst*) "belongs to the development of humans" (*es gehört zur Entwicklung des Menschen*), instilling understanding (p. 15). Art yields knowledge in that it makes the unconscious visible (*Kunst macht Unbewußtes sichtbar*), it is a "synthesis between feelings and cognition (*zwischen Fühlen und Denken*), it is a "Form von Kommunikation" (p. 15). Moreover, "through art we understand others, we understand ourselves" (*Durch die Kunst erkennen wir den Anderen, erkennen wir uns selbst*) (p. 19). Honegger does not utilize the analytical language of aesthetic cognitivism, but he clearly holds to the idea that the artistic value of a work is closely tied to its ability to communicate.

Hopkins, Robert (2017). "Imaginative Understanding, Affective Profiles, and the Expression of Emotion in Art." *Journal of Aesthetics and Art Criticism* 75/4, 363–374.

Rehabilitating Collingwood's view on emotion by contextualising it within the broader contours of his programme, Hopkins argues that artworks are affective insofar as they offer access to emotion and that this experience instils forms of understanding. This does not mean that expression defines art (à la Collingwood), but

that art can promote (among other things) such understanding. The type of understanding accessible through the experience of emotion instigated by a work of art is not intellectual or conceptual but instead connected to human self-perception. As Hopkins argues “art can play an intelligible role in the generation of this understandings, and...doing so might indeed be where a significant part of its value lies” (p. 364). Affective experience leads to synthesis: “grasping how my feeling will alter given possible changes in my circumstance or inner condition gives me the sort of purchase on it that can help me decide whether to allow it to influence my conduct. This purchase...surely counts as understanding” (p. 368). Hopkins dubs this form of understanding “imaginative understanding.” Although focusing expressly on the role of emotion to stimulate the imagination through art, Hopkins’ engagement with Collingwood constitutes an aesthetic cognitive approach because it connects the valuation of an artwork to its ability to inculcate understanding. He brings Collingwood’s expressivism into contact with aesthetic cognitivism, subordinating emotion to understanding.

Ihringová, Katarína (2017). “Art and Knowledge, or How Cognitive Science Affects Art Theory.” Pages 53–68 in *The Cognitive Aspects of Aesthetics Experience – Introduction*. Spectrum Slovakia 15. Edited by A. Démuth. Frankfurt am Main: Peter Lang.

Ihringová argues for the incorporation of neuroscientific and neuroaesthetic research into the broader philosophical discussion relating to aesthetics and the value of artworks. In this context, she adopts the idea that art is a form of cognition, placing her perspective within the broader stream of aesthetic cognitivism. Comparing the philosophies of Freedberg and Lamarque, she emphasises the aesthetic cognitive aspects of their argument, even though Lamarque is a noted anti-cognitivist. For Ihringová, the affective aspects of aesthetic experience qualify as cognitive features, even though she may overstates the case when it comes to authorial intention: “we can get to the intent of the author through emotional reaction; we undergo a direct personal experience with the work of art and take in the emotional content of it. According to Freedberg, all of these aspects are crucial for cognitive knowledge, especially for a knowledge of art” (pp. 61–62). This approach raises also a number of questions, for her, directly related to aesthetic cognitivism, like “is the cognitive value of the work of art identical to its artistic value? Do true representation and true depiction guarantee cognitive value?” (p. 58). The combination of neuroscience and philosophy can begin to answer some of these lingering questions.

Jelinek, Alana (2013). *This is Not Art: Activism and Other ‘Non-Art.’* New York: I.B. Tauris.

Jelinek offers a wide-ranging discussion on the value of art as discipline (focusing primarily on the London art world), describing and critiquing the insipid neoliberalism that she sees as endemic to the modern art world. Market value, deregulation, and privatization – three key aspects of neoliberal ideology – are too often implicitly and unthinkingly embraced by modern artists, critics, and buyers. There is little critique of neoliberalism because there has been no obvious alternative to markets to determine the value of artworks. Jelinek offers a concrete alternative, arguing that the art as a discipline is defined by its knowledge-making ability, an argument that coheres in many ways with aesthetic cognitivism. Art is one of many

“knowledge-forming disciplines” (p. 119), and this understanding “helps us to articulate what is art and what is not art in a way that open and honest, as well describing what is good art in endogenous disciplinary terms instead of...through neoliberal market values” (p. 120). The ability of a work to transmit knowledge or tell a story increases its aesthetic value as a work of art. Art is thus akin to philosophy, archaeology, or anthropology in its ability to make and pass on knowledge: “in other words, like other disciplinary forms of new knowledge/storytelling, art may produce the kind of surprises that profoundly alter our established way of seeing” (p. 146). Art can be judged in part by its ability to inculcate understanding, and the knowledge-forming aspect of art is essential to cultural critiques of neoliberalism.

John, Eileen (2013). “Art and Knowledge.” Pages 384–393 in *The Routledge Companion to Aesthetics*. 3rd edition. Edited by B. Gaut and D. M. Lopes. London: Routledge.

In this overview on the relationship between art and knowledge, John points to a number of ways that art has been described as a source of knowledge, but she also describes a number of ways that artworks may expand the cognitive capacities of viewers, offer cognitive value that does not constitute knowledge, and contribute to “theory-building.” She also acknowledges the multivalent complexity of art, noting that it is not necessarily a “knowledge-dedicated domain” (p. 385). Nonetheless, artworks can provide avenues for gaining (sometimes banal) propositional knowledge (knowledge of art history, knowledge of facts, e.g. that an artist knew about daffodils), experiential knowledge (e.g. imaginative extension, relevance of emotion), and knowledge in the form of understanding (e.g. cultivation of intellectual virtues, engagement with self, experience, and art). This latter form impacts our understanding of the world, suggesting that “cognitive value may lie in a positive impact on abilities to do such things as perceive delicately, recognize patterns, find contrasts, screen out insignificant detail and be conceptually flexible and open to new information” (p. 389). An example she uses is narrative fictions ability to instil moral capacity and self-understanding. Importantly for John, knowledge gained from artworks, of whatever kind, must be related to the aesthetic features of the work as art.

John, Eileen (1998). “Fiction and Conceptual Knowledge: Philosophical Thought in Literary Context.” *Journal of Aesthetics and Art Criticism* 56/4, 331–348.

Arguing against the construal of the relationship between philosophy and literature proposed by Peter Lamarque and Stein Haugom Olsen (*Truth, Fiction, and Literature*, Oxford: Clarendon, 1994), John carefully suggests that readers’ responses to fiction “can involve the pursuit of conceptual knowledge” (p. 331). It is not the text or the author that instil this knowledge, but it is something cultivated by the reader based on their life experiences and the pre-existing concepts they bring to a literary encounter: there is a “compelling connection between the nature of our experience with fiction and the acquisition of conceptual knowledge” (p. 331). Moreover, part of the literary value of a work lies in its ability to shape concepts, an idea similar to the cultivation of understanding. John notes that it is “literarily valuable for a work to challenge us conceptually, to push us to examine what our concepts mean and what we use them to do: the capacity to inspire that kind of

activity is one of the things that can make a work of fiction interesting and good. In that way literary value overlaps with philosophical value” (p. 331). John’s approach to conceptual knowledge and literature satisfies both the epistemic and aesthetic aspects of aesthetic cognitivism – depending on the reader, literature can yield conceptual knowledge and its ability to do so increases its aesthetic appeal. To conclude with John’s own words: “works of fiction, rather than providing new ways of thinking, sometimes lead us to a place of obscurity or untested areas in entrenched ways of thinking. In getting us there, the work provides a context in which we can think fruitfully about the conceptual issues raised, where the line of inquiry we pursue is integrated into our efforts to judge the characters and events” (p. 340).¹⁰

Jones, Peter (1975). *Philosophy and the Novel: Philosophical Aspects of Middlemarch, Anna Karenina, The Brothers Karamazov, A la recherche du temps perdu, and the Methods of Criticism*. Oxford: Clarendon.

Although not directly concerned with aesthetic cognitivism and theories of knowledge in literature, Jones’ positivist theory of interpretation based on close readings of the works noted in his subtitle assumes a cognitivist perspective, demonstrating how an underlying cognitivism might contribute to hermeneutics. Jones views the works he analyses as arbiters of philosophical knowledge. For example, *Middlemarch* emphasises the role of the imagination, which allows us to make sense of the world, expand beyond our immediate experiences, and empathize with others, while *The Brothers Karamazov* sets forth an elaborate and explicit moral doctrine that may or may not impinge on our own moral choices. The philosophies embedded in these works also function as philosophies of literature. To this end, literature itself can become a philosophical tool to facilitate its own self-understanding as an arbiter of knowledge.

Kieran, Matthew (2006). “Art, Morality and Ethics: On the (Im)Moral Character of Art Works and the Inter-Relations to Artistic Value.” *Philosophy Compass* 1/2, 129–143.

Arguing against what he calls aestheticism – the idea that only the explicitly aesthetic features of an artwork (its harmony, complexity, coherence, and so forth) determine its value – Kieran makes a case of ethicism, which he defines as the view that the moral merits or demerits of a work contribute in part to its artistic value. Tracing the view that artworks can transmit knowledge back to Aristotle and Hume, he notes that “we sometimes appreciate and value works in terms of their insight and understanding. One of the most important ways this is so is in terms of moral understanding” (p. 131). Kieran’s ethicism is predicated on a form of aesthetic cognitivism, since he presupposes that artworks are cognitively significant in the ways that they are constructed as art. Making cognitively significant claims of some form increases the artistic value of a work. Answering the question “what is art particularly good at?” Kieran answers that it can use “artistic means to engage the imagination and thereby see things in a new light, make new connections, convey insights and get us to respond emotionally...respect for cognitive value is internal to artistic practice(s)...where a work tries via artistic means to convey insight or get us to understand states of affairs and attitude a certain way then the cognitive content of

¹⁰ See also John, “Literature and the Idea of Morality,” in *A Companion to the Philosophy of Literature*, ed. G. L. Hagberg and W. Jost (Oxford: Wiley Blackwell, 2015), 285–299.

the work is relevant to its value as art. This will often include, though is clearly not exhausted by, its moral character” (p. 132). Acknowledging also other cognitive values of art beyond the moral, and further nuancing an ethicist perspective, Kieran’s arguments are firmly ground in a broader aesthetic cognitivism. This observation is relevant for a number of approaches to the relationship of morality and the arts (see Gaut, Nussbaum, and Carroll, for example).

Kieran, Matthew (1997). “Aesthetic Value: Beauty, Ugliness and Incoherence.” *Philosophy* 72/281, 383–399.

Arguing that the ugly, grotesque, and incoherent can maintain aesthetic qualities associated with pleasure (although, this is perhaps a negative reality in terms of ethics), Kieran distinguishes between *aesthetic* and *cognitive* value, both of which work together to determine the *artistic* value of artworks. It might be argued that some Dadaist works, *Un Chien Andalou*, punk, or other grotesque and incoherent art forms are valued, in part, not for “any putative aesthetic qualities but rather the cognitive attitudes represented or explored through them” (p. 387). The ugly and grotesque challenge and frustrate attitudes, desires, expectation, and beliefs, leading to new cognitive insights, at least as they pertain to “what certain human possibilities would or could be like” (p. 387). Even if these works lack aesthetic value, their cognitive merits enhance their artistic value. Although Kieran rejects the idea that the artistic value of the ugly lies exclusively in its cognitive merits, concluding that ugliness is an aesthetic value that is parasitic in relation to particular artistic traditions, the cognitive value of these works remains as part of a larger nexus of artistic value.

Kieran, Matthew (1996). “Art, Imagination, and the Cultivation of Morals.” *Journal of Aesthetics and Art Criticism* 54/4, 337–351.

Kieran’s article argues for ethicism in relation to the connection between art and morality as opposed to aestheticism. He recognises an inherent connection between aesthetic judgements about artworks and moral judgements; a prominent aesthetic feature of the visual and literary arts is their ability to engage the imagination to better understand the world. Good artworks promote “imaginative understanding” of moral sensibilities: “an artwork may encourage us to consider and to become open to people, dilemmas, and states of affairs we might otherwise have dismissed out of hand”; artworks “may help us to learn through imaginatively vivifying the commitments and consequences of applying certain moral principles” (p. 338). The ability of an artwork to lead to moral reflection in the form of imagining increases its aesthetic value as an artwork. For Kieran art “distinctly promotes the form of understanding required for moral understanding. Art can widen, develop, and deepen our imaginative understandings of ourselves, others, and our world. *Good* artworks will do so for most people, across time and cultures, far better than mediocre ones. *Great* artworks are those which may promote the imaginative understanding of many people, across many times and cultures” (p. 348, emphasis added). An ethicist approach also allows for complex cases, where the moral imaginings prescribed by the work decrease its aesthetic value despite its other positive features. (Kieran points to the anti-Semitism in Pound’s *Cantos* and Riefenstahl’s *Triumph of the Will*.) Overall, Kieran argues that an artwork’s ability to transmit moral knowledge, in the

form of imaginative understanding, is relevant to the aesthetic valuation of said work.¹¹

Laner, Iris (2015). "Practical Aesthetic Knowledge: Goodman and Husserl on the Possibilities of Learning by Aesthetic Practices." *Estetika: The Central European Journal of Aesthetics* 12/2, 164–189.

Combining observations from Goodman and Husserl, Laner investigates the relationship between aesthetic experience and practical knowledge, meaning knowledge about how to do something, a concept sometimes summarised in neoliberal corporate jargon as "transferable skills." Her approach helps "to deepen the comprehension of aesthetic experience as a learning activity, a practice that can help to generate competent and critical epistemic agents who are not only equipped with concrete propositional knowledge, but who also have at their disposal the practical means to enhance their appreciation and to reflect critically upon existing knowledge" (pp. 165–166). Creatively combining both cognitivist and phenomenological approaches, Laner argues that aesthetic experiences are "experiential spaces" where people can improve skills associated with interpretation and symbol systems, where they can attend to objects in ways that improve their capacities of perception, and where they can empathically judge their own experiences against other possibilities. Artworks yield knowledge that allows for the acquisition of skills, and this capacity influences the work's aesthetic value.

Lopes, Dominic McIver (2005). *Sight and Sensibility: Seeing Pictures*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.

Within a larger discussion of evaluation in the visual arts, primarily painting and photography, Lopes directly addresses the cognitivist–autonomist debate (chapter 4), offering a deeply nuanced and original unpicking of the philosophical issues at stake. His conclusions align with aesthetic cognitivism insofar as they recognize that "many pictures are cognitive tools: they extend the power of thought...empowering thinking by showing us how things look" (p. 130). Moreover, the cognitive merits or demerits of a work are tied to the work's aesthetic merits and demerits, among other avenues of evaluation. Distinguishing multiple forms of knowledge, Lopes argues that the cognitive value most directly tied to aesthetic evaluation is that of intellectual virtue development, specifically the cultivation of the skill of "fine observation" (pp. 147–151). For Lopes, "fine observation is one intellectual virtue fostered or reinforced by looking at pictures, and it is a cognitive merit in pictures that boost fine observation. They are training wheels, albeit sometimes very sophisticated training wheels, that enable thinkers to hone their cognitive abilities" (p. 150). In other words, the visual arts are cognitively valuable because they inculcate cognitive skill, not primarily in their ability to transmit varying forms of propositional knowledge. Nonetheless, Lopes' argument stands within aesthetic cognitivism because it links (in some cases)

¹¹ See also Kieran, "Value of Art," in *The Routledge Companion to Aesthetics*, 3rd ed., ed. B. Gaut and D. M. Lopes (London: Routledge, 2013), 289–298; Kieran, "Art and Morality," in *The Oxford Handbook of Aesthetics*, ed. J. Levinson (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2003), 451–470; Kieran, *Revealing Art* (London: Routledge, 2005), esp. 99–147; Kieran, "The Impoverishment of Art," *British Journal of Aesthetics* 35/1 (1995): 15–26; Kieran, "Aesthetic Knowledge," in *The Routledge Companion to Epistemology*, ed. S. Bernecker and D. Pritchard (London: Routledge, 2010), 369–379.

the development of virtue and aesthetic evaluation: “some attributions of cognitive merit to pictures imply aesthetic evaluations” (p. 155).

Lyas, Colin (1997). *Aesthetics*. London: UCL Press.

In this witty and engaging introduction to philosophical aesthetics, Lyas ultimately concludes that the issues of morality and truth are deeply entwined with the aesthetic value of artworks, especially narrative literature: “not only are truth and morality central to our lives, so any art involved with them inherits some of this centrality, but in addition we persistently find the claim that art is in some important and special way a path to truth and understanding” (pp. 189–190). Although he does not draw on the technical language often associated with aesthetic cognitivism (cf. Gaut and Baumberger), Lyas assumes that art can transmit knowledge, especially moral knowledge of the self, and that this engagement between the moral vision of a work and the viewer is part of the work’s value as art. Artworks are expressive and revelatory, which Lyas also describes as “epiphanic”; they have the power to “change in part or in whole one’s way of seeing something” (p. 200), to give us “a way of expressing what we already inchoately knew we were” (p. 201), to help us to “see what we have done” (p. 201), using Nathan’s prophetic interrogation of David in 2 Samuel 12 as an example. Imaginative narrative offers knowledge of possibilities “implicit in the morality to which we have subscribed” (p. 202). There is a tension in the revelatory or epiphanic view of art and knowledge: “on the one hand we feel something has been *revealed* to us: yet, on the other, we also feel we already knew it” (p. 202). In any case, and regardless of the puzzles and issues involved in this epiphanic approach, works of art may instil understanding insofar as they help us to articulate what it is that we already inchoately knew to be the case. In this way, Lyas’ aesthetics nest within aesthetic cognitivism because he acknowledges art’s ability to transmit knowledge and assumes that this ability is one of the measures for evaluating artistic value.

Maioli, Roger (2014). “David Hume, Literary Cognitivism, and the Truth of the Novel.” *SEL: Studies in English Literature 1500–1900* 54/3, 625–648.

Maioli’s article focuses primarily on evaluating the relationship between David Hume’s empiricism and anti-cognitivist approaches to literature (especially poetry and the novel) in the context of the eighteenth-century development of the novel. Although acknowledging that Hume is explicitly anti-cognitivist, Maioli finds important philosophical nuances in his writings. Hume’s own reliance on thought experiments is case in point, suggesting that he can locate cognitive value in fictions, however contrived. For Maioli, there is space within Hume’s work to locate a literary cognitivism – the idea that fiction can be a source of knowledge qua literature. Hume’s epistemology does not foreclose the possibility of a more flexible and expansive aesthetic cognitivism, at least when it comes to literature.

Marples, Roger (2017). “Art, Knowledge and Moral Understanding.” *Ethics and Education* 12/2, 243–258.

Engaging closely with cognitivist philosophers of art (e.g. Currie, Kieran, Carroll, Nussbaum, and others), Marples argues that art is one important vector for moral

education. Quoting Iris Murdoch, for example, he notes that “art is the most educational of all activities and a place in which the nature of morality can be seen” (p. 249). Imaginative engagement with the arts, especially literary arts, “contributes significantly to the practical wherewithal we need in order to determine how we should act and feel” (p. 250). The arts shape personal behaviour, self-understanding, empathetic proclivities, and emotional maturity and range. This perspective on moral education requires a cognitivist approach to the arts. If “art is a tool for moral education” (p. 253), then aesthetic cognitivism must be a valid approach to understanding the value of artworks.

Matravers, Derek (2014). “Art, Knowledge and Virtue: Comments on Alana Jelinek’s *This is Not Art*.” *Journal of Visual Art Practice* 13/3, 169–177.

Engaging Jelinek’s *This is Not Art*, Matravers nuances her overarching argument that the endogenous value of art is located in its “practice as part of a knowledge-forming discipline in way that has its analogue in the processes, mechanisms, and contributions of other knowledge-forming disciplines” (p. 172). Matravers takes some umbrage with Jelinek’s construal of truth, arguing instead that truth is essential to evaluating the cognitive value of artwork (pp. 174–175) and invites her to say something more concrete about her larger project (pp. 175–177). Nonetheless, he agrees with the heart of her construal: works of art are deeply connected to story and metaphor and that these stories have the potential to alter our vision of the world, and therefore instil knowledge in the form of changed perceptions. Matravers suggests that we can distinguish two claims in Jelinek’s aesthetics: “The first is that art creates radically new stories, and these stories constitute new knowledge. The second is that these radically new stories alter our perception, and in altering our perception we suffer an increase in knowledge” (p. 174). Matravers’ own view and his interpretation of Jelinek constitute a form of aesthetic cognitivism: cognitive merits constitute aesthetic merits, and these cognitive merits at least partially constitute the value of a works of art. The primary difference between Matravers and Jelinek, at least as he construes it, is that he is more pessimistic in art’s ability to exclusively instil knowledge in the form of truth. Appealing to Plato, he concludes that “I am sceptical as to whether it is in the nature of art to be either on the side of the angels or the devils. A work of art could create a story that was nuanced and complex, that enacted plurality, and yet be rebarbative” (p. 176).¹²

McGregor, Rafe (2016). “Narrative Representation and Phenomenological Knowledge.” *Australasian Journal of Philosophy* 94/2, 327–342.

Focusing in particular on “exemplary narratives,” McGregor builds a case for what he calls narrative cognitivism – the idea that “narrative representations can provide knowledge in virtue of their narrativity” (p. 328). Narratives can instil certain forms of phenomenological knowledge, like what it is to be lonely in a city for example, as can other forms of literary and visual arts. But narratives have a special ability to transmit what McGregor calls lucid phenomenological knowledge by adopting the standard mode of engagement with a narrative that its author wants readers to adopt, which he defines as “the realization of what a particular lived experience is like by

¹² See also Matravers, “The Report Model versus the Perceptual Model,” in *Emotion and the Arts*, ed. M. Hjort and S. Laver (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1997), 78–92.

means of the reproduction of a particular experience of a particular character for the audience” (p. 332). He attempts to demonstrate that this specific form of knowledge is uniquely related to narrative apart from aesthetic qualities, using the 2004 documentary *Super Size Me* as an example. He ultimately concludes that narrative forms and design are aesthetic qualities, suggesting that narrative cognitivism is a form of and an argument for aesthetic cognitivism: “a subset of works of art (those that are exemplary narratives) can provide knowledge (lucid phenomenological knowledge) in a manner that is aesthetically relevant (in virtue of their narrativity)” (p. 341).

McGregor, Rafe (2014). “Cinematic Philosophy: Experiential Affirmation in *Memento*.” *Journal of Aesthetics and Art Criticism* 72/1, 57–66.

Although he does not explicitly draw upon the vocabular of aesthetic cognitivism, McGregor advances a cognitivist argument pertaining to a particularly complex film: that *Memento* (2000) makes a genuine and original contribution to philosophical thought, a contribution made possible exclusively by the cinematic medium. The aesthetic constraints of a particular art form enable the transmission of a particular type of knowledge (philosophical knowledge). More generally, McGregor argues, this situation means that “some films can make philosophical contributions by paradigmatic cinematic means” (p. 58). The way that film in particular makes contributions to philosophical thought is by the means of “experiential affirmation,” defined as “the production of new, justified, true belief by the employment of cinematic imagery to stimulate the imagination” (p. 60). The activation of the imagination through cinematic devices can inculcate new forms of belief (or, at least, confirm aspects of previously held perspectives) in the viewer.

Mikkonen, Jukka (2015). “On Studying the Cognitive Value of Literature.” *Journal of Aesthetics and Art Criticism* 73/3, 273–282.

This article explores a number of themes relevant to aesthetic cognitivism, arguing ultimately for a neo-cognitivist perspective where understanding is the key cognitive component that readers can learn from literature. For Mikkonen, “the concept of *understanding* outperforms the concept of *knowledge* in describing the various cognitive values associated with literature” (p. 273). From this perspective he moves to clarify what is meant by “understanding,” pointing out this weakness in other aesthetic cognitivist theories. The advancement of understanding “maintains that artworks may develop readers’ perception, provide them new perspectives on familiar things, help them acknowledge previously unnoticed relations between concepts, and offer them new categories for classifying objects” (pp. 274–275). More consequential in Mikkonen’s analysis is his insistence that empirical research aimed at measuring how or to what degree literature instills understanding is ultimately a dead end: “it is difficult to see how the actual cognitive benefits of literature could ever be quantified and measured” (p. 277). Instead, the cognitive value of literature should be explored in three ways: (1) in the critical activity of literary interpretation undertaken by professional scholars (practices of criticism); (2) in the study of the reception of specific literary works in different contexts (practices of literature); and (3) in the direct descriptions of reader’s experience with literature. Evidence exists to

measure the claims of aesthetic cognitivism, but it does not lie in the empirical sciences.

Mikkonen, Jukka (2010). "On the Body of Literary Persuasion." *Estetika: The Central European Journal of Aesthetics* 47/3, 51–70.

In this article, Mikkonen addresses objections to the idea that literature has cognitive value and that its ability to transmit knowledge or instil understanding by way of its literary features is an aesthetic merit. After engaging with a variety of non-cognitivist claims that he classes as "no-argument arguments," he builds from the pragmatic observation that many people have gleaned and been persuaded by significant truths from literature. Using the Aristotelian idea of the enthymeme as a foundation, he argues that literary artworks can persuade readers by way of their literary features, especially by suppressing or omitting conclusions that the author expects the audience to reach. Good literary artworks "invite the reader to participate in the act of truth-seeking and insight" (p. 67); "a literary work persuades its readers of its truths enthymematically, by implying the deliberately omitted conclusion: the unstated part of the argument is suggested by the work and filled in by the reader" (p. 62). If works are too explicit with their claims (like Dickens' *Hard Times*), they sacrifice artistic value and become too explicitly didactic. Literary works make arguments – and their ability to make these arguments successfully increases their artistic value – but not explicitly like non-fiction or other forms of persuasion.¹³

Moland, Lydia L. (2017). "Hegel's Philosophy of Art." Pages 559–580 in *The Oxford Handbook of Hegel*. Edited by D. Moyer. Oxford: Oxford University Press.

Defly unpacking its many complexities, Moland's portrayal of Hegel's aesthetics locates Hegel within the broad confines of aesthetic cognitivism. Of course Hegel's programme and art's place in it is much more expansive, but it is undergirded in part, according to Moland, with a perspective that affirms art's ability to transmit knowledge of various sorts, even *the* Idea (though the closer art comes to expressing the Idea, the less likely it is to function as art, even though art is a sensuous embodiment of the Idea). For Hegel, art expresses the divine and inculcates human understanding: "it is partly through art that we become fully human in the first place" (p. 559). Through art "humans discover the 'deepest interests' the characterize them and their societies: their conception of the divine, their understanding of their humanness, their attitude toward nature" (p. 560). But because art is the sensuous embodiment of knowledge (or the Idea), it is limited in its articulations and its limits are oblique. Nonetheless, "art chronicles humans' attempts to articulate the Idea, to make sense of their place in the world's normative structure" (p. 565); this represents, for Hegel, substantial insight into human self-understanding, even though the interiority of art after classical Greek forms is a limiting factor of this self-understanding (p. 566). These limits acknowledged, Hegel still seeks "to show the extent to which each art helps humans understand their relation to the totality – in other words, to what extent each art *in itself* expresses the Idea" (p. 569). Art will continue, then, in part because its "continued value...derives from its inclusion of the sensuous in our perpetual quest for self-understanding and in its ability to disrupt our

¹³ See also his book-length treatment: Mikkonen, *The Cognitive Value of Philosophical Fiction* (London: Bloomsbury, 2013).

prosaic relationship to experience...art offers us this insight in a way no other medium can and therefore maintains its status as an expression of our deepest interests and highest truths” (p. 577). This reading of Hegel’s aesthetics places his thought within the bounds of aesthetic cognitivism because it relies on the idea that art can transmit knowledge and lead to human self-discovery and understanding.

Morris, Michael (2012). “The Meaning of Music.” *The Monist* 95/4, 556–586.

Taking on perhaps the most difficult art form to discuss in the context of aesthetic cognitivism, Morris argues for the cognitive value of (pure) music, specifically that “the point of music as an art is to enable us to understand the world” (p. 556). Setting aside propositional knowledge as the cognitive goal of music, he focuses instead on understanding, construed as a constellation of activities that extends beyond mere contemplation (p. 583). The cognitive basis for music stands in the common-sense observations that “it is natural, after having performed or listened to a piece of music, to feel that we have been in touch with the meaning of things, and the we have become a little wiser as a result” (p 556). Music’s meaningfulness rests in the words we use to describe it. But Morris supports this intuition by taking a nuanced representational view of music, contra Scruton. His approach becomes entwined with aesthetic cognitivism when he notes that “cognitivism about music...is the view that the point of music as an art is to put us in a position of being right about the world because one is attuned to the world” (p. 582). Understanding is one of the cognitive goals of music.

Mouriki-Zervou, Alexandra (2011). “The Cognitive Dimension of Art: Aesthetic Experience and Educational Value.” *International Journal of Learning* 18/1, 1–12.

Mouriki-Zervou rightly notes that whether one adopts a cognitive or non-cognitive approach to art’s ability to transmit knowledge drastically determines the role of art in education. Weighing the validity of each position, she concludes that, although the relationship between art and propositional knowledge may be problematic, “art can claim another approach to knowledge...offering insights into the world and the variety of humans’ perspectives on their world” (p. 2), a concept akin to some definitions of understanding. After tracing the contours of the debate from Plato and Aristotle onward, she explicitly embraces a cognitivist position, a stance that makes art a central player in practices of learning: “there are certain goals, within the education process, that can’t be obtained with other ways but only through familiarization with artistic expressions and the way these expressions call upon us to redefine the terms governing our relationship and our association with ourselves, other people and the world as a whole” (p. 9). Artworks help us to see alternatives to our lives and the world as we understand it. “Aesthetic value can enhance cognitive value” (p. 10), and art is therefore a source of learning.

Mullin, Amy (2000). “Art, Understanding, and Political Change.” *Hypatia* 15/3, 113–139.

Mullin integrates feminist art criticism and aesthetic cognitivism, engaging critically with Kieran, Carroll, and Nussbaum as avenues to explain the political possibilities of feminist art practice on personal identity. Artworks, and feminist artworks in particular, inculcate understanding insofar as they have “the potential to

increase...our critical social consciousness” (p. 113), allowing us to better perceive and critique oppressive power structures. These works contribute to our self-understanding and build the capacity for empathy (pp. 123–127). Focusing attention on a number of twentieth-century female visual artists, and grappling with the concept of “feminist art,” Mullin concludes that their work teaches that “we cannot separate one aspect of a person’s identity...from her socio-identities” (p. 119). She also explicitly rejects non-cognitivist theories, adopting aesthetic cognitivism (implicitly) as a philosophy that supports her conclusion that “feminist art theories necessarily suppose that art, knowledge, and politics are connected in deep and important ways” (p. 128).

Novitz, David (1983). “Fiction and the Growth of Knowledge.” *Grazer philosophische Studien* 19, 47–68.

Novitz argues for a form of aesthetic cognitivism related to literature, or at least to the epistemic cognitivist claim that artworks have the capacity to transmit knowledge. Readers of fiction acquire information from fiction that impinges on the real world and their lives: “Not only does fiction impart knowledge of the real world...but it helps us to understand and to come to terms with what would otherwise be baffling. It imparts insights, skills, and values of one sort or another, and in so doing helps us to see the world differently” (p. 48). Novitz divides the types of knowledge available in literature into three categories: (1) propositional beliefs about the world; (2) practical knowledge, sub-divided into “skills of strategy” and “intellectual strategies” (pp. 49–50); and (3) empathic knowledge of possible situations and lives. The majority of the article engages these forms of knowledge and how each might be acquired from literature. Knowledge is most prominently available when we deeply enter into the world of a fiction (p. 67). Science, for Novitz, is not the only knowledge-yielding discipline: “there is...a *pot-pourri* of ways, a veritable medley of methods, for acquiring beliefs, knowledge, skills and values of one sort of another” (p. 68).¹⁴

Nussbaum, Martha C. (1995). *Poetic Justice: The Literary Imagination and Public Life*. Boston: Beacon.

In this classic exposition on the function of literature in the public and the “judicious spectator” in the realm of law, Nussbaum closely examines the way that Charles Dickens’ novel *Hard Times* (1854) and the novel form more generally inform the literary imagination. Novels create empathetic readers and instil understanding of self, the world, and other people. She does utilize the philosophical language of aesthetic cognitivism but does argue that the novel “tells its readers to notice this and not this, to be active in these and not those ways. It leads them into certain postures of the mind and heart and not others” (p. 2). Literature enables readers to understand complex situations and see familiar patterns of life and relationships anew. Novels are one way that readers acquire the “ability to imagine what it is like to live the life of another person who might, given changes in circumstance, be oneself or one of

¹⁴ See also his book-length treatment in Novitz, *Knowledge, Fiction and Imagination* (Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 1987) and Novitz, “Epistemology and Aesthetics,” in *Encyclopedia of Aesthetics*, vol. 2, ed. M. Kelly (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1998), 120–123.

one's loved ones" (p. 5). Novels ultimately construct models of ethical reasoning that Nussbaum applies specifically to the work of judges in the American context.

Nussbaum, Martha C. (1990). *Love's Knowledge: Essays on Philosophy and Literature*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.

In this collection of previously published, but reworked essays, Nussbaum argues that novels can function as forms of philosophical knowledge, moral knowledge, ethical knowledge, and understanding. Moreover, the inextricable nature of form and content in the novel – their irreducibility and resistance to paraphrase – and the novel's potential to transmit knowledge increases the aesthetic value of novels as literary works of art. Together, and leaning heavily on Charles Dickens and Henry James (with further input from Aristotle, Proust, and many others), the essays consist of a series of interlocking arguments: that some truths about human life can only be adequately expressed by the narrative artist; that certain literary texts are indispensable for particular forms of philosophical enquiry (and that good novels function in this way); that the expressiveness of literature leads to cognitive gain since emotions are part of humanity's ethical agency; that fictional literature expands human experience, allowing for new forms of understanding; that literature instils moral understanding through "a scrutiny of alternative conceptions of the good" (p. 142); that cognitive engagement is bound to both thoughts and feelings; and that novels can be paradigms of moral activity, among other assertions. Although she does not utilize the technical language associated with more analytical forms of aesthetic cognitivism – her prose is too well-developed for jargon – the idea that artworks transmit forms of knowledge that allow for new modes of perception and that their ability to do this in part effects the work's aesthetic value is a central claim of this book.¹⁵

Pillow, Kirk (2006). "Understanding Aestheticized." Pages 245–265 in *Aesthetics and Cognition in Kant's Critical Philosophy*. Edited by R. Kukla. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

Refining Kant's view of understanding in light of the work of Goodman and Elgin (see above), Pillow broadens a Kantian philosophy of knowledge, seeking to downplay Kant's insistence on disinterestedness as a key part of aesthetic experience. Although this article does not explicitly deal with the valuation of artworks, its analysis of the philosophical nature of understanding and its relationship to aesthetic experience more broadly brings it into a larger conversation that impinges on aesthetic cognitivism. Goodman and Elgin's work on the nature of understanding and cognition creates a "more compelling" notion of understanding, allowing "us to see that central features of Kant's aesthetic theory, especially his theory of the aesthetic idea, contribute to the satisfactory characterization of understanding thus broadened" (p. 247). Furthermore, "conceiving understanding broadly as inclusive of both cognitive and aesthetic dimensions will provide a critical perspective on the divide

¹⁵ See also Nussbaum, "Finely Aware and Richly Responsible: Moral Attention and the Moral Task of Literature," *Journal of Philosophy* 82/10 (1985) 516–529; Nussbaum, "Exactly and Responsibly: A Defense of Ethical Criticism," *Philosophy and Literature* 22/2 (1998): 343–365; Nussbaum, "Perceptive Equilibrium: Literary Theory and Ethical Theory," in *A Companion to the Philosophy of Literature*, ed. G. L. Hagberg and W. Jost (Oxford: Wiley Blackwell, 2015), 241–267.

between aesthetic and cognitive judgements in Kant's thought, but will also remind us that Kant opens the way to recognizing human understanding as an interpretive endeavor" (p. 247). Goodman and Elgin "conceive understanding as the perpetual effort to make coherent sense of things in ways that advance pursuit of our goals and help us imagine new ones" (p. 248). This approach to understanding could easily be applied to artistic expression as well, and Pillow provides a way to bring Kantian aesthetics into contact with modern forms of aesthetic cognitivism.

Riley, Howard (2019). "Aesthetic Cognitivism: Toward a Concise Case for Doctoral Research through Practices in the Visual Arts." *Arts and Humanities in Higher Education* 18/4, 1–14.

This article makes the case that producing visual artworks as part of a research degree in UK universities can contribute knowledge and understanding in a given area. Drawing explicitly on aesthetic cognitivism and assuming it has the basis for his argument, Howard suggests that the visual arts can contribute to the deliverables of the modern research university if space is made for non-propositional forms of knowledge in research metrics: "the visual arts are as potent a means towards knowledge, understanding and the illumination of human experience as the science" (p. 2). Artworks are cognitively valuable because they facilitate learning and imaginatively engage the brain.

Robinson, Jenefer (2004). "The Emotions in Art." Pages 174–192 in *The Blackwell Guide to Aesthetics*. Edited by P. Kivy. London: Blackwell.

In the context of a larger discussion of the identity and role of emotion in the arts, Robinson argues that emotions evoked by artworks might be cognitively relevant in a number of ways and that this cognitive relevance in the form of understanding is a facet of the aesthetic evaluation of a work. She notes that "a good novel or play, besides evoking emotions, also invites and encourages us to *reflect* upon the motions of the characters and upon our own emotion experiences of them" (p. 187). Affective responses can lead to cognitive development, and emotional reactions are central to learning from – to gathering types of knowledge from – artworks: "our emotional responses – however dark – are necessary in order to both understand the novel and to learn from it, because in order to understand and learn from our emotional reactions to a novel, we must first have had an emotional experience of it. The same is true for many works of painting and music" (p. 187). Artworks enhance knowledge and understanding by enriching our emotional ranges, providing a "sentimental" or "experiential" education. Not all emotional content evoked by the arts is cognitive in its content, but reflection upon emotion is one feature of aesthetic evaluation: "good novels expand our emotional repertoire by giving us a better understanding of the many varieties of fear, anger, love, anxiety, and the other emotions that have names in our language, as well as illustrating emotional states for which there may be no word in our lexicon" (p. 188).

Robinson, Jenefer (1997). "L'éducation sentimentale." Pages 34–48 in *Art and its Messages: Meaning, Morality, and Society*. Edited by S. Davies. University Park: The Pennsylvania State University Press.

Robinson takes a highly nuanced approach to the relationship between, art, emotions, and knowledge, focusing primarily on Edith Wharton's novel *The Reef* (1912). Pushing back against Nussbaum's direct linkages of emotion and belief, Robinson argues that, although "emotional experience in general does not necessarily entail belief," "we do learn from novels...an education by the emotions" (p. 35). Rich emotional experiences lead to critical reflection and interpretation, which may lead to the development of new beliefs or forms of understanding. And even if belief is not an essential outcome of emotional experiences, they are educational insofar as they focus attention "on certain aspects of situations and characters," allowing readers to form conceptions about them (p. 35). The aesthetic features of novels are what enable these emotional experiences that lead to knowledge, be it cognitive or otherwise: perspectival play, narrative framing, characterization, and description create the initial emotive responses in readers, triggering reflection and interpretation, activities that lead toward knowledge. For Robinson, emotions may lead to cognitive gain, but they can also lead to something greater: a focusing of attention on aspects of life otherwise overlooked, leading to the "forming of new conceptions or points of view" (p. 41). Robinson's careful unpicking of the significance of emotional experience to instruct in cognitive and non-cognitive ways locates her work within the broader umbrella of aesthetic cognitivism. One of the aesthetic values for the evaluation of a work of literature is its ability to transmit knowledge, often through emotional experience, thoughtful reflection, and interpretation.

Rowe, M. W. (2009). "Literature, Knowledge, and the Aesthetic Attitude." *Ratio* 22/4, 375–397.

Rowe makes a polemical and classic analytic case for aesthetic cognitivism. Explicitly taking on twelve "no-truth" or other non-cognitivist theories, Rowe argues that these theories "are nourished by a too narrow a conception of the *aesthetic* and too narrow a conception of *knowledge*" (p. 377). As a result, he attempts to "provide an account of the aesthetic attitude and literary knowledge which shows that the alleged tension [between the two] is only apparent...the ability to impart knowledge can sometimes be a part, and an important part, of a work's aesthetic quality" (p. 377). And Rowe sees this approach as valid for all representational arts, although the focus of the article is almost exclusively on literature. In addition to arguing that the aesthetic attitude is more than simply the appreciation of the beautiful, Rowe's main arguments concern definitions of knowledge. Acknowledging that artworks can sometimes instill some forms of propositional truth, Rowe homes in on the idea that the most valuable forms of knowledge available through literature are experiential forms of knowledge that lead to understanding. And literature, for Rowe, is particularly suited to working out this type of knowledge because of its complexity and nuance; knowledge by acquaintance, empathic knowledge, knowledge of how to do something, *phronesis*, and reconceptualization are key forms of knowledge available in literature. More prosaically: "in reading a novel, I live through something in imagination, I extend potentialities of my own being, and I imaginatively experience people, places and incidents which I could not have imagined unaided" (p. 385). Rowe's approach to knowledge and literature is cognitivist in its orientation since it argues that a work's ability to inculcate nuanced forms of knowledge is part of an evaluation of its aesthetic value.

Rowe, M. W. (1997). "Lamarque and Olsen on Literature and Truth." *Philosophical Quarterly* 47/118, 322–341.

Building a classic counter-example case against the "no-truth" arguments in the influential *Truth, Fiction and Literature* (Oxford: Clarendon, 1994) by Peter Lamarque and Stein Haugom Olsen, Rowe rigorously argues that one of the defining features of literature is its ability to convey truth, even if in nuanced and complex ways. Lamarque and Olsen argue that even if propositional truths can be learned from literary work, "these truths are merely incidental to a work's value as literature" (p. 323). But Rowe counters that this claim runs contrary to the way that "writers, critics and readers behave in the real world" (p. 324), appealing to the pragmatics of literary praxis as a way to contravene no-truth claims. Rowe goes on to say that propositional truths, when understood in the light of authorial intention, genre, characterisation, and context, are central to the value of literary works as art, distinguishing between explicit propositions and propositions implied by the literary construction of a piece (p. 333). For Rowe, truth is central: "truth is neither necessary nor sufficient for literary merit...but truth is always a virtue and falsehood always a vice" (p. 335). Rowe's perceptive aligns with aesthetic cognitivism because it holds that literature's conveyance of a "truth" or some other form of knowledge produces a substantial part of its artistic value, as his concluding statement notes: "conveying truth has always been viewed as on the central values of literature, and while Lamarque and Olsen have made me seriously question this, they do not ultimately say anything which makes me think it false" (p. 341).

Rušinová, Michaela (2017). "Ordinary and Aesthetic Experience." Pages 15–29 in *The Cognitive Aspects of Aesthetics Experience – Introduction*. Spectrum Slovakia 15. Edited by A. Démuth. Frankfurt am Main: Peter Lang.

Connecting Kant's aesthetics to recent advances in the neuroscientific study of aesthetic experience (especially the work of Semir Zeki), Rušinová connects the aesthetic value of an object, be in an artwork or an aspect of the natural world, with its ability to instil forms of knowledge or understanding. For example, she notes that "an object of beauty is interesting as long as it stimulates our imagination and intellect" (p. 26), signifying the essential cognitive nature of aesthetic appreciation. Moreover, "aesthetic experience either of beauty or sublimity may enrich our horizons of the possible understanding of reality to inspire us, to let us understand our own situation and life better" (p. 27). Although primarily focused on integrating philosophical aesthetics and neuroaesthetics, Rušinová assumes a basic connection between the knowledge value of aesthetic experience and the aesthetic value of the object, placing her within the larger stream of aesthetic cognitivism.

Sauchelli, Andrea (2012). "Ethicism and Immoral Cognitivism: Gaut versus Kieran on Art and Morality." *Journal of Aesthetic Education* 46/3, 107–118.

Sauchelli wades into the opposing moral cognitivist views prominently argued for by Berys Gaut and Matthew Kieran. Gaut holds to ethicism, an idea that moral value of a work of art is relevant to its aesthetic value; Kieran argues that immoral aspects of artworks can also have aesthetic merit if they play an important role in the piece's evaluation or if it coheres to the moral attitude that the artworks prescribes. Both

Gaut's and Kieran's position rely on an underlying cognitivist claim that artworks can convey knowledge; their arguments lie in the relevance of morality on aesthetic judgement. Siding with Kieran, Sauchelli presses his argument further, positing that "the cognitive value of a work of art can go beyond what its author intentionally infused into the work" (p. 114). This point accounts for the "cognitive character" of a work of art, constraining "the set of possible knowledge and insights that can be reasonably connected to and praised in such a work" (p. 114). The "dispositional value" (p. 115) of a work impinges on ways that the cognitive character of a work is understood in light of new circumstance and the work of critics and other viewers as they work to perceive the concrete features of the work that comprise its dispositional properties.

Schaeffer, Jean-Marie (2015). *L'expérience esthétique*. Paris: Gallimard.

Within the context of a larger interrogation of aesthetic experience from a number of perspectives, Schaeffer addresses at length the relationship between emotion and knowledge. He takes the position that emotions are the result of and inform cognitive processes, creating an indelible connection between affective aspects for experiences with artworks and knowledge. For example, he notes: "comme on vient de la voir, toute émotion est le produit direct ou indirect... d'une évaluation cognitive, même si elle n'est pas toujours consciente, ni toujours fiable" (p. 141). Setting aside the reliability of emotions, Schaeffer's examination of aesthetic experience maintains an explicit cognitivist aspect because the emotions experienced when we engage artworks is deeply connected to cognitive processes.

Shaw, Daniel Joseph (2001). "Two Views about Truth in the Arts." *Journal of Aesthetic Education* 35/2, 49–65.

Building an interpretation of the *Poetics*, Shaw eschews anti-cognitivist interpretations of Aristotle (especially that of John Hospers), advocating for a form of aesthetic cognitivism traceable to David Daiches and supported by the social scientific observations of Max Weber. For Shaw, artwork is valuable, at least in part, because of its "ability to convey moral knowledge" (p. 57), but he critiques Gordon Graham's view of aesthetic cognitivism, insofar as Graham fails to distinguish between "cognitive states" and "life-enhancing acquaintance with the properties of life experience" (p. 62). In other words, the "understanding" that Graham views as cognitively relevant is not always so for Shaw. Shaw then develops a view of aesthetic cognitivism built upon a view of "interpretive understanding" that accounts "for the revelatory aspect of artistic knowledge," anchoring this revelation is "the bedrock of established truth" and locating the testing of these forms of knowledge beyond the world of art" (pp. 62–63). He concludes with a reflection on the ramifications of his aesthetic cognitivism on the teaching of the arts.

Sheppard, Anne (1987). *Aesthetics: An Introduction to the Philosophy of Art*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.

In this largely conventional introduction to aesthetics, focusing primarily on imitation, expressiveness, form, and beauty as aesthetic merits, Sheppard comes at the end of the book to a form of moral cognitivism. She does not use the analytic

language of aesthetic cognitivism, but, focusing primarily on literature, argues that artworks can instil understanding – “the moral value of art lies in its ability to give us imaginative insight into other people” (p. 151). The moral value of art is an aesthetic merit when it impinges on our views of the world, ourselves, and others, even if the influence of art on morality and perception is subtle and often implicit: “the effect of works of art on values and attitudes is often subtle, indirect, and only appreciated with hindsight” (p. 152). Artworks have cognitive value insofar as they impinge on moral formation and our ability to perceive the world. For Sheppard, the cognitive value of art is relevant, but an admittedly minor aspect of aesthetic experience and judgment.

Shusterman, Richard (1997). “Art Infracture: Goodman, Rap, Pragmatism.” Pages 114–124 in *Art and its Messages: Meaning, Morality, and Society*. Edited by S. Davies. University Park: The Pennsylvania State University Press.

Analysing Goodman’s aesthetics in conversation with the aesthetics of modern music, Shusterman argues that rap functions as form of cognitive philosophy, as a knowledge-transmitting art form. For example, he notes that “the realities and truths of hip hop are not the transcendental eternal verities of traditional philosophy, but rather the mutable but coercive facts and patterns of the material socio-historical world” (p. 122). Rap offers understanding of one’s place within particular social and economic worlds. Moreover, the overriding philosophy of rap is closely connected to Goodman’s aesthetics, connecting aesthetics and cognition in a way that is commensurate with forms of aesthetic cognitivism: “rap philosophers are really ‘down with’ Dewey and Goodman, not merely in metaphysics but in a non-compartmentalized aesthetics which highlights cognitive function and process. But knowledge of rap not only insists on uniting the aesthetic and cognitive, it equally stresses that practical functionality can form part of art’s meaning and value” (p. 122). Rap repudiates the idea that art is primarily for disinterested contemplation; instead, rap is a medium that emphasises knowledge transfer in the form of understanding.

Stokes, Dustin (2007). “Art and Modal Knowledge.” Pages 67–81 in *Knowing Art: Essays in Aesthetics and Epistemology*. Edited by M. Kieran and D. M. Lopes. Dordrecht: Springer.

In this strident defense of aesthetic cognitivism, Stokes takes critiques three claims that often coalesce to form anti-cognitivist perspectives: (1) that art cannot provide knowledge; (2) that any knowledge it can transmit is trivial; and (3) that artworks are not proficient mediums for transmitting knowledge. He builds a case against each of these claims, arguing instead that art “provides us with non-trivial propositional knowledge. Art enable modal knowledge, in particular, knowledge about possibility” (p. 67). For Stokes, knowledge of possibility has cognitive value because “we reliably form beliefs about modal truths based upon our experiences” (p. 67). His point is “*not* that artists are reliable authorities on modality. The claim, rather, is that art works get us well on our way to determining the conceivability of various propositions” (p. 77). The work itself serves as the facilitator of knowledge. Moreover, modal knowledge is not trivial as evidenced in the use of possibility in philosophical and scientific thought experiments: “in acquiring such knowledge, we hone the imaginative skills required for consideration of more mundane, nomological

possibility” (pp. 78–79). This acquisition assists in developing imaginative processes. Overall, the ability of an artwork to inculcate modal knowledge indicates “that art works, being the sorts of things that sustain cognitive interest, are well-suited to provide us with knowledge” (p. 81).

Swirski, Peter (2007). *Of Literature and Knowledge: Explorations in Narrative Thought Experiments, Evolution and Game Theory*. London: Routledge.

Swirski argues for a construal of the cognitive value of literature that breaks down the dualism of the science and humanities as separate knowledge-bearing disciplines. Even though not all literature does so, and even though it is not all that literature can do, Swirski is convinced that literature can provide propositional knowledge (among other things) about the real world. Literature does this primarily when it functions as a thought experiment, a well-theorized tool for philosophical and scientific inquiry: “Stories are adaptive tools to us navigate more efficiently – or more colorfully, imaginatively, and memorably, which deep down still comes down to more efficiently – our time on earth” (p. 6). Literature is for Swirski an efficient instrument of inquiry: “not all literary knowledge owes something to thought experiments...but the many narratives that do rely on thought experiments justify the attempts to put literary knowledge on a level with that found in the social sciences” (p. 8). Within this context, Swirski critiques the likes of Goodman and Elgin, emphasizing propositional knowledge as one vector for literary knowledge. His perspective represents a nuanced form of aesthetic cognitivism especially relevant to literature.¹⁶

Szpakowski, Michael (2018). “On Art and Knowledge.” *International Journal of Art and Design Education* 38/1, 7–17.

Szpakowski’s analysis assumes the epistemic stance of aesthetic cognitivism – that art yields knowledge – but he defines what forms of knowledge it transmits and how the visual arts in particular do so. He entertains propositional knowledge (“knowledge-that”), the idea that some artworks explicitly function as research outputs, and forms of empathic or practical knowledge (“knowledge-how”). However, he finds weaknesses in each of these approaches, arguing for “knowledge-with” as the ideal vector for understanding what kind of knowledge art can instil. For Szpakowski, this construal is “an elastic one, stretching from...empathy with human feelings...to imaginative projection into the world of those different to us by virtue of history, geography, race, gender, sexual orientation and so on, and furthermore a kind of imaginative empathy with things, with structures of contrast, of tension and release and of how our sensual engagement ties in with our personal self-knowledge and embodiment” (pp. 13–14). This knowledge is mediated through the aesthetics of the art object itself, not through any form of artistic or authorial intention.

Thomson-Jones, Katherine (2005). “Inseparable Insight: Reconciling Cognitivism and Formalism in Aesthetics.” *Journal of Aesthetics and Art Criticism* 63/4, 375–384.

Thomson-Jones argues that the inseparability of form and content in representational art does not preclude the aesthetic relevance of learning from art, but that it in fact

¹⁶ See also Swirski, *Literature, Analytically Speaking: Explorations in the Theory of Interpretation, Analytic Aesthetics, and Evolution* (Austin: University of Texas Press, 2010).

support aesthetic cognitive approaches. The inseparability of form and content is a key aesthetic feature of representational art: “a cognitive function for art that is determined by an aesthetic feature of certain works, namely, the inseparability of form and content” (p. 379). Inseparability functions in this way because it “encourages us, not to try to see art in terms of the world...but to see the world in terms of art” (p. 380), providing the capacity for empathy, emotional growth, and deeper understanding of ourselves and others. This article seeks to overcome one possible anti-cognitivist argument related to form and content, and Thomson-Jones turns this possible weakness in the cognitivist argument into a strength; the ability of representational art to transmit knowledge, “to give us a new perspective of bring us to see new significance depends on the inseparability of form and content” (p. 382).

Walsh, Dorothy (1969). *Literature and Knowledge*. Middletown: Wesleyan University Press.

Drawing in part from Dewey’s *Art as Experience* (1934), Walsh argues that good literature, composed by “talented” literary artists, has cognitive significance insofar as it transmits knowledge to careful readers who partake in “imaginative participation” (p. 117). By knowledge she refers not to propositions (literature can provide these, but non-fiction is better at it), but the knowledge of “knowing of” or “knowing by living through” (p. 11), what she calls an experience of an experience. This type of “virtual experience” is valuable vis-à-vis real experience because virtual experience “can be shaped, formed, complicated and elaborated far beyond the range of anything that could be provided in actual experience” (p. 105, see also pp. 138–139). Describing literature as illuminating, as providing “heightened understanding,” realisations, or epiphanies, “accurately expresses the kind of cognitive significance works of literature can have” (p. 11). Moreover, the cognitive value of literature is only relevant to literature if that “revelatory” knowledge is tied to the success of works “as literary art” (p. 1). The cognitive value of literary artworks lies not in their ability to function as vehicles of empirical claims, but in the way they allow readers to experience the possibilities of human interaction. The latter approach does not reduce literature to a highly ornamented treatise, but connects its content directly to its form: “if works of literary art can be revelatory, this revelatory disclosure must be associated with literary impressiveness, for there would be no point in stressing cognitive illumination or insight in any theory of literature unless we suppose that this disclosure is something won through creative effort, and expressed through an exploitation of the artistic resources of the linguistic medium” (p. 66). Walsh’s argument has clear resonances with aesthetic cognitivism; the quality of literature is evaluated in part by its ability to function as a vehicle for experiential knowledge.

Wilde, Carolyn (2007). “Matter and Meaning in the Work of Art: Joseph Kosuth’s *One and Three Chairs*.” Pages 119–136 in *Philosophy and Conceptual Art*. Edited by P. Goldie and E. Schellekens. Oxford: Oxford University Press.

Critiquing Kosuth’s own writings on his piece *One and Three Chairs*, Wilde examines the wider perceptions of meaning in conceptual artworks. She rejects the idea that artworks propose theses or propositions, but she does hold that the design, artistry, and symbolism of artworks can transmit knowledge to viewers, especially those who are aware of the context of a works production and the other intertexts

with which it engages. Composition and other artistic devices can “focus reflection” on themes or virtues (p. 122); understanding artistic processes and artistic discernment remain “evident *in* the work and makes the mere material thing, the marked surface, intelligible to others and open to their own imaginative interest” (p. 126). The work of the artistic endeavour provides opportunities for viewers to utilize their imaginative capabilities and the ways that artists embody “attention to things” (p. 126) give artworks their particular meanings. Wilde’s view of art’s ability to transmit knowledge is closely connected to the nexus of provenance, artistic praxis, and imaginative engagement.

Wilson, Catherine (1983). “Literature and Knowledge.” *Philosophy* 58/226, 489–496.

Wilson argues for a form of aesthetic cognitivism that overcomes the potential deficiencies of the propositional and “knowing what” conceptions of knowledge. She argues that literature may transmit propositional knowledge or the knowledge of what it is like to be in a certain situation but that these forms of knowledge are not unique to the (literary) arts. More relevant for the aesthetic value of a piece of literature is that “a person may learn from a novel...if he is forced to revise or modify, e.g. his concept of ‘reasonable action’ through a recognition of an alternative as presented in the novel” (p. 494). Learning from art “applies primarily to a modification of a person’s concepts, which is in turn capable of altering his thought or conduct, and not primarily to an increased disposition to utter factually correct statements or to display technical prowess” (p. 495). Aesthetically relevant knowledge is measured by the changes to the conduct or patterns of the reader. Wilson is not interested in the mechanics of this process, but it philosophically defines “knowledge” within the confines of aesthetic cognitivism.

Wood, Michael (2005). *Literature and the Taste of Knowledge*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

This book is the published version of Wood’s 2003 Empson Lectures, and it engages directly with the question of literature’s ability to convey knowledge and understanding. Wood does not use the analytical language sometimes associated with aesthetic cognitivism, but his engagement with the relationship between knowledge and literature places his work under this larger umbrella. His title is an homage to Dorothy Walsh’s *Literature and Knowledge* (1969), and his change to this title belies his argument. Literature provides knowledge, but it is oblique, and the knowledge of a piece of literature is not always the same as the knowledge of its author. Wood is convinced that literature offers knowledge, but it is “elusive” (p. 3), “the unsettling of direct knowledge by other knowledges; and the return of knowledge after its suspension” (p. 7). Literature offers a “taste of knowledge,” but “this can only be a taste, a sample, rather than an elaborate or plentiful meal” (p. 10). Wood is not interested in how authors or artists make meaning through their artistic activity, but in what the personified pieces themselves know. Artworks know things, but they do not always want to tell us. The types of knowledge that literature transmits are both propositional in nature and also more expansive, becoming “a form of lived experience” (p. 9), a construct that one might gloss as understanding. Wood upholds the epistemic claim of aesthetic cognitivism (that art transmits knowledge) and assumes that its ability to do so is one aspect that increases a work’s value as art.

Wood also taxonomizes the various types of knowledge that he sees as central to literature's oblique knowledge transmission (pp. 13–36) and further develops his personification of literature as the means by which the work says what it has to say, engaging with Barthes (pp. 37–67). Wood works out his perspective of art as secretive autonomous agent of knowledge in a tour de force of witty literary examples, slyly demonstrating his main contention that artworks know things, but they do not always say what it is that they know.

Young, James O. (1999). "Art, Knowledge, and Exemplification." *British Journal of Aesthetics* 39/2, 126–137.

Here Young critiques what he perceives to be an over-emphasis on exemplification as the primary route to gaining knowledge from artworks in Goodman and Elgin. He takes as his starting point that artworks are cognitively valuable and that their ability to yield knowledge is at least part of their overall artistic value. Nonetheless, "the cognitive value of artworks cannot be completely, or even mainly, explained in terms of their capacity for exemplification" (p. 126). Instead, Young proposes that representation is the larger category through which art becomes cognitively valuable, exemplification playing only a subsidiary role to this larger principle. He presents Goodman's and Elgin's construal of exemplification as "deeply confused" (p. 129), arguing that art's ability to represent the world in new ways is the primary vector by which knowledge becomes available to viewers: "works of art contribute to knowledge, not because they exemplify properties, but because they can represent aspects of the world" (p. 135). Young's programme is deeply rooted in aesthetic cognitivism and largely devoted to the details of how this theory functions on the ground.¹⁷

Zarnitsyn, Aleks (2015). "The Cognitive Value of Fiction in Thought Experiments in Personal Identity." *Journal of Aesthetic Education* 49/2, 62–81.

Contributing to recent trends in the philosophy of personal identity, Zarnitsyn argues that well-constructed, nuanced philosophical thought experiments can function like literature in terms of their cognitive value, especially when these thought experiments are non-instrumental. Basic to his argument is that the cognitive value of literature to allow readers to better understand their world and own identity: "My proposal rests on the idea that we can learn about the cognitive value of philosophical thought experiments in personal identity by thinking about the cognitive value of fictional literature" (p. 63). The cognitive value of literature, for Zarnitsyn, is not in its ability to transmit conceptual knowledge, but in its ability to emphasize "the *vision* of the world from an axiological perspective that a literary fiction may open up" (p. 67). Fiction "is a conceptual tool for understanding the actual world," even if fiction creates alternative worlds (p. 67). Imagining fictional worlds allows us to evaluate and rethink concepts in the real world. Because of fiction's cognitive value, non-instrumental philosophical thought experiments may also have cognitive value when constructed in a way that does justice to the complexity of literary fiction, what he calls "the literary model of thought experiments" (p. 72).

¹⁷ See also Young, "The Cognitive Value of Music," *Journal of Aesthetics and Art Criticism* 57 (1999): 41–54; Young, "Inquiry in the Arts and Sciences," *Philosophy* 71 (1996): 255–273; and his book-length treatment Young, *Art and Knowledge* (London: Routledge, 2001).

Art, Knowledge, Religion, and Theology

Bautch, Richard J. (2013). “Yachin and Boaz in Jerusalem and Rome.” Pages 67–81 in *Beauty and the Bible: Towards a Hermeneutics of Biblical Aesthetics*. Edited by R. J. Bautch and J.-R. Racine. Atlanta: SBL.

Bautch argues that the aesthetics of the two freestanding columns before Solomon’s temple, described in 1 Kgs 7:13–22, 41–42; 2 Chr 3:15–17 and named Yachin and Boaz, allow these presumably decorative items to function as arbiters of knowledge. More concretely, they retain the “a symbolic significance” (p. 68) insofar as they make theological statements, especially relating to perceptions of God’s majesty and propagandistic statements about the Davidic line, connecting the cultic and political as a form of networked knowledge: “Yachin and Boaz reflect not simply the human hands that made them but also the deity whose majesty transcends human greatness” (p. 70). Tracing further the reception of these columns in Renaissance Italy, especially at the Vatican, Bautch’s analysis is undergirded by the idea that these architectural structures described in biblical narrative are the arbiters of knowledge, even if that knowledge is prescribed by the political and cultic activities of the Davidic line.

Boxall, Ian (2019). *Matthew Through the Centuries*. Wiley Blackwell Bible Commentaries. London: Wiley Blackwell.

A substantial portion of Boxall’s analysis of the reception of the Gospel of Matthew (like many other volumes in this commentary series) engages depictions of the work in visual arts. Visual representations (and also dramatizations and musical performances) of scenes of episodes from Matthew not only reflect interpretations of the Gospel (visual exegesis), but, more substantially, they also change the way we see the narrative when we return to it. Visual depictions convey “the multivalency of the text in a more immediate way” (p. 28), emphasizing the complexity of literary interpretation and the work’s theological perspectives. Paintings related to Matthew’s Gospel change the way readers engage the text, instilling a form of understanding of the literary artwork. Boxall does not use the analytical language of aesthetic cognitivism, but this book (along with much of his body of work on the reception of New Testament works in the arts and later literature) assumes the epistemic stance that artworks reveal to us things about the world or other artworks. One of art’s central functions is to yield knowledge.¹⁸

Brewer, Christopher R. (2018). “‘Surely the Lord is in this Place’: Jacob’s Ladder in Painting, Contemporary Sculpture and Installation Art.” Pages 107–121 in *The Moving Text*:

¹⁸ See also Boxall, “From the Magi to Pilate’s Wife: David Brown, Tradition, and the Reception of Matthew’s Text,” in *The Moving Text: Interdisciplinary Perspectives on David Brown and the Bible*, ed. G. V. Allen, C. R. Brewer, and D. Kinlaw III (London: SCM Press, 2018), 17–36; Boxall, *Patmos in the Reception History of the Apocalypse* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2013), 177–208. For a similar approach to the Gospels that also engages the role of visual arts in knowledge production and biblical reception, see Mark Edwards, *John*, Blackwell Bible Commentaries (Oxford: Blackwell, 2004).

Interdisciplinary Perspectives on David Brown and the Bible. Edited by G. V. Allen, C. R. Brewer, and D. F. Kinlaw III. London: SCM Press.

Following David Brown's lead, Brewer describes art like this: "Innovative and potentially revelatory, art has, according to Brown, 'the capacity to transmit the biblical story in ways which at times could speak more powerfully to contemporaries than the original deposit'" (p. 107). Putting this perspective to the test – a view that clearly stands within the larger umbrella of aesthetic cognitivism – Brewer focuses on depictions of "Jacob's ladder," taxonomizing its depictions in modern art, arguing that "contemporary sculpture and installation art are among the most effective – and yet most often neglected – media for getting at contemporary meaning and significance" (p. 108). For Brewer, we can learn as much (if not more) about Jacob's visions (Gen 28:12–13) through the work of modern "pagan" artists than we can through traditional forms of textual exegesis and interpretation. This view necessitates that artworks transmit meaningful knowledge in the form of understanding – in the case of Jacob's ladder, understanding regarding transcendence – and that artworks' cognitive value is in some way tied to its aesthetic success.¹⁹

Brown, David (2017). "In the Beginning Was the Image." Pages 7–22 in *Divine Generosity and Human Creativity: Theology through Symbol, Painting and Architecture*. Edited by C. R. Brewer and R. MacSwain. London: Routledge.

In this article, Brown argues for a deep relationship between the arts, human culture, and revelation, with the incarnation functioning as a model for the generosity of God's presence. Within this larger discussion, Brown makes of numerous claims that cohere to an aesthetic cognitivist approach to the arts. He explicit makes the epistemic claim that artworks can instil non-trivial forms of theological knowledge, suggesting even that the arts and culture can critique scripture and tradition. Arts can "contribute to theological reflection" (p. 8) and Brown emphasises the point that scripture itself is an example of a literary artwork using metaphor, symbol, and literary devices to convey meaning. "So far from the scriptures offering simply a set of propositions, they paint images and tell narratives whose significance is not readily reducible to easily formulated conclusions. They inspire the human imagination" (p. 18). The arts are not just illustrative of theological truths, but they "too can operate as independent vehicles of truth," offering an "invitation to explore rather than simply assent" (p. 13). For Brown, God continues to speak "through the wider culture" (p. 17).

Brown, David (2017). "Why Theology Needs the Arts." Pages 23–36 in *Divine Generosity and Human Creativity: Theology through Symbol, Painting and Architecture*. Edited by C. R. Brewer and R. MacSwain. London: Routledge.

¹⁹ On a more popular level, see also Brewer, *Art that Tells the Story* (Grand Rapids: Gospel Through Shared Experience, 2011). More analytically, see his analysis of William Desmond's contribution to a natural theology of the arts via Howard Root, a discussion that assumes a form of aesthetic cognitivism: Brewer, "Rolling with Release into the Future: William Desmond's Donation to a Natural Theology of the Arts," in *William Desmond and Contemporary Theology*, ed. C. B. Simpson and B. T. Sammon (Notre Dame: Notre Dame University Press, 2017), 217–237. Similarly, see Brewer, "From Apparently Finite to Infinite: Conceptual Art and Natural Theology," in *Christian Theology and the Transformation of Natural Religion: From Incarnation to Sacramentality*, ed. C. R. Brewer (Leuven: Peeters, 2018), 173–189.

Within a more wide-ranging discussion of the relationship between theology and the arts, Brown makes two claims that correspond to cognitive perspectives on aesthetics. First, he argues that the literary devices inherent to scriptural works “can draw us from the material world into quite a different order to existence” (p. 25). This is what Brown calls “aesthetic encounters,” the intertwining of artwork and scripture that can change one’s view of the world, that can inculcate understanding. Second, Brown suggests that there is an indelibility between religious and aesthetic experience and that religious experiences can be renewed, clarified, or deepened “by subsequent aesthetic encounters” (p. 27). Artworks, especially good ones, can impinge upon religious experience, theological knowledge, and perceptions of existence.

Brown, David (2017). “Learning from Pagans.” Pages 37–48 in *Divine Generosity and Human Creativity: Theology through Symbol, Painting and Architecture*. Edited by C. R. Brewer and R. MacSwain. London: Routledge [repr. “The Glory of God Reveal in Art and Music: Learning from Pagans.” Pages 43–56 in *Celebrating Creation: Affirming Catholicism and the Revelation of God’s Glory*. Edited by M. Chapman. London: Darton, Longman & Todd, 2002].

Once again, Brown presupposes the epistemic claim of aesthetic cognitivism – that artworks can transmit forms of knowledge – in a larger discussion of what theology can learn from the arts, especially works produced by non-Christians artists. For example, Brown argues that Max Ernst’s *The Infant Jesus Chastised by the Virgin Mary* (1926) can teach Christians about the messiness of the incarnation, perhaps even critiquing Luke the evangelist’s portrayal of Jesus childhood (p. 41). Overall, Brown’s point is that “art can of course illustrate faith” but they can also at times go further, offering “a religious vision that we need to take seriously and engage with” (p. 45).

Brown, David (2017). “Worshipping with Art and Architecture.” Pages 190–203 in *Divine Generosity and Human Creativity: Theology through Symbol, Painting and Architecture*. Edited by C. R. Brewer and R. MacSwain. London: Routledge.

Examining the relationship between the architecture of (mostly European) Christian churches and the artworks they contain, Brown argues that ministers and congregants alike should work to be more cognizant of the subliminal effects of this artistic relationship. Although he does not explicitly adopt the philosophical languages of aesthetic cognitivism, Brown makes a number of claims that cohere with particular forms of this theory. For example, he argues that Sallman’s *Head of Christ* (1940) and Grünewald’s sixteenth-century Isenheim Altarpiece “both intend more than simple representation. The artists concerned rightly wanted to encourage viewers to engage with the significance of Christ,” to “convey” knowledge to viewers and “ensure continuing further reflection” (p. 191). Artists, through their artworks, can convey knowledge about the life of faith and their work’s ability to do this increases their aesthetic value. Grünewald’s piece is better than Sallman’s because its message is more complex and encourages further contemplation. Religious art, however, is not mere education for Brown, but can draw the viewer into worship and deepen their understanding of faith, allowing them to transmit knowledge about God and understanding about one’s relationship to him. Because religious art located in

churches and the architecture of the churches themselves can communicate knowledge of God and the life of faith, Brown calls the faithful to “take more seriously the logic of the building in which they worship” (p. 200).

Brown, David (2017). “The Annunciation as True Fiction.” Pages 105–112 in *Divine Generosity and Human Creativity: Theology through Symbol, Painting and Architecture*. Edited by C. R. Brewer and R. MacSwain. London: Routledge. [repr. from *Theology* 104 (2001): 123–130].

In this short essay, Brown claims that visual artworks can reveal aspects of the symbolic truth of the Gospels, even if the events they depicts are ahistorical, in part because the Gospels themselves are literary artworks. The visual arts help viewers to understand the potential significances of biblical texts. The “gap between artists and evangelist is not as great as may initially appear” (p. 105). The fact that the Gospels are in some ways fictional, stylized narratives gives them greater symbolic significance, setting readers “in an appropriate frame of mind for learning who Jesus was and his relevance to us” (p. 107). This perspective is similar to how particular visual depictions of Luke’s annunciation scene “first brought to Christian awareness the wider sense of [God’s] dependence” on Mary’s mothering and teaching of Jesus for an upbringing that lead to his ministry and eventual messianic self-understanding (p. 109). Artworks offer new insight into biblical texts and allow viewers to understand them and their significance in new ways.

Brown, David (2017). “Artists on the Trinity.” Pages 130–149 in *Divine Generosity and Human Creativity: Theology through Symbol, Painting and Architecture*. Edited by C. R. Brewer and R. MacSwain. London: Routledge. [repr. “The Trinity in Art.” Pages 329–356 in *The Trinity: An Interdisciplinary Symposium on the Trinity*. Edited by S. T. Davis, D. Kendall, and G. O’Collins. New York: Oxford University Press, 1999].

Tackling the controversial topic of visual representations of the trinity, Brown examines the assumptions that underlie the three dominant types of images: the triadic, societal, and incarnational. Although much maligned historically, Brown analyses the underlying arguments of these forms, seeking to recover their value for understanding the doctrine of the trinity. The visualisations have the ability to critique literal readings of trinitarian texts and doctrinal perspectives. Underneath Brown’s concern to recover the visual arts as a genuine realm of doctrinal and traditional development is the idea that artworks can provide genuine knowledge and offer new perspectives on doctrine, leading to greater understanding of that doctrine or religious principle. For example, pointing out the lacklustre nature of Piper’s tapestry in Chichester Cathedral, he notes that “we are certainly offered aesthetic and intellectual pleasure as we explore the tapestry, but it would be harder to argue that there accrues any deepening of one’s religious understanding” (p. 131). The potential of artworks to deepen understanding is in part related to their aesthetic evaluation. Artists invite “from the viewer deeper exploration of his [or her] theme, and things come to be noticed that did not engage the eye at first glance” (p. 143). The arts free the imagination for seeing the world, one’s self, or particular doctrines anew.

Brown, David (2007). *God and Grace of Body: Sacrament in Ordinary*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.

Presented explicitly as a sequel to his *God and Enchantment of Place* (2004), Brown continues his quest to reclaim religious experience and experience of God in the ordinary, focusing in this volume on the body and music as an embodied practice. Because God can be found in every aspect of human existence, theologians must take the arts (and other non-artistic ordinary practices) seriously as loci of divine revelation. As in many of his other works, Brown's position vis-à-vis the arts comes close to endorsing aesthetic cognitive positions, taking for granted that artworks can transmit knowledge and facilitate encounters of the divine. Taking on a range of musical traditions in this vein, from classical to pop to jazz, Brown presupposes that "music can help break down the barriers between the invisible world of the divine and our own. In other words, certain features of music help an already present God to be perceived...As in the relation between painter and viewer, a composer can help the listener through focus on certain features inherent in music...to perceive external reality in general in a new way, and with that perception the ultimate ground for such ideas in God as ultimate reality itself" (p. 237). This sensibility is of a kind with aesthetic cognitivism.

Brown, David (2000). *Discipleship and Imagination: Christian Tradition and Truth*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.

Building upon his *Tradition and Imagination* (1999), Brown takes a more specific look at a number of features related to the development of tradition as a source of divine revelation, focusing on practices of discipleship. As is usually the case, Brown's work is deeply learned and nuanced, and he continually returns to a perspective on the arts that views them as reservoirs of tradition and even as triggers for traditional developments. For example, in his chapter on the lives of the saints, Brown argues that modern Christians need an "imaginative capacity to maintain continuities, while yet accepting the need to envisage very different worlds and applications" (p. 95). One of the main avenues for this continued reflection on life in Christ that does justice to the past but does not foreclose on future revelation is the novel and imaginative fiction more broadly. Fiction can "supplement...what the Bible offers" (p. 97) because "the life of Jesus has in effect moved from being a set of specific examples for close copying to the status of being an analogous case, that requires imaginative re-identification under very different circumstances, and for that our greater debt is now to the imaginative work of novelists or their equivalent on stage or in film" (p. 99). The idea that artworks can function as sources for or reflections of revelation is a sensibility that coheres closely with more analytical-philosophical concepts related to aesthetic cognitivism.

Brown, David (1999). *Tradition and Imagination: Revelation and Change*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.

Brown argues that both scripture and tradition are mediums of divine revelation, suggesting that tradition can critique scripture, just as scripture can critique tradition. Taking aim at a number of areas where tradition functions as a reservoir of revelation, Brown concludes his study with the arts, adopting a sensibility that bumps up against and that is akin to certain forms of aesthetic cognitivism. For example, in a chapter entitled "Art as revelation," an idea that finds similar expression in some

philosophical discussions of the arts, he argues that creative expression as a possible form of knowledge transmission is underwritten by the incarnation; artistic transformation in the Gothic period, for example, corrects the biblical witness in emphasizing Christ's humanity (p. 362), even if on other fronts it gave way to Romanesque advances. Ultimately, Brown concludes that "so far from thinking of the Bible as an already fully painted canvas and the traditions of the later Church as offering at most some optional extra colouring, we need to think of a continuous dynamic of tradition operating both within the Bible and beyond" (p. 365). This "beyond" most assuredly includes the arts in all their varied forms, placing Brown's theological program in close proximity to aesthetic cognitivism.²⁰

Brown, Frank Burch (2018). "Orpheus Revisited: Can the Arts ever Lead Theology? And Where?" Pages 117–128 in *Christian Theology and the Transformation of Natural Religion: From Incarnation to Sacramentality. Essays in Honour of David Brown*. Edited by C. R. Brewer. Leuven: Peeters.

Burch Brown engages with David Brown's argument that artworks can function as sources of revelation, critiquing both scripture and ecclesial communities. More specifically, he explores the ways in which the arts can lead theology, concluding that an important reciprocal relationship exists between the arts and theology – together they can "recover the ways in which the meaning, the marriage [between Orpheus and Eurydice], can be transfigured" (p. 128). Within this discussion he takes for granted that artworks can transmit knowledge, especially knowledge of God as symbol gives rise to thought: "when contemplating and living with the symbol, thought may discover new insights and ways of construing and configuring" (p. 126). In other words, the arts have a cognitive function in relation to theology insofar as they reveal knowledge of God's revelatory activity.

Brown, Frank Burch (2014). "Musical Ways of Being Religious." Pages 109–129 in *The Oxford Handbook of Religion and the Arts*. Edited by F. B. Brown. Oxford: Oxford University Press.

Within the context of a sweeping overview of music in religious (primarily Christian) contexts, Burch Brown concludes with a view of music that is revelatory, pointing specifically to the work of David Greene. According to this line of thought, music is a vector of revelation, which is construed as "a dynamic and open-ended process" (p. 123). Music in religious contexts is both a spiritual exercise and a process that fully engages theology, creating an iterative process of creation and recreation of spiritual realities: "even when music is a setting of scriptural or liturgical texts, it is not simply making old truths more accessible and appealing by means of a richly imagined medium" (p. 123), it is newly transforming these traditions. Music does this as an "aesthetic medium that interprets what it manifests" (p. 124). Music has the potential

²⁰ Much of Brown's work comes into contact with aesthetic cognitivism in significant ways. See also, Brown, *God and Enchantment of Place: Reclaiming Human Experience* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2004); Brown, *God and Mystery in Words: Experience through Metaphor and Drama* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2008). See also Brown and Ann Loades, "Introduction: The Dance of Grace," in *The Sense of the Sacramental: Movement and Measure in Art and Music, Place and Time*, ed. D. Brown and A. Loades (London: SPCK, 1995), 1–16.

to provide new knowledge on sacred traditions through its revelatory capacities based on its aesthetic features as an artistic medium.

Fiddes, Paul S. (2018). "The Trinity, Modern Art, and Participation in God." Pages 81–98 in *Christian Theology and the Transformation of Natural Religion: From Incarnation to Sacramentality. Essays in Honour of David Brown*. Edited by C. R. Brewer. Leuven: Peeters.

Engaging closely with David Brown's work on the doctrine of the trinity and the revelatory potential of the arts, Fiddes presses Brown's reluctance to see abstract art's ability to mediate knowledge and experience of the Trinity. Through both the positive and negative sublime, "abstract art can mediate a revelation of the triune God" (p. 87) "if the experience of 'persons' (*hypostases*) in God is an experience of the relations in movement rather than of any kind of 'individuals' or 'subjects' who *have* relations" (p. 91). In addition to providing opportunities for participation in the trinity (pp. 96–98), abstract artworks can communicate knowledge of the triune God to Christian thinkers and others in Christian communities, even if the images lack three-in-oneness or are produced by those outside the community. Fiddes' argument overlaps with aesthetic cognitivism insofar as artworks are able to communicate knowledge about Trinity as relations in movement.

Graham, Gordon (2007). *The Re-enchantment of the World: Art versus Religion*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.

Graham argues that the attempts of multiple modern art movements to re-enchant the world in the face of growing secularization and death of God ultimately fail. Even though the arts have ultimately won their autonomy from religion, "the abandonment of religion, it seems, must mean the permanent disenchantment of the world, and any ambition on the part of art to remedy this is doomed to failure" (p. 186). But within this largely negative argument, Graham acknowledges the expressive power of arts, focussing on the ways that particular movements have sought to re-enchant the world in ways analogous to religious expression. His assumptions about the cognitive power of art and the aesthetic value of a work's ability to transmit knowledge cohere with his other explicit writings on aesthetic cognitivism (see the entries in the previous section). For example, Graham points to the Surrealists as particularly successful in their attempt to "reveal" the realities of the world as an act of re-enchantment: "it is in the strange and compelling paintings and exhibits of the later Surrealists that we find the most explicit attempt in the visual arts to *reveal* the irrational, chaotic, and daemonic forces underlying the surface appearance of ordinary life by depicting the weird and uncanny" (p. 59, emphasis added). Surrealist depiction transmits knowledge of (or, at least, one perspective on) the chaos of the world and the Surrealists sought a form of "creative revelation – the use of artistic creativity to reveal the secret or hidden nature of things" (p. 64). Similarly, Dickens' novels "reveal to us a particular understanding of the moral world in which we live" (p. 79), readers of fiction more generally "make narrative connections" that enables them to go beyond the literary into "life as it is being lived" (p. 86), and the purpose of Joyce's *Dubliners* is "epiphanic, the creation of moments of revelation and seeing" (p. 96). Graham's underlying construal of the aesthetic value of art is thoroughly

cognitivist in orientation, even if he is pessimistic of art's ability to re-enchant a secular world.

Greenaway, Jon (2018). "Intertextuality, Tradition and Finding Theology in Unexpected Places: Reading *Frankenstein* with the Help of David Brown." Pages 177–194 in *The Moving Text: Interdisciplinary Perspectives on David Brown and the Bible*. Edited by G. V. Allen, C. R. Brewer, and D. F. Kinlaw III. London: SCM Press.

Engaging closely with David Brown's *Tradition and Imagination* (1999) and nineteenth-century Gothic literature, Greenaway extends Brown's observation "that the Christian story has, can and indeed must acquire new insights or reinterpretations – rereadings – through fresh stimuli, even if it comes from unexpected sources such as the Gothic" (p. 178). For Greenaway, "even in cultural forms that seem to have little to offer, challenging theological insights may be present and God's grace still active" (p. 178). The construction of a "polyvocal" narrative voice in *Frankenstein* and its aesthetics as a literary text is the "means by which the novel contributes to the theological quest for a larger narrative or grander 'story' that gives sense to one's existence" (p. 180). Moreover, Greenaway argues that "within the Gothic the interaction between theology and literature is highly productive" (p. 191). Statements like these lead me to believe that a form of cognitive aesthetics stands in the background of Greenaway's analysis. He is concerned to show how features specific to the Gothic and to *Frankenstein* in particular are constitutive of the work's ability to transmit – and even create – new forms of theological knowledge. This ability rehabilitates the value of a form of literature considered by Coleridge to be "the trash of the circulating libraries" (p. 178).

Hart, Trevor (2013). *Between the Image and the Word: Theological Engagements with Imagination, Language and Literature*. New York: Routledge.

Within a larger discussion of the relationship between theology, imagination, and the arts (especially focusing on literature and its ability to instil mental images), Hart adopts a perspective on the arts' ability to transmit theological knowledge that coheres with strands of aesthetic cognitivism. In some cases, for Hart, the theological content transmitted by a literary work makes it a theological text. Theology of all sorts is poetic and deeply contingent on the human imagination. In addition to transmitting theological content, artworks can be revelatory: "and this, no doubt, is precisely why we find art and literature so compelling and so valuable; because they will not be isolated in some hermetically-sealed 'alterity' set in apposition to our lived reality, but continually break in (or break out) to modify our ways of experiencing that same reality, for good or ill. The self who returns from the imaginative migrations afforded by literary artifice is never precisely the same self, but a self expanded, adapted and changed (and who knows how much?) by what is has experienced" (p. 114). Art changes human understanding of the self through experience of the work and its message. Artworks, poetic though they may be, are transformative (p. 146). For example, regarding Milton, Hart notes that "the beliefs, the ideas, are absolutely essential to the way the poem works *as a poem*, fusing the concerns of heart and mind and will together in an imaginative vision which challenges and reshapes not just our thinking but in Lewis's phrase our 'total

response to the world” (p. 152). Good artworks transmit knowledge, inculcating (self-)understanding.

Hedley, Douglas (2012). “Revelation Imagined: Fiction, Truth, and Transformation.” Pages 79–88 in *Theology, Aesthetics, and Culture: Responses to the Work of David Brown*. Edited by R. MacSwain and T. Worley. Oxford: Oxford University Press.

Situating Brown’s work in the context of his notable Oxford predecessors like Newman, Lewis, and Farrer, and also critiquing the lack of clear criteria for Brown’s ideas on the cognitive capacity of imagination (p. 86), Hedley primarily evaluates (and concurs with) Brown’s position on the capability of the arts to instill knowledge. Hedley notes that Brown “argues for the capacity of fiction to disclose transcendence” (p. 83) and comments that “it is the prerogative of the arts to explore the domain of self-awareness and the anxiety and excitement connected to the existence of the world as we know it” (p. 84). In other words, the arts possess the ability change the way that people view themselves within the world, a form of self-understanding. Poets are “able to present the world so that we can perceive an otherwise obscured transcendence or mystery: the poet becomes a seer who is able to penetrate a non-empirical realm” (p. 84). The ability of artworks to teach us about ourselves, the world, and God’s engagement with it is a hallmark of good art because “there is also an important tradition of viewing great aesthetic works as possessing a strong didactic component” (p. 85).²¹

Jensen, Robin M. (2008). “Material Evidence (2): Visual Culture.” Pages 104–119 in *The Oxford Handbook of Early Christian Studies*. Edited by S. A. Harvey and D. G. Hunter. Oxford: Oxford University Press.

Although Jensen explicitly rejects a focus on the aesthetic features of early Christian artworks – an idea that she associates with art historical investigation, viewing aesthetics as exclusively interested in disinterested appreciation of the beautiful (p. 106) – she argues that visual culture is important not just for its use as historical data. Christian visual culture is important because it transmits knowledge, theological and otherwise. This assertion puts Jensen’s overview of the discipline into at least oblique contact with aesthetic cognitivism (perhaps its “common sense” instantiation), even though there is no philosophical reflection in the piece. For her, “the study of visual images...not only supplements and balances documentary research, but often affords scholars access to objects of great beauty as well as *powerful agents of message and meaning*” (p. 104, emphasis added). Christian visual culture, incorporating a broad conception of the arts, is an agent of knowledge transmission. And some scholars who focus on this tradition are “intent on discerning the way in which the art communicates aspects or tenants of a system of belief or values” (p. 113).

Johnson, Jay (2020). “Art.” Pages 185–192 in *The Bloomsbury Handbook of the Cultural and Cognitive Aesthetics of Religion*. Edited by A. Koch and K. Wilkens. London: Bloomsbury.

²¹ See also Hedley, “Imagination and Natural Theology,” in *The Oxford Handbook of Natural Theology*, ed. R. Re Manning (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2013), 539–550.

Arguing within the context of the “aesthetics of religion” approach, Johnston makes the case that both the processes of art production and art consumption are knowledge-based practices. Artists transmit their cultural, historical, spiritual, and religious knowledge into the works they create, and viewers take on new insights in the form of knowledge based on their experiences of the work. For Johnston, both the making and consumption of visual arts is knowledge producing. This perspective places Johnston’s approach to religion and art in league with a more philosophically minded cognitive aesthetics. Johnston makes no claim regarding the aesthetic value of artworks based on their knowledge-producing capacities, but he is convinced that (religious) art practices form and transmit knowledge: “artworks are understood as crystallizing crucial elements of this process [the dialectic of artistic practice and theory] and enabling new ‘ways’ of letting knowledge emerge and disseminate” (p. 187). Moreover, this perspective is deeply interdisciplinary, drawing upon history, cultural studies and other disciplines as constitutive of art production. Artworks are a “crystallization of broader social ideas that have utility for current debates...this is indeed a multi-modal and interdisciplinary undertaking” (p. 189).

Joyce, Paul M., and Diana Lipton (2013). *Lamentations Through the Centuries*. Wiley-Blackwell Bible Commentaries. Oxford: Wiley-Blackwell.

Within the context of a broad exploration of the reception history of the Old Testament book Lamentations, a poetic lament of the destruction of the Temple and Jerusalem by the Babylonians in the sixth century BCE, Joyce and Lipton engage deeply with the arts, including poetry, literature, print material, and visual art. While they do not explicitly reflect on the cognitive abilities of artworks or the functions of their aesthetic features, their analysis reflects a latent aesthetic cognitivism because they take the position that visual representations of literature have the capacity to inform subsequent readings of those texts, yielding knowledge and shaping conceptions of the work. A good example is their discussion of Samira Abbassy’s *Lamentation* (2007), a work whose imagery connects in multiple ways to Lamentations, even though the author likely did not reference the biblical book at all. Yet her “response to the universal theme of death and destruction following invasion...means that her painting is at home in a reception history broadly construed. This is good news: readers of Lamentations would have plenty to learn from Samira Abbassy even if it transpired that she learned nothing at all from Lamentations” (pp. 79–80). In other words, we learn about the literary work through the vector of a visual representation that may or may not itself be cognizant of the literary work.²²

Koestlé-Cate, Jonathan (2013). “The Currency of Belief.” *Art and Christianity* 73, 2–5.

Profiling the British artist John Newling (b. 1952), Koestlé-Cate argues that Newling’s works can be described as “art seeking understanding” (p. 2) insofar as they investigate the world. Newling’s work emphasises in particular the mystery of

²² There are a number of other commentaries on the Hebrew Bible in this series that seriously engage the arts as knowledge yielding media for understanding the biblical text, theological development, and other issues. See especially David M. Gunn, *Judges* (Oxford: Blackwell, 2005); Jo Carruthers, *Esther Through the Centuries* (Oxford: Blackwell, 2008); Susan Gillingham, *Psalms Through the Centuries*, vol. 1 (Oxford: Wiley-Blackwell, 2008).

religious belief and the possibilities of certainty through, for example, his *Singing Uncertainty* (2011). For Koestlé-Cate, Newling's art can make theological points. His *Chatham Vines* emphasises "Christ as the true vine, and the vine as the source of one element of the Eucharist" (p. 2). The ability of his work to successfully comment upon complex concepts like value satisfies the epistemic claim of aesthetic cognitivism and Koestlé-Cate implies that this ability increases the value of Newling's works as art.

Luz, Ulrich. *Matthew in History: Interpretation, Influence, and Effects*. Minneapolis: Fortress, 1994.

Taking Gadamer's notion of "effective history" (or "history of effects," "history of influence") as his point of departure, Luz argues that texts – and the biblical text in particular – cannot be interpreted in isolation from history. According to Luz, "biblical texts do not *have* a meaning ... they *produce* a meaning – new meanings – again and again in history" (p. 17). Going further, he explains that "the meaning of a biblical text (and of many literary texts) is a 'potential' of meaning... A biblical text is not a reservoir or a cistern, with a fixed amount of water in it that can be clearly measured. Rather it resembles a source, where new water emerges from the same place. This means that the history of interpretation and effects that a text creates is nothing alien to the text itself, as if the text with its meaning existed at the beginning and then only afterward and secondarily had consequences and created a history of interpretation" (p. 19). For Luz, then, understanding the biblical text entails understanding a wide range of effects including "not only the history of exegesis and interpretation, such as commentaries and sermons, but also other fields, such as the reception of biblical texts in literature, prayers, dogmatics, art, etc." (p. viii; see also p. 30 where Luz mentions dramatic plays and paintings). Connecting the dots to aesthetic cognitivism, this means not only that artworks have cognitive functions, but also that these artworks – whether paratextual or beyond the biblical page – are not optional extras but are instead essential with reference to the production and understanding of meaning. See also Luz's discussion of truth (Chapter 5), as well as his three-volume Hermeneia/EKK commentary on Matthew which employs this hermeneutical approach.

O'Hear, Natasha (2018). "Understanding John's Visions: Unlocking the Insights of Revelation's Visual History." Pages 122 – 142 in *The Moving Text: Interdisciplinary Perspectives on David Brown and the Bible*. Edited by G. V. Allen, C. R. Brewer, and D. F. Kinlaw III. London: SCM Press.

Building on David Brown's studies *Tradition and Imagination* (1999) and *Discipleship and Imagination* (2000), O'Hear examines a range of visual depictions of the complex narrative of the New Testament book of Revelation, including Dürer, illuminated manuscripts, medieval altarpieces, modern Chicana artist Yolanda Lopez, and a diversity of other styles and media. Underlying O'Hear's analysis of Revelation's visualisation as instance of "visual biblical reception" is an implicit aesthetic cognitivism that, following Brown, supposes that "engaging with the imaginative responses inspired by biblical texts helps us better understand the original or 'source-text' and in some cases assists in forming an informed critique of that source-text" (p. 122). In other words, visual arts that depict biblical scenes

transmit knowledge about or perspective on the scenes they represent, leading in some cases to greater insight into the biblical text itself. In this way, visual depictions of biblical scenes offer understanding into the biblical stories and their developments. Visual arts also point out, for O’Hear, that the “original ‘deposit’” on which they are based “has limitations” (p. 138). Visualisations can help us articulate aspects of the text and its reception that the text itself cannot do. The biblical text is not a complete and sufficient medium for divine revelation.²³

Quash, Ben (2013). *Found Theology: History, Imagination and the Holy Spirit*. London: Bloomsbury.

Within the context of a larger theological discussion that examines the role of the holy spirit and divine revelation in history (with a special focus on the revelatory role of the arts and imagination), Quash makes a number of claims that come into contact with aesthetic cognitivism. Artworks can transmit theological knowledge of various kinds, which implies a higher aesthetic evaluation. He seeks to do more than show how the arts have functioned within the world of Christian art, going beyond to examine how art “discloses profound insights about the functioning of historical and imaginative...Christian reasoning” (p. xvii). A good example is his lengthy discussion of Carpaccio’s *The Dead Christ* (ca. 1505) which “provokes thought about how particular historical circumstances create opportunities for new theological insight, and about what role the human imagination can play in responding to such opportunities and expressing such insight” (p. 93). This work is “indeed theology of a kind” (p. 93) and is “capable of rendering new theological insight” (p. 94) through its aesthetic features and the associations that it trades upon. Quash’s approach is predicated upon the idea that artworks can yield knowledge.

Quenot, Michel (1996). *The Icon: Window on the Kingdom*. Translated by a Carthusian monk. Crestwood, NY: St. Vladimir’s Seminary Press.

Introducing the history, craft, symbolism, and theology of Orthodox iconography, Quenot makes a number of claims about icons that stand within the stream of aesthetic cognitivism. In addition to other theological features, and despite the way their production has been carefully prescribed in different contexts, icons and their usage in liturgy transmit or represent certain types of knowledge. For example, icons are “truthful”; they “beckon us to contemplate...they speak indeed of God, but also they speak about humanity” (p. 11). Icons reveal to us our true selves by representing the cosmology and theology of the Orthodox church; they are central mediums of divine revelation and communion, expressing “what Orthodoxy is” (p. 12) – its very essence. This is a profound knowledge from this perspective. But most importantly for Quenot, the icon is a vale to the invisible world and knowledge thereof, providing glances of the unseen world, its structure, cosmology, through-patterns, and dramatis personae. In other words, “the art of the icon is imbued with theology” (p.15) and, like much of Christian art, it has an essential didactic purpose: art has something to

²³ See also O’Hear, *Contrasting Images of the Book of Revelation in Late Medieval and Early Modern Art: A Case Study in Visual Exegesis* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2011); O’Hear and O’Hear, *Picturing the Apocalypse: The Book of Revelation in the Arts over Two Millennia* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2015).

teach us about the divine, especially icons because they trade off of the significance of the incarnation and function as incarnational objects.

Rosen, Aaron (2018). “Re-visions of Sacrifice: Abraham in Art and Interfaith Dialogue.” Pages 91–106 in *The Moving Text: Interdisciplinary Perspectives on David Brown and the Bible*. Edited by G. V. Allen, C. R. Brewer, and D. F. Kinlaw III. London: SCM Press.

Directly engaging with David Brown’s work on the relationship between tradition, revelation, and the arts, Rosen develops Brown’s discussion on the sacrifice of Isaac (Genesis 22) in *Tradition and Imagination* (1999). Focusing especially on modern Israeli, Palestinian, and Turkish visual art, he extends Brown’s preoccupation with depictions of Isaac as a willing sacrifice by engaging subsequent turns in the tradition that critique an array of issues like the demands of the state. Abraham is central to the shared inheritance of Judaism, Christianity, and Islam, but modern art’s portrayal of him brings his ambivalence to the forefront. The sharing of a problematic ancestor as represented by modern artists creates fruitful opportunities for dialogue. Undergirding this discussion is an aesthetic cognitivist perspective that tracks with Brown’s own assertions. For Rosen “artists can be a profound source of religious reflection” (p. 92); they are not “content to imagine their way out the horrors their respective texts induce. They return to the scene of the crime in order that we might study it with fresh eyes, investigating the origins of our traditions – and our religious selves – with unflinching honesty” (p. 102). Art offers avenues of understanding and self-reflection, forcing viewers to rethink the significance of sacred traditions.

Seow, C. L. (2013). *Job 1–21: Interpretation and Commentary*. Grand Rapids: Eerdmans.

Although not explicitly concerned with philosophical aesthetics, Seow’s commentary on the biblical book of Job takes an aesthetic cognitivist perspective on the work in a number of ways. First, he emphasises the exquisiteness of Job as a literary work, implying that the literary traits of the work and its artistry is central to its value and message. “There is perhaps no other biblical book that has been as universally and extravagantly praised as an exquisite specimen of literary art,” he notes (p. 74), going so far as to say that the fictional elements and the overall design of Job “may be regarded as a mark of its poetic achievement” (p. 75). Furthermore, and directly relevant for aesthetic cognitivism, Seow immediately connects the literariness of Job to its complex theological perspectives: Job signifies its perspectives through the medium of its status as a literary artwork. Job’s ability to transmit complex theological knowledge and discourse – emphasised by Seow’s lengthy overview of the “history of consequences” related to Job, including the visual arts in Jewish and Christian tradition – increase its value as a work of art.

Speight, Allen (2017). “Religion, Art, and the Emergence of Absolute Spirit in the *Phenomenology*.” Pages 148–165 in *The Oxford Handbook of Hegel*. Edited by D. Moyar. Oxford: Oxford University Press.

Working to unpack the chronological development of Hegel’s complex thought on the relationship of art, religion, and philosophy, Speight makes a number of interpretations that place Hegel’s thought, at least obliquely, within the orbit of aesthetic cognitivism, although of course Hegel’s concerns in *Phenomenology of*

Spirit (the primary concern of the essay) transcend aesthetics. Nonetheless, Speight's assertions that art mediates between the human and divine signifies that under certain conditions, art has the ability to mediate (theological) knowledge to humans who engage with it. He notes that "Hegel's emerging thought about the *origins of art as a human activity* provides a key of sorts to understand the progression of his own understanding of the relation between the human and divine" (p. 149). Furthermore, Hegel views art as revelatory, especially as it relates the anthropomorphising of the Greek pantheon, and art is "directly concerned with the divine in the sense of 'the deepest interest of mankind, and the most comprehensive truths of the spirit'" (p. 154). Art arises from the fact that humans are thinking, cognitive beings, suggesting that, for Hegel, artworks may have cognitive functions (pp. 154, 163).

Thiessen, Gesa E. (2014). "Artistic Imagination and Religious Faith." Pages 77–90 in *The Oxford Handbook of Religion and the Arts*. Edited by F. B. Brown. Oxford: Oxford University Press.

Examining the significance of the imaginations as a central resource for artist creation, religious expression, and human experience, Thiessen closely ties the act of artistic production to theologies of creation and eschatology. Because artworks are the products of imagination, they are able to transmit theological knowledge, knowledge of God and the significance of his activities: "imagination is indispensable in any form of knowledge or understanding. In the act of understanding we are dependent on experience, conceptual knowledge, empathy, and the imagination, all of which are essential to the creative, artistic process as well as to the life of faith and doing theology...the more deeply the artist engages with matter, words, or sound, the more her work may approach and *reveal* glimpses of transcendence" (p. 84, emphasis added). Art is revelatory and engages the imagination in ways that assist in understanding human reality and God's engagement with the world. Therefore, faith can seek understanding and illumination through artworks, especially when it "acknowledges the revelatory power of art" (p. 84), appreciating the role of the imagination both in artistic creations and God's creation. This confluence of faith and art raises a number of unanswered questions relating to the search for meaning, their use of images and imagination, symbolic structures, and their shared "revelatory, prophetic, political, social, and moral dimensions" (p. 85). Thiessen concludes with a special appeal to eschatology, arguing that the development of the imagination through engagement with the arts is important because "the imagination...functions in particular in the perception of what might, could, and will be – i.e., in perceiving the possible. In more theological terms, it is the power of the imagination that allows for followers of Christ to envision and comprehend something of the meaning of the kingdom of God" (p. 86). Her view of imagination and aesthetic experience runs parallel to the way that some philosophers speak of art as revelatory within the broader context of aesthetic cognitivism.

Thiessen, Gesa E. (1999). *Theology and Modern Irish Art*. Dublin: Columba.

Working to understand the relationship between art and theology, and the way that artworks transmit theological knowledge and perspective, Thiessen examines the work of ten modern Irish artists, some who profess faith and some who do not. She

first explores the relationship between theology and the arts, building on the work of Tillich and Horst Schwebel. Thiessen's view is especially influenced by Tillich's view that art is expressionistic (pp. 21–23). She makes the case that art can be a revelatory source of knowledge and understanding and “a source in and of theology” (p. 9). Art's revelatory aspects are enabled both by a work's aesthetic features and the imagination of the viewer, who works to interpret the piece in a way and makes plain its underlying claims, theological or otherwise. Knowledge of God is available in the form of modern visual art, as well as other forms of art; “spirit can be revealed through matter, i.e. through the material visual work of art” (p. 13). This knowledge may, however, be indirect: quoting Schwebel, she notes that “images of Christ can...lead to ‘indirect theological knowledge’” (p. 28). Underlying her entire analysis is that the bedrock idea that “works of art are...rich and relevant sources of theology” (p. 255), that art can “enhance our understanding of divine presence and our notion of theology itself” (p. 256). This view fulfils both the epistemic and aesthetic requirements of aesthetic cognitivism.

Viladesau, Richard (1999). *Theological Aesthetics: God in Imagination, Beauty, and Art*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.

Within Viladesau's notable and broad study of theological aesthetics, he makes room for the idea that art is a locus for theology, in part because artworks have the capacity to transmit knowledge and engage human cognition. It is not that Viladesau is an aesthetic cognitivist in an analytical sense, but his view of aesthetic experience does come into contact with cognitivist arguments, even if his project is much more expansive. For example, “the aesthetic realm provides theology with ‘data’ concerning its three objects (God, religion, and theology itself), as well as with knowledge of the cultural matrix to which these are related in reflection” (p. 15). Art for Viladesau is a “way of thinking” (p. 17), and following Gadamer and Rahner, he makes art a central player in theology's self-understanding: “theology may achieve insight into its own context and method through parallels in this history of the arts; it can use that history as a source for the knowledge of concrete religion; and it can find there...an ‘illustration’ of its own meanings” (p. 17). Using art in this way is a hermeneutical risk, but one that is worth taking.

Wilson, Ross (2013). “Beauty and Sublimity.” Pages 419–434 in *The Oxford Handbook of Theology and Modern European Thought*. Edited by N. Adams, G. Pattison, and G. Ward. Oxford: Oxford University Press.

Negotiating the complex relationship between theology and modern aesthetics through the vectors of Kant and Adorno, Wilson investigates “the lingering inheritance of and antagonism toward theology in some instances of reflection on the beauty of nature and art, and on the sublime, in modern thought” (p. 420). Ultimately, he makes the case that “modern aesthetics is unavoidably predicated upon theological assumptions and habits of thought, which are nevertheless variously diluted, deformed, and deflected” (p. 428). Theology and aesthetics are integrally linked, but modern aesthetics obscures the theological aspects of its programme. At the heart of modern aesthetics stands an “ineliminable and underdeveloped theology” (p. 429). Although Wilson is not expressly concerned with aesthetic cognitivism, his engagement with Adorno – who ultimately views “the final expunging of art's

theological heritage [as]...an expunging of art itself” (p. 430) – intimates an openness to the idea that art can transmit knowledge. Adorno argues that “the theological heritage of art is the secularization of revelation” (p. 430), and Wilson too adopts a revelatory perspective on art: “art is revelation because it shows to be existing something that is not at all deducible from anything already existing in the world” (p. 430). Art transmits theological knowledge, reinforcing the indelibility of aesthetics and theology.

Manuscript Traditions and Aesthetic Cognitivism

Allen, Garrick V. (2018). “Text and Tradition: David Brown and New Testament Textual Criticism.” Pages 3–16 in *The Moving Text: Interdisciplinary Perspectives on David Brown and the Bible*. Edited by G. V. Allen, C. R. Brewer, and D. F. Kinlaw III. London: SCM Press.

Allen explores medieval manuscripts as co-equal arbiters of text and tradition. Placing Greek manuscripts of the book of Revelation into conversation with the theology of David Brown, Allen makes a number of claims that could be interpreted as cohering with aesthetic cognitivism broadly conceived if we consider manuscripts to be complex artworks. Manuscripts function as arbiters or thresholds of knowledge about both ancient literary traditions and their traditions of interpretation, accounting (in part) for changes to scriptural traditions and book technologies. For example, Allen points to four manuscripts that contain illuminations of the four cosmic antagonists of the book of Revelation (GA 2028 2044 2054 2083), suggesting that their depiction and selectivity reflect knowledge of particular conduits of reading, understanding, and interpretation: “the similarities in the visual representations of these texts indicates that the artist intuited a connection between them [the represented figures]” (p. 11). These images re-orient our understanding of Revelation’s cosmic topography. Allen does not reflect on the evaluative claim of aesthetic cognitivism, but his assertion that the images reveal information on the possibilities of reading the text reflects its epistemic claim.

Allen, Garrick V. (2017). “Image, Memory, and Allusion in the Textual History of the Apocalypse: GA 2028 and Visual Exegesis.” Pages 435–454 in *Studien zum Text der Apokalypse II*. ANTF 50. Edited by M. Sigismund and D. Müller. Berlin: De Gruyter.

Focusing on the limited cycle of illuminations in a fifteenth century copy of the Andrew of Caesarea commentary on the book of Revelation, Allen argues that “manuscripts are more than the texts they carry...[they are] artefactually valuable” (p. 435). The many manuscript features (including artistic images) beyond the text provide a “channel of tradition for examining the reception of a work in a given period” (p. 436). Although controlled in part by traditional strictures, the images included in some illuminated manuscripts open possible pathways for reading the literary work to which they are juxtaposed. In the case of Paris, BnF grec 239 (GA 2028), the depiction of the four cosmic antagonists in the book of Revelation (see Rev 12:3; 13:1–3, 11; 17:1–3) emphasises the relatedness of these figures, helping readers to create literary connections between them. The inclusion of these images also highlights the grotesque nature of the literary imagery. Not only are these images reservoirs for understanding the reception of the Apocalypse in the fifteenth

century, but they inform reading events and transmit knowledge about the literary text of the manuscript. It is not necessarily the case that illuminated manuscripts are better tradents of literary works, but that they are more aesthetically complex as objects and have the potential to further enlighten reading events.²⁴

Bawden, Tina (2019). “Observations on the Topological Functions of Color in Early Medieval Christian Illuminated Manuscripts.” Pages 187–203 in *Clothing Sacred Scriptures: Book Art and Book Religion in Christian, Islamic, and Jewish Cultures*. Manuscripta Biblica 2. Edited by D. Ganz and B. Schellewald. Berlin: De Gruyter.

In her analysis of the function of colour in medieval Latin Christian books, Bawden adopts multiple positions commensurate with the tenants of aesthetic cognitivism. Colour is a culturally conditioned aesthetic device that serves a number of functions related to knowledge transmission, including the knowledge of the literary work to which the images are attached and certain forms of theological knowledge. Colour can guide and structure “the perception and reception of texts” (p. 187), assist in comprehending pictures, structure the topology of manuscripts and their literary works, and promote interpretive practices. More significantly, “color marks an area of mediation between the human and divine spheres...this threshold is accessed through the respective book itself” (p. 191). Because particular colours are representative of the divine realm, it provides access to knowledge of sacred space: colour “formulates the hope ubiquitous in medieval manuscripts and formulated both in images and in texts, that the book in question...transports those who commission, make and use it closer to the sacred realm” (p. 202).

Berardi, Robert, Nicoletta Bruno, and Luisa Fizzarotti (2019). “Introduction.” Pages 1–12 in *On the Track of the Books: Scribes, Libraries and Textual Transmission*. Edited by R. Berardi, N. Bruno, and L. Fizzarotti. Berlin: De Gruyter.

Although not explicitly concern with or aware of aesthetic cognitivism, the introduction to this volume lays bare a perspective on books and manuscripts as arbiters of knowledge that runs throughout its many articles. For the editors and contributors “the book is both a material object and a metaphorical personification, as it stands for something else, material or immaterial – a person, an object, and a literary motif” (p. 1). Books are material objects themselves that transmit texts, but they are also material metaphors that provide knowledge into other domains, retroactively shaping the way we read and understand the literary texts that transmit. Books, and their aggregation into collections like libraries, are material symbols, embodying cultural, political, and economic knowledge.

Berlekamp, Persis (2013). “Visible Art, Invisible Knowledge.” *International Journal of Middle East Studies* 45/3, 563–565.

In this short reflection, Berlekamp examines astrological mirror images of Perseus in an early eleventh century Arabic manuscript once owned by Narcissus Marsh, a former archbishop of Dublin (Oxford, Bodleian, Marsh 144). The book, a copy of the

²⁴ The idea that manuscript traditions are arbiters of knowledge beyond and entwined with their texts, accessible most obviously in their paratexts, is put forward in Allen, *Manuscripts of the Book of Revelation: New Philology, Paratexts, Reception* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2020).

Kitab Suwar al-Kawakib (The Book of the Forms of the Stars) composed originally in the late tenth century, contains paired mirror images of astronomical constellations. This allows readers to read the stars regardless of their directional orientation, building basic skills for star gazing. But the subtle differences of the images, according to Berlekamp “show how comparisons invited by closely related images on paper could be critical to the acquisition of some kinds of knowledge” (p. 565). This suggestion borders on aesthetic cognitivism insofar as it recognizes that the details of manuscript images transmit knowledge.

Brown, Michelle P. (2019). “Concealed and Revealed: Insular Visualizations of the Word.” Pages 69–79 in *Clothing Sacred Scriptures: Book Art and Book Religion in Christian, Islamic, and Jewish Cultures*. Manuscripta Biblica 2. Edited by D. Ganz and B. Schellewald. Berlin: De Gruyter.

Examining Insular book production and its relationship to eastern Christian practices, Brown argues that books are mediators and transmitters of cultural and even theological knowledge, suggesting a perspective commensurate with forms of aesthetic cognitivism. Even when books like the Freer Gospels or the Lough Kinale bookshrine become relic objects and their texts become inaccessible, the artistic features of their covers continue to transmit information. The veiling or entombing of the word in the Freer Gospels, for example, signifies to Brown the following: “here, the Word remains veiled and awaiting, like Christ in the tomb, the resurrection that is proclaimed by its external visualization of the evangelists about to declare Christ’s teaching, sacrifice and triumph over death during the liturgical reading of their bejeweled Gospels” (p. 71). Moreover, “the fact that these texts were considered effective even while closed demonstrates...the power of the Insular visual imagination, which could conceive of the unseen visual symbol” (p. 73). The materiality of books is “imbued with new significance” expressed through its “very materiality and invested sacrality” (p. 77). The visual features of books are conduits of information about their texts and theological ideas represented therein, a position that meets the epistemic condition of aesthetic cognitivism.

Bücheler, Anna (2019). “Clothing Sacred Scripture: Textile Pages in Two Medieval Gospel Books (Trier, Dombibliothek Ms. 138 and 139).” Pages 123–138 in *Clothing Sacred Scriptures: Book Art and Book Religion in Christian, Islamic, and Jewish Cultures*. Manuscripta Biblica 2. Edited by D. Ganz and B. Schellewald. Berlin: De Gruyter.

Examining the intricately painted textile pages in two medieval Latin Gospel books, Bücheler argues that they function as mediums of knowledge transmission, including both knowledge of the biblical text and theological knowledge of the mechanics of revelation. The ability of these artistic devices to function as transmitters of knowledge implicitly places Bücheler’s analysis within larger discussions of aesthetic cognitivism. She assumes the epistemic value of these embedded artworks and their functions increase their aesthetic value as works of art. This perspective does not extend to the manuscript itself as a work of art, but to the individual works of art therein. The painted curtains and textiles in these manuscripts are closely tied to metaphors for divine revelation: “the formal and material concept that characterizes these text(ile)-veils instructs the readers that revelation, although it may be aided by the corporeal sense, is primarily an intellectual and contemplative

challenge to the eyes of the mind” (p. 130). As such, these images have “didactic and metaphorical functions” (p. 133), and, following some philosophers who view the epiphanic aspects of art as cognitively relevant, they are “theophanic” insofar as they transmit knowledge of God (p. 135). Images like these are didactic elements that pass on knowledge of the text and theological knowledge about God and the mechanics of divine revelation.

Cleaver, Laura, and Helen Conrad O’Briain (2015). *Latin Psalter Manuscripts in Trinity College Dublin and the Chester Beatty Library*. Dublin: Four Courts Press.

This book includes a number of useful features and sumptuous reproduced images, but its most useful section as it pertains to aesthetic cognitivism is Cleaver’s discussion of the function of illuminations in medieval Latin psalters (pp. 23–38). Illuminations serve a number of functions in this context. They help readers navigate the lengthy psalter, entertain with sometimes whimsical, exotic, and satirical images, and demonstrate the wealth and prestige of patrons, artists, and the text of Psalter itself. But the images, unique to each manuscript also direct attention to salient aspects of the text, directing its interpretation and deepening interpretive engagement. For example, “for those who knew the text well, or by heart, the addition of imagery could prompt a reader to pause and reconsider the familiar words. Decoration in the form of figurative images, swirling foliage, or geometric patterns, thus served to add layers of meaning or significance to the text” (p. 23). More specifically, images like those in TCD MS 91 emphasise the musical nature of the psalter, focusing attention on the nexus of Davidic authorship, divine inspiration, and artistic performance (see pp. 32–33). For Cleaver, this nexus has the potential to deepen readers’ understanding of the text; artistic figurations and patterns substantially impinge upon interpretation and reconfigure existing conceptions of the work. Under these circumstances, one of the possible reasons for illuminating a psalter manuscript is to enhance the cognitive value of the reading experience.

Ganz, David (2019). “Clothing Sacred Scriptures: Materiality and Aesthetics in Medieval Book Religions.” Pages 1–46 in *Clothing Sacred Scriptures: Book Art and Book Religion in Christian, Islamic, and Jewish Cultures*. Manuscripta Biblica 2. Edited by D. Ganz and B. Schellewald. Berlin: De Gruyter.

Introducing a larger volume that examines the aesthetics and expressiveness of material and artistic features of medieval manuscripts, Ganz traces some of the features of these objects that contributes to their ability to transmit knowledge. For Ganz, the vast economic resources and technical skill necessary to produce these items signifies that their function extends well beyond mere ornamentation and beautification. Instead, they define the scriptural and its expressive properties: “material devices come into play by which scripture is perceived and performed as an aesthetical, tangible and visible object” (p. 3). The “clothing” of scripture is an area where religion and art come into direct contact (p. 4), where material book objects become three-dimensional (p. 6), and where the internal diversity of religious practice becomes visible (p. 7). But more directly related to aesthetic cognitivism is the idea that these features are mediums for knowledge transmission, passing on information about perspectives on the text, on the historical context of a piece’s production, and about theological ideas like holiness, divine imminence, and the

spatial features of the cosmos and reality. For example, Ganz notes that “clothing sacred scripture transformed books into iconic objects that visualized the spatiality of revelation...we should expect that artistic endeavors of clothing were directed on locating books at the threshold between those spheres, qualifying them as media of revelation” (p. 12). And again: “a promising way to reassess a large corpus of mainly narrative book illuminations may be followed when these pictures are treated less as visual reduplication of content already available in the text than as an invitation to experience the revelational function of holy books” (p. 13). This observation extends even to the aesthetics of the script, polychromy, and the use of stylized initial letters. Books may also directly transmit theological knowledge: “in and through the [decorated] book, the godhead himself speaks to the believers” (p. 21). Lurking behind Ganz’s overview of the possibility of book ornamentation and their expressive capabilities is an implicit aesthetic cognitivism, predicated on his view that these features are designed to transmit different forms of knowledge and their presence and ability to do so increases the aesthetic value of the manuscript as a work of art.

Nichols, Stephen G. (2016). *From Parchment to Cyberspace: Medieval Literature in the Digital Age*. New York: Peter Lang.

Dealing primarily with medieval vernacular literature and manuscript traditions, Nichols takes a pragmatic cognitivist approach to what he calls the “manuscript matrix,” by which he means the interplay of visual signs on a manuscript folio. These signs include text, paratexts of all kinds, and varieties of illumination and artistic features. For Nichols all of these items are essential to interpretation: “verbal and visual components – rubrics, miniature paintings, decorated or historiated initials, marginal embellishments, glosses – all contribute different interpretations to the same ‘work’ in different manuscripts” (p. 49). These items “play a major role in the way manuscripts convey knowledge” (p. 60); manuscripts are an “authentic form of artistic representation in the full sense of the term” (p. 90). Nichols engages briefly with Nelson Goodman’s work on the philosophy of art (pp. 47–48) but takes for granted that the aesthetics features on manuscripts pages transmit knowledge that contributes to interpretations of literary works unique to each manuscript.²⁵

Tumanov, Rostislav (2019). “Devotional Re-enactment on the Way Through the Book: The Peculiar Layout of the Copenhagen Hours.” Pages 223–243 in *Clothing Sacred Scriptures: Book Art and Book Religion in Christian, Islamic, and Jewish Cultures*. Manuscripta Biblica 2. Edited by D. Ganz and B. Schellewald. Berlin: De Gruyter.

Prioritising the layout and images in a single medieval book of hours (Copenhagen, Kongelige Bibliotek, Thott 541 4), Tumanov argues that its programme of miniatures provides readers an opportunity to re-enact the life of the virgin Mary, Jesus’ incarnation, and David’s encounter with Bathsheba, inculcating a form of

²⁵ Nichols’ bibliography along these lines is vast, but see also Nichols, “Fission and Fusion: Meditations of Power in Medieval History and Literature,” *Yale French Studies* 70 (1986): 21–41. Most notably, his work on “New Philology” appears to me to be undergirded by a form of implicit cognitivism: see, e.g., Nichols, “Introduction: Philology in a Manuscript Culture,” *Speculum* 65 (1990): 1–10. New Philology continues to be relevant for multiple manuscript cultures: see, e.g., Liv Ingeborg Lied and Hugo Lundhaug, eds., *Snapshots of Evolving Traditions: Jewish and Christian Manuscript Culture, Textual Fluidity, and New Philology* (Berlin: De Gruyter, 2017).

experiential knowledge that alters the way we understand these literary episodes. The pictorial dimensions of the book provide cognitive information that is aesthetically relevant to the function and meaning of the book as a holistic object. The images “steer their readers toward a mode of spiritual perception” (p. 226) and allows readers to superimpose the narrative of the incarnation and passion onto their own lives, mediating their daily experiences through the experiences of Jesus as portrayed in the book. Insofar as the “arrangement of its miniatures produces numerous semantic interrelations” between text, image, and reader (p. 242), the book as a work of art and its miniatures as embedded artworks function as arbiters of knowledge, placing Tumanov’s analysis of the book within the larger context of aesthetic cognitivism.

Further Readings in Philosophical Cognitive Aesthetics

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