

**COGNITIVE TRANSFORMATION AS A VALUE OF ART: A
STUDY OF THE COGNITIVE VALUE OF ART**

A Dissertation
Submitted to
the Temple University Graduate Board

in Partial Fulfillment
of the Requirements for the Degree
DOCTOR OF PHILOSOPHY

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January, 2012

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ABSTRACT

Art has been thought of as a source of cognitive value that might contribute to the survival and the enrichment of human life by providing us with knowledge about and insight into our world. The cognitive value of art, understood generally in terms of the provision of knowledge, has been discussed by many philosophers who have focused on issues concerning the means by which knowledge is acquired in the arts and the range of knowledge that art is able to provide. However, in focusing on knowledge as the end-product of art, philosophers have tended to neglect the subjective aspect of the cognitive value of art and the importance of the process of experiencing art, during which the subject who experiences an artwork goes through a particular kind of transformation.

In recent years, Noël Carroll has overcome this problem by considering the moral cultivation of the subject who experiences works of art. However, the subjective aspect of art's cognitive value cannot be exhausted by moral cultivation. In this dissertation I argue that the principle cognitive value of art resides in the *cognitive transformation* of the subject that occurs throughout the process of experiencing works of art. My discussion of the transformation involves an analysis of the ways in which artworks articulate perspectives and promotes the processes of reconfiguration and particularization. I also, with the aid of John Dewey's philosophy of experience, explore the ways in which reconfiguration and particularization contribute to art's transformative potential and what characterizes the cognitive transformations which result from aesthetic experiences.

PREFACE

My journey toward writing this dissertation started with my desire to rationalize and justify the time and energy I have invested in art appreciation, in particular by elucidating the sense of transformation and cognitive advancement that I have experienced in my encounters with various artworks. Accordingly, my dissertation explores the nature of cognitive transformation through art, and how works of art lead the subject who experiences them to be cognitively transformed.

My work on this topic has led me to an appreciation of related issues that bear upon the topics I discuss in the dissertation. First, there is the issue of the ontological stability of the art object, which surfaces in my discussion of Dewey's ontology of art that claims that the art object itself is transformed in the process of being engaged with by a subject. Second, the issue of whether art has relative or inherent aesthetic value, and the relation of aesthetic value to cognitive value, emerges with regards to my claim that the historical, cultural, and personal factors that differentiate particular subjects should be taken into consideration when we evaluate the degree and value of cognitive transformations that result from a particular aesthetic encounters. Third, there is the issue of inter-subjectivity and collective experience that, when addressed, will enrich my discussion of the transformation of the subject through experience of works of art. I hope to incorporate discussions of these issues in my future research.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

The writing of this dissertation has been one of the biggest challenges I have ever had to face. Over the past five years, since I came to US and started to pursue a Ph.D., I have learned a great deal about myself, including my abilities and limitations as a thinker and as a person. Without the support, prayer, and guidance of the following people, this study would not have been completed. It is to them that I owe my deepest gratitude.

First and foremost I want to thank my advisor, Prof. Philip Alperson, who undertook to act as my advisor despite his many other academic commitments. He has provided me with expert guidance and unflagging support and encouragement. I am especially grateful that he was always accessible and willing to help me even while he was in Austria. It has truly been an honor to be his student.

I would like to thank the other members of the dissertation committee: Profs. Susan Feagin, Joseph Margolis, and Susan Wells. I am grateful to them for their contribution of time, energy, and ideas that made the writing of this dissertation productive and stimulating. I was especially delighted to interact with Susan Feagin by having her as one of the committee members. Her wisdom, knowledge, and commitment to the highest standards inspired and motivated me.

It is a pleasure to thank current and former faculty members and staff from the Department of Philosophy. I cherish the time I spent with Prof. Noël Carroll. I have learned immensely from the many conversations I have had with him. His advice and

encouragement was valuable and inspiring. I want to thank Prof. Paul Taylor, who was always friendly and helpful, especially during my most difficult times at Temple. I am lucky to have been his student and research assistant. I wish to thank Prof. Han-Kyul Kim, whom I have known for such a long time, from my years at Seoul National University. He has offered me advice and encouragement whenever I needed them. I am grateful to Prof. Miriam Solomon, Director of Graduate Studies. I cannot imagine my years at Temple without her help and guidance. She was also the role model of an excellent teacher and I enjoyed her class very much. I can also not thank enough Sonia Lawson, Coordinator of the Philosophy Department. Despite how busy she must be, she was always kind and extremely helpful. I also wish to thank Prof. David Wolfsdorf, whose friendship is so dear to me. The joy and enthusiasm he has for his research was contagious and motivational for me, and I am thankful to him for that.

My time at Temple was enriched in large part due to the many friends and colleagues I have met. I am grateful to Lior Levy, Qrescent Mason, Joan Jasak, Nikolaus Fogle, Andrew Beckerman, Morgan Lipe, Danielle LaSusa, Oz (Avram) Blaker, Roger Wolgemuth, and José Muniz for their friendship. Eric Fleming especially deserves all of my gratitude. Without him, this dissertation would have been literally impossible. I am in debt of his generosity and unconditional friendship.

My deepest gratitude goes to my family, who have always supported, encouraged, and believed in me, in all my endeavors throughout my life. I am indebted to my father for the example he set for me as a scholar, and I have no suitable word that can fully describe the everlasting love of my mother and my sister for me.

I would regret my doctoral years at Temple if I did not join the Emanuel Church Young Adult Group (ECYAG). Joining ECYAG was not only a turning point in my life, but also a wonderful experience. I cherish the prayers and support I received from them, and their friendship. I am especially thankful for the friendships I have with Hyunjung Kim, Jinyoung Kim, and Sungeun Kim. They are like a family to me, and I cherish every moment I had with them. Furthermore, Rev. Jikwang Kim has always been a constant source of encouragement during my graduate study.

My years at Seoul National University opened my mind and motivated me to pursue a Ph.D. I thank Prof. Haewan Lee for his guidance, encouragement, and support. Without him I would not have dreamed of studying abroad. I am truly honored to be his first graduate student. I am also grateful to Profs. Byoung-Nam Oh and Jong-Hwan Oh, who showed me a passion for research and intellectual rigor.

Last but not least, I thank God for all the blessings I have been given. You have been and you will always be my rock. May your name be glorified.

To my mother and father, Young-Lim Hwang and Seung-Yeon Cho, with love

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CHAPTER 1

ART AND COGNITIVE VALUE: THE SCOPE OF THE PROBLEM

The creation and appreciation of artworks are important dimensions of many different cultures. Why, one might ask, have people devoted so much of their time, energy, and resources to the arts? One plausible answer is that art is a source of *cognitive value*, a value that might contribute to survival and the enrichment of human life by providing us with some level or variety of knowledge, insight, or profundity in our understanding of human affairs. The cognitive value of art, understood generally in terms of the provision of knowledge, has been discussed by many philosophers who typically focus on issues concerning the means by which knowledge is acquired in the arts and the range of knowledge that art might be thought to present. However, in focusing on knowledge as the end-product of art, philosophers have tended to neglect the subjective aspect of the cognitive value of art and the importance of the process of experiencing art where the subject who experiences art goes through a particular kind of transformation.

In recent years, Noël Carroll has overcome this problem by considering the moral cultivation of the subject who experiences works of art. However, the subjective aspect of art's cognitive value cannot be exhausted by moral cultivation. In this dissertation I argue that the principle cognitive value of art resides in the *cognitive transformation* of the subject that occurs throughout the process of experiencing works of art. I put forward a

view that may be applied to different genres of art, though I acknowledge the difficulty in providing an account that is universally applicable across the arts. The applicability of my view will be seen most clearly with respect to arts that have representational content, including many of the visual arts (paintings and films in particular) and literary arts (poetry and novels in particular), and in a limited way to other arts (such as music, dance, sculpture, and architecture) to the extent they might be said to have representational content. My discussion of cognitive transformation via art as the cognitive value of art prompts further discussion about the value of art in general, including the other kinds of value art might possess, and the relationship between art's cognitive value and these other values. I believe that the cognitive value of art is one of many kinds of value art may serve, which include aesthetic, hedonic, historical, and monetary value, which are not mutually exclusive. Also, I believe that there are many kinds of cognitive value that art may serve, including, but not limited to, cognitive transformation and knowledge provision. I will discuss these questions, and in particular the relationships among hedonic, aesthetic, and cognitive value, in the last chapter in a way that sheds light on the nature of the cognitive transformation through art.

Is Art a Significant Source of Cognitive Value?

As the key focus of this dissertation, the idea that art can be a significant source of cognitive value, as attractive as it might first seem, has been a matter of debate extending back to classical discussions of the role and status of art in society. One of the most

famous skeptics of art's cognitive value is Plato (428-348 BCE). Plato claims in *Republic* that art cannot impart anything seriously worth calling knowledge.¹ On Plato's view, pictorial, sculptural, and literary art are all forms of *mimesis* and what the artist imitates is merely the imperfect appearances found in this world, which are far from the true reality of the Forms. Furthermore, he argues that the function of literature is not to improve our knowledge but to move our passions, an effect that he criticizes as corrupting character. Aristotle (384-322 BCE) defends the cognitive value of poetry against Plato's charges. Unlike Plato, who assumes the ultimate reality of universals independent of material reality, Aristotle locates universals within particulars. On Aristotle's view, works of art are not imitations of imperfect appearances, but rather impart knowledge of universals through particular entities.² Plotinus (204-270 CE), who also defends art against Plato, argues that although the beauty of art falls short of the Forms, the recognition of worldly beauty is nevertheless a path to knowledge of the higher Forms.³

In the Renaissance period, Sir Philip Sidney (1554-1586), in *Apology for Poetry*, defends the cognitive value of art by attributing the role of second creator to the artist, who creates a world that is founded on the natural world yet is to a great extent

¹ Plato, *Republic*, trans. Francis MacDonald Cornford (Oxford University Press, 1941), book 6, 595-601.

² Aristotle, *Poetics*, trans. M.E. Hubbard. in *Ancient Literary Criticism; The Principal Texts in New Translations*, ed. D.A. Russell and M. Winterbottom (Oxford, 1972), 1451b.

³ Plotinus, *The Enneads*, trans. Stephen McKenna (London: Faber and Faber, 1956), v. 8.1.

independent of it.⁴ This suggests the idea that art offers cognitive gains to the extent that it offers audiences an acquaintance with certain forms and possibilities of the world that might not be presently realized. In the Romantic Period, art's cognitive value was supported by writers such as William Wordsworth (1770-1850), Samuel T. Coleridge (1772-1834), and Charles Baudelaire (1821-1867) who held an epistemological view that considers emotions and the imagination to be closely linked to knowledge. According to these writers, art has its source in the emotions and affects its audience emotionally. Artists are seen to possess a sort of emotional intuition, which enables them to participate emotionally in the inner life of the world itself, as well as the inner life of other human beings. The imagination, regarded by the romantics as the key faculty of the artist, is seen as a mode of thought capable of seizing directly on deep and mysterious truths that reason alone cannot reach.⁵

In the last forty or so years, there seems to have been less debate on *whether* art is a significant source of cognitive value than on the means by which the cognitive value is acquired in the arts, and on the range or nature of cognitive gains that art might be thought to present. Nevertheless, there still have remained some skeptical views on art's possession of cognitive value in recent discourse. Before discussing the diverse kinds of cognitive values which the arts possess, it will be helpful to identify and reply briefly to some of the main objections to art's possession of cognitive value in order to understand

⁴ Peter Lamarque and Stein Haugom Olsen, "Truth," *The Encyclopedia of Aesthetics* (Oxford, 2008), accessed May 25, 2011, <http://www.oxfordreference.com.libproxy.temple.edu/view/ENTRY.html?subview=Main&entry=t234.e0510>.

⁵ Lamarque and Olsen, "Truth."

what possible problems there are for any adequate account of art's cognitive value to overcome.

First, it can be argued that the so-called cognitive value of art is either unstatable or banal. Audiences, it might be argued, cannot often say *what* they have learned, and even if they can say what they have learned, such statements typically turn out to be commonplaces.⁶ For example, as Jerome Stolnitz points out, Jane Austen's *Pride and Prejudice* might be said to put forward propositions about how stubborn pride and ignorant prejudice can keep people apart, however, surely such statements are banal. However, this objection loses its strength when art's cognitive value is proved to be not restricted to knowledge that is put neatly in the form of a proposition. In fact, to put what we learn so baldly as above is to ignore the possibility that Austen's work might teach us how 'stubborn pride' can be known in particular situations, what it is like to misjudge and be misjudged based on the first impression, how to empathize with characters who suffer from their immaturity, and so on. These are things we can learn from works of art that are neither trivial nor banal, yet are also a sort of knowledge which cannot be easily reduced to a proposition.

A second objection against the cognitive value of art is that art does not seem to be unique with regards to contributing to our cognitive advancement.⁷ This objection might seem to be especially compelling when we think about the fact that we do not

⁶ Jerome Stolnitz, "On the Cognitive Triviality of Art," *British Journal of Aesthetics* 32 (1992): 193.

⁷ Stolnitz, "Cognitive Triviality," 191-92.

usually blame someone's lack of certain knowledge or sensibilities solely based on their ignorance of works of art, although we sometimes do think that ignorance of art does play a part in it. This means that what we can learn from art can also be learned elsewhere. However, asserting the cognitive value of art does not require the uniqueness claim. We may still ascribe cognitive value to art even if its achievement in this regard can be matched in other ways, just as one might grant that both television and newspapers provide us with news about world events. In the case of art it is certainly possible that, in addition to its cognitive value, other values, such as the beauty of the colors in paintings or the sensory pleasure acquired in listening to music, might occur in tandem with the cognitive aspect of art. Thus, even if there is no unique way that art contributes to our cognitive advancement, it means neither that art is not valuable, nor that art is not a source of cognitive value.

A third objection to the idea that art might provide us with knowledge or insight about the world derives from the fictional nature of much art. As T.J. Diffey puts the question, "How can a work of art be faithful to the facts it would teach if art is not by its nature fact-stating?"⁸ This way of putting the objection, however, overstates the fictionality of art. First, not all art is fictional. Many works of art such as poetry and essays based on personal experiences refer to and document the actual world. Moreover, even in the case of primarily fictional works, it can be plausibly argued that works of art

⁸ T.J. Diffey, "What Can We Learn From Art?", *Australasian Journal of Philosophy* 73 (1995): 208.

function to cultivate our skills of perception that help to acquire knowledge about the world.

Finally, it might be argued that even to the extent that art does impart knowledge, it cannot justify the knowledge it puts on offer. Even if one acquires true beliefs from art, one is never justified in believing them simply on the basis of one's acquaintance with the artwork, because knowledge requires experience of the actual world for it to be justified.⁹ However, as Berys Gaut points out in his discussion of the relationship between art and knowledge, this objection applies not only to fictions but also to non-fictional works and reference books. We tend to assume that reference books have been properly vetted for their accuracy, but there is no guarantee that this is the case. This is immediately obvious in the case of outright frauds such as the so-called 'Hitler Diaries'. But, more generally, for the justification of what one learns from reference books, one needs to go outside the text and appeal to actual experiences. From that point of view artworks and reference books are on the same footing.¹⁰ Unless this consideration requires us to deny most reference books as sources of cognitive value, this objection does not stand against works of art.

As shown, none of the addressed objections effectively deny the cognitive value of art. Working on the assumption that art is a significant source of cognitive value, I will turn to the question of what precisely the cognitive value of art is.

⁹ Stolnitz, "Cognitive Triviality," 196.

¹⁰ Berys Gaut, "Art and Knowledge," *The Oxford Handbook of Aesthetics* (Oxford, 2005), 442-43, accessed May 25, 2011, doi:10.1093/oxfordhb/9780199279456.001.0001.

What is the Cognitive Value of Art?

To this point I have been speaking rather generally about the “cognitive value” of art in terms of its capacity to provide knowledge. Let me now try to make this notion more explicit. There have been two major knowledge-based approaches to the cognitive value of art: *propositional* and *non-propositional* theories. According to propositional theories, works of art are thought to be cognitively valuable when they provide us with knowledge that can be put in the form of a proposition. Morris Weitz, for example, argues that in *Proust* one finds the revelation that ‘there are no essences to our emotions’ and ‘that jealousy, love, and suffering manifest themselves in different ways and are recognized according to different criteria.’¹¹ Also, Charles Dickens tells us in his Preface to *Bleak House* that everything said concerning the Court of Chancery in the work is substantially true. One could plausibly infer from Dickens’s novel, for example, the proposition that estate litigation in the court of Chancery in mid-nineteenth-century England moved very slowly. In this way, the propositional theory seems to apply relatively straightforwardly to realist novels such as *Bleak House*. But the view might also apply to non-realist modes of art. It could be argued, for example, that *Princess Mononoke* (1997), a Japanese animated feature film that depicts the struggle between the supernatural guardians of a forest and the humans of the Iron Town, though ostensibly involving numerous fantastic

¹¹ Morris Weitz, *Philosophy in Literature: Shakespeare, Voltaire, Tolstoy & Proust* (Detroit: Wayne State University Press, 1963), 78-84.

elements, can provide us with knowledge about the conflict between human interests and nature manifested in the particular context of late Muromachi period (15th – 16th century) of Japan that could be expressed in the propositional form.¹²

There are, however, difficulties with the propositional account of the cognitive value of art. According to the propositional account, the cognitive value of art is thought to reside not simply in the presentation of propositions, but in the provision of propositional *knowledge*. If by propositional knowledge we mean true and justified beliefs that can be put in propositional form, it is not immediately evident how a work, *qua* work of art, could present propositional knowledge. Although art is ultimately on the same footing with reference books in terms of justification as discussed earlier, providing true and justified beliefs is hardly a forte of art. As a matter of practice, many artists and audiences do not regard the provision of true beliefs as a central or even as a necessary feature of works of art. It may also be argued that even in cases when works of art might be thought to embody true and justified beliefs, art does not discover or produce them, but merely recycles and presupposes them. The belief about the slow pace of estate litigation in the court of Chancery, to return to the example introduced above, is not new knowledge generated from *Bleak House*; the evidence existed already in court records that predate the book. Works of art might remind us of or fortify certain beliefs, but they do not contribute much to the augmentation of the stock of propositional knowledge. Indeed, one might argue that, at best, such propositional knowledge as that works of art

¹² I am here following Gaut's discussion of propositionally-based theories. He uses examples of *the Iliad* and *Odyssey* as examples of non-realist modes of art. See Gaut, "Art and Knowledge," 443.

provide is trivial. As Stolnitz puts it, what follows from the propositional approach is that artistic knowledge may be either speculative, because non-verifiable, or trivial, because it is already verified.¹³ That is to say, propositional theories as an approach to the cognitive value of art are highly likely to lead us to deny that art is a significant source of cognitive value.

Non-propositional approaches to the cognitive value of art proceed from a different, perhaps broader, conception of what counts as knowledge than is assumed by proponents of the propositional theories. Put somewhat formulaically, it can be argued that knowledge consists not only in knowledge *that* something is the case, but rather knowledge *how*, knowledge about how one might perceive, imagine, feel, think, or act in particular sorts of situations, and knowledge *what*, knowledge of what to do, what to feel, and especially, what certain experiences and mental states are like.¹⁴ For example, we might acquire knowledge of how to sympathize with someone like Ralf in the film *The Boy in the Striped Pajamas* (2008), when he discovers that his son was accidentally killed in the gas chamber of a Nazi concentration camp. This knowledge might involve what it would be like to be Ralf, a commandant of the concentration camp, with his belief that the fate of the Jewish inmates is irrelevant to the welfare of his family, his commitment to

¹³ Stolnitz, "Cognitive Triviality," 191-92. See also Monroe Beardsley, *Aesthetics: Problems in the Philosophy of Criticism* (New York: Harcourt, Brace & World, 1958), 429 and Hilary Putnam, "Literature, Science and Reflection," in *Meaning and the Moral Sciences* (London; Boston: Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1978), 90.

¹⁴ About knowledge *how*, see David Novitz, *Knowledge, Fiction and Imagination* (Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 1987), 132, and for knowledge *what*, see Dorothy Walsh, *Literature and Knowledge* (Middletown, Conn.: Wesleyan University Press, 1969), 91-97. Also for more broad notion of knowledge *how* and knowledge *what*, see Roger Scruton, *Culture Counts: Faith and Feeling in a World Besieged* (New York: Encounter Books, 2007), 33-37.

the extermination of the Jewish people, and his confrontation of the horrible reality of the concentration camp when his own son, Bruno, is executed.¹⁵ These kinds of knowledge resist being put neatly into the form of propositional statements. Rather, it is sometimes argued, the knowledge of what something is or would be like is a matter of “knowledge by acquaintance,” and art provides us with an opportunity to go through, even if vicariously, kinds of experiences with which we may not have been familiar.¹⁶ Or perhaps we are presented with knowledge how, in this case knowledge of how to apply an abstract concept to concrete situations. Jane Austen’s *Pride and Prejudice*, for example, not only offers the knowledge *that* first impressions are a poor guide to evaluating characters, but, in addition, readers of the work can learn how to apply the inadequacy of judging someone based on the first impression to a range of situations they hitherto thought unproblematic.¹⁷ In this way readers can learn how to do something they did not previously know how to do.

The suggestion that art might provide non-propositional knowledge has played a role not only in philosophical discussions of the cognitive value of works of art but also in the practice of ethical criticism that seeks to highlight the ethical insight that works of

¹⁵ The film *The Boy in the Striped Pajamas* is distinctively effective in this regard, providing knowledge of how to sympathize with someone, because viewers tend to realize a shocking fact that they were rather indifferent to the fate of the Jewish inmates throughout the whole time, more or less as Ralf was, until they encounter the death of Bruno and numerous Jewish inmates with him, while watching the film with focus on Bruno and his family as protagonists.

¹⁶ Berys Gaut, *Art, Emotion, and Ethics* (New York: Oxford, 2007), 136 and Noël Carroll, “Art and Ethical Criticism: An Overview of Recent Directions of Research,” *Ethics* 110 (2000): 362.

¹⁷ James O. Young, *Art and Knowledge* (London; New York: Routledge, 2001), 95.

art might provide.¹⁸ By providing us with particular richly detailed examples, the film *Crash* (2004), for instance, leads us to see *how* racism makes itself known in particular situations, and demonstrates *what* it is like to suffer from racism in unexpected places and from people with no particular evil intentions. These are things that can crucially contribute to one's ability to make sound moral judgments. To this extent, non-propositional theories escape the charge of triviality that might be leveled against propositional theories.

Discussions of the non-propositional nature of the cognitive value of works of art present their own difficulties, however. Proponents of non-propositional theories are sometimes criticized for operating with a vague notion of what non-propositional knowledge is. Carroll asks, for example, "What conditions must obtain for a candidate to count as 'knowledge of what X is like?' And, once those conditions are spelled out, will this sort of knowledge really turn out to be categorically distinct from 'knowledge that' or will it be reducible to long conjunctions of propositional knowledge?"¹⁹ This is problematic because, with the vague notion as the foundation, non-propositional theories cannot clearly articulate the range of the cognitive value of art.

Also, there is a larger problem that non-propositional theories must face because, like propositional theories, they are still knowledge-based theories. In the approaches we have considered thus far, the cognitive value of art is construed primarily in terms of the

¹⁸ See Scruton, *Culture Counts*, and Eileen John, "Art and the Knowledge," in *Routledge Companion to Aesthetics*, ed. Berys Gaut and Dominic Lopes (New York: Routledge, 2001).

¹⁹ Carroll, "Ethical Criticism", 363.

provision of knowledge, either propositional or non-propositional, where knowledge is seen as an objective end-product of experiencing works of art. There is in these approaches a certain neglect of the subjective aspect of the experience. Readers, viewers, and appreciators of art frequently speak of the cognitive value of artworks in terms of the kinds of personal transformations they undergo in the experience of works of art. Ralph Smith, for example, asks “Why after an encounter with a work of artistic substance and magnitude are we never quite the same?”²⁰ Catherine Elgin also talks about readers who are transformed by works of art in the sense that they not only read a work in light of their understanding of the world, but also understand the world in light of the works they have read.²¹ Can we make sense of these claims? And in what sense might we describe *these* experiences as cognitive?

The Cognitive Value of Art in the Discourse of Ethical Criticism

The discourse of ethical criticism, which raises questions about the nature of moral lessons that might be learned through art, can be of help here to answer the questions above. Carroll identifies three approaches to the question of the morally relevant cognitive value of art: the *acquaintance* approach, the *subversion* approach, and the

²⁰ Ralph A. Smith, “Toward Percipience: A Humanities Curriculum for Arts Education,” in *The Arts Education and Aesthetic Knowing Ninety-First Yearbook for the National Society for the Study of Education, Part II*, ed. Bennett Reimer and Ralph A. Smith (Chicago: National Society for the Study of Education, 1992), 5.

²¹ Catherine Z. Elgin, “The Laboratory of the Mind,” in *A Sense of the World: Essays on Fiction, Narrative, and Knowledge*, ed. John Gibson, Wolfgang Huemer, and Luca Poggi (New York: Routledge, 2007), 52-53.

cultivation approach.²² The acquaintance approach holds that knowledge of what something is or would be like, which Carroll calls knowledge of acquaintance, is the type of knowledge that art excels in providing, and is especially relevant for moral reasoning. Hilary Putnam, for example, embraces a version of acquaintance approach with a claim that art provides knowledge of possibility.²³ He says, “if I read Celine’s *Journey to the End of the Night* I do not learn that love does not exist, that all human beings are hateful and hating (even if – and I am sure this is not the case – those propositions should be true). What I learn is to see the world as it looks to someone who is sure that hypothesis is correct. I see what plausibility that hypothesis has; what it would be like if it were true; how someone could possibly think that it is true.”²⁴ This knowledge of possibilities can be considered to be a kind of knowledge of acquaintance, because it is knowledge of what it would be like to be in a certain situation where certain things are true or where they are believed to be true.

The subversion approach, according to Carroll, is an approach which holds that the significant value of art resides in art’s calling into question or subverting the previous settled views of its audience.²⁵ For example, by showing what slavery is like and how

²² Carroll, “Ethical Criticism”, 362-68.

²³ Versions of the acquaintance approach are found in Putnam, “Literature, Science and Reflection”; Frank Palmer, “Literature and Moral Understanding: A Philosophical Essay on Ethics,” in *Aesthetics, Education and Culture* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1992); Gregory Currie, “The Moral Psychology of Fiction,” *Australasian journal of Philosophy* 73 (1995): 250-59, etc.

²⁴ Putnam, “Literature, Science and Reflection”, 89-90.

²⁵ Versions of the subversion approach are found in Catherine Wilson, “Literature and Knowledge,” *Philosophy* 58 (1983): 489-96; R.W. Beardmore, “The Censorship of Works of

people just like us suffer from slavery, *Uncle Tom's Cabin* challenges the racist view that some racial groups of people deserve the life of a slave. While the knowledge of what slavery is like in itself is the significant value endorsed by the acquaintance approach, the subversion approach puts more emphasis on the subjective aspect of the cognitive value of art, which involves a subject going through the subversion of his moral view through art. Catherine Wilson, one of the proponents of subversion approach, considers art's cognitive value based on her re-conceptualization of learning. She says, "the term 'learning' 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."²⁶ With this notion of learning, she embraces the possibility of our learning from art in virtue of art's capacity to modify our thoughts and conduct, while suggesting that we need not seek art's cognitive value in the propositions derived from works of art.²⁷

The cultivation approach holds that the subject who experiences art becomes morally cultivated through art.²⁸ Matthew Kieran, for example, claims that art cultivates

Art," in *Philosophy and Fiction*, ed. Peter Lamarque (Aberdeen: Aberdeen University Press, 1983); Bernard Harrison, *Inconvenient Fictions: Literature and the Limits of Theory* (New Haven, Conn.: Yale University Press, 1991); John Passmore, *Serious Art* (LaSalle, III: Open Court, 1991); Richard Eldridge, "How Is the Kantian Moral Criticism of Literature Possible?" in *Literature and Ethics*, ed. Bjorn Tysdahl et al. (Oslo: Norwegian Academy of Science and Letters, 1992), etc.

²⁶ Wilson, "Literature and Knowledge," 495.

²⁷ Wilson, "Literature and Knowledge," 489.

²⁸ Versions of the cultivation approach are found in Matthew Kieran, "Art, Imagination, and the Cultivation of Morals," *Journal of Aesthetics and Art Criticism* 54 (1996): 337-51; Noël Carroll, "Moderate Moralism," *British Journal of Aesthetics* 36 (1996): 223-37; Noël Carroll,

ethical insights and moral sensibilities through promoting imaginative understanding, especially through prescribing particular imaginative experiences; the way something is presented in art prescribes and shapes the very content of what is to be imagined and how it is to be understood.²⁹ Kieran says, “through identifying with the peasants, in *The Potato Eaters*, we imagine not merely the conditions and dilemma of the peasants represented, but, as *prescribed* by van Gogh’s work, we may imagine and thus learn what it would be like to share our meager sustenance with others, how we would feel, think, and be in the light of a certain kind of regard or concern for others.”³⁰ The cultivation approach, according to Carroll, can be wedded to acquaintance approach insofar as imagining what something would be like, that is, knowledge of acquaintance, crucially contributes to moral cultivation of the subject. Yet, even then, the cultivation approach does not put emphasis on the knowledge of acquaintance itself as the significant value of art, but focuses on the cultivation of moral sensibilities and abilities to make sound moral judgments through the knowledge. The insight of the subversion approach can be also embraced by the cultivation approach, for subversion of moral views is a possible result of moral cultivation of a subject. However, the cultivation approach considers not only the radical alteration of moral views, but also the overall improvement of moral talents to be the subjective aspect of the cognitive gains from art.

“Art, Narrative and Moral Understanding,” in *Aesthetics and Ethics*, ed. Jerrold Levinson (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1998); Martha C. Nussbaum, “Exactly and Responsibly: A Defense of Ethical Criticism,” *Philosophy and Literature* 22 (1998): 343-65, etc.

²⁹ Kieran, “Cultivation,” 337-51.

³⁰ Kieran, “Cultivation,” 345.

The Moral Cultivation Approach

The cultivation approach has received much attention in recent years, and it certainly sheds light on the *subjective* aspect of the cognitive value of art, more comprehensively than the acquaintance approach and the subversion approach; it focuses on the influence of the knowledge of acquaintance on the subject, not the knowledge in itself as an object as the acquaintance approach does, and it also attends to many kinds of moral cultivation of a subject that are not confined to the radical subversion of moral views as the subversion approach does.

There are, however, some problems with the cultivation approach that prevent it from being a comprehensive account of art's cognitive value. First, while, as we have seen, the approach is applicable to specifically moral cognitive value, it leaves unanalyzed the ways in which art might involve a personal cognitive transformation outside the sphere of the moral. Consider questions about the cognitive aspects of visual perception, as for example, in the differing views of Ernst Gombrich and John Ruskin concerning the way objects look to us when represented in the differing styles of Turner and the Impressionists. Ruskin holds that paintings have progressed through artists' setting aside the knowledge and assumptions that intrude between their recognition or interpretation of the scenes before them and what they actually and directly see. According to him, only Turner and the Impressionists have achieved this disengagement

and succeeded in delivering ‘innocent’ perception.³¹ On the contrary, Gombrich denies the possibility of ‘innocent’ perception based on his belief in the role that knowledge or expectation plays in our recognition of what is there to see, and Turner and Impressionists cannot be exceptions. Still, Gombrich believes that paintings can be a place for an experiment with the ways we perceive objects, and in this way they can contribute to our understanding of our visual system and our visual construction of the world, although not by showing the possibility of ‘innocent’ perception as Ruskin claims. Despite their difference, both of Gombrich and Ruskin consider the contribution of these works of art to our understanding, and to our understanding of visual perception in particular. Yet, this cognitive aspect of visual perception certainly does not belong to the sphere of the moral.

One way of handling this problem is to distinguish between the narrow or strict conception of the moral and the wider conception of the ethical, and to argue that the moral cultivation approach carries over to the realm of the ethical. Carroll, for example, speaks of the moral as pertaining specifically to “concepts of right and wrong, obligation and duty, virtue and vice, especially with regard to others or with regard to ourselves in relation to our conduct toward others” while the ethical encompasses broader notions of “the good life” or “the meaningful life.”³² However, there is a danger in this approach

³¹ Ernst Gombrich, *Art and Illusion: A Study in the Psychology of Pictorial Representation* (Oxford: Phaidon, 1980), 187.

³² Carroll writes, “... so far the kinds of moral skills that we have claimed that some artworks can cultivate are moral in the very narrow sense. That is, they pertain primarily to judgments that employ concepts of right and wrong, obligation and duty, virtue and vice, especially with regard to others or with regard to ourselves in relation to our conduct toward others. However, there is a broader conception of morality, sometimes dominated by the term

that the relevant notion threatens to become too broad, encompassing virtually everything that can be a part of a person's life; if virtually everything can be considered ethical, would there be any purpose of regarding something as ethical? Probably not.

Another problem with the moral cultivation approach comes from the consequentialist implication of the notion of moral cultivation that if the arts can morally cultivate the audience, then the audience should become morally more virtuous than before encountering the arts. According to Carroll, artworks, especially narrative works, engage audiences in a constant process of moral judgment, encouraging readers or viewers to form moral evaluations of characters and situations on virtually every page. Compared to everyday life where the call for rendering moral judgments tends to be intermittent, Carroll claims, artworks call for a constant exercise of moral judgment that lubricates the moral powers of the audience, and helps them to make sound moral judgments. This is one of the ways in which artworks can lead to the moral cultivation of the subject who experiences the arts.³³ But how do we know that someone is morally cultivated and he is now capable of making more sound moral judgment? Generally we know it by observing someone's behaviors, for there is particularly intimate relationship between morality and our behavior. However, Carroll himself points out that we do not know much about the regularly recurring effects of artworks, and thus he writes, "instead

ethics, which concerns questions of the nature of the good life or the meaningful life. Such ethical concerns –while canvassing narrow moral preoccupations with obligations to others, with justice and fairness, with right and wrong – ask, more broadly, what makes a life worth living." - Noël Carroll, "Art and the Moral Realm," *The Blackwell Guide to Aesthetics* (Blackwell, 2003), 6, accessed February 19, 2010, doi:10.1111/b.9780631221319.2003.00009.x.

³³ Carroll, "Ethical Criticism," 366-67.

of attending to the putative behavioral consequences of artworks, ethical criticism, properly so-called, takes the experience the work is designed to engage as its object of scrutiny.”³⁴ With the help of this remark, Carroll’s argument can be construed as the following: our moral sensibilities, including the ability to make moral judgments, can be cultivated through and during the experience of works of art, but the cultivation of moral sensibilities does not necessarily lead to morally virtuous behavior. If this is the case, I find the term ‘moral cultivation’ misleading because the notion of moral cultivation usually carries the consequentialist implication.

Roger Scruton, in *Culture Counts*, also points out the seeming disconnection between moral virtue and cultural refinement, the latter of which can be construed as much exposure to and experience of artworks. According to him, many of those whose taste in high culture may be coarse or nonexistent, due to the lack of exposure to high culture, often make sound moral judgments. Conversely, there are highly cultivated people, such as Stalin and Hitler, who have had a refined taste in art but nevertheless lived the lives of vicious psychopaths.³⁵ From this Scruton concludes, “The moral value of art does not lie in the fact that it makes you good – maybe it has no such potential. Its moral value consists in the fact that it perpetuates the idea of moral value, by showing that *there really is such a thing* (author’s italics).”³⁶ For example, *King Lear* leads us to

³⁴ Carroll, “Ethical Criticism,” 370.

³⁵ Scruton, *Culture Counts*, 14.

³⁶ Scruton *Culture Counts* , 105.

see that there really is a meaningful death when life has striven to ennoble itself, and there is certain kind of suffering that is worth taking.³⁷

While I find myself in agreement with Scruton concerning the seeming disconnection between one's moral virtue and one's experience of art, I do not believe, nor do I think Scruton believes, that morally good works of art *cannot* have a good influence on people's behavior. I believe that good works of art will have a good influence, *other things equal*, but there are many things to consider in reality to measure the influence. For example, even if it is true that some Nazis have read a lot of novels and might have been moved by them, their moral depravity does not prove that art cannot have a good influence on audiences. Martha Nussbaum rightly points out that Nazis are not known as great readers of Dickens or Henry James, but they were certainly great readers of Nietzsche and listeners of Wagner whose works might well have undermined the good influence of any morally valuable works Nazis might have experienced. Also, their society is known to have contained many strong influences that could militate against any good influence of art.³⁸

For this reason, the moral value of works of art should be measured not based on its influence on human behavior, despite the possibility of such an influence, but based on its contribution to the advancement of moral understanding. Considering the consequentialist implication in the notion of moral cultivation, the moral value of art regarding its contribution to our moral understanding seems to be better appreciated in

³⁷ Scruton *Culture Counts*, 105.

³⁸ Nussbaum, "Exactly and Responsibly," 352.

cognitive terms instead of moral cultivation. ‘Cognitive’ is rather a neutral term compared to ‘moral’ in the sense that we do not expect one who knows or understands better to behave somehow in a better way as much as we do expect one who is morally cultivated to behave in a morally virtuous way.

Another problem of the cultivation approach concerns works of art with sympathetic portrayals of characters who act immorally, as for example in the films *The Talented Mr. Ripley* (1999) and *Let the Right One In* (2008). These films make audiences sympathize with murderers by providing compelling explanations of why they choose to act the way they do. For example, in *Let the Right One In*, Eli, a vampire who appears to be a young girl, kills people in order to procure blood. She lets Håkan, an older man who is living with her, murder people for her with the promise of physical intimacy with her. She even kills bullies of Oskar, her new friend and soon-to-be partner, in the name of rescuing him. In the end, she and Oskar end up fleeing with all the money she saved and with each other for a new start, leaving behind all the blood-shedding crimes they committed. These films have been well received by critics and viewers and have been generally praised as good and interesting works but they all seem to have moral defects, in the specific sense that, due to the content or the perspectives they offer, they seem to contribute either negatively or not at all to the moral cultivation of viewers.

Some philosophers have argued that such works can nevertheless have positive moral and cognitive value. Kieran, for example, argues that works with immoral content and perspectives can help us to achieve full understanding of moral goodness by making

aspects of immorality experientially accessible and intelligible.³⁹ Similarly, Karen Hanson claims that excellent but morally deplorable artworks that present morally deplorable ideas with cogency are valuable because they keep us alive to possibilities we might easily ignore.⁴⁰ *Let the Right One In*, for example, shows how unity and acceptance between two individuals can be attained by means of violence, how morbid interests can help to form peculiar friendships, how the desire of a pedophile can lead to self-sacrifice, etc. Both Kieran and Hanson suggest, in other words, that such works are valuable because they enhance our understanding of the possibilities of human thought and action. *Let the Right One In* is valuable because it can lead us to see how things that seem in conflict - such as violence and acceptance, and desire and sacrifice – can in fact be connected and interlocked in the way we think and act. This kind of understanding can be not particularly moral but still valuable because it is cognitively stimulating and satisfying. When we consider the value of art in terms of moral cultivation, however, the value that resides in enhancing this particular kind of understanding can be easily neglected because neither is there a clear connection between this understanding and one's moral virtue, nor does this understanding always fit neatly into the realm of the moral.

I should add here that while arguing for the value of certain works of art, including immoral ones, because they are cognitively stimulating and satisfying, I am not

³⁹ See Matthew Kieran, "Forbidden Knowledge," in *Art and Morality*, ed. José Luis Bermúdez and Sebastian Gardner (London; New York: Routledge, 2003).

⁴⁰ Karen Hanson, "How Bad Can Good Art Be?," in *Aesthetics and Ethics: Essays at the Intersection* (Cambridge, U.K.; New York: Cambridge University Press, 1998), 221.

claiming that art can lead us only to the advancement of understanding. I do acknowledge the possibility of misunderstanding caused by works of art. Although there can be multiple ways of understanding something, each of which might be correct in some respect, it does not mean that there is not such a thing as misunderstanding. For instance, if *Let the Right One In* leads an audience to conceive murder to be something that usually procures genuine friendship and affection, then it would be a case of misunderstanding of implication and consequences of murder that is provided by a work of art. It is possible that some works of art can lead one to misunderstanding or misperception, as even a view without cogency and coherence can be presented to and accepted by audiences when it is forced with repetitive stimuli to senses as in some propaganda works. However, I do not believe that art can be equally cognitively detrimental and cognitively valuable. For the way art contributes to the advancement of our understanding, I believe, is distinctive in the sense that art leads us to begin our exploration and reflection on some question or issue, rather than giving us a definite answer; art does so by exposing us to new possibilities and challenging our existing ways of thinking and perceiving, as I will discuss in detail in the following chapters. Thus, even when a work of art presents an incorrect view of something, it does not necessarily lead audiences to misunderstanding, because a work of art does not present the view as something to be faithfully accepted and believed, but as something to think about and question especially when it does not fit in with other relevant considerations. In this sense, despite misunderstanding and misperception that can be given from some works of art, works of art, especially ones

that are cognitively stimulating and challenging, tend to possess cognitive value regardless of their moral or immoral character.

As I have thus far briefly reviewed, the discussion of the moral value of art in the discourse of ethical criticism, the cultivation approach in particular, sheds light on the subjective aspects of the cognitive value of art. The cultivation approach takes into account the change that the subject who experiences works of art undergoes during the experience. However, due to the moral focus of the discussion, cultivation approach misses some significant values of art with regards to its contribution to our understanding outside the realm of the moral. Moreover, due again to its exclusively moral focus the moral cultivation approach often carry the unintended burden of the consequentialist implication that moral cultivation leads to morally virtuous behaviors. In this dissertation I suggest that the contribution of art to the advancement of our understanding should be considered in terms of cognitive transformation, instead of moral cultivation and instead of knowledge acquisition as well. I will discuss the nature of cognitive transformation, and how art leads to cognitive transformation in the following chapters.

However, before doing so I need to examine knowledge-based discourses of the cognitive value of art more closely. While claiming that there is a need for an alternative account to the knowledge-based ones, I have not discussed the problems of knowledge-based accounts sufficiently, except briefly mentioning earlier that our focus on knowledge when we consider the value of art leads us to neglect the subjective aspects of the cognitive value of art. Now I will discuss the limitation of ordinary notions of knowledge as they arise in knowledge-based discourses, by considering James Young's

account in particular. Young attempts to provide an account of the cognitive value of art explicitly in terms of provision of knowledge, and his account is relatively recent and comprehensive, thus it will serve as a good example of a knowledge-based account of art's cognitive value which I criticize and to which I aim to provide an alternative.

Young's Knowledge-based Account

Young claims that all works of art have to possess cognitive value by being a source of knowledge. This claim is based on an institutional definition of art according to which something is defined and accepted as art by members of an artworld. Although there can be many different artworlds that adopt different criteria of art, Young argues that the artworlds where only the artworks with cognitive value are accepted as art can encourage artists within it to provide artworks with maximal value. It is because art with maximal value, according to him, can be achieved only through the combination of pleasure and knowledge. He holds that in whatever way art is defined in each artworld, it would be agreed that artworks act on audience by causing within them certain mental states. These mental states can be valuable for their own sake because they *are* pleasurable, or they can be valuable not in themselves but for the results they have by ultimately *causing* pleasurable mental states. Knowledge, according to Young, is the most obvious example of things of extrinsic value that possess the capacity to *cause* intrinsically valuable mental states, that is to say pleasurable states, because a person with knowledge is in a position to predict and control nature with a view of maximizing human well-being. Considering

that human beings also enjoy knowledge for its own sake, if art can provide knowledge, then it is able to cause mental states with intrinsic *and* extrinsic value. He acknowledges that providing knowledge is not the only way art can provide mental state with intrinsic value, however, art with knowledge can be of utmost value in the sense that it can provide mental states both of intrinsic and extrinsic value, the latter of which facilitates further pleasure.⁴¹ Thus, he says, “[if] everyone acted in his best interests, only one artworld would exist and all artworks would have cognitive value.”⁴²

Concerning the way that art provides knowledge, Young rather exclusively attends to art’s provision of knowledge in virtue of its being representational. Although art does not have to be representational in order to be a source of knowledge, because we can learn about art from an artwork *qua* example of art as we learn about counterpoint from Bach’s fugues and about Impressionism from Impressionist paintings, for instance. Young believes that what we expect to acquire from art is not knowledge about art only but knowledge about significant matters of our lives.⁴³ In this regard, Young suggests that being representational is a significant way art can provide knowledge.⁴⁴ He defines representation as the following, “R is a representation of an object O if and only if R is intended by a subject S to stand for O and an audience A (where A is not identical to S)

⁴¹ Young, *Art and Knowledge*, 17-18.

⁴² Young, *Art and Knowledge*, 21.

⁴³ Young, *Art and Knowledge*, 23-24.

⁴⁴ Young, *Art and Knowledge*, 67.

can recognise that R stands for O.”⁴⁵ For Young, a representation is always *about* something and it has the capacity to bring that something to the mind of a ‘suitably qualified audience’.⁴⁶ Also, representation is not simply re-presenting an object, but presenting an object with a particular perspective so that art can provide an interpretation of reality, which ultimately leads to knowledge about reality.

In Young’s account, the role of perspective in art’s provision of knowledge is noticeable. Young defines perspective as a way of conceiving of an object that can enhance the understanding of the object.⁴⁷ He further claims that a perspective is right – because a way of conceiving of an object cannot be true or false although it can be right or wrong – when it aids people who adopt it in the acquisition of knowledge.⁴⁸ For example, Dickens’s representation of the Court of Chancery in *Bleak House* presents readers with the perspective that Chancery is an institution about which one ought to be angry.⁴⁹ If this perspective is right, it will assist readers in acquiring the knowledge that it takes too long a time to achieve justice in Chancery, the procedure required in Chancery is ineffective, and so on. On the contrary, when a work of art provides a wrong or mistaken perspective, audiences take a mistaken way of conceiving the object in the work, and it hinders the acquisition of knowledge. In this sense, according to Young,

⁴⁵ Young, *Art and Knowledge*, 24.

⁴⁶ Young, *Art and Knowledge*, 25.

⁴⁷ Young, *Art and Knowledge*, 67.

⁴⁸ Young, *Art and Knowledge*, 69.

⁴⁹ Young, *Art and Knowledge*, 80.

perspectives are means of apprehending the truth of certain propositions, and thus acquiring knowledge.

What is of particular significance in Young's account is that he considers *practical knowledge* as well as propositional knowledge as the cognitive gain. Although we can acquire propositional knowledge from art, he claims, what makes art particularly important as a source of cognitive value is the practical knowledge it offers. Practical knowledge is a kind of non-propositional knowledge, in the sense that it cannot be expressed in propositional terms. Young argues that artworks can give audiences the capacity of applying abstract concepts to particular situations, and knowledge of what certain mental states are like. Thus it seems that Young's concept of practical knowledge embraces both knowledge how and knowledge what.⁵⁰ For example, almost everyone possesses the propositional knowledge that officiousness, or meddling, is not desirable, for example. However, people may not know what officiousness is like and how to recognize certain acts as officious. A writer can represent a fictional figure and her behavior in such a way that readers become able to recognize that the figures are officious, as James Austen does in *Emma* when Emma officiously interferes in the marriage issue of others. In this case, what a reader learns is not simply that officiousness is not desirable because she knew it all along. Instead, she acquires the ability to apply the concept of officiousness to a range of actions she had hitherto thought unproblematic. She will respond with more sensitivity to future occasions of officiousness. This is learning how to do something that the reader was not able to do, and thus it is an

⁵⁰ Young, *Art and Knowledge*, 95-96.

acquisition of *practical* knowledge. Young seems to imply that what makes art special as a source of cognitive value is this capacity of providing practical knowledge, because this is something that can be seldom acquired from other domains of inquiry as effectively as in art.

Limitation of the Notions of Knowledge

Young's account of the cognitive value of art has its merits, one of which is that it embraces as a cognitive value non-propositional knowledge in addition to propositional knowledge, which broadens the range of the cognitive value of art and highlights the distinct feature of learning from art. However, Young's account shares the problems with other knowledge-based accounts in general due to the limitation of the notions of knowledge it relies on. The critiques of Young's account by Carl Matheson and Evan Kirchhoff help illustrate the problems of the notions of knowledge, and of Young's account, despite their own limitation. Matheson and Kirchhoff criticize Young's account for many reasons, but here I attend to one criticism that concerns me the most. They claim that by considering knowledge as the only cognitive value of art, Young restricts himself to a theory that does little justice to accepted artistic practice that embraces a much broader range of cognitive value of art.⁵¹ Yet, as a matter of fact, their critique does not do justice to Young's position. Matheson and Kirchhoff say, "For a work of literature

⁵¹ Carl Matheson and Evan Kirchhoff, "Art and Knowledge (review)," *Canadian Journal of Philosophy* 33 (2003): 580.

to provide us with knowledge, it must do more than merely produce true belief. The work must also, in some sense, provide us with a justification of those beliefs.”⁵² Here, and throughout their critique on Young, by ‘knowledge’ they mean true and justified belief, that is to say, propositional knowledge.⁵³ Based on this notion of knowledge that includes propositional knowledge only, Matheson and Kirchhoff accuse Young’s account of being more limiting than it actually is. To be more specific, they are right to point out that Young considers knowledge as the only cognitive value of art, but they are wrong to suggest that Young reduces the value in question to *propositional* knowledge. The problem lies in their narrow notion of knowledge, and their neglect of Young’s consideration of practical knowledge.

Still, this accusation of Matheson and Kirchhoff, despite its own error, brings to the surface two important problems of Young’s account. The first problem is that Young’s account fails to show the clear relationship between his general claim that a perspective presented in a work of art leads the audience to acquire knowledge, and the particular claim that art can provide practical knowledge. This causes his consideration of practical knowledge to be easily neglected. Even worse, the relationship between propositional knowledge, let alone practical knowledge, and the perspective presented in a work of art is not clear enough to support Young’s general claim. Concerning this matter, Matheson and Kirchhoff write,

⁵² Matheson and Kirchhoff, “Art and Knowledge (review),” 592.

⁵³ From the beginning of their critique, they claims that according to Young, “a work does not become artworthy by inspiring us to meditate, ruminate, or reflect unless the work also leads us to true beliefs that are, in some sense, justified.” - Matheson and Kirchhoff, “Art,” 575.

Young seems to be conflating the perspective that produces knowledge with the knowledge that it produces ... For instance, the representation of the Court of Chancery in Charles Dickens's *Bleak House* 'presents readers with the perspective that Chancery is an institution about which one ought to be angry' ... it seems that the Court of Chancery is an institution about which one ought to be angry is a propositional claim, and hence capable of truth and falsity. Also, it seems that this claim is something that the reader would conclude from her reading of *Bleak House*. It is not a way of looking at things that leads to further knowledge; it is knowledge to which the book leads the reader.⁵⁴

Young's main claim about the cognitive value of art is that a perspective presented in a work leads the audience to acquire knowledge, and thus the notions of perspective and of knowledge, as well as the relationship between these two notions, play a significant role in Young's account. Consequently, the ambiguity of each notion and of the relationship in question weakens Young's whole discussion of the cognitive value of art.

The other problem is that the ordinary notions of knowledge are inadequate to be employed for a comprehensive account of art's cognitive value. As for Young in particular, he reduces all the cognitive value to knowledge without reconceptualizing the notion of knowledge in such a way that his consideration of practical knowledge can be put in the overall picture clearly. Consequently, he ends up being falsely accused of trivializing the cognitive value of art by considering propositional knowledge to be the only cognitive value of art. Although some types of non-propositional knowledge - knowledge *how* and knowledge *what*- are often acknowledged by many philosophers, especially in the past 40 years or so, the notion of non-propositional knowledge is far from clear. In many cases, knowledge in general is still confused with propositional

⁵⁴ Matheson and Kirchoff, "Art and Knowledge (review)," 590.

knowledge, as shown in the discussion of Matheson and Kirchhoff, or only a few kinds of the alternatives to propositional knowledge are considered. For example, although Young holds that art provides practical knowledge as well as propositional knowledge, he never mentions other knowledge-types that are categorizable as neither practical nor propositional.

Limitation of the Notions of Practical Knowledge

Now, I turn to the limitation of the notions of practical knowledge in particular. As addressed earlier, it should be acknowledged that the consideration of practical knowledge allows Young's account to be more comprehensive than the theories that embrace only propositional knowledge as the cognitive value of art. Still, his notion of practical knowledge is very limiting because it is bound primarily to *knowledge* rather than to the *process* of acquiring knowledge and other kinds of cognitive gains. The limitation of Young's account of practical knowledge in this regard manifests itself when it is compared to Carroll's moral cultivation approach. The most important feature of practical knowledge is one's learning how to do something that he was not able to do, including how to apply abstract concepts to concrete situations. Likewise, one of the features of moral cultivation is the development of moral sensibilities including the skills of applying abstract moral concepts to concrete situations. However, while Carroll focuses on the process of improving skills –the process where the subject is changed to

be equipped with developed moral sensibilities, Young mainly attends to the outcome of the process, that is, improved skills or increased practical knowledge.

Concerning the kind of knowledge art is capable of providing, Young writes, “works of art are (I maintain) sources of knowledge only of the object they represent.”⁵⁵ I find this notion of knowledge, and Young’s account of art’s cognitive value based on this, particularly inadequate to embrace the significance of the *overall* change of a subject through experiencing works of art. Young’s approach leads us to focus on knowledge as the end-product of the experience of a work of art, and more precisely, knowledge only of a particular object presented in a work of art rather than overall enhancement of understanding. On the contrary, Carroll’s focus is more on the overall change of a subject through the experience of works of art. Carroll writes, “In Austen’s encouraging us to see what is wrong in Emma’s behavior we are brought to see the relevance of such abstract principles in everyday affairs in such a way that we can become more adept at issuing comparable judgments in real life. In this regard *it is the process that engagement with the novel encourages that is educative rather than the product construed as a newly acquired moral maxim.*” (italics added)⁵⁶ As explicitly expressed in this remark, Carroll suggests us to focus on the process of experience of art, and the change of a subject achieved in the process.

Perhaps the problem of Young’s account with regards to this neglect of the subjective aspect of art’s cognitive value can be alleviated if the notion of knowledge,

⁵⁵ Young, *Art and Knowledge*, 36.

⁵⁶ Carroll, “Moral Realm.”

and of practical knowledge in particular, is modified so that it emphasizes the significance of the influences of the arts on the subject. Consider Gaut's notion of practical knowledge as an example. While only a *certain* kind of knowledge how – knowledge of how to apply abstract concepts to concrete situations– and a *certain* kind of knowledge what – knowledge of what certain mental states are like- are embraced in Young's notion of practical knowledge, Gaut's notion of practical knowledge embraces more diverse kinds of knowledge how. Adopting what other philosophers have discussed concerning this matter, Gaut suggests that art provides us with practical knowledge in the following ways: art can educate our emotions; art can improve our practical reasoning; art can enhance our imaginative capacities; art can teach us how to look at the world.⁵⁷ As shown here, Gaut's notion of practical knowledge attends to the diverse influences art can have on a subject, and when practical knowledge is construed in this way, a significant problem of knowledge-based accounts, which is that the subjective aspect of the cognitive value of art is neglected, seems to be alleviated. Nevertheless, I still claim that knowledge, even practical knowledge, is inadequate to be a key notion of a comprehensive account of the cognitive value of art. We may take into consideration diverse kinds of changes the subject undergoes through the experience of a work with the help of this broadly conceptualized notion of practical knowledge. Yet, even with this alternative notion, we will still consider the changes as if they are the end-results of

⁵⁷ Each view is presented respectively in Jenefer Robinson, "Sparshott on Art and Expression," *Journal of Aesthetic Education* 31 (1997): 9-17; Putnam, "Literature, Science and Reflection"; Gregory Currie, "Realism of Character and the Value of Fiction," *Aesthetics and Ethics*, ed. Jerrold Levinson (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1998); Nelson Goodman, *Languages of Art* (Indianapolis: Hackett, 1976).

experiencing art, without paying enough attention to the process of experiencing art where and through which the changes occur. This lack of proper attention to the process will result in our neglect of *the way* that a work of art can lead the change of the subject, and of *the nature* of the change that can be only clarified when we understand how the change occurs.

The inadequacy of the notion of knowledge also becomes apparent in the light of the discourse concerning the question whether the cognitive value of art should be discussed in terms of learning from art or of being changed by art. For example, Lamarque points out that early nineteenth century writers had defined poems primarily as a delightful way of changing the reader's mind and effects human betterment.⁵⁸ M. H. Abrams also writes, "by placing the reader in his own affective state of mind, the poet, without inculcating doctrines, directly forms characters."⁵⁹ Concerning the question at hand, Eileen John points out that learning from art requires a larger degree of awareness and specification of what has been learned than that which is required for affirming that one has been changed by art.⁶⁰ Whether or not the distinction between 'learning' and 'changed' has to be made, one thing becomes clear from this discourse: if art's cognitive value is to be explained in terms of knowledge acquisition we do need to be able to specify what exactly is the knowledge that is acquired from each work of art in most

⁵⁸ Peter Lamarque and Stein Haugom Olsen, "The Philosophy of Literature: Pleasure Restored," *The Blackwell Guide to Aesthetics* (Blackwell, 2003), 6, accessed February 19, 2010, doi: 0.1111/b.9780631221319.2003.00013.x.

⁵⁹ M.H. Abrams, *The Mirror and the Lamp: Romantic Theory and the Critical Tradition* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1953), 39.

⁶⁰ John, "Art and the Knowledge," 330.

cases. Now, consider our experiences of works of art. After an experience of a work of art, quite often times “I see things differently now” is all we can say. Especially with the cases where what we already know is reminded, clarified, and enriched by experiencing works of art, it is difficult to articulate the cognitive value of the works in terms of knowledge acquisition. In this respect, even if Gaut, and the earlier thinkers he mentions, is right to claim that art can educate our emotion, improve our practical reasoning, enhance our imaginative capacities, etc., knowledge does not seem to be an adequate notion to embrace these diverse kinds of cognitive gains from art.

The Cognitive Values of Art: Alternatives to Knowledge

I thus far have discussed the limitations of the notions of knowledge, and claimed that preoccupation with knowledge as the end-product of experiencing works of art results in neglecting other kinds of significant cognitive values of art that are not left after but located within the process of experiencing works of art. It includes what we acquire both from and during cognitive activities that works of art facilitate, including our trying out diverse ideas, feelings, and attitudes in order to understand the work.⁶¹ These activities might not always produce new knowledge as an end-product, but they always make us intellectually engaged with the work. Now I will discuss in what terms, other than knowledge, the cognitive value of art has been considered.

⁶¹ John, “Art and the Knowledge,” 331.

Many philosophers have considered certain cognitive values of art that fall short of knowledge. Among others, Carroll claims that many works of art, although they do not provide us with knowledge, do facilitate our acquisition of knowledge, by functioning as a lens and enabling the prepared audience to corroborate in observation. Carroll gives Manet's painting *the Plum* as an example.⁶² The painting presents a young woman, sitting alone, enjoying her cigarette and a glass of candied liquor in a public place. The painting does not deliver us certain knowledge *per se*, in the sense that it does not offer any statistics about how many young women were frequenting Parsian cafes unaccompanied. Yet it called contemporary viewers' attention to a certain aspect of modern life that they might have been only recently coming to notice or not at all. With this painting, Manet could lead many viewers to observe and examine this new aspect of modern life that otherwise they might have missed, and thus facilitate acquisition of knowledge such as that there were an increasing number of young women who could savor possibilities of a new social environment.⁶³ The fact that the cognitive value of art in this case falls short of directly providing knowledge does not mean to Carroll that art should be thought any less of with regards to knowledge provision. Instead, he says, "the communication of knowledge, including social knowledge, usually leaves some, if not most, of the work of corroboration up to the audience."⁶⁴ By reconceptualizing the notion of communication

⁶² Noël Carroll, "Literary Realism, Recognition, and the Communication of Knowledge," in *A Sense of the World: Essays on Fiction, Narrative, and Knowledge*, ed. John Gibson, Wolfgang Huemer, and Luca Poggi (New York: Routledge, 2007), 42.

⁶³ Carroll, "Literary Realism," 42.

⁶⁴ Carroll, "Literary Realism," 37.

of knowledge, or by simply reminding us that knowledge can be, and often is, communicated without being directly delivered, and without the firm evidence that things such as statistics provide, Carroll argues that art is nevertheless not on a weak footing with regards to providing knowledge to audience.

Notice that although Carroll discusses here a certain kind of cognitive value of art that falls short of directly delivering knowledge, he still discusses it in terms of knowledge. Considering his other discussions concerning moral cultivation of audiences through art, what he attempts to do here seems to be to merely clarify the relation between art and knowledge, rather than to provide a knowledge-based account of art's cognitive value. In fact, in an earlier writing he suggests that the cognitive value of art is to be understood not in terms of knowledge provision, but rather in terms of cultivation of sensitivity to previously unfamiliar views, acuity of perception, improvement of impartiality, mobilization of right emotion, etc.⁶⁵ Having considered the context of, or the intention of Carroll with regards to, this discussion, and considering that it may be worthwhile to clarify the relationship between art and knowledge, I still believe that too much of a focus on knowledge in consideration of art's cognitive value, as if knowledge is the ultimate goal of our appreciation of art, can be misleading.

As for the issue of art's cognitive values that are not categorizable as forms of knowledge, similarly to Carroll, Amy Mullin discusses art's cognitive value with regards to art's capacity to direct our attention. She claims that artworks can lead us to think about a topic or a situation that we have never thought much about, and to think about it

⁶⁵ Carroll, "Moral Realm."

in a new or a different way. Works of art do so by introducing an imaginative thought experiment, and guiding the nature of our reflection upon it; they can lead us to imagine that the world, or certain objects and situations in the world, is different from what we have thought it to be like, and to temporarily adopt a particular point of view on what we imagine.⁶⁶ Even an object that is so common and familiar to us that we do not pay much attention to it can become an object of our utmost interest, and things we thought were too remote can become familiar when they are successfully particularized in a work with interesting and compelling details, and framed in a particular way by the artist. The accessibility and the quality of imaginative experience, which is acquired in the way described here, is what Mullin considers to be one of the most significant cognitive values of art. Mullin shares the view with Carroll that the cognitive value of art can be derived from art's guiding of our attention. Yet, by emphasizing our cognitive activities *per se*, and imaginative experience in particular, rather than the ultimate contribution of the activities to the communication of knowledge, Mullin's account casts light on an alternative account of art's cognitive value I aim to provide.

Scott R. Stroud approaches the issue of the cognitive value of art from a different angle, with a focus on simulated experience from art and the subjective knowledge acquired from it. He first considers the general relationship between experience and knowledge, and claims that we are able to reflectively think about and discuss something due to an experience of it, and in this sense knowledge is integrally bound up with

⁶⁶ Amy Mullin, "Moral Defects, Aesthetic Defects, and the Imagination," *The Journal of Aesthetics and Art Criticism* 62 (2004): 249.

experience. In particular, subjective knowledge is inextricably related to experience when he writes, “In my account, however, the experience of what it is like to be *x* in situation *y* is a type of knowledge – subjective knowledge.”⁶⁷ Stroud discusses the cognitive value of art, mostly of literary narrative, on the basis of this notion of subjective knowledge. He claims that literary narrative gives readers a *simulated* experience of what it *would* be like to occupy a different subjective position.⁶⁸ Although simulated experience might not coincide with the exact experience in reality, he suggests, it can come close to such an experience and give one an almost complete picture of what it would be like to actually be having that experience in a non-simulated fashion. Considering the intimate relationship between experience and subjective knowledge, the simulated experience that art offers can provide something of cognitive value that is very close to subjective knowledge from actual experience. This subjective knowledge is what Stroud claims to be a significant cognitive value of art.

Although Stroud obviously considers the cognitive value of art in terms of subjective *knowledge*, I note that Stroud’s account differs from other knowledge-based accounts of art’s cognitive value in two respects; one is that it puts emphasis on the *subjective* aspect of knowledge, and the other is that it attends to the importance of experience *per se*. In Stroud’s discussion, knowledge is neither some object that can exist outside of the subject who experiences works of art, nor does it need to be contained in a

⁶⁷ Scott R. Stroud, “Simulation, Subjective Knowledge, and the Cognitive Value of Literary Narrative,” *Journal of Aesthetic Education* 42 (2008): 27.

⁶⁸ Stroud, “Subjective Knowledge,” 23-29.

neat form of a proposition with firm evidence to support it. He does not draw a clear line between experience and knowledge because, according to him, having experience of certain objects is in itself having knowledge of them. Nevertheless, I note that in Stroud's account of subjective knowledge, there is no proper acknowledgement of the richness of the subjective aspects of art's cognitive value, particularly concerning the capacity of art that leads the subject who experiences works of art to cognitive transformation. Thus, his notion of subjective knowledge proves to be inadequate to be the key notion of an alternative account of the cognitive value of art I aim to provide.

Introduction of the Following Chapters

I have thus far examined a few accounts of the cognitive value of art where cognitive value of art is not considered in terms of traditional notions of knowledge. I acknowledge that they shed light on a possibility of non-knowledge-based account of the cognitive value of art. However, despite such a contribution, they have their limitation in the sense that they pay insufficient attention to the subjective aspect of the cognitive value of art. Although Mullin, for example, by focusing on imaginative experience, rightly attends to the significance of the process of experiencing works of art and the role of imagination, she does not consider them in terms of art's capacity to lead the subject to cognitive transformation.

In my dissertation I aim to provide an alternative account that goes beyond traditional knowledge-based theories and that gives proper attention to the subjective

aspect of the cognitive value of art. My account centers on the change that the subject goes through during the process of experiencing art. I borrow the insight of Carroll that what is significantly and cognitively valuable about art is not knowledge considered as the end-product, but rather the process of experiencing art that affects and changes the subject of the experiences. Unlike Carroll, however, I argue that the change of the subject through art should not be discussed in terms of moral cultivation but rather in terms of what I call *cognitive transformation*. My position here entails two key moves: I move from Carroll's concern with moral understanding to a broader range of cognitive value, and I move from the notion 'cultivation' to a concept of 'transformation' in order to capture what I consider to be changes that occur with respect to the object of the experiencing subject.

My discussion of the transformation through artworks involves an analysis of the ways in which artworks articulate perspectives. In particular, I focus on *reconfiguration*, drawing on the work of Catherine Elgin in chapter 2, and *particularization*, drawing on the work of Martha Nussbaum in chapter 3. As shown in the discussion of propositional theories, it is difficult to make the case that art contributes to our cognitive progress by augmenting the stock of propositional knowledge. I argue that Elgin's conception of reconfiguration, that is, reorganization of the perception of an object so that hitherto overlooked or underemphasized features, patterns, come to light, help us to understand how cognitive progress through art is possible. Drawing also on the work of Nelson Goodman, I show that art is an ideal domain for reconfiguration and for that reason art can be a significant source of cognitive value. In chapter 3, I argue that the operation of

particularization in art also contributes to art's potential as a significant source of cognitive value. I argue that art is especially good at articulating the significant matters of human life, including our sense of self, our emotions, our relation to each other, and our place in the world. These matters are best understood in particularity, not solely relying on general rules or principles. In this light of consideration, I also discuss the role of emotions and imagination in our cognitive engagement with art. I stress in particular the ways in which the emotions and imagination of the audience become vivid, powerful, and cognitively instructive, due to the richly particularized details of the works, and based on this I suggest that the cognitive value of art cannot be separated from the very process of experiencing art and our cognitive activities that are involved in the process.

In chapter 4, I put forward the case that the operation of reconfiguration and particularization do indeed result in cognitive transformations, in a sense related intimately to the nature of the experience of a work of art. I refer to John Dewey's philosophy of experience that, I argue, helps illustrate how experiences of art can transform the subject to be a better cognitive agent. Finally, in the last chapter, I consider the question whether the cognitive value of art is relevant to aesthetic value, i.e., to the value of art *qua* art. I also discuss cognitive pleasure and the role it plays in the cognitive transformation of a subject, drawing on the work of Peter Lamarque, Eileen John, and Michel D. Hurley. This discussion clarifies the nature of the cognitive transformation through art, which I claim to be the significant value of art, and consequently it helps to clarify the relationship between the cognitive value and the aesthetic value of art.

CHAPTER 2

RECONFIGURATION

In this chapter, I will discuss one of the distinctive ways artworks can contribute to the cognitive advancement of the subject who experiences works of art, which, following Catherine Elgin, I will call reconfiguration.

Reconfiguration

Reconfiguration is a term used by Elgin to conceptualize the nature of cognitive progress in a way that is neither limited to nor comprehended by the rationalist and empiricist traditions. These traditions suggest that cognitive progress is the growth of our stock of knowledge by acquisition of new true beliefs that are justified and reliably generated, and presumably that can be neatly put into the propositional form, so called propositional knowledge. According to this view, a person learns a hitherto unknown but properly grounded truth, and smoothly incorporates it into his epistemic system. However, many of the new beliefs incorporated this way contribute very little to the advancement of understanding, namely, making sense of how things are put together, with their differing

importance and weight, by organizing and synthesizing the information given to us.⁶⁹ For example, suppose that someone is gathering information about Oedipus, a mythical Greek king. For her, the belief that Oedipus was named after the swelling from the injuries to his feet and ankles, according to the Greek myth, is a kind of knowledge that can be smoothly incorporated into the stock of knowledge about Oedipus she may have already accepted. Yet this augmentation of the knowledge stock, by simply adding new information, does not necessarily alter or improve her understanding of Oedipus in a significant way. On the contrary, the knowledge that Oedipus is in fact a son of King Laius and Queen Jocastas, and that Oedipus was prophesized to kill his father and marry his mother significantly contributes to the advancement of her understanding of Oedipus. It is not simply because she acquires new pieces of knowledge that are added to the existing stock of knowledge, but because they challenge and alter the way she organizes and synthesizes the information that has already been given to her. The importance and meaning of the affairs in Oedipus's life are significantly changed due to the new knowledge; all the glory in his success at defending himself from King Laius, his providing the right answer to Sphinx and saving Thebes, and the people of Thebes giving him the recently widowed Queen Jocasta's hand in marriage as a token of their gratitude, turn into the pieces of the tragic puzzle. As shown here, not all added knowledge meaningfully contributes to the development of our understanding. Rather, as Elgin tries to show through her analysis of reconfiguration, our understanding of the relations

⁶⁹ The notion of understanding is considered more in the later part of this chapter, 'Further Features of Reconfiguration in Art'.

between already known information can contribute more to cognitive progress than simply adding new information.

Furthermore, this knowledge-based view of cognitive progress is even more problematic when it is applied to art, because art is not suited to impart new meaningful propositional knowledge. Of course art can offer some knowledge, for example, that Shakespeare had a large vocabulary, or that *Don Quixote* is more than 800 pages long, yet these kinds of knowledge hardly contribute to the meaningful development of our understanding.⁷⁰ Nevertheless, art can contribute significantly to the advancement of our understanding, and the cognitive value of art that is not accounted for by the knowledge-based cognitive model can be, at least partly, comprehended by Elgin's notion of reconfiguration.

According to Elgin, reconfiguration is "reorganizing a domain so that hitherto overlooked or underemphasized features, patterns, opportunities, and resources come to light."⁷¹ I accept this definition of reconfiguration and use this as one of the key notions of my account of art's cognitive value, while noting that this notion should include not only enriching and supplementing our perception by shedding light on thus far underemphasized aspects of objects, but also clarifying our perception by offering a strong guide of what to attend and what to overlook. I suggested above that incorporating new information or beliefs smoothly into the existing stock of knowledge does not

⁷⁰ Catherine Z. Elgin, "The Laboratory of the Mind," in *A Sense of the World: Essays on Fiction, Narrative, and Knowledge*, ed. John Gibson, Wolfgang Huemer, and Luca Poggi (New York: Routledge, 2007), 43.

⁷¹ Catherine Z. Elgin, "Creation as Reconfiguration: Art in the Advancement of Science," *International Studies in the Philosophy of Science* 16 (2002): 14.

always lead to meaningful cognitive progress. In fact, significant development of our understanding, both in art and in other domains of knowledge, is achieved when the existing epistemic system is challenged and reassessed, causing former methodologies and standards to be revised and existing information to be reorganized. For example, significant advancement in understanding was possible when lepidopterists challenged the previous methodology that focused on exterior similarity between moths and butterflies. When they ignored that similarity and also ignored the obvious differences between caterpillars and butterflies but classified the latter two as the same sort, lepidopterists could improve their understanding of butterflies.⁷² Likewise, cognitive progress in many domains often consists in reconfiguration, although not all reconfiguration is equally cognitively valuable as I will discuss later in this chapter. What I will show using this notion of reconfiguration is that art may not be a domain of inquiry that generates a significant amount of new propositional knowledge, however, art is an ideal domain for reconfiguration, and as such, it has potential of being cognitively valuable.

Reconfiguration is not a completely new concept invented by Elgin. The idea of reconstruction of information is suggested by others including James Young and Nelson Goodman among others.⁷³ Young introduces the notion of *interpretive illustration*, a

⁷² Catherine Z. Elgin, “Art in the Advancement of Understanding”, *American Philosophical Quarterly* 39 (2002): 3.

⁷³ Matthew Kieran also presents a similar idea, with particular emphasis on imagination, when he writes, “Art utilizes and provides a common pool of imaginative resources and techniques, from stock myths and stories on through to perceptual categories or feelings. But *it is precisely in drawing upon, extending, constructing, and developing these resources that art can draw our attention to aspects of our world which we had previously missed.*” (Italics added) –

representation that presents perspectives on objects that are not a part of our ordinary experience of the objects and that can change how things are perceived by doing so.⁷⁴ For example, unlike a vacation snapshot of the cathedral in Rouen which adds nothing to our ordinary perceptual experience, Monet's paintings of cathedral can add something. They show how the appearance of the cathedral varies with time of day and atmospheric condition and how the emotional impact on viewers can differ accordingly, and this is what makes Monet's paintings, but not the snapshot, interpretive illustrations. Using diverse techniques including amplification, connection, correlation, juxtaposition, selection and simplification, interpretive illustrations draw attention to certain features of objects, place them in context, display their consequences and draw comparisons between them, and by doing so provide a new perspective on objects.⁷⁵

Goodman also discusses our understanding in terms of organization and reorganization of information, in his own words, *worldmaking*. He believes that worlds are not out there for us to find, but they are made and remade in our understanding; thus for him, understanding is a matter of worldmaking.⁷⁶ According to Goodman, worldmaking is commonly composed of the processes of composition and

Matthew Kieran, "Art, Imagination, and the Cultivation of Morals," *Journal of Aesthetics and Art Criticism* 54 (1996): 343.

⁷⁴ James O. Young, *Art and Knowledge* (London; New York: Routledge, 2001), 81.

⁷⁵ For detailed account of each of these common and important techniques, see Young, *Art and Knowledge*, 82-85.

⁷⁶ Nelson Goodman, *Ways of Worldmaking* (Indianapolis: Hackett, 1978), 22.

decomposition, weighting/emphasis, ordering/arrangement, deletion and supplementation, and deformation/reshaping.⁷⁷

Young's account of interpretive illustration and Goodman's account of worldmaking are quite helpful in understanding how we, artists and audiences, get access to various perspectives on objects, owing to the thinkers' rich examples and clear explanation of each way of organizing information. However, I find both accounts limiting. As for Young's account, the techniques of interpretive illustration he introduces are techniques of *artists*, and audiences are presumed to rather passively recognize what is presented in works. When I discuss cognitive progress through reconfiguration in art, I consider two levels of reconfiguration: reconfiguration embodied in works of art by artists, and the enhanced ability of *audiences* to reconfigure other things. Audiences not only recognize and appreciate embodied reconfiguration in works of art, but they are transformed as a result of experiencing art. By being exposed to reconfigurations in art, to new ways of perceiving things around them, their capacity of reconfiguring things by themselves can be enhanced.

For example, Picasso's portrait of Gertrude Stein is known for drawing her in a way that hitherto unnoticed and underemphasized features of hers are highlighted and she looks magisterial⁷⁸; Picasso's reconfiguration of Stein's appearance is embodied in the portrait. Some people who knew her came to look at the portrait and realized she did have

⁷⁷ For detailed account of each of these ways of worldmaking, see Goodman, *Worldmaking*, 7-17. Goodman says that these are ways, not *the* ways, which worlds are made, leaving open the possibility that there can be other ways.

⁷⁸ Elgin, "Creation as Reconfiguration," 15-16.

the features presented there. For them, as a result of looking at the portrait, the standard for what characteristics need to be present for someone to resemble Stein changes, and accordingly people who previously would not have qualified as looking like Stein now do so. Also, if Elgin is right to claim that the portrait is arguably the first portrait in history to portrait a woman as magisterial, or even if it is just one of a few early portraits to portrait a woman such a way, then a viewer's standards of how to describe or recognize women's visual characteristics could be influenced by experiencing the work.⁷⁹ Some viewers could start looking at other women and noting their hitherto unnoticed features, including what makes them look magisterial. In these cases, it is the viewers that exercise their own capacity of reconfiguration, which is developed as a result of being exposed to artists' reconfiguration embodied in a work of art.

In Young's account, there is no room for considering the enhanced capacity of the audience to reconfigure. Also, interpretive illustration, as ways of representation, and the perspectives acquired from them should lead to *knowledge* production in his account. As such, his account results in a limited discussion of the cognitive value of art, because there is cognitive value of art that cannot be justly appreciated through this knowledge-based model of cognition.⁸⁰ For Young's notion of interpretive illustration to be adopted for a comprehensive account of art's cognitive value, this problem, among others, should

⁷⁹ Elgin, "Creation as Reconfiguration," 16.

⁸⁰ Although Young considers not only propositional knowledge but also practical knowledge, a kind of non-propositional knowledge which includes some of knowledge *how* and know *what*, I claim knowledge-based discourse in general including Young's cannot provide a comprehensive account of art's cognitive value. For this discussion, see chapter 1 of this dissertation.

be resolved. In this regard, Elgin, contra Young, suggests reconfiguration as an alternative model of cognitive progress to the knowledge-based model, and forms the ground for more comprehensive discussion of art's cognitive value.

Also, Elgin puts the most emphasis on *reassessment* and *revision* of a formerly accepted epistemic system by reconfiguration and cognitive progress achieved through it, while Goodman discusses worldmaking in consideration of our *general* understanding of the world, of how one's perspective or interpretation generally affects the way an object is perceived or described. For the purpose of manifesting the significance of new or different organization, that is to say, reorganization, of already given or accepted information in cognitive progress, without making commitment to Goodman's worldview, I choose to use Elgin's notion of reconfiguration.⁸¹ But I acknowledge that techniques of interpretive illustration in Young's account are also devices of reconfiguration in works of art, and the ways of worldmaking Goodman discusses can also be ways of reconfiguration. Accordingly, as I have argued above, their detailed elaboration of each technique can help us to grasp the notion of reconfiguration.

Art and Reconfiguration: from Goodman's Account of Aesthetic Symbols

⁸¹ Goodman's view upon which his discussion of worldmaking is built is manifest in the following: "Countless worlds made from nothing by use of symbols –so might a satirist summarize some major themes in the work of Ernst Cassirer. These themes –the multiplicity of worlds, the speciousness of 'the given', the creative power of the understanding, the variety and formative function of symbols– are also integral to my own thinking." – Goodman, *Worldmaking*, 1.

Now I should clarify the relationship between art and reconfiguration, in order to show why the notion of reconfiguration should be employed in the discussion of the cognitive value of art. I claim that art is an ideal domain for reconfiguration and possesses the potential to be cognitively valuable in virtue of this. To illustrate my claim, I draw on Goodman's account of the symptoms of the aesthetic symbols.⁸² However, before doing so, I should clarify the terms of my application of Goodman's account here. I do not intend to identify the aesthetic with art, assuming that art is the only thing that is aesthetic. I only intend to employ Goodman's account of the aesthetic symbols in my discussion of art, relying on Goodman's claim that something is a work of art only when its symbolic functioning presents symptoms of the aesthetic. Once introducing five symptoms of the aesthetic, Goodman argues that none of them is either a necessary or sufficient condition for the aesthetic. However, he claims that the enumerated symptoms probably tend to be present rather than absent, and to be prominent in aesthetic experience. In this regard, he writes, "They [the symptoms] may be conjunctively sufficient and disjunctively necessary."⁸³ Following Goodman, I believe that most works of art exhibit some of the symptoms of the aesthetic, but I am willing to accept the possibility that some artworks – the ones, if there are any, that do not exhibit the symptoms - will not occasion the reconfiguration I have in mind.

⁸² Goodman uses "symbols" as a very general term. He says, "It [symbol] covers letters, words, texts, pictures, diagrams, maps, models, and more, but carries no implication of the oblique or the occult. The most literal portrait and the most prosaic passage are as much symbols, and as 'highly symbolic', as the most fanciful and figurative." – Nelson Goodman, *Languages of Art* (Indianapolis: Hackett, 1976), xi.

⁸³ Goodman, *Languages of Art*, 254.

The five symptoms Goodman suggests to differentiate aesthetic symbols from non-aesthetic ones are the following: syntactic density, semantic density, relative repleteness, exemplification, and multiple and complex reference.⁸⁴ Among these, the first three are particularly relevant to reconfiguration in art. *Syntactic density* is the condition in which the finest difference in certain respects constitutes a difference between symbols. Goodman illustrates this using the ungraduated mercury thermometer as an example, where the smallest difference in the height of the mercury column signifies a different temperature, as contrasted with a digital read-out instrument that marks its measurements in sharply separated units. *Semantic density* is the condition in which symbols are provided for things distinguished by the finest differences in certain respects. For example, in ordinary English, words are put together into certain phrases, clauses, and sentences according to definite rules of grammar, and a small deviation from grammar does not make a meaningful difference but tends to nullify the phrases or sentences; ordinary English is not syntactically dense. However, due to many shadings of meaning and connotation that can be expressed, ordinary English is semantically dense. The ungraduated mercury thermometer, which is syntactically dense, is also semantically dense due to the finest difference in temperature that can be marked. *Relative repleteness* marks a condition in which comparably many aspects of a symbol are significant. Goodman illustrates this with comparison between a single-line drawing of a mountain by Hokusai and the same line as a chart of daily stock-market average. While in the latter

⁸⁴ Goodman enumerates four symptoms of the aesthetic symbols in Goodman, *Languages of Art*, 252-53 and adds one more symptom, multiple and complex reference, in Goodman, *Worldmaking*, 67-68.

all that counts is the height of the line above the base, in the former every feature of shape, line, thickness, etc. counts; the former is relatively more replete than the latter.

What Goodman, and I alike, note is that these three symptoms call for *maximum sensitivity of discrimination*.⁸⁵ Almost every variation in art bears significance, even subtle connotations and shadings of meaning can be expressed, and there are hardly any features that do not affect the identity of a work of art. In Picasso's portrait of Gertrude Stein, a slight difference of color or line can change our perception of the picture and the portrayed figure. Her portrait might lose the characteristic magisterial look, and instead acquire other sets of dominant features, such as vulnerability or cheerfulness, due to the slightest variation. It will not be the same painting. Moreover, not only visual art but also verbal art requires the maximum sensitivity of our capacity to discriminate. Literary fiction is replete and dense in the sense that many different aspects of it function symbolically and even finest differences in certain respects can bear significance. The events, characters, and descriptions of fictions are selected from numerous alternatives: which name should be given to a character or not given at all, or how much detail should be given to the description of figures or events. In principle, there are no limits to the choice of details or degree of details, and a slightly different choice can make a large difference to the meaning or the significance of the work.⁸⁶ Thus, if reconfiguration is about refocusing, reweighing, and reorganizing, and by so doing providing new perspectives on objects, sensitivity of discrimination in art is likely to facilitate

⁸⁵ Nelson Goodman, *Languages of Art*, 252-53.

⁸⁶ Elgin, "Laboratory," 49.

reconfiguration. The infinite possibility of meaningful variation, and of resulted reconfiguration, also explains the often claimed belief in the inexhaustibility of art.

There is another feature of art that is related to the symptoms of the aesthetic, which I believe further facilitates reconfiguration in art. Goodman calls it the *nontransparency* of art.⁸⁷ Among the five symptoms of the aesthetic enumerated by Goodman, there are two symptoms that have not been explained here yet: one is *exemplification*, a condition in which a symbol symbolizes by serving as a sample of properties it literally or metaphorically possesses, and the other is *multiple and complex reference*, which means that a symbol performs several integrated and interacting referential functions. For example, small swatches of cloth function as samples of the color, texture, pattern, etc., but not the size, shape, or weight of the cloth. These swatches exemplify the properties of which they function as samples. Also, when they function as samples of color, texture, and pattern at the same time, it is not because of their ambiguity but because of their feature of multiple and complex reference.⁸⁸ Combined with the three symptoms discussed above, these symptoms of the aesthetic, Goodman argues, tend to lead our attention to the symbol rather than, or at least along with, what it refers to.⁸⁹ When we encounter works of art, we cannot merely look through the symbol to what it refers to, as we do in obeying traffic lights. With art, we attend to the way the

⁸⁷ Goodman, *Worldmaking*, 69.

⁸⁸ Goodman excludes the case of multiple reference due to ambiguity from his conception of multiple and complex reference as a symptom of the aesthetic. For example, a Korean term “bae” means a stomach, a pear, or a ship in different contexts respectively, due to the ambiguity of the term in itself.— Goodman, *Worldmaking*, 69.

⁸⁹ Goodman, *Worldmaking*, 69.

referent is referred to or presented by the aesthetic symbols, the choices made in the process, and the significance of each choice to the extent we can discern it.⁹⁰

If we attend only to what the symbols in art refer to, then it would be hardly possible to explain the reason we value various works of art with similar referents. Consider acclaimed films and their remakes that are also positively reviewed such as the film *Mou gaan dou: Infernal Affairs* (2002) and its remake film *The Departed* (2006). The two films share the almost identical plot line where two protagonists become moles on opposite sides of a war between the police force and the mob, and enmesh themselves in conflicting loyalties and deceptions. The difference between the two films resides in the way that this plot unfolds differently through the operation of different symbols given in each film. *The Departed* takes place in an Irish neighborhood of South Boston and deals with the war between the Irish mob and the Massachusetts State Police, while *Infernal Affairs* deals with the war between the Chinese Triad mob and the Hong Kong police force. Also, while the plot of *The Departed* enfolds with more weight on the love triangle involving a woman (Madolyn) and two protagonists (Colin and Billy), *Infernal Affairs*, with the reference to Avici, the lowest level of hell among all eight hells, emphasizes the endless suffering of the protagonists (Yan and Ming) in the light of Buddhist perspective. Because the different contexts such as these bestow upon each film particular and distinctive significance and values, viewers value both films, despite the

⁹⁰ Goodman writes, “This emphasis upon the nontransparency of a work of art, upon the primacy of the work over what it refers to, far from involving denial or disregard of symbolic functions, derives from certain characteristics of work as a symbol.” – Goodman, *Worldmaking*, 69.

almost identical referents, that is, the plot line. The significance of our attention to the way the aesthetic symbols function in art also explains why we often value works that are without clear referents such as some abstract paintings and some instrumental music. Despite the lack of referents, certain ways in which the aesthetic symbols are organized and presented, for instance, certain interactions of sounds and rhythms, bestow significance and values upon the work.

Notice that it is the nontransparency of symbols that calls our attention to the symbols themselves; it leads us to see the diverse possibilities of the way symbols function and interact with each other, and furthermore, how the referent is formed and modified by the interaction of symbols. Ironically, when we turn our attention from what is referred to by symbols to the symbols themselves, from *what* is dealt with to *how* it is dealt with, it becomes easier for us to see the referents in a new light. Consider the film *The Waitress* (2007). It is valued by many viewers not because it presents something new and innovative as a referent. Most of the facts and thoughts about an abusive husband, pregnancy in a less-than-ideal circumstance, and infidelity are widely known and already presented in many previous works. The film is valued for the particular way it deals with those issues in a delightfully bright and hopeful manner, with its choice of characters, dialogue, music, etc. The dilemmas where the main character Jenna finds herself are presented in parallel with mouth-watering pies such as "I Hate My Husband Pie," "I Can't Handle an Affair Because It's Wrong & I Don't Want Earl to Kill Me Pie". The peace and hope of which Jenna finally gets a glimpse is expressed through a song *Baby Don't You Cry*, so called *the Pie Song*. The viewers of the film cannot pass through these pies with

witty names and the heart-warming song to the issues of pregnancy and infidelity, because these symbols are what catch their attention and what actually form and modify the given issues. It is this particular way symbols function that makes it possible for the film to embody reconfiguration of the formerly depressing issues, as the ones where one can still find hope. In this illustrated way, art's nontransparency helps artworks to possess the capacity to challenge our previous and habitual perception, and leads us to reassess what we know and how we perceive, by leading our attention to the symbols themselves and the diverse ways they function.

Further Features of Reconfiguration in Art

I have thus far discussed the relation between art and reconfiguration on the basis of Goodman's account of the symptoms of the aesthetic. Now I will consider two other features of art, without relying on Goodman, which enable reconfiguration in art to be distinctively effective: active engagement of imagination in art appreciation, and art's providing a strong guide for our attention.

The reason reconfiguration can effectively contribute to cognitive advancement is that understanding is a matter of configuration, that is, to grasp how things hang together. We need to make sense of the information available to us, by organizing it, synthesizing it, and attending to some pieces of information while ignoring others. This is what happens in understanding in general and in reconfiguration as well. When we find the configuration of information in existing understanding misleading or dissatisfying, we

feel the need for reconfiguration. However, not all reconfiguration is equally cognitively valuable since some reconfigurations can mislead us to focus on trivial or irrelevant factors. We need to discern worthwhile reconfigurations and a good way to do so is through experimentation, which tests whether taking a given set of information to focus on is cognitively fruitful. By ‘fruitful’ I do not mean truer or more accurate, but something that effectively challenges, clarifies, supplements, and enriches our previous understanding. For instance, focusing on information that indicates the relation between butterflies and caterpillars was more fruitful for lepidopterists at a certain point, than focusing on the visual similarities between butterflies and moths; the realignment— from butterflies and moths vs. caterpillars to butterflies and caterpillars vs. moths – was a fruitful reconfiguration, without necessarily being a truer one.

A notorious example of an immoral work of art, *Triumph of the Will* (1935), can further clarify what I mean by fruitful reconfiguration. In his discussion of art’s prescription of our imaginative understanding through which art may develop and enhance our moral understanding, Matthew Kieran introduces this film as an example of a work of art that promotes radically flawed imaginative understanding. For the technique, composition, and editing of the film is purposefully designed to promote the imaginative understanding that the destiny to which the Nazis march is one of a glorious, righteous, victorious crusade against the impure forces of the world, and everything and everyone has a purpose in the great order of Nazism. Kieran writes, “it is fundamentally at odds with virtually every significant aspect of the true nature of Nazism. That is, the imaginative understanding promoted constitutes a fundamental and radical

misunderstanding of what it represents.”⁹¹ In connection with my discussion of reconfiguration, this film, then, might be thought of as a harmful or cognitively detrimental reconfiguration of Nazism, and the 1934 Nazi rallies at Nuremberg in particular. However, I claim that this film is not necessarily a harmful reconfiguration. Rather, I think this film can be received as a fruitful reconfiguration to certain viewers, especially those whose understanding of Nazis and WWII is significantly limited, so that it is nearly impossible for them to understand how it was ever possible for German citizens to support the Nazis in the 1930s. Because the film sheds light on certain aspects of Nazism, and more importantly, certain aspects of the perspective of German citizens of that time toward the Nazis, the depth of tragedy and terror that is involved in WWII can be better comprehended. Although this film might have been a harmful reconfiguration of Nazism, when it was used for spreading Nazi propaganda in the 1930s, this film now can be received as a fruitful reconfiguration to certain viewers.

I do not claim that any reconfiguration can be fruitful or harmful depending on those who appreciate it. The reason *Triumph of the Will* can be fruitful or harmful to a great extent is that it possesses the capacity to shed light on certain aspects of Nazism clearly and effectively, that is to say, it embodies such a powerful and effective reconfiguration. Thus, to the one who is already under the spell of Nazism, on the one hand, this film can be harmful, particularly in moral and political respects, in the sense

⁹¹ Kieran, “Cultivation,” 346-47. I should note that Kieran changes his view of an immoral work of art with regard to its contribution to moral understanding. In later essays, he claims that immoral works of art can also cultivate moral understanding of the audience. For his changed view, see Matthew Kieran, “Forbidden Knowledge,” in *Art and Morality*, ed. José Luis Bermúdez and Sebastian Gardner (London; New York: Routledge, 2003).

that he may be led to believe Nazism is something he is to support and follow. On the other hand, to the one who understands the problems of Nazism alone, this film can be cognitively beneficial because it may enable him to understand what could motivate certain German citizens and others to frenziedly support Nazis and what they would have suffered before, during, and after WWII. As illustrated here, I believe we should take historical, cultural, and personal differences of a perceiver into consideration in the discussion of fruitful reconfiguration. However, I also claim that certain reconfigurations can be widely considered cognitively more valuable than others. For there are reconfigurations that fail to shed light on any significant aspect of an object effectively, either by focusing on only trivial or irrelevant elements of the object or being disoriented. Considering this, the need of discerning fruitful reconfiguration through experimentation becomes apparent.

In the experiment for discerning fruitful reconfigurations, the most significant requirement, I believe, is the active engagement of our imagination that imposes certain boundaries and within them draws out the consequences of experiments, not as “a realm in which ideas are utterly unconstrained, bouncing off each other like gas molecules in random motion.”⁹² In imagination, reconfigurations can be contrived, elaborated and tested, and art is an ideal domain for *active engagement of imagination* as a ‘laboratory of

⁹² Elgin, “Laboratory,” 47. Also, for a discussion of how imagination can be employed in a way that is devoid of all constraints, but instead be subject to the disciplined pursuit of advancement of understanding, see Berys Gaut, *Art, Emotion, and Ethics* (New York: Oxford, 2007), 151-56.

the mind' for reconfiguration.⁹³ Active engagement of imagination is surely not a unique feature of art. Imagination also plays a crucial role in many disciplines including the sciences, especially when making hypotheses and operating thought experiments. However, many academic domains, especially many fields of sciences, depend heavily on established background theories, whose acceptability is taken for granted. These theories circumscribe the organization and interpretation of information and their import.⁹⁴ The activity of imagination as a laboratory for reconfiguration is far less circumscribed in art than in other domains. In the practice of making and appreciating art, truth or accuracy that can be more easily secured with reliance on accepted theories is not of foremost importance, for the lack of truth can be compensated by other values including creativity or beauty. Accordingly, there is more chance for reconfiguration in art to shed light on something new or thus far hidden that may be discordant with accepted theories.

Still, one can remain skeptical about the extent to which reconfiguration and imagination in art can contribute to the development of understanding. One may think that it is preferable to study two or three real cases of unwanted pregnancy than to watch films like *The Waitress* or *Juno* (2007), for example. Above all, there are more details available in reality than works of art, which means more information. Even two or three pregnant women in a relatively isolated circumstance are affected by numerous factors, and a wealth of descriptions are available for characterizing their interaction. More information, however, does not always entail a greater chance to learn something

⁹³ I borrow this expression from Elgin, "Laboratory".

⁹⁴ Elgin, "Laboratory," 44-47.

important. With reality, it is quite difficult to discern what to attend to and what to ignore among a vast amount of information. While *The Waitress* leads us to focus on hope and strength that grow in Jenna despite the dreadful circumstance she is in, the film's counterpart in reality would give us too much information about the pregnant woman's abusive husband, her employer, the wife of her lover, etc. to focus on her thoughts. In reality, we are likely to be lost in the flood of information, or organize information with reliance on our perceptual habits. In both cases, the opportunity for reassessment of previous ways of understanding, which can lead to cognitive progress, rarely comes.

The strength of art in this regard is that art provides a strong guide for the direction of our attention, and by so doing embodies clear reconfiguration. In art, what is messy and vague in reality can be presented clearly, and what is hitherto hidden or unnoticed can be shown and discovered. Audiences can see something in art they would otherwise not see or not see so clearly. It is possible in virtue of artists' hands that select, highlight, control and manipulate things, so that certain things are brought to the foreground and their relevant interactions made manifest. As addressed above, understanding is a matter of knowing how things hang together, and art is more likely to show a new or different way of organizing things clearly than reality, by *providing a strong guide* of what needs our attention.⁹⁵ For this reason, reconfiguration for cognitive advancement is distinctively effective in art.

⁹⁵ Kieran presents a similar view through his claim of art's prescription of imaginative understanding. He writes, "An artwork does not merely repeat the familiar or tell us about the unfamiliar. Rather, it seeks to bring home a particular imaginative understanding of a world. Thus the way our imaginings are prescribed and shaped distinctively affects the nature of what we are to understand imaginatively. This is precisely what makes our imaginative engagement with

An example can show that the features of art that I just described enable reconfiguration in art effective; that art is a domain of less circumscribed imagination that functions as a laboratory for reconfiguration, and that art leads us to discover new perspectives by strongly guiding our attention. Consider the works of Swiss artist Sandro Del-Prete. His works are known as studies in perception, especially of different perspectives. He says that his interest in different perspectives started when he observed the eyes of a chameleon, which could move simultaneously in two directions. He started experimenting by drawing objects that could be looked at simultaneously from two different viewpoints. In his experimental paintings, including *Window Gazing* (1961) and *The Folded Chess Set* (1975), objects are reconfigured with reference to the presumed perspective of a chameleon. All the individual parts were correctly drawn, but the whole picture appeared somehow impossible, and thus the normal terms such as front, back, top, bottom, right, and left could not be used there.⁹⁶ He carefully chose and controlled visual elements in his drawings so that they can guide viewers to attend to certain things and not

artworks distinct from the flux of ordinary experience.” Although I believe art’s guiding our attention can shape our imaginative understanding to a certain extent, I find his conception of prescription stronger than it needs to be. For instance, concerning the film *Triumph of the Will*, Kieran claims that it is a dangerous work not only because it shows how Nazism conceives of the world, but also because it attempts to convince us that this is how the world and humanity *should* be understood. – Kieran, “Cultivation,” 343, 347. When I claim that art provides a strong guide for our attention, however, I mean that a work of art provides a *suggestion* of a way to attend to the work for a possibly rewarding experience. Although I am willing to admit that some works of art make rather a strong suggestion that something should be understood in a particular way, I believe most works of art, and most good works of art, suggest to us that there is more than one possible way that something *can* be understood or appreciated, and leave the audience to choose. For this reason, I prefer not to follow Kieran in using the term of prescription.

⁹⁶ Al Sackel, *Masters of Deception: Escher, Dali & the Artists of Optical Illusion* (Sterling Publishing, 2004), 48-49.

others, and to engage in new perceptual experience. His art explores the possibilities of the presumed perceptual system of a chameleon, however by so doing, he leads us to realize how much *we* are used to looking at things in a particular way. This is something we cannot fully appreciate when we are confined to our habitual perception and take it for granted. This example clearly shows the extent to which certain experiments, and certain reconfigurations, are possible and effectively embodied in works of art.

Although I mainly use examples of paintings and films, most of what I discussed above is applicable not only to visual art but also to other genres of art. In order to demonstrate how, let me list perspective-altering techniques found in Del-Prete's drawings. First, his composition and manipulation of visual elements, his making some things salient and omitting others, allow his drawings to embody reconfiguration of the space, which can lead us to experience a new way of perceiving space and reflect on our habitual way of perception, which we would not do without the drawings. Second, his drawings lead us to temporarily take up the perspective of a chameleon that trigger the reflection on our own habitual perception. Furthermore, the experience of his drawings can dislodge a widely presumed knowledge claim such as that we can easily discern what is front or back, top or bottom, and right or left.

Notice that these perspective-altering techniques in Del-Prete's drawings are concordant with the techniques of fiction that are introduced by Elgin.⁹⁷ According to Elgin, there are three ways that fiction contributes to cognitive advancement. First, fiction prompts us to formulate a hypothesis that we would not entertain without the fiction

⁹⁷ Elgin, "Laboratory," 51-52.

despite the ample evidence around us. It enables us to organize our information in a new, and possibly more insightful, way. Fiction does this by exemplifying a pattern, through the choices for salient features and features to be omitted. Elgin uses the example of the play *The Crucible*, which can lead the readers to entertain the hypothesis that contemporary institutions that purport to hold the candle that would light the world are no less arrogant and dangerous than the Puritanism portrayed in Miller's play. Second, fiction enables us to suspend our own perspectives, and temporarily take up another, and see how things look from other perspectives. This is made possible through fiction's providing a strong guide of what we attend to. In this way, fiction exposes us to more diverse perspectives, which discloses more diverse aspects of things, and more possibilities of how things can be configured. Consider Patricia Highsmith's novel *The Talented Mr. Ripley*, which gives readers a rare chance to take up a perspective of a criminal by means of its convincing narrative, and by doing so provides possibly enriched understanding of criminals' motivation. Third, fiction lets us dislodge some unfounded knowledge claims. Borrowing an example again from Elgin, the novel *Mansfield Park* shows that a good character represented by Fanny Price, who is ethically upright without being smug or self-satisfied, is not particularly likeable. It dislodges the claim that the good are always likeable. This consideration of fictions shows that the way reconfiguration contributes to cognitive advancement can be similar in drawings and in fictions.

Also, the application of my argument should not be limited to visual and literary arts. Consider two different renditions of a Jazz standard *The Nearness of You* (1938),

one by James Taylor and Michael Brecker in *Nearness of You: The Ballad Book* (2001), and the other by Ella Fitzgerald and Louis Armstrong in *Ella and Louis* (1956). These renditions, and others, can be deemed as different examples of reconfiguration of the original song, and the way the auditory elements are arranged is so different that different aspects of the song are highlighted in each rendition. In the 2001 rendition, the sound of the piano, saxophone, guitar, and drum sounds rather remote amongst which the mellow tenor of James Taylor provokes the sense of peace and solitude despite the love-whispering lyric, as if the love could be unanswered or the loved one is far away. On the contrary, in the 1956 rendition, the sound of the band, the piano and the trumpet in particular, sounds up front, mingled with the warm and elegant female vocal and the deep and gravelly male voice, as if they all are in intimate and merry dialogue in a bar or a party scene. The color of the trumpet sound and occasional scat singing adds the hint of the relaxed and secure relationship of the lovers, in contrast to what the yearning tenor of Taylor suggests in the 2001 rendition. All things considered, when the 2001 rendition is viewed as a reconfiguration not only of the original composition, but also of the 1956 rendition, the three perspective-altering techniques are made manifest in this example of jazz music. Through the particular manipulation of auditory elements, the 2001 rendition leads the listener to temporarily take up a perspective of a lonely and yearning lover who is in solitude, and challenges the previous interpretation of the lyric that suggests the already answered love and the secured relationship of the lovers. Based on this similarity, I claim that much of my discussion of reconfiguration is applicable to diverse genres of art.

Cognitive Value of Reconfiguration in Art

Now, I will conclude this chapter by discussing the cognitive value of art with regards to reconfiguration. Reconfiguration is introduced as a model of cognitive advancement that is an alternative to the traditional model based on the augmentation of the stock of knowledge. Thus, the cognitive value of art arrived at through reconfiguration should be something other than acquisition of new knowledge claims. Then what is it?

The first cognitive value of art I have in mind resides in *art's capacity to expose us to diverse perspectives*. I claimed that art, through reconfiguration, embodies and presents new possible ways of how things are put together: which aspect should weigh more and which aspect less, which aspect should be in contrast with another, which aspect can be neglected, etc. Also, it is shown that art can allow us to take up the perspective of others'. Our exposure to diverse perspectives through art can significantly contribute to the advancement of our understanding, especially for those to whom the perspectives are new and unfamiliar. For example, with regard to our understanding of object p , we have a way of perceiving p that we are accustomed to, and as a result of reconfiguration we can acquire another way of perceiving it, which might not be necessarily a more accurate or true perspective, but which nevertheless presents p in a new way. The reconfiguration can not only allow us to explore the new way of perceiving p , but also lead us to reflect on the accustomed way of perceiving that may be reinforced or revised by the reflection. What happens here is not permanent replacement of

perspectives, but rather an enrichment and advancement of our understanding by exposure to more possibilities of reflection and perception.

My discussion thus far has been focused on acquisition of advanced understanding of particular objects reconfigured in art. However, there is another cognitive value of reconfiguration in art that has an enduring effect on the general way of our perceiving and understanding the world. When experiences of artworks that provide alternative perspectives are accumulated, the general way some viewers encounter and understand the world can also change. To put it differently, frequent exposure to diverse perspectives on particular objects or situations, that are embodied in works of art, change something deep down in our cognitive condition, something that is a precondition for acquiring advanced understanding of other things.⁹⁸ We may get accustomed to the idea that there may be other ways, even better ways, to organize information than the usual way, and other ways of understanding things around us. This may change our perceptual habits in a way that we become more careful and hesitant in firmly believing that one way of understanding is the correct one, and we begin to consider more possibilities of organizing and making sense of given information. In other words, we become more capable of shifting our perspectives and embracing other possibilities, which I call the enhancement of *cognitive flexibility*.

The concept of enhancement of flexibility through art is developed by Susan Feagin, although what she focuses on is *affective* flexibility enhanced by appreciating

⁹⁸ I borrowed a phrasing from Feagin and modified it here. – Susan L. Feagin, *Reading with Feeling: the Aesthetics of Appreciation* (Ithaca, N.Y.: Cornell University Press, 1996), 241.

fictional literature.⁹⁹ She claims that one of the significant values of appreciating fiction is its enhancement of affective flexibility, that is, the capacity required in making the psychological shifts and having sensitivities that are implicated in having affective responses to fiction. First of all, appreciating fiction *as art* requires sensitivity to imagery, subtle connotations and associations, rhythms of language, diction, voice, and vocabulary. Sensitivity to these sorts of features is often precisely what enables us to experience empathy or sympathy.¹⁰⁰ It is not that only works of art can be experienced with this kind of sensitivity; however, good works of art tend to require a sensitivity and affective expansion beyond mundane abilities involved in reading bad art or non-art, including much genre fiction.¹⁰¹ Secondly, what is crucial in appreciating fiction is that one must be flexible enough to respond accordingly to relevant features in each given context in a work. Even when the same sentence appears several times, it should be understood differently if presented in different contexts. Moreover, appreciating fiction requires and enhances the flexibility of having different responses to different styles presented in different works, as well as to altered contexts in a single work. In this sense,

⁹⁹ Feagin, *Reading with Feeling*, 238-55.

¹⁰⁰ Feagin points out that it is a sensitivity to sentence structure of *To the Lighthouse* that enabled her to empathize with Mr. Ramsay in the following passage “[Mr. Ramsay, stumbling along a passage one dark morning, stretched his arms out, but Mrs. Ramsay having died rather suddenly the night before, his arms, though stretched out, remained empty.]” she says, “The fact that the sentence is bracketed, that “out” is placed at the end of a clause, that numerous phrases protract the sentence thereafter, all leave the reader feeling rootless and alone.” – Feagin, *Reading with Feeling*, 243.

¹⁰¹ Feagin, *Reading with Feeling*, 244-45.

appreciating works of art, especially of a wide range of authors and types expands one's affective flexibility in a significant way.

Feagin claims that increased affective flexibility itself is valuable because it makes it possible for us to appreciate fiction more easily and to a greater degree. However, the benefit of increased affective flexibility is not restricted to that. It is valuable also because it enhances our potential for affective and experiential imagination, which goes beyond the mere entertaining of a proposition or a thought-content but involves experiencing genuine emotions directed towards imagined states of affairs, and the sensory or phenomenal presentation of an entertained thought-content. For instance, in imagining torture, I can merely entertain the thought of being tortured and maintain my fantasy of withstanding the torments without a single slight moan. Yet, I can also imagine being tortured with such vividness that I may come to feel actual disquiet and even fear; experientially imagining the sharpness of instruments and the smell of my burning flesh may undermine my imaginative fantasy of courage.¹⁰²

In addition to this enhancement of imaginative potential, Feagin argues for the value of affective flexibility with regards to the enhancement of our capacity to control our emotions. Since the notion of control is applicable only when more than one option is available, the ability of responding differently is a prerequisite for controlling emotion. These capacities accompanied with enhanced affective flexibility underlie not only our abilities to appreciate fiction but also other aspects of our affective lives. Exercising the

¹⁰² For more discussion of affective and experiential imagination, see Gaut, *Art, Emotion and Ethics*, 154-55.

flexibility through fictional literature enables us to respond flexibly to people, objects, and events in our daily lives.¹⁰³

I should note again that Feagin's account is of *affective*, not cognitive, flexibility, and its enhancement by means of *fictional literature*, rather than art in general. She explicitly claims that she is not arguing for intellectual or cognitive merits of fiction.¹⁰⁴ Also, she distinguishes affective flexibility from intellectual flexibility as well as physical flexibility. However, her notion of affective flexibility can help us to understand the nature of *cognitive* flexibility, and I argue that the enhancement of *affective and cognitive* flexibility is a feature of art appreciation *in general*. Here I do not intend to claim that Feagin's account can be applied to every work of art without modification. Enhanced sensitivities to rhythms of language, diction style, voice, and vocabulary, for instance, cannot be acquired through appreciation of instrumental music, although sensitivities to other features, such as intonation contour and tonality, can be increased.

Nor do I intend to argue that affective flexibility is identical with, or necessarily leads to, cognitive flexibility. Enhanced affective flexibility, expanded potential of imagination, and the capacity for emotional self-control themselves might not be of cognitive value in a traditional and narrow sense; affective flexibility itself does not provide us with a new piece of information or moral lesson. However, all these discussed capacities derived from affective flexibility can contribute to the enhancement of cognitive flexibility in a significant way. Properly controlled emotions and rich

¹⁰³ Feagin, *Reading with Feeling*, 253.

¹⁰⁴ Feagin, *Reading with Feeling*, 242.

experiential imagination, rather than random emotional outbursts and minimal imagination, are what turn mere exposure to diverse perspectives into full appreciation of these perspectives and embodiment of them in one's cognitive system. The openness to alternative perspectives, not just blind openness to any new or different ones, but critical openness in pursuit of advancement of understanding, can be acquired only when the previous perspective and the alternative ones are fully appreciated with help of proper emotion and imagination.

As I have thus far discussed, the operation of reconfiguration is distinctively effective in art, in virtue of which art contributes to the cognitive progress in two ways, by exposing us to more possibilities of perception, reflection, or expression, and thus by enhancing our cognitive flexibility.

CHAPTER 3

PARTICULARIZATION

In the previous chapter, I discussed reconfiguration as a distinctive way in which artworks can contribute to the development of understanding of those who experience the works. Now I turn to another distinctive way art makes the cognitive contribution, namely particularization. By particularization, I mean individual description or specification of a particular instance as it is commonly defined, and more importantly, I focus on its opposition to making things general and universal, that is, making things particular. The operation of particularization is prominent in most works of art, because even a universal theme or common object is represented or expressed in art as a particular instance by the artist's selection and arrangement of material and media. By particularizing a theme or an object in certain ways, a work of art leads audiences to actively attend to and respond to certain aspects and details of the theme or the object, and have an experience with it. In discussing how the operation of particularization contributes to the advancement of our understanding, I will begin by showing that certain matters concerning our lives should be understood in their particularity, and claim that the understanding in question can be acquired through particular experiences *per se*, rather than general or universal rules extracted from accumulated experiences, drawing on the work of Aristotle and Martha Nussbaum. Once the significance of learning

through experiences, and the limits of experiences we can acquire in real life are demonstrated, I will argue that in virtue of the operation of particularization, works of art can offer us the experiences that we need for the advancement of our understanding, and our perceptual abilities for future experiences can also be cultivated through experiences of art. Then, I will discuss how particularization can operate successfully in art, by considering the role of our emotions and imagination in general, and in our experience of art in particular.

Understanding Practical Matters in Their Particularity

When we think about how we learn things, we see that in many cases our learning involves mastery of general concepts and rules that have been established through the generalization of our own and others' past experiences. For instance, how to prepare to go to my Korean friend's wedding ceremony can be learned by certain previously established rules, such as that one prepares congratulatory money, wears a dress that is not white-colored, etc. However, there are certain matters with which general rules seem especially insufficient, including matters about ourselves, our emotions, our relations to each other, and our places in this world. Concerning the earlier example, what I would feel in my friend's wedding is something that is not sufficiently apprehended by general rules and concepts, because my relation with the friend and her fiancé, and my marital status and financial situation, along with other factors, should be considered. This understanding of a certain matter in the context of particular, unique, and complex

situation in which the matter is located is what I consider to be understanding in particularity.

Martha Nussbaum, following Aristotle, suggests that practical matters concerning the question of “how should one live?” should be understood in their particularity.¹⁰⁵

According to Nussbaum, practical matters with ethical concerns, which requires understanding of a given situation and being able to make an appropriate choice of what to do and what to feel, may contain some ultimately particular and non-repeatable elements, and the occurrence of these elements that are instantiated elsewhere can render the whole context entirely different and unique in an endless variety of combinations.

While drawing upon this discussion of Nussbaum, I do not commit to so called moral particularism if it entails the notion that moral principles and theories *per se* are necessarily inadequate to human morality.¹⁰⁶ I acknowledge the significant role that abstract concepts and rules play in our understanding, including understanding of practical matters. Without the operation of rules and concepts, and with consideration of particularity alone, we cannot avoid the great possibility of being mistaken. My

¹⁰⁵ Martha C. Nussbaum, *Love's Knowledge: Essays on Philosophy and Literature* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1990), 71.

¹⁰⁶ In fact, in his criticism of moral particularism that is entailed in Iris Murdoch's discussion of the relationship between art and morality, Kieran himself differentiates Nussbaum's position by saying, “The notion that art may make a noninstrumental contribution to our moral understanding, whilst disavowing moral particularism, may suggest Marth Nussbaum's Aristotelianism.” – Matthew Kieran, “Art, Imagination, and the Cultivation of Morals,” *Journal of Aesthetics and Art Criticism* 54 (1996): 341.

consideration of the significance of understanding in particularity should allow the cooperation of previously established rules and concepts.¹⁰⁷

In fact, understanding in particularity and understanding by general rules are inseparable in the sense that understanding in particularity still involves some use of certain rules, and understanding by rules presupposes accumulated particular experiences from which the rules are extracted and through which the application of the rules is practiced. However, in discussing the significance of understanding in particularity, I intend to emphasize the limitation of general rules in understanding certain matters in the present, however many particular experiences a subject may have already gone through in order to acquire the rules and the ability to use them. For in general, rules that have been set up in advance encompass only what has been before, so they cannot take into consideration the unprecedented and unique features of objects and situations.¹⁰⁸

Furthermore, rules are valued largely based on their simplicity rather than their

¹⁰⁷ Later in this chapter, I will return to the issue of the roles of rules and concepts in our understanding in the context of the enhancement of perceptual skills through experiences of works of art.

¹⁰⁸ Some may object that differences between the cases do not entail the inadequacy or insufficiency of general rules, but they mean that general rules and principles are applied to each case differently and result in different outcomes. For example, Onora O'Neill points out that Kant emphasizes the need of considering the particular circumstance of a case in the application of the universal principle of morality. If this kind of argument allows general principles to be applied in a way that all unprecedented and unique features of each situation can be considered, so that each situation can be understood in its particularity as well as in terms of principles, I have no particular objection to that. My argument of understanding practical matters in their particularity does not aim to deny that great amount of our understanding is norm or rule-governed, but to emphasize the significance of considering particularity of the object in our understanding, and art's contribution to the enhancement of the understanding of that sort. For O'Neill's discussion of Kant, Onora O'Neill, "The Power of Example," in *Constructions of Reason: Explorations of Kant's Practical Philosophy* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1989), 165-186.

complexity and flexibility, and as such subtle and context-embedded features of objects or situations are difficult to take into consideration when one is concerned only with rules. That is why Nussbaum says that the subtleties of a complex ethical situation must be seized in a confrontation with the situation itself rather than with some concepts or rules alone.¹⁰⁹

Here I should clarify the scope of my discussion, with regard to drawing on the work of Nussbaum and Aristotle. In their consideration of the significance of the particular, Aristotle and Nussbaum focus on ethical matters. However, I believe that their insight does not apply to ethical matters alone. There are certain cognitive matters that lack a specifically ethical dimension which should also be considered in their particularity. Consider the situation of Jenna in the film *Waitress* (2007), where she finds out about her pregnancy while trying to separate herself from her abusive husband. While there might be a general concept, or common sense, which can help understand what emotions she would have, this cannot provide sufficient clues for us to *really* understand Jenna's emotions. Her emotions in the given situation can be appropriately understood only in terms of the particularity of the situation. If her husband was more charming in compensation for him being abusive, if she had an education or career that would give her more options for her life, or if she was living in a big city instead of the small town where there was no place she could hide from her husband and the eyes of the neighbors, the way she feels would be different. Some might say that knowing how others would feel is an ethical matter, considering that it is essential to know these things for us to

¹⁰⁹ Nussbaum, *Love's Knowledge*, 71.

empathize with others and live a harmonious life as ethical and social beings. However, we can also be simply curious about the nature of diverse emotions and occasions where these emotions emerge without such further motives. This is just one example of non-ethical cognitive matters that should be understood in their particularity rather than by general rules alone, and in light of this I suggest that we broaden the scope of the particularity account of Nussbaum and Aristotle.

Recall that in order to understand certain matters in particularity, one should recognize the relevant and salient features of a complex situation. This task, however, is hardly an easy one. Due to the uniqueness of the particular persons and relationships that are involved, there are always new and unanticipated features to be considered in each situation. Also, the relevant features to be recognized are always embedded in the given context and cannot be neatly extracted from it. An example can help to illustrate what understanding certain matters in particularity amounts to. In Philippa Gregory's novel *The Other Boleyn Girl*, and in the real historical event upon which the novel is based, for example, although both Anne and her sister Mary are mistresses of King Henry VIII, the relationship between Anne and Henry VIII is different from the one between Mary and the king. Even when Anne is placed in the situation Mary is thought to have been in before as the king's mistress and as a Boleyn girl, the answer to the question of what Anne should do in order to win the king's favor, and how the king would respond to what Anne does, cannot be acquired by merely applying some lessons from Mary's previous experience in the place where Anne is situated. The personalities and habits of Mary that is formed or influenced by her previous marriage, Anne's experience of and education in

the French court, love and friendship between the sisters, and numerous other factors affect the relationship between Henry VIII and each girl. The weight of the task of bearing a male heir for the king, for example, is uniquely heavy for Anne due to the particular relationship between her and the king that involves his divorce from Catherine of Aragon, his break with the Roman Catholic Church, his offering the queenship to Anne, etc. For Anne, the rules and ideas she might have acquired from Mary's experience, and those of other non-Boleyn mistresses, do not suffice to fully understand and appropriately respond to her own situation.

When I claim that general rules are not sufficient for understanding practical matters, I do not mean that we have little guidance of any kind in such tasks. I believe that our previous experiences can help, but again, not only by providing us with some generalized rules to follow in our present and future experiences. More importantly, experiences also help us by developing our perceptual abilities, so that we better understand subtle and context-embedded features of newly encountered objects of situations. These abilities can be developed by using them in many different occasions. For example, a close friend of mine who has known me through lots of experiences would predict and understand my responses to a newly encountered situation better than a stranger who hardly knows me. It is not only because he knows a lot of things about the pattern of my emotions and behaviors, but also because he knows what he should pay close attention to and how to understand it. Even though he does not and cannot know with certainty how I would respond to a new situation, my friend knows that the best

clues can be found in my body language, such as raising eyebrows or pursing lips. He has better perceptual abilities for understanding my responses than a stranger.

As I wish to show through the example of my friend, the abilities for understanding practical matters concerning *particular* persons or situations, on the one hand, can be improved through sufficient experiences with that particular person or situation. On the other hand, when it comes to the understanding of practical matters *in general*, people with many experiences of diverse kinds are said to be in an advantageous position. For this reason, Aristotle, in his discussion of understanding practical matters, claims that although young people can become wise in things like mathematics and geometry they cannot become people of practical wisdom. For young people have not had enough time to have many diverse experiences, compared to old people who Aristotle believes are more likely to possess practical wisdom.

Concerning this claim, I find myself in agreement with Aristotle *only to the extent* that both the quality as well as the quantity of the experience, and experience from works of art as well as experience from real life, is considered. For example, if old people tend to have more experiences *both* in real life *and* from art since they have lived longer and have invested more time in appreciating works of art, then they would tend to possess more practical wisdom; and if some people are born or somehow cultivated to be more attentive and observant, then they would tend to have more enriched experience both from real life and from art, and they would possess more practical wisdom. I emphasize this because I believe that experiences from art play a significant role in developing our understanding of practical matters no less than our experience in real life does. Although

old people tend to have more experiences in general, even old people can never have enough experience in real life. There are simply too many things that require the help of accumulated experiences to be fully understood. Also, there are often many barriers, including certain emotions and self-interest, for us to get deeply and appropriately involved in many experiences in real life.¹¹⁰ Experience from art can help in this regard. Art provides us with opportunities to acquire full and common experiences, and more importantly, abilities for more enriched future experiences.

Art's Contribution to Our Learning through Experiences

First, experiences of art supplement the insufficiency of our experience in real life by providing opportunities to acquire *fuller experience*, and by 'fuller' I mean more comprehensive both in quantity and quality. Art can provide us with access to a wide range of diverse experiences, which in real life we might not encounter. Also, whether it is an experience of a familiar or unfamiliar sort, an experience drawn from art tends to be intense and thorough. In her discussion of literature's unique role in delivering moral insights, Nussbaum claims that without fiction our experience is too confined and too parochial.¹¹¹ Modifying this claim, I suggest that fiction *and* many non-fictional works of art *extend the range of our experience*, making us reflect and feel about what might be

¹¹⁰ By 'appropriately' I do not mean that there is one right way to be involved in a certain experience. I use this term in the sense that an experience, with regard to its contribution to our understanding, is not marred by certain kinds of our emotions and self-interest.

¹¹¹ Nussbaum, *Love's Knowledge*, 47.

otherwise distant and unfamiliar so that we can have fuller experiences. For example, we do not usually seem to pay much attention to what is happening in the lives of others. Even when some people around us are going through some turning point of their lives such as marriage, divorce, or a loss of their loved ones, things often tend to seem too distant for us to feel anything substantial. However, in the activity of reading a novel, or a non-fictional essay such as *The Diary of Anne Frank*, for example, we are led to imagine the lives of others with greater precision, focusing our attention on each given detail, feeling each event more keenly.¹¹²

One of the reasons art can offer us opportunities to have fuller experience is that the very act of appreciating art means we choose to focus on what is presented in works of art with heightened attentiveness, at least for the duration of the activity of appreciating. Even when we read something for fun, if we do not focus on what is in the text and do not actively engage with it, things do not make much sense to us and we are likely to fail in obtaining pleasure from the reading. This explains why I easily burst into laughter at the humor in books or films while I often do not respond at all to fun jokes that crack up the people sitting next to me at a café; at a café, I simply choose not to pay attention to others but focus on my studying.

¹¹² Some may claim that due to the greater precision and focus, works of art provide a chance to have a narrower experience. In terms of intense and through experience with a given object, in the sense that irrelevant details are ignored or omitted and we can focus only on relevant details, it might be called narrower experience. However, as specified, by fuller experience, I also mean the extended range of experience in the sense we get the opportunities to have an experience that is unfamiliar to us or something that is impossible for us to have a direct experience in real life. In this sense 'narrower' doesn't seem to be an adequate concept here.

In addition to the heightened attentiveness that audiences bring into art appreciation, there is another reason why we can have fuller experience with art, by feeling and reflecting about things in art more keenly and actively. We can do so in virtue of the design of the works of art, the way artists arrange certain details that are particularized in a certain way.¹¹³ Consider the film *Nobody Knows* (2004), a film about children abandoned by their single mother. The mother left a note to Akira, a 12-year-old boy, which says that she is going away for a while and he, as the oldest boy in this household, is now in charge. As time passes and the money runs out, things become chaotic. The children are out of water, there is no electricity, the flat becomes a dump heap, Akira's new friends abuse his younger brothers and sisters, and the youngest sister dies from a trivial accident because Akira cannot afford the hospital. This film is based on a real event known as "affair of the four abandoned children of Sugamo" (covered by Japanese media in 1988). The real event is even more grisly than the film; there was a fifth child, a baby boy dead and hidden in a closet even before the mother left, and the fourth child died not from an accident but was beaten to death by one of the friends of the oldest boy. Considering the shocking nature of the events themselves, the real story is probably more grotesque and more tragic. However, the pity, sadness, or anger that the real event brings about is very likely to be somewhat remote, without necessarily denying the possibility of the emotion being genuine, except for the people who actually know

¹¹³ The discussion of the design of the artist that guides our attention is found in Robinson's discussion of emotional education through literature. She suggests that by guiding our attention, a work of art leads our emotional experience of the work. –Jenefer Robinson, *Deeper than Reason: Emotion and Its Role in Literature, Music and Art* (Oxford: Clarendon, 2005), 177-81.

and care for these children. In most cases, the emotions towards the real event tend to accompany thoughts such as, “how can a mother abandon her own children? I do not understand her” or “I don’t understand how those children can be so brutal and careless”. From the perspective of an outsider, too many things are hidden or unnoticed for one to have a deep and personal emotional response. Moreover, in the case of the people who are actually related to these children, their emotions tend to be so strong and partial towards the children that they cannot or are not willing to see the whole picture, including why the mother happened to go away for too long and why the oldest boy hung out with a cruel kid who was going to kill the youngest sister, for example.

A work of art is different in this regard. The design of the work leads a viewer to attend to all the significant details that help to understand this particular situation presented by the work and to experience things in the work more closely and fully. In the case of this particular film, the design of the film leads a viewer to see the mother, Keiko, not as a downright villain but an irresponsible child herself. It shows how Akira and other children can love their irresponsible mother and be excited and happy whenever she is around. It also shows how they understand the situation where Keiko comes back home drunk early in the morning and frequently goes away for extended periods of time. They hope she finds a rich husband so that they can all live in a big house where they do not have to hide in suitcases whenever they move into a new place, and that they can go to school and make friends outside. The audience can infer how Akira would feel and think when he reads the mother’s note, when he begs for money from those who might be the fathers of his siblings but deny their responsibility, and when he stares through the fence

at boys of his age playing baseball at school. By presenting these selected details in this particular way, the film leads us to understand how Akira manages to support his siblings well at first but loses control over himself and the other children as time passes. Due to this understanding, although the story in the film may not be as shocking as the real event and its portrayal in the media, the audience can be more deeply moved and heartbroken by the tragic story of the film.

As shown in the example, art helps us to experience things more closely and fully. As Nussbaum rightly points out, we have many motives to be blind and negligent in the experiences of real life.¹¹⁴ Our jealousy, hatred, and self-interest interject themselves between us and our full experiences. For example, when someone losing his job directly leads to my promotion during an economic crisis, I can be quite blind, due to my interest, to why this person deserves pity and empathy. Likewise, if I am the landlord of the small flat where some children like Akira and his siblings live without their mother, my anger towards my flat becoming a dump heap can hinder me from fully empathizing with these children. Just because it is not our life, a work of art places us in a position that is favorable to perception that is not hindered or misoriented by one's self-interest that makes one ignore and blind to what is opposing or irrelevant to his interest. Works of art lead us to attend to what we need to attend, not only to what we tend to, or want to, attend. For this reason, the example discussed here is not just a case of shift of attention, from what is in one's self-interest to the interest of the children, but also of a case where art enables us to have a fuller experience.

¹¹⁴ Nussbaum, *Love's Knowledge*, 162.

Second, experience of art can contribute to our learning through experiences by equipping us with *common experience*. Nussbaum elaborates this point with regard to ethical concerns. She suggests that since we are living in a society where living together in harmony is the object of our ethical interest, having common experiences on which our understanding of each other is built is important. However, to share common experiences is crucial to understanding human beings and their emotions in general regardless of further ethical concerns. Without sharing the experience of the loss of parents either directly or indirectly, for example, some people might respond inappropriately in the funeral to those who have lost their parents, for they do not understand the situation appropriately. Some may object that we, as human beings *per se*, are born to be able to imagine how others would feel even without the help of art. This claim may bear some truth in the sense that all human beings seem equipped with a minimum degree of this ability. However, it is undeniable that this imaginative ability is cultivated throughout one's life, and through one's experiences. Or some others may object that knowledge of certain rules or concepts enables one to understand the situation appropriately, but, as discussed earlier, not only are the rules themselves derived from accumulated experiences, but how to apply the rules to understanding of a particular situation is also learned through one's experiences. Also, it is highly unlikely and counterintuitive to imagine that all the unique and unexpected features of a particular experience, in their differing weight and significance, can be considered through the rules. Considering the role of experience in this regard, that of providing the common ground for our understanding each other, the significance of experience from art becomes more apparent

when we recall the fact that experience in real life is so limited, partly due to our short life span and our self-interests and certain kinds of emotions that get in the way of full experiences.

The ability of art to provide us with common experiences can be further considered in the light of immoral works of art. In an experience of art, we can take up perspectives we deem morally problematic and thus we would not voluntarily entertain. For example, in real life we could not, and would not be willing to, understand a criminal and liar such as Tom Ripley in the film *The Talented Mr. Ripley* (1999). Yet through the film we get access to Tom's perspective and get a sense of how one thing leads to another, which eventually results in several murders; how Tom's sexual obsession leads to his accidental killing of Dickie, how the hotel concierge mistaking Tom for Dickie leads Tom to start assuming Dickie's identity, how Tom's lie to Meredith about his identity, which started rather innocently, eventually leads to the killing of his new lover, Smith-Kingsley. It is intriguing that we can take up the perspective of such a person and get to understand someone whom in real life we have only an extremely rare chance of encountering, while we cannot do so with a person next door or a close friend of ours. It is also intriguing that art can lead audiences to have common experiences, rather ironically, in virtue of the operation of particularization in art. Due to the particularized details through which Tom's perspective is presented in a compelling way, audiences can share the experience of taking up the perspective of such a criminal.

Moreover, the experience of this film can be rewarding not only because it offers an opportunity to understand something that would be unfamiliar to us otherwise. Even if

Tom's perspective is somewhat familiar to me because of a similar mindset I have with Tom, for example, it does not mean that taking up his perspective would not be rewarding for me. By watching this film, I am likely to acquire a better understanding of myself and people with similar mindsets, which I cannot acquire from real life experiences alone. My self-interest, such as that I want to regard myself and be regarded by others as a moral being, intervenes in my real life experiences; I may ignore and neglect certain features of my emotions and behaviors because of this interest, and this blinds and stupefies me in understanding the nature of my behavior and of the situation in which I am located. In terms of understanding the immoral aspects of ourselves, and of people related to us, works of art can place us in a favorable position for this task by offering opportunities for us to be observers, rather than being the one to be observed and scrutinized.

Some may question the value of experiences of immorality in particular, while acknowledging the value of common experiences in general. I believe, however, that this doubt can be dissolved when we consider the indispensability of comparative cases in understanding anything. In order to fully appreciate and understand the nature of a given experience, we need a comparative experience against which we consider the current experience.¹¹⁵ For example, in order to fully appreciate the loyalty of my friend in a time of need, I should be able to understand what it would be like to experience being betrayed by a friend. Likewise, the experience of an irresponsible mother, through a work of art

¹¹⁵ Matthew Kieran, "Forbidden Knowledge," in *Art and Morality*, ed. José Luis Bermúdez and Sebastian Gardner (London; New York: Routledge, 2003), 63.

such as *Nobody Knows*, can allow the audience to share an understanding of motherhood, responsibility, etc.

In addition to, and in fact in virtue of, providing us with fuller and common experience, there is a more important way that art serves the advancement of our understanding. It cultivates our *perceptual abilities* to appreciate future experiences more fully. In this regard, Nussbaum claims that the *perceptual abilities* are developed by our experience of literature. Rather differently from our daily use of the term with focus on sensations, by perception Nussbaum means the activity of discerning acutely and responsively the salient features of one's particular situation.¹¹⁶ Following Nussbaum, and with more specification, I claim that the perceptual abilities can be honed by experiences not by the many so-called 'experiences' that we pass through with numb senses in our daily life, but by those, what John Dewey calls "esthetic experiences", in which we consider details of particular situations with heightened attentiveness and sensitivity.¹¹⁷ Art is distinctively effective in providing these kinds of experiences. In real life many crucial details are not available when we are not deeply involved in a given situation, or the details are not attended to by us when our self-interests are so interwoven in the situation that we are led to be biased. Without the help of experiences drawn from art, we are likely to become accustomed to neglecting details and perceiving the situations we encounter as we wish them to be.

¹¹⁶ Nussbaum, *Love's Knowledge*, 37.

¹¹⁷ For a discussion of "esthetic experiences", see chapter 4 of this dissertation and John Dewey, *Art as Experience* (New York: Capricorn Books, 1934).

Let me clarify the nature of the developed perceptual abilities through experiences that art provides. When I claim that the perceptual abilities are improved through the accumulation of experiences, I do not simply mean that a number of accumulated practices of applying some rules or concepts to particular situations allow us the mastery of the rules and concepts that can help us in acutely discerning the salient features of a situation. If perceptual abilities are cultivated mainly through the mastery of some rules, then perception would be a matter of precision. However, what marks superb perception is *flexibility* rather than precision, especially considering this changing world we inhabit that always greets us with some new and unexpected features, and uniquely different situations where these features are embedded. Flexibility is not mere open-mindedness that responds positively to anything; rather, by this term I mean something close to Nussbaum's concept of improvisation. In her illustration of improvisation, Nussbaum contrasts a symphony player and a jazz musician.¹¹⁸ It would be agreed by many that the work of a jazz musician is characterized by improvisation, while the most crucial ability of a symphony player is following the lead of, and the signals from, the score and the conductor. This, however, does not mean that a jazz musician can do whatever she wants. If this is the case, there would be no real distinction between different pieces of jazz music. A jazz musician has a double commitment in her improvisation rather than no commitment; she has to present a new possibility of interpretation of the given work and by doing so freshly realize the work with each performance; at the same time, her performance should be committed to the basic form

¹¹⁸ Nussbaum, *Love's Knowledge*, 94.

and structure of the given piece with respect to historical traditions. For a jazz musician, the original score is something neither to rigorously and precisely follow nor to completely neglect, but something that should be thoroughly respected and embodied in her creative improvisation.

This concept of improvisation gives us some lead with regards to how to understand the role of general rules and abstract concepts in our understanding of practical matters. As social beings with personal histories, we cannot help acquiring more than a few rules from generalizations of what has thus far been experienced either by us or by others. However, there are a number of matters that are important for us as human beings that cannot be appropriately dealt with by rigorous application of rules or abstract concepts, due to the surprising new factors with differing significance and the irreplaceable uniqueness of each matter to be considered. This is why I have been emphasizing the importance of our understanding of practical matters in their particularity. Nevertheless, neither do we have to nor can we discard all the rules and concepts with which we are familiar and start anew every time we encounter a new practical matter. What we need is to know how tight our grip on the rules should be, and when to loosen our grip. For this purpose, the rules should not remain abstract but be embodied by us as a musical score is embodied by a jazz musician. As musicians acquire abilities to improvise once they embody original musical scores by practicing and making mistakes and corrections, audiences acquire flexible perceptual abilities by going through practices of utilizing general concepts and rules with the help of works of art. By appreciating works of art, audiences are exposed to examples of particular situations

where the design of the artists leads the audiences to see rather clearly, compared to the experiences in real life, how much general ideas are to be applied and where exceptions and resilience are required. Perceptual flexibility, as the mark of superb perception, is to know *how to and how much to apply* diverse rules and concepts for the appropriate perception of the situation, and *what factors are relevant in* that application, when encountering a new situation. Works of art provide us with the opportunities to improve this perceptual flexibility with fuller and common experiences drawn from them.

Thus far, I discussed art's contribution to the development of our understanding by supplementing the experience of real life. Now I should clarify the relationship between this supplementation and the operation of particularization in art. As I have discussed, lots of learning, especially that which requires an understanding of objects in their particularity and uniqueness, is possible only through experiences, and considering the limits of our real-life experiences, the significance of art becomes manifest. Art offers us full and common experiences on which our understanding is built, and opportunities to develop our perceptual abilities that allow us to have more enriched experiences in the future. Art is capable of doing so in virtue of the distinctively effective operation of particularization in art. Consider thus far discussed reasons why art excels in supplementing our experience. First, the activity of appreciating art means that we choose to focus on the particularized details in the work with heightened attentiveness and responsiveness. Also, the design of artworks, including the selection and arrangement of certain details, makes it difficult for us to miss any of the salient and relevant details that are crucial in understanding the given situation. The fact that experience drawn from art

is not experience in real life also helps the audience to attend to the significant details as selected and arranged by the design of the work, without interjection of his self-interest and perceptual habits of perceiving situations and objects as he wishes or feels comfortable. In sum, from the beginning of appreciating art, audiences get ready to be exposed to and immersed in the details of an object or a situation that is carefully particularized through the selection and arrangement of media and material by the artist. That is to say, the operation of particularization is especially effective in art. This is why art can effectively supplement our experiences of real life, which contributes to the advancement of our understanding. Art contributes to the advancement of our understanding in virtue of its distinctively effective operation of particularization.

The Engagement of Our Emotions and Imagination in Art Appreciation

Now I turn to the other reason why art is so apt for the task of particularization, and consequently, for both providing quality experiences and developing our perceptual abilities. It is because our emotions and the imagination are actively engaged in our appreciation of art. Of course emotions and the imagination are also actively engaged in the process of creating art, but I here attend to their role in art appreciation in particular in order to consider the contribution of *audiences'* emotions and imagination to their understanding. This engagement is to be considered in light of particularization first because particularization facilitates the activity of imagination and emotions, and second because, in connection with the first, particularization in art is fully realized by help of imagination and emotions. I

believe that the first claim is intuitive enough to not call for an argument. The rich details of episodes of a man with Asperger's syndrome, in a work of art such as the film *Adam* (2009), lead the audience to engage with the work with vivid imagination and emotions.¹¹⁹ The film shows how difficult it is for Adam to build a relationship with others due to his inability to empathize by means of a concrete episode where he abruptly asks the girl he likes if she was aroused during their first outing, which causes her to leave in embarrassment and discomfort. In virtue of this particularized detail, viewers can imagine vividly some aspect of living with the syndrome and in turn, our imagination helps us to respond to the given situation with genuine emotions toward Adam, which would not be possible with abstract concepts and general ideas of Asperger's syndrome alone.

The second claim that particularization in art is fully realized only with the audience's active engagement of emotions and imagination, however, requires more explanation. Works of art are designed to not only facilitate but also *utilize* this engagement, and only when this succeeds can we appreciate the particularized details of the work appropriately. Without the audiences responding with particular pity and grief for Saigo, for instance, who is a private in the imperial Japanese army, *Letters from Iwo Jima* (2006) cannot be understood and appreciated in its particularity; it would be perceived as just another WWII film full of bloody battle scenes without being meaningfully differentiated. Consider another WWII film *The Flags of Our Father* (2006), which also deals with the Iwo Jima battle, but from the perspective of an American Marine. Without the engagement of different kinds of emotions and imagination, the particularity of either film cannot be realized. What makes *Letters from*

¹¹⁹ Carroll suggests this claim with an example of an AIDS victim in a work of art.

Iwo Jima unique, especially to American viewers, is that it leads audiences to imagine what it would be like to see things from the perspective of those in the Japanese army and respond with emotions based on that particular imagination, which otherwise the viewers would seldom do. They are led to imagine what it would be like to be stationed in Iwo Jima as a Japanese soldier while knowing that the sole goal of the army is not victory but holding out as long as possible before the total defeat for the sake of mainland Japan. The film also leads the viewers to imagine what it would be like to see his fellow soldiers die not only on the battlefield but from dysentery, malnutrition, and beatings from senior soldiers. This particular imagination helps the emotions with which the audience responds to the film to be specifically directed toward these particular episodes.

Moreover, when I claim that particularization in art is fully realized by the active engagement of our emotions and imagination, I also take into consideration their role in providing *unity* to each of the particular works. In our everyday perception and understanding, imagination makes connections between fragmental information about an object or a situation, fills in the gaps, and makes sense of the object as a whole, with the guidance of emotions.¹²⁰ It is the same with art, and the role imagination and emotions play in art may be even more crucial. Although art can present certain details that have escaped the attention of the audiences or certain details that the audiences normally do not have access to, and present them in such a way that the audiences can focus on significant details with heightened attentiveness, it does not mean that art generally can contain more details

¹²⁰ The discussion of the role of emotions in providing unity to our experience is found in Dewey's *Art as Experience*. For my reading of this discussion of Dewey, see Chapter 4 of this dissertation.

than our real life. There are obvious limitations to the number of details that can be chosen and contained in a single work of art, so it is inevitable that audiences supplement details that they find necessary with their imagination, which in turn is guided by their emotions. Although it is a work of art that presents us certain details in order for us to understand the object or the situation given in a work, it is our emotions and imagination that arrange, connect, and supplement the details and make sense of them as a whole.

My claim about the role of our emotions and imagination in the realization of particularization in art relies on the active role of emotions and imagination in our understanding in general. I briefly discussed above how imagination and emotions together contribute to our understanding in everyday life and in experiences of art. Now I will focus more on emotions, and discuss rather exclusively how they contribute to our understanding. Emotions are often thought to be something passive, something we give out involuntarily as a response to the encountered situation. Especially with regard to understanding, emotions are thought to be the output when understanding is provided as an input. When we consider a certain situation unfair, for example, we respond with anger, or to put it differently, our anger toward a certain situation implies that we understand it to be unfair. However, the relationship between understanding and emotions is reciprocal; not only does understanding guide and shape our emotions, but emotions also guide and shape our understanding. Aristotle developed an account of cognition largely based on our emotions, and it is applicable to current discussion.¹²¹ According to him, emotions allow us to understand the

¹²¹ The suggestion of emotion as an essential part of our cognition is also found in Damasio's book – Antonio Damasio, *Descartes' Error: Emotion, Reason, and the Human Brain* (New York: G.P. Putnam, 1994).

nature of particular situations, and cognition must draw on the work of the emotive elements if it is to be properly informed.¹²² In continuity of this understanding of cognition, Nussbaum offers an example where one discerns intellectually that a friend is in need in a certain situation but fails to respond to it with appropriate sympathy or grief. For Nussbaum this is not just a case where someone is emotionally challenged or merely indifferent. She claims that the cognition of this person is incomplete because the emotional part is lacking.¹²³ Likewise, I claim that our understanding of *Letters from Iwo Jima* is incomplete if it is not accompanied by a particular kind of pity or grief as addressed above.

The notion that emotions shape and complete our understanding is also found in Aristotle's discussion of *akrasia*: doing something other than the best while knowing what is, and being able to do, the best. As addressed in Plato's discussion of *akrasia* in *Protagoras*, the cause of *akrasia* is often thought to be that people are overcome by pleasure.¹²⁴ Plato, through the voice of Socrates, suggests that *akrasia* is in fact a matter of intellectual failure.¹²⁵ He claims that although people can occasionally participate in so-called *akratic* actions, these actions are not truly *akratic*, because in these cases, people do not do something other than the best while knowing what is best. Rather, he suggests, so called

¹²² Nussbaum, *Love's Knowledge*, 79.

¹²³ Nussbaum, *Love's Knowledge*, 78.

¹²⁴ Plato, in the voice of Socrates, says, "They [most people] maintain that most people are unwilling to do what is best, even though they know what it is and are able to do it. And when I have asked them the reason for this, they say that those who act that way do so because they are overcome by pleasure or pain or are being ruled by one of the things I referred to just now."— In Plato, *Protagoras*. Trans. Stanley Lombardo and Karen Bell, in *Plato: Complete Works*, ed. John M. Cooper and D.S. Hutchinson (Indianapolis: Hackett, 1997), 352d5-e2.

¹²⁵ Plato, *Protagoras*, 351b-358e.

akratic actions are cases where people do something other than the best *without knowing* which choice is really best, and it is due to their failure to properly measure goodness.¹²⁶ If people really know what is best, then they would not do something less than the best by being overcome with passion for pleasure or desire, and thus, *akrasia* is impossible. Like Plato, Aristotle also considers *akrasia* to be a matter of intellectual failure. Yet for Aristotle it is not a failure in measuring goodness because he does not share with Socrates of *Protagoras* the assumption of commensurability of diverse kinds of goodness, and of values in general; if different kinds of goodness cannot be measured by the same standard, then *akrasia* cannot be the failure of measuring the quantities of goodness. Instead, according to Aristotle, *akratic* action is the result of incomplete practical knowledge that is incapable of accompanying the passion or desire to do things that are considered best, and in this sense it is an intellectual failure. As suggested in this discussion of *akrasia*, emotions, as considered in terms of passions and desires, are significant components of our knowledge and understanding without which our cognition is incomplete.¹²⁷

There is another consideration that illustrates why emotions should be thought to shape our understanding, and it is especially related to the operation of particularization in art. It is that emotions give us a motivation to pay close attention to the right details. For instance, Nussbaum suggests that love involves one's desire to share a form of life with a loved one, and one's trust in the guidance of the loved one, which motivates one to learn to

¹²⁶ Or it is due to the failure of measuring pleasure, because Socrates identifies goodness and pleasure in his argument of the impossibility of *akrasia*.

¹²⁷ Nussbaum, *Love's Knowledge*, 80-81.

see aspects of the world she or he had previously missed if they are what the loved one sees.¹²⁸ Henry James rightly points out that reading novels often involves this kind of learning, and I claim that appreciating art *in general* promotes such kinds of learning.¹²⁹ What makes particularization in art distinctively effective, namely our choice to be attentive to the work that is implied in our appreciation of art and the design of the work that guides the audience's attention to what the work intends to show, facilitates the formation of some kind of love or friendship toward the work. This emotion in turn can motivate us to learn to see the world from a different perspective than our own, from the perspective the work of art presents. This is why even immoral works of art can attract us and guide our perceptions despite the immorality that would normally repel us. Love, empathy, or pity is what leads one to look beyond the barrier of his or her ethical judgment, even if only temporarily. In watching *The Talented Mr. Ripley*, the viewer somehow begins to empathize with, or pity, Tom, a person whom the viewer would probably abhor in real life, and because of this emotion the viewer learns to see things from Tom's perspective, despite her own judgment that it is morally problematic. In this way, the viewer acquires a chance to see the motivation and nature of certain immoral behaviors, which can ultimately lead to a better understanding of morality itself.¹³⁰

¹²⁸ Nussbaum, *Love's Knowledge*, 44.

¹²⁹ For more detailed discussion of Henry James, See Martha Nussbaum, *The Fragility of Goodness: Luck and Ethics in Greek Tragedy and Philosophy* (Cambridge & New York: Cambridge University Press, 1986), chapter 8-12.

¹³⁰ This view is developed in Kieran, "Forbidden Knowledge."

I should note that love and friendship, emotions that are thought to be positive, are not the only emotions that shape and affect our understanding, because negative emotions also have their own share of influence on our understanding. I have already addressed above that emotions such as jealousy and hatred can make us blind to certain significant details of a given situation, which affects our understanding in a detrimental way. However, some of the so called negative emotions can help our understanding. For example, Alison Jaggar claims that outlaw emotions, emotions that are distinguished by their incompatibility with dominant perceptions and values, can positively contribute to our understanding.¹³¹ For example, if a woman feels uncomfortable and responds with anger when she is expected to be flattered by complimentary sexual banter, her anger is an example of an outlaw emotion.¹³² The experience of anger in this particular situation can lead her to question the source of this unexpected emotion and try to find the answer by perceiving or interpreting the situation in a different way than before; she may come to realize how much she is being sexually objectified, why this sexual objectification of women is more common than that of men, and what function it serves in society. This could give her an insight into the world around her that could not have been acquired if she was flattered as conventionally prescribed. This discussion of outlaw emotions suggests that there is a variety of emotions, including but not limited to love and friendship, which contribute to the development of our understanding,

¹³¹ See Alison M. Jaggar, "Love and Knowledge: Emotion in Feminist Epistemology," *Inquiry: An Interdisciplinary Journal of Philosophy* 32 (1989): 157-76.

¹³² Some may object that this example is outdated and the anger with which this woman responds to the given situation is actually the conventionally prescribed response in society now, in virtue of the change of society. Having this objection in mind, although I do not think this is entirely true, I have to add that the adequacy of this particular episode as an example of outlaw emotions relies on in which society this episode is situated.

although the way negative emotions contribute to our understanding may be different from that of love and friendship. While positive emotions toward a work of art can invite the audience to try out the perspective presented in the work, negative emotions toward a work may not invite the audience in the same way. Instead, negative emotions can invite scrutiny and thorough reflection on the work, on the perspective given in the work, and one's own thoughts, in order for the audience to make sense of the negative emotions, especially when the negative emotions are unexpected ones.

Although the significance of emotions to our understanding has been widely granted, there also has been suspicion of emotions that they can be too misleading and unreliable to be significant components of our understanding. I do not intend to refute this suspicion by claiming that emotions are not misleading, because they sometimes can be. Rather, I point out the fact that beliefs, which are unarguably thought to constitute understanding, can also be misleading. Suppose my friend once told me, "you are a fat girl," and I got angry. My anger toward her can be misleading if it leads me to interpret her genuine compliment, "you are so lovely when you eat" as an ironic insult. However, it is possible that this misunderstanding in fact has been caused by my wrong belief; if my friend came from a country where "fat" meant beautiful and desirable regardless of body fat percentage, then my belief that she is insulting me is wrong. Since my misleading emotion, anger, comes from the belief that she is insulting me by saying "you are a fat girl," the primary cause of this misunderstanding is my misleading belief. Our beliefs on the meaning or significance of certain things can be wrong and misleading. Yet, as Nussbaum points out, this hardly leads

us to dismiss the importance of beliefs to our understanding.¹³³ Then there seems to be no reason for us to dismiss emotions.

Particularization and Reconfiguration

I have thus far discussed the role of the imagination and emotions in cognition, and their contribution to the development of our understanding. In particular, I claimed that the engagement of our emotions and imagination is what realizes and completes particularization in art. Before closing this chapter, I will briefly consider the relationship between particularization and reconfiguration, the latter of which is discussed in chapter 2. I believe understanding the relationship between the two will deepen our understanding of the nature of each. As addressed, reconfiguration is reorganization of our perception, so that hitherto overlooked or underemphasized features of an object come to light. It seems, however, that re-organization presupposes former organization.

Suppose we have an idea of a house and build a house according to it; we do not call this activity a reconfiguration or remodeling of a house, except when the initial idea of the house is clear and concrete, and different enough from the actual house that is built according to it, that the idea of the house can be meaningfully differentiated from the actual house, and vice versa. Otherwise, we just call this house-building a creation of the house. In order to remodel a house, there should be a house concretely present before us or in our mind. Only then can we reconfigure the features of a house and make hitherto unknown features come to

¹³³ Nussbaum, *Love's Knowledge*, 41-42.

the surface. When an object stays abstract, it is almost impossible to re-organize its components because the components, and the pre-existing relations among components, do not appear clearly enough for us to devise an alternative way of organizing them. When Goodman says “worldmaking begins with one version and ends with another”, he seems to imply that the version we start remodeling is an already particularized one albeit in an old and habitual way.¹³⁴ In this sense, reconfiguration, especially meaningful reconfiguration, presupposes particularization as a prerequisite.

On the other hand, particularization sometimes seems inseparable from reconfiguration. In some cases, reconfiguration seems to be a mode of particularization. For example, Picasso’s portrait of Gertrude Stein is a reconfiguration of her appearance and also a reconfiguration of previous portraits of her. But at the same time, it can be seen as an attempt to particularize the idea of Gertrude Stein; if an earlier portrait of her by another artist is considered to be an attempt of particularization of the idea of Stein, Picasso’s portrait can be another attempt of particularization. Moreover, for a meaningful particularization, merely locating something universal or general within a particular and complex context may not suffice. It may require a new or alternative context in which some underemphasized or neglected feature of an object can come to light. In this sense, particularization may always require reconfiguration to be accompanied. The close relationship between reconfiguration and particularization suggests that the imagination and emotions, as discussed in this chapter mainly with regards to particularization, are also actively engaged in reconfiguration.

¹³⁴ Goodman, *Worldmaking*, 97.

By the operation of particularization art can present certain details of an object or a situation in a particularized context in a way that the significant details are attended by the audience and facilitate the active engagement of the audience's emotions and imagination. And by the operation of reconfiguration art can present certain unfamiliar and hitherto unnoticed details of an object or a situation, or present familiar details in an unfamiliar way so that unnoticed aspects of an object or a situation can be attended to. By doing so, reconfiguration in art can facilitate the audience's emotions and imagination to be engaged in a new way. Moreover, as I discussed above, particularization can be fully realized only when the audience's emotions and imagination are actively engaged, because only with particular imagination toward what is presented in the work that is guided by a particular emotion, the work of art can be properly appreciated in its particularity and unity. In thus far described way, the active engagement of emotions and imagination completes and fully realizes particularization, including re-configured particularization, namely reconfiguration.

In this chapter and the previous chapter, I discussed two distinctive ways in which works of art contribute to the advancement of our understanding, reconfiguration and particularization. In this light of consideration, I also discussed the role of emotions and imagination in our cognitive engagement with art, which completes and fully realizes the operation of both reconfiguration and particularization. In the next chapter, I will discuss how the operation of these two in works of art can lead to cognitive transformation of a

subject who experiences the works, which I claim to be the significant cognitive value of art.

CHAPTER 4

COGNITIVE TRANSFORMATION

I have thus far demonstrated the problems and limitations of knowledge-based accounts of art's cognitive value in chapter 1, and suggested for the need of an experience-based account, on the ground that what is cognitively valuable is not a message or a piece of knowledge that is achieved as an end-product of experiencing a work of art, but the process of experience itself through which the subject is cognitively transformed. I also demonstrated how the operation of reconfiguration and particularization in our experience of art contributes to the advancement of our understanding throughout chapter 2 and 3. In this chapter, I aim to show how reconfiguration and particularization in art amount to a cognitive transformation in a sense related intimately to the nature of the experience of art, and discuss the nature of cognitive transformation that is acquired from experience of art. For this goal, I first consider the nature of our experiences in general, drawing on Dewey's account of experience, in order to illustrate how our *experience* of art leads to the advancement of our understanding. Then, based on this consideration, I elaborate the nature of cognitive transformation from experiencing works of art, particularly in comparison with the notion of moral cultivation, and with emphasis on the reciprocity of the transformation and the possibility of its multiple occurrence with a single object. It will help clarify the contribution that my alternative account based on

cognitive transformation makes to the comprehensive understanding of the cognitive value of art.

Dewey's View of Experience

Dewey considers experiences in terms of our interaction with our environment and our goal of survival. The environment can be equally friendly and hostile to an organism's survival, and experience is, according to Dewey, the fulfillment of an organism in its struggles and achievements in the world in which it is immersed.¹³⁵ The nature of these struggles and achievements is more clearly demonstrated in Dewey's account of the two dimensions of experiences. According to Dewey, our interaction with the environment consists of two dimensions, which he calls the *primary* and *secondary* dimensions of experience.¹³⁶ In our interactions with environment, we engage with and respond to it with entrenched habits that have been formed from our previous experiences. These habits have been formed as they are because they are considered adequate to our goal of survival. Until some obstacles appear to show that the entrenched habits are not adequate to the life-sustaining task any longer, our experience is relatively fluid and apprehended as a qualitative whole. This is the primary dimension of experience.

¹³⁵ John Dewey, *Art as Experience* (New York: Capricorn Books, 1934), 18-19,

¹³⁶ See John Dewey, *Experience and Nature* (New York: Dover, 1958), 16-20. For more detailed discussion of primary and secondary dimensions of experience, see Leonard J. Walks, "The Means-Ends Continuum and the Reconciliation of Science and Art in the Later Works of John Dewey," *Transactions of the Charles S. Peirce Society* 35 (1999): 595-611.

However, it is inevitable that some objects and events will appear as obstacles and frustrate the life-sustaining task. In such situations, our habits fail to overcome the obstacles and we begin to have doubts about the way we have interacted with environment, and with this doubt there also begins a struggle to be liberated from the unease of doubts. This unease triggers a transition from a primary to a secondary dimension of experience that is characterized by reflection, analysis, and reconstruction. In this secondary dimension, experience is not apprehended as a whole, but features and elements of the experience are analyzed, and the causal relations are examined in order to be reconstructed in a way that can liberate us from doubt and uneasiness. The secondary dimension of experience equips us with a new habit by means of which previous obstacles are no longer obstacles and our experience of our environment can be fluid and apprehended as a qualitative whole again; this is an achievement with regard to the life-sustaining goal.

With this achievement in the secondary dimension, we engage in the primary dimension of experience again, but this time a cognitively enriched primary experience, which eventually enriches the overall dimension of experience. Dewey suggests that experience is cognitively enriched in virtue of the transition from primary to secondary experience, because when the phase of the secondary dimension is successful, it generates improved awareness of the causal connection of the elements of experience, including awareness of the consequences of our own interventions in causal sequences. This deepened awareness becomes a feature of the restored primary dimension; in other words, we go back to the primary dimension of experience as an agent transformed with

new awareness and new habits of responding to the environment. Dewey, through this discussion of the two dimensions of experience, suggests that there is an intimate connection between self-transformation and one's interaction with one's environment. Dewey makes this connection explicit when he says, "Individuality itself is originally a potentiality and is realized only in interaction with surrounding conditions. In this process of intercourse, native capacities, which contain an element of uniqueness, are transformed and become a self ... The self is both formed and brought to consciousness through interaction with environment."¹³⁷ For Dewey, the transformation of a subject, and furthermore, even the formation of a subject, is only possible through interactions with environment; that is to say, a subject is formed and transformed through *experience*.

In his book *Art as Experience*, Dewey discusses the nature of experience and then considers art in particular in light of how he articulates his theory of experience. By newly conceptualizing both experience and art, Dewey attempts to deliver art from being compartmentalized and isolated from the objects of everyday experiences.¹³⁸ He suggests that not only experiences of art, but experiences in general, unless they are "experiences" only by name where we just drift in them, have an aesthetic aspect that I take to include the potential of transforming the subject who undergoes the experience. Dewey acknowledges that all "arts", including the "arts" of science, politics, history, painting, poetry, have the same subject-matter in the sense that they concern the interaction of the

¹³⁷ Dewey, *Art as Experience*, 293.

¹³⁸ Dewey, *Art as Experience*, 10.

live creature with his or her environment.¹³⁹ Nevertheless, he does differentiate various kinds of experiences in terms of the interests and purposes that initiate and control them.¹⁴⁰ In an intellectual experience, such as the experiences of scientific practice, much of the value of the experience lies in the conclusion, in the generation of knowledge as an end-product. The conclusion may be capable of being extracted as a formula and used as a factor or a guide in other inquiries, and the purpose of acquiring the conclusion tends to initiate and control the experience. However, in experiences of aesthetic art, the end-product is seldom of central importance, Dewey suggests, but the experience *per se* is where the value lies. Dewey explicitly says that the purpose of aesthetic art is the enhancement of direct experience itself. He says, “The product of art – temple, painting, statue, poem – is not the work of art. The work takes place when a human being cooperates with the product so that the outcome is an experience that is enjoyed because of its liberating and ordered properties.”¹⁴¹

¹³⁹ I should note that there seems to be a tension of some sort in Dewey’s philosophy of art. As Casey Haskins points out, Dewey moves back and forth throughout *Art as Experience* between two broadly different uses of ‘art.’ In some places he uses it to refer to the products and processes of the fine arts specifically. Yet in other places, he uses it to refer to a dimension of action in general, not only in the fine arts, in which experience attains its full developmental potential. Haskins claims that through this tension Dewey suggests that art has become something that is not a fixed kind of activity but as a developing category of cultural self-description and practice in the 20th century. While not attempting to argue otherwise, I focus on Dewey’s discussion of art as the products and processes of the fine art, and refer to the wider range of activities in general by “art.” For more discussion of the tension in Dewey’s philosophy of art, see Casey Haskins, “Dewey’s Art as Experience: The Tension between Aesthetics and Aestheticism”, *Transactions of the Charles S. Peirce Society* 28 (1998): 217–259 and Stephen Pepper, “Some Questions on Dewey’s Aesthetics,” in *The Philosophy of John Dewey*, ed. Paul Arthur Schilpp (New York; 1939), 369-90.

¹⁴⁰ Dewey, *Art as Experience*, 57.

¹⁴¹ Dewey, *Art as Experience*, 222.

Dewey's experience-based concept of art is also manifest when he discusses the development of artistic techniques and the emergence of new artistic movements such as post-impressionism. He argues that these changes occur in connection with efforts to solve problems that grow out of the need for new modes of experiences.¹⁴² For example, the development of artistic techniques for the shift from two-dimensional to three-dimensional depiction, including the use of light and vanishing points, was a response to the growth of naturalism in experience outside of art. The environment around the artist that changes physically and spiritually demands new forms, and new techniques for these forms, of expression.¹⁴³

In continuity with previous chapters, reconfiguration and particularization in art can be considered in terms of experience, and in particular, the two dimensions of experience identified by Dewey. Art triggers the transition from the primary to the secondary dimension of experience through these two operations in art, thus effecting cognitive transformation of the subject. Reconfiguration, on one hand, is embodied in works of art through marking out new boundaries within and between objects, and this can cause unease to a perceiver who approaches with his entrenched habits that are tailored for previous boundaries. Particularization, on the other hand, through presenting the same object in newly or differently particularized contexts, challenges a perceiver to modify his way of interacting with the object. In these ways art distinctively and

¹⁴² Dewey, *Art as Experience*, 146.

¹⁴³ Dewey, *Art as Experience*, 316.

effectively causes the transition between two dimensions of experiences, which can lead to cognitive transformation of the subject who experiences art.

Thus far, I have introduced Dewey's view on experience and on art. Before going further and discussing Dewey's view on aesthetic experience, I should briefly clarify my stance toward Dewey's view. I find Dewey's discussion of art and experience insightful to the extent that it acknowledges and attends to the significance of the process of experiencing art, rather than what is left after the experience. I take this insight of Dewey as the ground for the alternative account of art's cognitive value to the knowledge-based one. However, I find some of Dewey's views, more precisely, his ontology of the artwork, rather extreme. In the earlier quote where he denies that the product of art such as a painting or a poem is a work of art, he suggests that the artwork is the experience as the outcome of the interaction between a human being and the product. Also, in another place in *Art as Experience*, he identifies 'the work of art in its actuality' with perception, the experience of the product on the perceiver's side.¹⁴⁴ I find this view misleading to the extent that it leads us to neglect the meanings of the physical and material existence of many works of art. Yet it is not necessary to endorse this extreme ontology of art in adopting Dewey's insight for my goal in this dissertation, because the significance of the process of experiencing art can be discussed without necessarily identifying a work of art with, or reducing it to, experience. Thus, in applying his philosophy of experience to my discussion of art's cognitive value, I keep my distance from Dewey with respect to the ontology of art.

¹⁴⁴ Dewey, *Art as Experience*, 169.

An Aesthetic Experience

In consideration of the significance of experience *per se*, contrasted with the end-product of experience, it is helpful to emphasize the process of experience, the whole duration of the process. However, I must first distinguish aesthetic experience and non-aesthetic experience, the former of which alone bears significance for Dewey. Dewey claims that in much of our experience we just drift in it, and we “yield according to external pressure, or evade and compromise.” About such an experience, he writes, “there is experience, but so slack and discursive that it is not *an* experience. Needless to say, such experiences are anesthetic.”¹⁴⁵ Based on this distinction, Dewey argues that in every *aesthetic* experience, which he also calls *an* experience, there is dynamic organization in the sense that experience is a growth involving inception, development, and fulfillment. It takes time to have an experience; material from the environment is ingested and digested through interaction with the live organism. Dewey says, rather poetically, “An esthetic experience can be crowded into a moment only in the sense that a climax of prior long enduring processes may arrive in an outstanding movement which so sweeps everything else into it that all else is forgotten.”¹⁴⁶ Notice here that even when all else is forgotten but the moment of climax, there still remains the fact that there was the time-consuming process prior to and that, in fact, enabled that moment. With regard to this time-consuming

¹⁴⁵ Dewey, *Art as Experience*, 41.

¹⁴⁶ Dewey, *Art as Experience*, 41-42.

process, Dewey adds, “An instantaneous experience is an impossibility, biologically and psychologically. An experience is a product, one might almost say a by-product, of *continuous* and *cumulative* interaction of an organic self with the world.”¹⁴⁷

This emphasis on the process of experience is one of the significant features that mark experience-based accounts of art’s cognitive value, and I believe it is why experience-based accounts can be more comprehensive than knowledge-based ones. Opposed to the focus on knowledge as the cognitive value of art in knowledge-based accounts, Dewey suggests that the cognitive value of art must be something more than knowledge. He says, “what is intimated to my mind is that in both production and enjoyed perception of works of art, knowledge is transformed; it becomes something more than knowledge because it is merged with non-intellectual elements to form an experience worthwhile as an experience.”¹⁴⁸ To put this matter differently, through experiences of art, significant matters of life are made more intelligible, but not by production of knowledge or reduction of experience to abstract concepts or formula. The matters of life are rendered more intelligible *in a clarified, coherent, and intensified experience*.¹⁴⁹ Then, the cognitive value of art is located not only in what is left after the experience of art, namely knowledge, but also, rather significantly, within the process of experience, to which experience-based accounts alone pay proper attention.

¹⁴⁷ Dewey, *Art as Experience*, 229.

¹⁴⁸ Dewey, *Art as Experience*, 301-2.

¹⁴⁹ Dewey, *Art as Experience*, 301-2.

Here I note that, in the quote above, Dewey refers to experience of art with the term “enjoyed perception,” a term that clarifies what he believes to be the nature of our experiences of artworks. In fact, he explicitly says, “an esthetic experience, the work of art in its actuality, is perception.”¹⁵⁰ In order to articulate what he means by *perception*, Dewey contrasts it with recognition. He claims that without a time-consuming process of interacting with an object, there can be no perception but only mere excitation or mere recognition of an object as one of a familiar kind. He also claims that mere recognition is possible only when the agent is occupied with something other than the object recognized, such as an intention to use the object as a means for something else, while perception requires the agent’s full attention to the object itself. He says, “In recognition we fall back, as upon a stereotype, upon some previously formed scheme. Some details or arrangement of details serve as cue for bare identification.”¹⁵¹ Having understood recognition in this way, Dewey considers perception, but not recognition, as an aesthetic experience.

When we consider our experiences with artworks in light of Dewey’s understanding of experience, and in particular of the time-taking process of experience, it becomes inevitable to ask what is required for a certain encounter with an object to be an aesthetic experience. There must be some characteristics that distinguish an aesthetic experience from a non-aesthetic one such as a mere encounter with environment. One characteristic has been suggested above in the comparison of recognition and perception.

¹⁵⁰ Dewey, *Art as Experience*, 169.

¹⁵¹ Dewey, *Art as Experience*, 54.

An aesthetic experience requires one to fully attend to the various aspects of an object, and be open to the possibility of interacting with thus far hidden or neglected aspects of it. This attentiveness and openness toward an object are not possible when one is preoccupied with something other than the object itself, which is often the case in our recognition of an object. Dewey writes, “Experience in the degree in which it is experience is heightened vitality. Instead of signifying being shut up within one’s own private feelings and sensations, it signifies active and alert commerce with the world.”¹⁵² The active interaction, which involves attentiveness and openness to an object, is the key requirement for an aesthetic experience.

Now I turn to another significant characteristic of an experience that is found in Dewey’s account. According to Dewey, one of the most important features of an experience is unity, which is acquired when a single quality pervades the entire experience.¹⁵³ What is this single pervading quality? Dewey claims that it is emotion. He says, “It [emotion] selects what is congruous and dyes what is selected with its color, thereby giving qualitative unity to materials externally disparate and dissimilar. It thus provides unity in and through the varied parts of an experience,”¹⁵⁴ and later adds, “the perceived object or scene is emotionally pervaded throughout.”¹⁵⁵

¹⁵² Dewey, *Art as Experience*, 18.

¹⁵³ Dewey, *Art as Experience*, 38.

¹⁵⁴ Dewey, *Art as Experience*, 44.

¹⁵⁵ Dewey, *Art as Experience*, 55.

I should note, however, that although he claims that emotion offers unity to our experience of an object, Dewey makes it clear that emotion needs not be, and in fact cannot be invariant from the beginning to the end of an experience. For Dewey, transformation of “inner” material - emotions and ideas - is required as much as transformation of “outer” material - perceptible objects - in order for a work to be artistic. In fact, he claims that a work is artistic to the degree these two kinds of transformation are carried out simultaneously. So he writes, “Only by progressive organization of ‘inner’ and ‘outer’ material in organic connection with each other can be anything produced that is not a learned document or an illustration of something familiar.”¹⁵⁶

To illustrate, at the beginning of the interaction with objects, the feelings and ideas of an artist can be comparatively scattered and undefined. These inner materials take shape when they are reflected throughout the change of the outer materials, as a painter applies pigment upon the canvas and a writer composes sentences with words. Pertaining to emotions in particular in this process, an emotion is transformed through our acting and our being acted upon by the object; Dewey calls the emotion with which we begin the interaction *natural* or *original* emotion, and suggests that the emotion becomes distinctively aesthetic through an worthwhile interaction with an object, that is to say, an aesthetic experience.¹⁵⁷ The example here is of someone making an artwork, and of the unity that is acquired through the process of making some object. The unity of an experience may not be acquired in the same way in the case of a perceiver. For

¹⁵⁶ Dewey, *Art as Experience*, 78.

¹⁵⁷ Dewey, *Art as Experience*, 78-79.

instance, the physical transformation of outer material is not accompanied by the transformation of inner material in the case of a perceiver in the same way as it is in the case of an artist. However, an emotion, as inner material that goes through transformation, still pervades the experience of the perceiver, and the transformation of outer material takes place in the limited sense that the object is perceived differently in the eyes of the perceiver as his inner material goes through transformation. In other words, the outer material is transformed in the perception of the perceiver.¹⁵⁸ In this rather dynamic sense, an emotion, despite its own transformation, pervades the whole of an experience and provides it with unity.

Reconfiguration and Particularization in the Light of Dewey's Notion of Experience

I have thus far discussed the complicated and active nature of an aesthetic experience, for cognitive transformation through art is possible in virtue of the nature of aesthetic experience, and thus the understanding of the transformation should also be built on the philosophical reflection on an aesthetic experience. Now I turn to the question how reconfiguration and particularization, and their contribution to the advancement of our understanding, can be considered with regards to the nature of our experience as discussed by Dewey. I discussed in previous chapters how the operation of

¹⁵⁸ I will come back to this issue of the transformation of the object in the relation to the transformed subject later in this chapter.

reconfiguration and particularization is distinctively effective in art, and accordingly renders art a significant source of cognitive value. I also discussed above briefly how reconfiguration and particularization trigger the transition between the primary and secondary dimension of experience, and thus leads to cognitive transformation. However, I have not yet explored the source of reconfiguration and particularization in art. If our cognitive progress through art is derived, at least in part, from reconfiguration and particularization, what are reconfiguration and particularization derived from? If reconfiguration and particularization are embodied in works of art in virtue of an individual and creative artist, from where does her individuality and creativity come?

For Dewey it would not be the case that an artist approaches an object with an empty mind and then some divine force or genius captures and directs her at the moment of creation. Nor would he suggest that an artist is born as a special being equipped with outstanding individuality and creativity. Then, how are individuality and creativity understood by Dewey? Dewey believes that every individual brings with him a way of seeing and feeling that is constructed by his prior interactions with environment. For this reason, past experiences are very important to our present experiences, including our experience of creation and appreciation of art. Dewey says, “the scope of a work of art is measured by the number and variety of elements coming from past experiences that are organically absorbed into the perception had here and now. They give it its body and its suggestiveness.”¹⁵⁹ Because much of one’s history of prior experience is unique and different from others’, there can be a great degree of individuality, which is a source of

¹⁵⁹ Dewey, *Art as Experience*, 127.

artistic creativity. The varied individual histories of individuals make it possible for someone to bring out aspects of an object that are new in the eyes of others, and she achieves this by reconfiguring the object through her own perspective. However, it does not follow that all the aspects of the object brought out by an individual are already known and familiar to herself. Whatever perspective and whatever emotion she brings to the object at the beginning will undergo transformation as she interacts with the object. The new aspects of the object, brought out in virtue of these transformed perspectives and emotions, can be encountered as new to her as well as others.

In continuity with his discussion of individuality and creativity, Dewey also considers imagination in terms of past experience. He first considers an agent's bringing his own perceptual habits that are formed by past experiences to be one's bringing his whole being. He says "aspects and states of his prior experience of varied subject-matters have been wrought into his being: they are the organs with which he perceives,"¹⁶⁰ then he connects reconfiguration with this understanding of one's whole being and claims that the raw material from our environment is reconfigured to express the artist's imaginative vision of the whole being of the person.¹⁶¹ Notice that here Dewey suggests one's imaginative vision is not a mere fantasy coming out of nowhere, as it is firmly grounded in and reflects one's own history of prior experiences. According to Dewey, what makes a work of art unique or original is not the raw material because we all live in the same world where raw material is from, but one's individuality, creativity, and imaginative

¹⁶⁰ Dewey, *Art as Experience*, 93.

¹⁶¹ Dewey, *Art as Experience*, 90.

vision, all based on one's own particular history of prior experiences that bring out new aspects of the world.¹⁶² As an example, Dewey considers Vincent Van Gogh, who took common objects as a subject-matter, such as sunflowers or a pair of peasant's shoes, which had been commonly observed by many people and are normally considered to possess nothing new to be known. However, Van Gogh tried to present these objects with new meanings; he reconfigured common objects through the imaginative vision of his whole being.¹⁶³ With the help of the individual vision of an artist, objects can be emancipated from conventional associations regarding their fixed and unalterable uses and values, and they can be put into new contexts and new relationships where they acquire new meanings and new values.¹⁶⁴ This is the way that reconfiguration and particularization can be understood in the light of Dewey's discussion of experience.

Cognitive Transformation

In chapter 1, I argued that the limitation of most previous accounts of art's cognitive value lies in their neglect of the subjective aspect of the value in question; this neglect is made manifest in these accounts focusing on the objective aspect of art's cognitive value alone, namely, knowledge as the end-product of experiencing art. I claim that an alternative account should take into consideration the subjective aspect of art's cognitive

¹⁶² Dewey, *Art as Experience*, 112.

¹⁶³ Dewey, *Art as Experience*, 90.

¹⁶⁴ Dewey, *Art as Experience*, 99-100.

value, and the cognitive transformation of the subject should be the key focus in considering the subjective aspect. From pre-existing discussions concerning this matter, the closest account to the one I aim to provide here is the moral cultivation approach, because it rightly attends to the process of experiencing art and the changes of a subject brought about through the experience. Nevertheless, the moral cultivation approach still glosses over many significant aspects of one's experience of art that are relevant to a new account of art's cognitive value based on cognitive transformation. Here I will discuss three aspects of the nature of cognitive transformation: 1) the transformation is considered in terms of *cognitive* advancement instead of moral advancement; 2) the transformation is reciprocal in the sense that the object as well as the subject of an experience is transformed; 3) there can be multiple instances of transformation resulting from the interactions between a single subject and a single object. This discussion will demonstrate why 'cognitive transformation', instead of 'moral cultivation' should be the key focus of a comprehensive account of art's cognitive value.

Cognitive Transformation vs. Moral Cultivation

Let me discuss first the issue of moral focus in considering the transformation of a subject, in order to demonstrate the reason the transformation through a work of art should be considered not in moral terms but in terms of cognitive advancement. One reason to indicate the inadequacy of moral focus in discussing the subjective aspect of art's cognitive value is concerned with the issue of immorality in art. The answer to

“what is immoral art?” is far less clear than is assumed in discussions concerning morality in art. Many works of art have been deemed to be immoral mainly for the following reasons that are not mutually exclusive: first, a work contains immoral subject-matter or content; second, a work presents an immoral view without necessarily endorsing it; third, a work can evoke an immoral response from audiences; fourth, a work is pervaded with an immoral attitude or promotes an immoral perspective. However, there are cases in which these reasons are not sufficient to make a work immoral.

As for the immoral subject-matter, consider the film *Irreversible* (2002), which is known for the rape scene portrayed in a single unbroken shot that lasts nine minutes, and the extreme violence that includes someone having their skull crushed with a fire extinguisher. Deemed by many reviewers as one of the most walked-out-of-films due to disgust, and as particularly offensive to women, this film may be categorized as immoral art, on account of containing too much immoral material. However, as the film critic Roger Ebert argues, this film can be moral in virtue of the structure of the film, which presents vengeance first and then the acts that cause and inspire it later; this film also presents the rape first and then the life of Alex, the rape victim, before the rape, including the warm and playful moment in bed with her boyfriend, Marcus. Ebert says, “The movie does not end with rape as its climax and send us out of the theater as if something had been communicated. It starts with it, and asks us to sit there for another hour and process our thoughts. It is therefore moral – at a structural level.”¹⁶⁵ By using immoral material,

¹⁶⁵ Roger Ebert, “Irreversible,” rogerebert.com, last modified March 14, 2003, <http://rogerebert.suntimes.com/apps/pbcs.dll/article?AID=/20030314/REVIEWS/303140303/1023>.

even, as in the case of *Irreversible*, of the most brutal and cruel variety, a work of art can give us a chance to reflect upon moral issues such as rape and violence in depth, and when successful, it may move us further away from immorality in our thoughts and behaviors. Then, the work can be moral in its effect on audiences despite, or even in virtue of, the immoral material contained in it.

Second, the claim that a work is immoral because it introduces an immoral view is controversial. *Irreversible* introduces the view that violence to a beloved is a rightful cause of vengeance upon the assailant; this is a view held by Marcus and a street thug named Mourad, who talks Marcus onto the path to vengeance. Promising to help Marcus find the rapist for money, Mourad says, “The assailant drew blood. Blood calls for revenge. Vengeance is a human right.” Some may consider this view on vengeance immoral since violence cannot reverse what has already happened, but simply leads to more violence and further discord. Yet for others vengeance may be the only way to achieve justice and even a moral duty, as in Japan’s feudal past when the Samurai class upheld the honor of their family or their lord through the practice of revenge killings, for example. The line between the moral and the immoral is often less clear than commonly assumed. Moreover, even if there is a general consensus that a certain viewpoint presented in a work of art is immoral, if the work of art leads viewers to reflect deeply upon this view, consider its possible consequences, and establish one’s own stance toward the view, then the artwork can be moral in its effect on audiences despite, or again in virtue of, the immoral view presented in it.

Let me consider the third reason that might cause one to regard a certain work of art as immoral. When a work of art evokes immoral responses in audiences, such as ridicule at sincerity or praise of cruelty, the work can be considered immoral. When it is associated with the second reason, that is to say, if a work of art presents an immoral view with such a compelling power that the audience is persuaded by it and becomes to share the immoral view, then the art in question is immoral in its effect. Furthermore, even when there is no immoral view presented in a work of art, there can be immoral responses from audiences to the work. One may insist that the responses of the audience should not be a standard by which the morality of works of art is gauged because there often can be completely unintended and unexpected response, rather incidentally. However, some works are more likely than others to evoke immoral responses *due to* their essential features, not merely incidental ones, including the ways they are designed and the choice of subject-matter. In this sense, if there is a reliable causal relation between a work and immoral responses, these works might be considered to be immoral on account of the immoral response they evoke.

Suppose a viewer of *Irreversible* enjoys the scene where a man has his face pounded in with a fire extinguisher that continues until long after he is apparently dead. The enjoyment of this scene would be immoral, especially because this attack is presented before the rape scene, of which this attack is an attempt at revenge. The viewer may enjoy this scene because she gets vicarious satisfaction from watching a scene of extreme violence that she has always wanted to commit but has been restraining herself from acting out because of her fear of punishment. Even worse, the film may engender a

desire in a viewer to attempt the same or even more brutal violence. Or, to cite the other problematic scene in the movie, a viewer may become aroused by watching the rape scene, and some kind of erotic fantasy involving rape may take hold of this viewer. There may also be someone who uses the film for the purpose of supporting his belief that a woman who dresses in a certain way deserves to be raped. These are all possible and plausible responses of audiences to the film, due to the material in the film and the way scenes are shot and edited, regardless of the initial intention of the filmmaker.

Recall that I demonstrated above the possible positive moral effects of the same film *Irreversible* that render the immoral subject-matters and immoral view presented in the work insufficient to make the work immoral. When we consider both those positive moral effects and negative effects I just described, two problems of this response-based claim of immorality are made manifest. One is that it is too simple to be applied to many works of art that call for more complex and ambiguous responses; this response-based claim is inadequate to be applied to *Irreversible*, for instance, which can invoke both positive and negative response from audience. The other problem is derived from the old tension between a concern for art's intrinsic values and a concern for its instrumental effects. When we focus on the moral effects of experiencing art on audiences, it seldom matters whether some of those effects come from misunderstanding of the work, and the whole discussion of art's value leads away from any consideration of the value of art *qua* art. This is in fact not just a problem of response-based claims of immorality in art, but a problem inherent in any approach that attempts to determine the value of art on moral grounds. It is because a moral focus on works of art, from either a content-based or

perspective-based approach, tends to be connected with the consideration of moral effects art has on its audience, as observed above. This observation indicates the inadequacy of a moral focus when attempting to determine art's value. The value of art *qua* art, related to the question "what do we learn from art?" in particular, should be considered not in moral terms, but in a more comprehensive context. I claim that the question should be answered in cognitive terms, by focusing on the exercise of significant mental functions -including perception, discrimination, analysis, and judgment- in the process of experiencing works of art, and especially the way art deepens our understanding.¹⁶⁶

A further reason why the value of art should be discussed in cognitive terms can be also demonstrated with a discussion of the fourth reason for art to be considered immoral, to which I have not attended yet. Works of art are often deemed immoral because they are pervaded with immoral attitudes or they promote immoral views. For example, Matthew Kieran regards Graham Greene's *The Destroyers* as immoral, because for this story to work the audiences are required to hold the immoral cognitive-affective attitude that pervades the work and that otherwise they may not hold.¹⁶⁷ In the story, the competitive rivalries for the leadership between two central characters in a gang of boys are achieved by the overnight destruction of the house of a widower. Through identifying with the central characters who are struggling to attain group acceptance,

¹⁶⁶ Following Ralph A. Smith, "Toward Percipience: A Humanities Curriculum for Arts Education," in *The Arts Education and Aesthetic Knowing Ninety-First Yearbook for the National Society for the Study of Education, Part II*, ed. Bennett Reimer and Ralph A. Smith (Chicago: National Society for the Study of Education, 1992), 57-58, and Matthew Kieran, "Forbidden Knowledge," in *Art and Morality*, ed. José Luis Bermúdez and Sebastian Gardner (London; New York: Routledge, 2003), 58.

¹⁶⁷ Kieran, "Forbidden Knowledge," 68.

readers respond with delight at the achievement of the characters, even though it is the destruction of someone's house. When the gang recognizes as their rightful leader the one who successfully led the destruction of the house, readers tend to find it only fitting and appropriate; thus, the audience responds in a way that they would normally deem to be immoral.¹⁶⁸ Rather than giving readers an opportunity to contemplate the cost of the destruction, which involves the suffering of an innocent old man, the story shows how a destruction of someone's house can be an achievement and a means to gain acceptance and respect. It seems easier to claim immorality of *The Destructors* than *Irreversible*.

However, Kieran suggests that the immorality of this story does not decrease but increase the value of this work *qua* art, for the moral defect promotes the intelligibility and reward of the imaginative experience provided by the work.¹⁶⁹ By engaging with a work of art that is pervaded with a certain attitude that we otherwise would not hold, we can imaginatively explore different possible attitudes and find that way of looking at the world intelligible as far as the work is successful. Kieran says, "What matters is not so much a question of whether the moral perspective of a work is what we take to be the right one but, rather, whether it is conveyed in such a way that we find it intelligible or psychologically credible."¹⁷⁰ Here by showing that the value of a certain work of art is not decreased but in fact increased by its immorality since the immorality renders the

¹⁶⁸ Kieran, "Forbidden Knowledge," 68-69.

¹⁶⁹ Kieran, "Forbidden Knowledge," 63.

¹⁷⁰ Kieran, "Forbidden Knowledge," 72.

work cognitively valuable, Kieran suggests that the value of a work of art should be considered on cognitive grounds, rather than moral grounds.

The value of immoral art *qua* art can be also considered in connection with the puzzle of *imaginative resistance*, which I believe once again suggests the inadequacy of the attempts to determine the value of art on moral grounds. It is widely recognized that our imaginative resistance is greater with immoral works than other kinds of artworks, as we resist complying with a work's prescription to imagine that torturing innocent people is fun, for example, while we generally comply with a prescription to imagine that a pig can talk.¹⁷¹ If it is true, when an immoral work of art succeeds and gets us to undergo an imaginative experience it intends to provide, it deserves to be valued more highly. Because it succeeds in providing an imaginative experience that can contribute to the advancement of our understanding, but neither often nor easily provided by other works due to our imaginative resistance to immoral experience. It is also valuable because it succeeds in making accessible something to which it is difficult to access. Broad accessibility to audience has been considered, whether explicitly or not, as one of the virtues of art as apparent in our praising works of art that appeal to many different generations of audience.¹⁷² If a work succeeds to achieve broad accessibility despite its

¹⁷¹ See Kieran, "Forbidden Knowledge," 71. For more discussion, see Richard Moran, "The Expression of Feeling in Imagination," *Philosophical Review* 103 (1994): 75–106; Kendall Walton, "Morals in Fiction and Fictional Morality/I," *Proceedings of the Aristotelian Society* 68 (1994): 27–50; Tamar Szabo Gendler, "The Puzzle of Imaginative Resistance," *Journal of Philosophy* 97 (2000): 55–81; Dustin R. Stokes, "The Evaluative Character of Imaginative Resistance," *British Journal of Aesthetics* 46 (2006): 387–405.

¹⁷² Amy Mullin, "Moral Defects, Aesthetic Defects, and the Imagination," *The Journal of Aesthetics and Art Criticism* 62 (2004): 259.

immoral contents that commonly decrease accessibility, I believe the work deserves to be valued highly.

With regards to Kieran's emphasis on cognitive aspect of art's value above, I should point out that the value is considered by him to be based on *imaginative experience* art provides. Whether it is a moral or immoral perspective that a work demands its audiences to hold during the experience, if the imaginative experience deepens their understanding of certain matters, the work can be cognitively valuable. Furthermore, imaginative experience has been considered by many not as an incidental by-product of experiencing art, but the very goal of creating and appreciating art. The potential of providing a worthwhile imaginative experience is what distinguishes art from other objects, and in this sense the potential is regarded as the value of art *qua* art. Amy Mullin explicitly presents this view when she says, "...it seems more plausible to consider the rich imaginative experience of temporarily identifying with the immoral perspective (supposing that the immoral perspective is indeed novel or unusual or fleshed out in a creative way) is itself aesthetically valuable..."¹⁷³ Thus, when I claim that the value of art should be considered in terms of *cognitive* transformation, the transformation should also be based on the nature of art *qua* art, including the imaginative experience provided, not on incidental consequences.¹⁷⁴

Reciprocal Transformation

¹⁷³ Mullin, "Moral Defects," 257.

¹⁷⁴ This issue will be discussed in length in chapter 5.

Now I will turn to another aspect of transformation through experiencing art, which is also a significant value of art *qua* art. I claimed that *moral cultivation* is inadequate as the key focus of a comprehensive account of art's cognitive value. Some of the reasons have been addressed above, and can be summarized by the claim that the value of art *qua* art cannot be adequately measured with a *moral* focus. Another reason I refuse to build my account of art's cognitive value upon moral cultivation is that I find the notion of *cultivation* limiting. The notion of cultivation clearly indicates something or someone under development. As for the subject who experiences art, the change she undergoes through the experience may be considered in terms of cultivation because the change can lead her to a deepened or developed understanding; it might be said using Dewey's terms that the subject's life-sustaining capacities are developed. However, this is not all we need to understand in consideration of the subjective aspect of art's cognitive value. Dewey says, "in an experience, things and events belonging to the world, physical and social, are transformed through the human context they enter, while the live creature is changed and developed through its intercourse with things previously external to it."¹⁷⁵ The transformation of the subject is so intimately intertwined with the change of the object that an understanding of the former would be incomplete without understanding of the latter. Yet the notion cultivation cannot adequately embrace the change on the side of the object.

¹⁷⁵ Dewey, *Art as Experience*, 257.

The change that a subject undergoes, which I call cognitive transformation, is already discussed through Dewey's account of the two dimensions of experience. In the transition between primary and secondary dimensions of experience, when a subject shifts from analysis, reflection, and reconstruction of the secondary dimension back to the primary dimension of experience, the subject is transformed. Then what about the transformation of the object? Some may claim that the idea that an object is transformed through its interaction with a subject is true only when the object is physically changed, as it is in the process of most art-making. I claim, however, that an object may undergo transformation as well when there seems to be no change of the object in a material sense. In fact, what I attend to is the fact that the object is not perceived the same *in the eyes of the transformed subject*. It is because due to the transformation on the side of the subject, the external environment that caused doubts about her previous self and her previous habits is now in accordance with her. In other words, the environment that once was an external obstacle to life-sustaining goals, as the object of her experience, is transformed into something that can be incorporated in an experience that is fluid and apprehended as a qualitative whole, because the subject is transformed for this very goal. Here I should make it clear that I do not intend to deny the objectivity of the object of our experience, as Dewey seems to do in his conceptualization of art. I do not accept Dewey's ontology of art that identifies art with an experience, and acknowledge the significance of physical existence of the art object that is involved in our experience, but I attend to the potential of the transformation of the object in the eyes of transformed subject.

This idea of reciprocity of transformation is placed by Dewey in a particular context of life-sustaining activity, but the idea that objects are transformed through their interactions with human agents itself is not new at all. Consider Marcel Duchamp's well-known ready-made work *Fountain* (1917). When a urinal was placed in a different human context –an art exhibition- than its usual use and value in a bathroom, the urinal became transformed into a new object, which some call art and others call garbage. Although this is a case of an object that goes through transformation *via* the process of art-making, where objects are expected to be changed by human agents, it illustrates that an object can be transformed through the interactions with human agents *without* physical change. Nelson Goodman's discussion of forgery in *Languages of Art* is also based on the similar idea, but from the perspective of a perceiver rather than an artist. Goodman suggests that our knowledge of certain presently invisible aspects of an object in fact affects our present looking.¹⁷⁶ He says, "... to look at the pictures now with the knowledge that the left one is the original and the other the forgery may help develop the ability to tell which is which later by merely looking at them ... This knowledge instructs me to look at the two pictures differently now, even if what I see is the same."¹⁷⁷ As indicated at the end of the quote, this is a case where the object does not physically change. However, the object is transformed in the eyes of the perceiver when it is placed in a different human context that involves the knowledge of the picture being a forgery. To put it in Dewey's terms, the picture is no longer perceived to possess the same

¹⁷⁶ Nelson Goodman, *Languages of Art* (Indianapolis: Hackett, 1976), 103-4.

¹⁷⁷ Goodman, *Languages of Art*, 104.

problem as before, that is, the problem one should cope with for the life-sustaining goal. The perceiver is no longer confused at the lack of physical difference between the original and the forgery, because the forgery is now perceived as a forgery.

With the support of these ideas regarding the transformation of objects, the question now at hand is why cultivation is an inadequate notion with which to account for this transformation. It is inadequate because applying the concept of development to the change of environment, to the object of our experience, is possible only on the ground of utterly human-centered thinking. Once a human agent is transformed in a way that previous obstacles are not perceived as obstacles any longer, then she can be considered to be better equipped for life-sustaining activity, and to be developed in that sense. What about the object that undergoes transformation to be put in accordance with the subject? Would we consider a well-tamed wild tiger that used to be a danger to human life to be developed or cultivated? If so, from whose perspective is the tiger considered developed? To consider the examples above, it may not be a development at all from the perspective of the urinal that becomes work of art, or of a painting that comes to be identified as a forgery, because there seems to be no less reason for the objects to be hostile than to be friendly or cooperative to human agents. In order to consider the change of objects through interaction with human agents in terms of cultivation, the relationship between human beings and environment should be first clarified, which is far beyond the scope of this paper. As a matter of fact, the inadequacy of *cultivation* in considering transformation of the object does not seem to bother defenders of the moral cultivation approach, because they do not attend to the transformation of the object while the subject

is morally cultivated through the interaction with it. That, I claim, is what makes the moral cultivation approach more limiting and less comprehensive.

There is another reason why we need to attend to the transformation of an object in consideration of the subjective aspect of art's cognitive value. It is that a consideration of transformation on the side of an object helps articulate the nature of an aesthetic experience as Dewey conceptualizes it. Not every encounter with an object leads to the transformation of the object and the subject who encounters with it. For example, to recognize an object as a familiar kind and recognize its fixed use and value, as we recognize a white plain piece of paper as something to write on, is an encounter with an object. However, in my everyday encounter with the white paper, it can be recognized as the same paper over and over again as something to write on, without any noticeable change. In an encounter that involves mere recognition, the object as well as the subject does not undergo transformation, for recognition is not an aesthetic experience, according to Dewey. Without an object that is transformed through interaction with a human agent, there is no aesthetic experience that has transformative potential on a subject. For the transformation of the subject occurs for the very purpose that the object that used to be an obstacle to the life-sustaining activities is to become in accordance with the subject because the subject is transformed in such a way. Thus, the object cannot be the same in the eyes of the transformed subject. There are cases where it is difficult to discern whether there is a transformation of the subject, or whether there is an aesthetic experience. The transformation of the object in relation to the subject can be a reliable standard for an aesthetic experience in these cases. This consideration again demonstrates

the inadequacy of the notion of cultivation, which is not suitable for grasping the object's transformation through interacting with human agents, which should not be neglected in a comprehensive account of art's cognitive value.

Multiplicity of Cognitive Transformation

Now I turn to another aspect of cognitive transformation through experiencing art, which will turn out to be connected with the reciprocity of transformation through art. Art is often claimed to be inexhaustible, which means that art is not an object that we appreciate once and are then finished with. Works of art, especially when they are great art, invite us to revisit them on multiple occasions since their value is not exhaustible by a single experience. In fact, not only works of art but all objects of aesthetic experiences calls for multiple interactions with them. When we visit a single object multiple times, we may respond to it in different ways each time we visit it. Concerning artistic objects in particular, Dewey says, "...experience is a matter of interaction of the artistic product with the self. It is not therefore twice alike for different persons even today. It changes with the same person at different times as he brings something different to a work."¹⁷⁸ As suggested, even for a single subject, there can be many different experiences to be had.¹⁷⁹ If an aesthetic experience has a potential to transform the subject, then the transformation

¹⁷⁸ Goodman, *Languages of Art*, 344.

¹⁷⁹ –Jenefer Robinson, *Deeper than Reason: Emotion and Its Role in Literature, Music and Art* (Oxford: Clarendon, 2005), 188-94.

should also be considered in terms of the multiplicity of aesthetic experiences with a single object.

Dewey suggests that a subject can have multiple different experiences with a single object because the subject brings something different to the object each time. However, there still remains a question. How is the subject capable of bringing something different to the object each time? One may answer that it is because the subject is situated in a different context each time so that her focus and perspective differs, and I suppose this may be true in many cases. Yet I consider this multiplicity to be more importantly an inherent characteristic of art rather than a merely contingent feature. In this regard, it is important to attend to the reciprocity of transformation through art, and more precisely, the transformation of the object through art in relation to the transformed subject.

I discussed earlier the transformation of the subject through aesthetic experiences with regards to a subject's struggle for and achievement of survival. When a subject encounters an object, and when some features of the object cause doubts about one's entrenched habits, the object is perceived as an external obstacle that one has to overcome by transforming oneself. Suppose an object stays more or less the same in the eyes of a subject, as an object that possesses the feature A before and after the subject's transformation, and the only difference is that the subject no longer feel unease even though he still perceives the presence of the same A in the object. If this is what happens in our interaction with an object, then the object is nothing more than an external obstacle that the subject has to overcome once and for all. The subject should be finished with it at

the moment he is transformed in a way that the object no longer discomforts him. However, what happens in an aesthetic experience is that the object undergoes its own transformation; the object is perceived as a different object to the transformed subject and remains as something that still deserves a visit. There can thus begin a new interaction between the subject and the object that can lead to further transformation. If the subject was previously struggling with feature A of the object, now the subject may have to struggle with feature B, which has been previously overshadowed by A, or surfaces in the subject's struggle with A. Once the subject is transformed in a way that A can be in accordance with her, B can stand out as an obstacle to be overcome. In this new interaction, the subject goes from the primary dimension to the secondary dimension of experience in order to analyze and reflect on this new obstacle and re-reconstruct the ways in which she responds to the object. When she returns to the primary dimension of experience, she returns as once-again transformed self.¹⁸⁰

As thus far discussed, Dewey's account of experience helps illustrate how an aesthetic experience, and an experience of art in particular, leads to the cognitive transformation of a subject. With help of Dewey's account, and by means of comparison with the moral cultivation approach, I have clarified the features of cognitive transformation through experience of art. In the next chapter, I will discuss the aesthetic relevance of the cognitive value of art based on the features of cognitive transformation I have clarified here.

¹⁸⁰ I will return to this issue of multiplicity in Chapter 5, in connection with my discussion of the role of pleasure in cognitive transformation through art.

CHAPTER 5

THE AESTHETIC RELEVANCE OF COGNITIVE TRANSFORMATION

In this last chapter I shall consider the question whether the cognitive value of art is relevant to aesthetic value, i.e., the value of art *qua* art. To this end, I will first consider cognitive pleasure, which plays a significant role in our cognitive engagement with art, and in our cognitive transformation through art in particular. I will begin by introducing a misconception about art's cognitive value that is presented in James Young's account as an example to show what is problematic about knowledge-based accounts. Then I will consider the significance of cognitive pleasure in our experience of works of art. My discussion of cognitive pleasure will in turn clarify the nature of the cognitive transformation through art, which I claim to be a significant cognitive value of art. Furthermore, it will help to clarify the aesthetic relevance of the particular kind of art's cognitive value that is based on this cognitive transformation.

Before I begin to discuss the aesthetic relevance of art's cognitive value, I should briefly clarify what I mean by *aesthetic value*. By aesthetic value, I mean the value of art as art, not as something else; for example the value of Gustav Klimt's *Portrait of Adele Bloch-Bauer I* as a painting and not as a means of money laundering or as a decoration. The value of art can comprise many different kinds of values, including monetary value, moral value, historical value, cognitive value, decorative value, and aesthetic value, etc.,

which are not mutually exclusive. In this sense, the value of art means all kinds of value that can be derived from and attached to art, and it often includes something that is almost always irrelevant to art *qua* art, such as monetary value. One may use the term artistic value to refer to the value of art *qua* art, but I prefer the term aesthetic value for the reason that artistic value is often identified with all kinds of values attached to art. I acknowledge the fact that aesthetic value is sometimes considered to be the value of art that is derived strictly from the formal aspect of art –styles or designs- that leads our sensory experience, based on the assumption that the features of art *qua* art are found only in the formal aspect of art. However, I do not adopt the notion of aesthetic value that is conceptualized in this narrow way. I believe features of art *qua* art to be the ones that contribute to the realization of what we seek and value in art; including the active engagement of emotions and imagination, and a particular kind of pleasure. For instance, the active engagement of our emotions and imagination is something that we expect, seek, and value in art, and when a work of art succeeds in leading its audience to this manner of engagement, the work should be considered to be of aesthetic value due to this achievement. On the contrary, money is not explicitly or willingly claimed to be what we, artists and audiences alike, seek and value in art, although lots of works of art do carry significant monetary value. When a work of art is sold at a high price, this does not necessarily mean that the work is of significant aesthetic value. My discussion henceforward will be conducted based on this conception of the aesthetic value of art that it is the value derived from the features of art *qua* art that contribute to the realization of what we seek and value in art.

Knowledge-based Accounts vs. Experience-based Accounts

In *Art and Knowledge*, Young provides a knowledge-based account of the cognitive value of art that claims all works of art have to possess cognitive value, and throughout the book, he considers the cognitive value of art exclusively in terms of knowledge, both propositional and non-propositional. He argues that there is a practical reason for us to insist on an artworld where only art with cognitive value is considered to be art.

According to Young, art can have at most two basic functions, either to provide *pleasure* or to provide *knowledge*. Both functions could be performed simultaneously, and art is of its utmost value when it provides both pleasure and knowledge. He writes in this context, "Consequently, art can have hedonic value, cognitive value or both."¹⁸¹ I find this conceptualization of the values of art, more precisely the dichotomy of cognitive value and hedonic value, to be problematic. When he discusses knowledge being a source of pleasure, by acknowledging that human beings often enjoy knowledge for its own sake, Young seems to take cognitive pleasure into consideration. However, once separating the two functions of art, providing pleasure and providing knowledge, he seems to suggest that the cognitive and hedonic values of art can be clearly separated from each other.¹⁸²

The problem with Young's account, and in fact the problem shared with any account that focuses on knowledge alone in consideration of art's cognitive value, is that

¹⁸¹ James O. Young, *Art and Knowledge* (London; New York: Routledge, 2001), 18.

¹⁸² Young, *Art and Knowledge*, 17-8.

those accounts allow no room to consider the intimate and rather complex relationship between pleasure and the cognitive value of art. Pleasure not only can be accompanied by diverse ways of cognitive advancement, including acquisition of knowledge, but it in fact significantly contributes to our cognitive advancement by motivating us to experience works of art and to cognitively engage with them in the first place. For this reason, pleasure that is relevant to our cognitive advancement requires our special attention, and my discussion of this kind of pleasure will help illuminate the issues including why a single work of art can lead multiple occasions of cognitive transformation, why we should attend to the process of experiencing works of art instead of focusing on the end-product only that is left after the experience, and why art's cognitive value based on its transformative capacity is also of aesthetic value. I will first consider the relationship between pleasure and the aesthetic value of art, as it is articulated by Peter Lamarque and Stein H. Olsen, and then consider the cognitive pleasure in particular that is involved in our cognitive engagement with art, as suggested in Eileen John's discussion of art appreciation. By doing so, I will show that the cognitive pleasure from art is particularly bound up with aesthetic qualities, and thus the cognitive value of art derived from cognitive pleasure is also aesthetically relevant.

I attend to the philosophy of literature of Lamarque and Olsen because of their attempt to put the pleasure we derive from literature at the center of their consideration, as the title of their essay "The Philosophy of Literature: Pleasure Restored" suggests. I especially note their answer to the question of what is the aesthetic value. With regards to literature, Lamarque and Olsen say, "the values reside in the pleasurable experience that

literature can provide, which in turn rest on the aesthetic qualities (not formalistically defined) that literature exhibits.”¹⁸³ Notice that Lamarque and Olsen discuss a particular kind of pleasure that rests on the aesthetic qualities that they further specify as coherence and connectedness in a work, and the way that thematic content gives shape to subject-matter and image.¹⁸⁴ The aesthetic qualities in question can be easily missed by those who approach literature with purely linguistic, educational, or other kinds of practical interests. Thus the particular kind of pleasure based on these aesthetic qualities requires the audience to attend to the work of art *qua* art. In this sense, the value of art, as it is derived from this pleasure, must be aesthetic value. Some may call this kind of pleasure 'aesthetic pleasure' since it is a pleasure derived from the experience of works of art *qua* art, and what we experience is neither instrumental nor utilitarian pleasure, but pleasure for its own sake . I do not object to this insofar as the aesthetic qualities from which aesthetic pleasure is deemed to be derived are not formalistically defined, in its extreme, as in the discussion of Clive Bell, as only the combination of lines and colors in paintings.¹⁸⁵ Yet the adequacy of the term aesthetic pleasure is not my main concern here. I am more concerned with whether the pleasure I am discussing here, that is to say, the pleasure particularly relying on aesthetic qualities, is cognitively relevant, and if it is, how.

¹⁸³ Peter Lamarque and Stein Haugom Olsen, “The Philosophy of Literature: Pleasure Restored,” *The Blackwell Guide to Aesthetics* (Blackwell, 2003), 6, accessed February 19, 2010, doi: 10.1111/b.9780631221319.2003.00013.x.

¹⁸⁴ Lamarque and Olsen, “The Philosophy of Literature.”

¹⁸⁵ See Clive Bell, *Art* (London: Chatto & Windus, 1914).

In this respect, I find Eileen John's consideration of cognitive stimulation from art most intriguing. Art is, according to her, generally granted to be a source of cognitive stimulation, meaning at the very least that works of art "prompt activities in conscious life; thoughts, feelings, perceptions, and desires," In fact, more often than not, a positive evaluation is attached to art and art is considered to prompt "conscious activity which is interesting, new, provocative, intense, suggestive."¹⁸⁶ In agreement with John, I claim that many works of art, if they are worth being called works of art, prompt and require us to cognitively engage with them in order to appreciate and enjoy them properly.¹⁸⁷ This cognitive engagement may or may not lead to knowledge, traditionally the most acknowledged form of cognitive value, but regardless, art is deemed valuable partly in virtue of the cognitive engagement *per se* that is involved in experience of art. This view on the cognitive stimulation as a value of art, according to John in her later writing, agrees with the nature of us human beings who are ready to try out ideas and make connections between things to see how things are, and can be, connected and synthesized in the world.¹⁸⁸ We simply value cognitive stimulation, and accordingly art is deemed valuable in virtue of its cognitively stimulating character.

¹⁸⁶ Eileen John, "Art and the Knowledge," in *Routledge Companion to Aesthetics*, ed. Berys Gaut and Dominic Lopes (New York: Routledge, 2001), 331.

¹⁸⁷ By 'properly' I do not mean that there is only one right way to appreciate a work of art but that the work should be appreciated as art in its complexity and richness. I will bring this up soon with consideration of the role of pleasure in cognitive transformation through art.

¹⁸⁸ See Eileen John, "Poetry and Cognition," in *A Sense of the World: Essays on Fiction, Narrative, and Knowledge*, ed. John Gibson, Wolfgang Huemer, and Luca Poggi (New York: Routledge, 2007), 230-31.

Two Features of Our Cognitive Engagement with Art

Here I want to attend to two features of our cognitive engagement with art that are found in John's discussion, the first being that pleasure-seeking is integrated into our engagement with a work of art and the second being that this pleasure-seeking is bound up with the aesthetic qualities of art. Although John herself does not address our cognitive engagement with the explicit articulation of these two features as I do here, I believe this way of articulating the issue can considerably clarify the role and character of pleasure in cognitive activities that are involved in the experience of artworks.

Concerning the first feature, John writes, "with art, it is appropriate to make associations which are interesting or funny or somehow satisfying."¹⁸⁹ When we appreciate works of art, we try out our ideas of how certain things - such as visual elements in paintings and auditory elements in music,- can be associated and connected without being strictly restricted by certain rules or theories. The associations and connections we test out do not always have to be coherent with each other, and even interpretative contradictions might be acceptable insofar as they are cognitively rewarding and satisfying. This is why there can be a number of different interpretations of a single work of art, especially those which are particularly abstract and complex and thus make room for exploration. This pleasure-seeking character of our cognitive engagement with art seems to better explain why we go to galleries and concert halls, or read literature, than the goal of knowledge acquisition does. Although we often end up

¹⁸⁹ John, "Art and the Knowledge," 331.

being enlightened from experiencing works of art, we often approach works of art in the first place seeking pleasure, which is derived from cognitive engagement as well as sensory engagement with art. Concerning that our cognitive engagement with art is often pleasure-oriented rather than truth or knowledge-oriented, the role of cognitive pleasure should not be neglected in our consideration of art's cognitive value.

Moreover, I note that this pleasure-seeking character of our experience of artworks also sheds new light on the multiplicity of cognitive transformations which are possible through engagement with art, which I previously discussed in connection with the reciprocal transformation of the subject and object of the aesthetic experience.¹⁹⁰ When we visit a work of art repeatedly, we do so partly because we find pleasure in visiting it in itself; in other words, it is the pleasure-seeking character of our cognitive engagement that prompts us to visit a single work over and over again. If we approach art only with a certain practical goal, such as learning something particular, without relishing the pleasure involved in the process of learning, we would not revisit it repeatedly. We do not, for example, revisit an alphabet book repeatedly once we have mastered the alphabet unless there is something enjoyable in the book itself. Furthermore, when we revisit a work of art, there is no one fixed track of cognitive engagement for us to follow in order to properly appreciate the work. We explore the possibilities of diverse associations, even different associations each time of visiting the work, seeking pleasure and satisfaction,

¹⁹⁰ See Chapter 4 of this dissertation.

which render each visit a different experience, and make possible a multitude of cognitive transformations even through a single work of art.¹⁹¹

The second feature of our cognitive engagement with art is that aesthetic qualities of art guide and circumscribe our cognitive engagement, which is suggested in John's discussion of poetry. Although we test out our ideas of diverse possible associations between the elements of the work in such a way that they are cognitively stimulating and satisfying, the associations are necessarily bound up with qualities of a given work *qua* art, including the style and the design of the work by which the elements in a work are put together in a particular form. Our cognitive engagement with art is neither entirely free nor is it guided only by pleasure. Instead, art allows relatively unanchored cognitive engagement, that is to say, active exploration of possible connections and associations between elements of the work within the boundary made by aesthetic qualities of the work. In this sense, as Berys Gaut points out, it is akin to our cognitive engagement with metaphor, in which we participate in open-ended exploration of some of the salient similarities between two disparate entities; the exploration is open-ended *as far as* it is bound to the similarities between two entities.¹⁹² Even though it is possible that we enjoy free association that is merely inspired by a work of art, it tends to be a case of the instrumental use of art as a means to further ends, not experiencing works of art *qua* art.

¹⁹¹ In connection with Chapter 4, I suggest that this pleasure and satisfaction are intimately related to cognitive transformation that accompanies the feeling of relief from uneasiness and doubt about one's previous way of interacting with environment, and feeling of achievement that follows.

¹⁹² Berys Gaut, "Art and Knowledge," *The Oxford Handbook of Aesthetics* (Oxford, 2005), 438, accessed May 25, 2011, doi:10.1093/oxfordhb/9780199279456.001.0001.

In this sense, to relish the cognitive pleasure that is derived from experiencing works of art *qua* art, our pleasure-seeking cognitive engagement should be bound up with aesthetic qualities in the work.

I addressed earlier that John considers human beings to be cognitive creatures who are ready to cognitively engage with the things that are around and available to them, and I believe this to be a correct description of the cognitive aspect of human nature. We are ready to connect things around us and see what cognitive lines of connection can manage to hold together with varieties of weight and conviction.¹⁹³ This cognitive engagement in general may or may not be interesting or cognitively important, and probably a great deal of it is not. However, our cognitive engagement with art in particular holds a promise of rewarding cognitive engagement in a certain way. John writes concerning this issue, with focus on poetry in particular, that "in poetry we get a chance to try out possibilities for connection that have had attraction and weight for someone else, and it seems worth experimenting with them ourselves."¹⁹⁴ I claim that this promise of reward applies not only to poetry but to art in general, for the reason that all works of art are products of the artist's design and experiments, whether or not his or her initial design is realized in the final product without considerable change. The design and the plan of the artist, and the possibilities of a connection that had attraction and weight for him or her, are reflected in the aesthetic qualities of a work. Thus, our cognitive engagement with art, when guided by careful attention to these qualities, holds a promise

¹⁹³ John, "Poetry and Cognition," 230.

¹⁹⁴ John, "Poetry and Cognition," 231.

of a reward in the sense described here. In this way, our cognitive engagement with art, which is guided by and bound up with aesthetic qualities, not only guarantees the aesthetic relevance of the cognitive engagement, but also promises that the engagement will be cognitively rewarding or satisfying.

Now let me illustrate how our cognitive engagement and the pleasure derived from it are bound up with the aesthetic qualities of a work. A good example can be found in Michael D. Hurley's discussion of W.B. Yeats's "Leda and Swan". He examines this poem as an example which shows that the cognitive value of art resides in the experience of knowing, that is, the cognitively stimulating experience during the process of art appreciation, instead of knowledge *per se*. The following is the first and second stanzas of "Leda and Swan":¹⁹⁵

A sudden blow: the great wings beating still
Above the staggering girl, her thighs caressed
By the dark webs, her nape caught in his bill,
He holds her helpless breast upon his breast.

How can those terrified vague fingers push
The feathered glory from her loosening thighs?
And how can body, laid in that white rush,
But feel the strange heart beating where it lies?

Depicting the rape of Leda by Zeus-as-swan, Hurley claims, Yeats creates an artwork unmistakably violent, but through the prosody and diction, eroticism is also imagined in an uncertain relation to this violence. For example, although this poem begins with "a sudden blow" that clearly indicates violence of this attack, "vague fingers"

¹⁹⁵ Michael Hurley, "How Philosophers Trivialize Art :Bleak House, Oedipus Rex, 'Reda and the Swan'", *Philosophy and Literature* 33 (2009) :117.

and "loosening thighs" suggest that her body is responding erotically. This suggestion of eroticism is heightened as the poem continues, as illustrated in the last line of the second stanza where Leda's earlier awareness of the swan's beating wings return as a recognition of Zeus's beating heart. Hurley claims that a defining feature of this poem's achievement as a poem is that it manages to sustain a disturbing ambiguity, i.e., the tension between Zeus as a lover and Zeus as an assailant. Also importantly, this tension is not stable but it plays out phrase by phrase. In one phrase what is depicted is more of violence than of erotic love, and in the next phrase it is more erotic than violent; this ambiguity is strengthened and weakened phrase by phrase but it is never completely resolved. Hurley writes, "the instrumental capacity of language to signify stable knowledge is, through the experience of the poem's aesthetic qualities, suspended in favor of a constantly evolving experience of knowing. It is this perpetual frustration of cognitive closure - and irresistible promise, forever being, but never being quite, fulfilled - that is the reason we are drawn to art."¹⁹⁶ I believe what Hurley considers to be the reason we are drawn to art, namely a constantly evolving experience of knowing that accompanies perpetual cognitive expectation and frustration, gives rise to cognitive pleasure. As shown in this example, this particular kind of cognitive pleasure is intimately related to aesthetic qualities of artworks.

I have thus far discussed two distinct features of our cognitive engagement with art; that it is integrated with our goal of seeking pleasure, and that this pleasure-seeking is inextricably bound up with aesthetic qualities of a work of art. In this discussion, the

¹⁹⁶ Hurley, "Trivialize Art," 118.

significance of cognitive pleasure in our cognitive engagement with art, and in our cognitive transformation through art in particular, is elucidated. Also, it is suggested that certain cognitive values of art are aesthetically relevant when they are based on a cognitive pleasure that is intimately related to the aesthetic qualities of a work. The question of aesthetic relevance of art's cognitive value, however, requires more comprehensive discussion than a brief suggestion above, thus hereinafter I will focus more exclusively on this question.

The Aesthetic Relevance of the Cognitive Value of Art

In discussing the question of whether the cognitive value of art is also aesthetically valuable, it would be helpful to clarify first what is, and what has been identified as, the aesthetic value of art. One possible answer is that the aesthetic value of art is a value that is acquired from the *aesthetic experience* of art, a concept that I will now briefly investigate. Accordingly, when the cognitive value is obtained from an aesthetic experience of art, it is aesthetically relevant. Consider this view as presented by Robert Stecker when he says, "For the purposes of identifying the value of art as art, we can simply equate the aesthetic experience of art with experience of the work, derived from close attention to it, and valued for its own sake. Aesthetic pleasure is the pleasure such experience affords. The aesthetic value of a work is what is valuable for its own sake in the aesthetic experience the work affords to those who understand it based on such an

understanding.”¹⁹⁷ According to this view, the aesthetic relevance of art’s cognitive value depends on how relevant the cognitive value in question is to the *aesthetic experience* of art.

Stecker conceptualizes aesthetic experience broadly, for his purpose is to define aesthetic value as broadly as possible in order to prevent us from confining aesthetic experience to sensory experience and, in so doing, reducing aesthetic value to the one derived from sensory experience alone.¹⁹⁸ However, Stecker’s approach displays a problem when it is confronted with the following examples. Consider the photographs of Victorian Britain. We acknowledge that those photographs can be an important source of information about that society, but we also acknowledge that this feature of the photographs does not make them better as artworks.¹⁹⁹ On the other hand, we value John Donne’s comparison of parted lovers to twin compasses in “Valediction: Forbidden Mourning” because it can lead us to conceive the former in a different perspective in virtue of the latter, and we grant that this new perspective renders Donne’s poem as a better work of art²⁰⁰; the metaphor of twin compasses suggests that the steadiness of the beloved allows the lover (presumably the speaker) to trace a perfect circle of life even while he is apart from her, as a drawing compass has one fixed leg and one moving leg

¹⁹⁷ Robert Stecker, “Value in Art,” *The Oxford Handbook of Aesthetics* (Oxford, 2005), 314, accessed May 25, 2011, doi:10.1093/oxfordhb/9780199279456.001.0001.

¹⁹⁸ This approach can be found in J.O. Urmson, “What Makes a Situation Aesthetic?,” *Proceedings of the Aristotelian Society*, Supplement, 31 (1957): 93–106, following a tradition initiated by Baumgarten.

¹⁹⁹ Berys Gaut, *Art, Emotion, and Ethics* (New York: Oxford, 2007), 350.

²⁰⁰ R.W. Beardmore, *Art and Morality* (London: Macmillan, 1971), 59

that together trace a perfect circle, and the parted lovers will be together as two legs of a compass will be pressed after the circle has been traced.

Both the information about Victorian Britain and the perspective on parted lovers are acquired through an experience of artworks. This knowledge is derived from close attention to each work respectively, and valued for its own sake. Suppose that I am looking at the photographs with close attention in order to relish the beauty of them without any further ends in mind. Then I am obviously having an experience for its own sake. Still, it does not prevent me from acquiring the information about the society described in the photographs. The information is a by-product that is legitimately derived from aesthetic experience. Thus a question arises as to what make the information conveyed by photographs of Victorian Britain aesthetically irrelevant and the perspective presented by Donne's poem aesthetically relevant. One may say that the question is already answered by Stecker's specification that aesthetic value is what is valuable *for its own sake*. Still, partly due to the ambiguity of the notion of 'for its own sake,' there seems to be no compelling reason to consider the information about Victorian British society to be not valuable for its own sake; some people may just enjoy having the information without further ends in mind. The specification of the aesthetic value given by Stecker seems unable to answer the question at hand. What we need to do in order to answer it, I believe, is to consider the relationship between aesthetic qualities and art's cognitive value. In the case of Donne's poem, the cognitive value of the work is aesthetically relevant because what is cognitively valuable is essentially connected with the particular metaphor and composition of words, which comprise the aesthetic qualities

of the work, by which the cognitive value is conveyed.²⁰¹ Contra this, the information provided about Victorian Britain does not necessarily rely on the aesthetic qualities of particular photos, thus the information does not make the photos aesthetically more valuable.

Earlier in this chapter, I introduced the claim of Lamarque and Olsen's in which aesthetic value is defined in terms of pleasure that is derived from aesthetic qualities. I did so for the purpose of clarifying the relationship between pleasure and the aesthetic value of art. Although Lamarque and Olsen do not suggest that the pleasure in which aesthetic value resides is of the cognitive variety, I suggested, drawing on John's and Hurley's discussion, that aesthetic value can reside in cognitive pleasure by illustrating how cognitive pleasure can be inextricably bound up with, and derived from, aesthetic qualities. However, this suggestion of mine requires more explanation because it may seem to be in conflict with Lamarque's general stance regarding art's cognitive value.

In fact, Lamarque is one of the most noted skeptics of the aesthetic relevance of cognitive values of art. While he endorses the view that art, especially literature, can offer audiences distinctive opportunities to learn due to the very nature of storytelling and the imaginative responses demanded by art, he rejects the claim that the cognitive values of art in general are aesthetically relevant.²⁰² For, according to him, these distinctive learning opportunities are not essential to the practices of literature, unlike genuinely

²⁰¹ Beardsmore, *Art and Morality*, 59.

²⁰² See Peter Lamarque, "Learning from Literature," in *A Sense of the World: Essays on Fiction, Narrative, and Knowledge*, ed. John Gibson, Wolfgang Huemer, and Luca Poggi (New York: Routledge, 2007).

cognitive practices such as philosophy where the central aim is advancement of understanding.²⁰³ Since being cognitively beneficial is not one of the essential features of art *qua* art, what we learn from art is just a contingent by-product. A similar view is presented in the following remark by Monroe Beardsley, who also argues for the independence of the aesthetic aspect of works of art: “But what makes literature literature, in part, must be some withdrawal from the world about it, an unusual degree of self-containedness and self-sufficiency that makes it capable of being contemplated with satisfaction in itself. And the secret of this detachment seems to lie in its capacity to play with, and to swallow up in its designs, all the vast array of human experiences, including beliefs, without that personal allegiance and behavioral commitment to them that constitutes assertion in the fullest sense.”²⁰⁴

However, I note that both Lamarque and Beardsley seem to suggest that the cognitive aspect of a work can be aesthetically relevant in rather an *indirect* way when it mars or promotes a work’s aesthetically valuable qualities, such as its coherence, complexity, intensity, or quality of dramatic development. For example, when Beardsley rejects the aesthetic relevance of art’s cognitive aspects, he focuses on the *truth* and *acceptability* of the theses that are contained in works of art. His particular intention is to

²⁰³ Lamarque writes, “What is interesting in the case of philosophy (and other cognitive disciplines) is not that the learning process is causal but the fact that the very nature of philosophical discourse – characterized by argument, truth-assessment, clarification, definition, analysis – is structured to promote the transmission (and evaluation) of belief. In this sense the practice of philosophy is *constitutively cognitive*; the process of leaning is what gives value and purpose to the practice.” – Lamarque, “Learning from Literature,” 14.

²⁰⁴ Monroe C. Beardsley, *Aesthetics: Problems in the Philosophy of Criticism* (New York : Harcourt, Brace & World, 1958), 437

criticize so called the Didactic Theory of literature, which claims that in order to be great, a literary work must contain profoundly true theses. But as for other qualities of the cognitive content, such as coherence and complexity, Beardsley suggests that we can take them into consideration when evaluating the aesthetic value of a work of art.²⁰⁵ For example, in Donne's poem that was addressed earlier, the perspective on parted lovers presented by the metaphor of a pair of compasses in fact promotes the complexity and quality of the dramatic development of the poem, and thus it is aesthetically valuable. Also, consider the following remark by Lamarque: "The novel's achievement is an artistic achievement, not a cognitive one (in the sense of belief-acquisition). The vividness, clarity, and subtlety of the handling of its themes, and the interest, coherence, and connectedness of the detail, are at the heart of the work's literary value."²⁰⁶ In my discussion, the cognitive value of art is not reducible to belief-acquisition, for it includes how the cognitive content is conveyed through the operation of reconfiguration and particularization, and by doing so contributes to the cognitive transformation of the subject who experiences a work of art. That is to say, 'vividness, clarity, and subtlety of the handling of its themes, and the interest, coherence, and connectedness of the detail' is at the heart of the work's cognitive value as I have discussed it in this dissertation. Therefore, Lamarque's remark here in fact suggests the aesthetic relevance of particular types of cognitive value.

²⁰⁵ Beardsley, *Aesthetics*, 426-29.

²⁰⁶ Lamarque, "Learning From Literature," 20.

I find myself in some agreement with Lamarque and Beardsley's analysis of the cognitive value of art, however, my position diverges from theirs to the extent that they seem to conceptualize the indirect aesthetic relevance of art's cognitive aspect as if it can be treated as an occasional exception to the more common case that the cognitive value of art is aesthetically irrelevant. Although I believe that not all but some cognitive value of art is aesthetically relevant, this does not mean that the aesthetic relevance of the cognitive value is something rare and unusual. In this regard, I note that there have been philosophers who argue for a more direct and prominent understanding of the aesthetic relevance of the cognitive values of art.

The view which holds that cognitive values are of aesthetic relevance has been often referred to as aesthetic cognitivism. Gaut, one of the most prominent proponents of aesthetic cognitivism, distinguishes two claims involved in aesthetic cognitivism, the first being an epistemic claim that we can learn from art and the second being an aesthetic claim that what we learn makes art better as art.²⁰⁷ While the epistemic claim is widely accepted, the aesthetic claim divides aesthetic cognitivism into two versions: the strong version of aesthetic cognitivism holds that what we learn from art *usually* or *generally* makes art better, and the weak or restricted version of aesthetic cognitivism holds that only *some* of what we learn makes art better as art. For example, Richard Beardsmore

²⁰⁷ Versions of aesthetic cognitivism are found in R.W. Beardsmore, "Learning from a Novel," in *Philosophy and the Arts: Royal Institute of Philosophy Lectures*, vol. VI, ed. Godfrey Vesey (London: Macmillan, 1973), Nelson Goodman, *Languages of Art* (Indianapolis: Hackett, 1976), David Novitz, *Knowledge, Fiction and Imagination* (Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 1987), Martha C. Nussbaum, *Love's Knowledge: Essays on Philosophy and Literature* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1990), Peter Kivy, *Philosophies of Arts* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press., 1969), Dorothy Walsh, *Literature and Knowledge* (Middletown, Conn.: Wesleyan University Press, 1969), etc.

embraces the strong version and claims that the cognitive value of art, especially of literature, are necessarily of aesthetic value because “when we learn from a work of literature, then what we learn, the content of the work, is essentially bound up with the way in which the writer expresses himself, bound up, that is, with the author’s style.”²⁰⁸ However, as Gaut claims, the strong version of aesthetic cognitivism seems untenable, given the possibility of cognitive value that does not depend upon artist’s style. For example, if someone acquires some historical information about the Danish royal household from *Hamlet*, this learning may not be bound up in any particular way with the author’s style.²⁰⁹ For this reason, Gaut embraces rather a restricted version of aesthetic cognitivism and claims that it is the way that a work conveys its cognitive values that makes them of aesthetic relevance.²¹⁰ I should add, for clarification, that although it is called weak or restricted version, it does not mean that they consider the aesthetic relevance of the cognitive value to be unusual. It rather suggests that there are general or usual ways that certain cognitive values of art become aesthetically relevant.

According to Gaut, some of the cognitive values of art are aesthetically relevant to the extent that the values are relevant to the main themes of the artworks, not just arbitrary insights, and they are conveyed through *artistic* means, *affective* ones in particular.²¹¹ This is based on another claim that art can teach us about the world by

²⁰⁸ Beardsmore, “Learning from a Novel,” 45.

²⁰⁹ Gaut, “Art and Knowledge,” 445.

²¹⁰ Gaut, “Art and Knowledge,” 445.

²¹¹ He also says, “the cognitive merits of a novel typically are aesthetically relevant when they are displayed in the particular detailed descriptions of characters, the narrative events, and

facilitating the deployment of the full force of affective and experiential imagination, which involves affective, sensory, or phenomenal presentation of an entertained thought-content.²¹² Considering that what is artistic, in Gaut's account, is what bestows, partly at least, and contributes to the aesthetic qualities of a work of art, I take his restricted version of aesthetic cognitivism to be another account that defends the aesthetic relevance of certain cognitive values of art, and which furthermore shows how these cognitive values are grounded in aesthetic qualities. Also, in agreement with Gaut's claim that only some cognitive gains from art are aesthetically relevant, I will show that art's capacity to generate cognitive transformation, which throughout this dissertation I have considered to be of significant cognitive value, *is* both the cognitive *and* aesthetic value of art, without denying the possibility that other kinds of cognitive values, including provision of certain kinds of knowledge, can also be aesthetically relevant. However, before discussing how cognitive transformation through art in particular is aesthetically relevant, I will consider the aesthetic relevance of the cognitive value of art in the context of ethical criticism, that is, the aesthetic relevance of moral understanding acquired from works of art. Since some important features that characterize cognitive transformation, including the role of our imagination in our experience of art, are discussed in the discourse of ethical criticism, this consideration will be helpful to illustrate the relationship between cognitive

the feelings prescribed by works. The claims a novel makes may be general, but they tend to be of aesthetic worth when made implicitly by the novels' treatment of particulars." – Gaut, "Art and Knowledge," 445. For more detailed discussion, see Gaut, *Art, Emotion and Ethics*, chapter 7-8.

²¹² For detailed explanation of affective imagination and experiential imagination, see Gaut, *Art, Emotion and Ethics*, 154-55.

transformation through art, as one of the significant cognitive values of art, and the aesthetic value of art.

The Aesthetic Relevance of the Cognitive Value of Art in Light of Ethical Criticism

I begin with a consideration of the approaches in the discourse of ethical criticism that discuss the aesthetic relevance of moral understanding with respect to its relation to the aim of a work of art. For example, Martha Nussbaum suggests that moral values, mainly comprised of advancement of moral understanding, are not extraneous but central to some works of art, including works of Charles Dickens and Henry James. She believes that failing to read Dickens's *Hard Times* with moral reflection is a rejection of the author's intention that his works be read with particular attention paid to their ethical content, for example, the equal worth of all human beings and the misery caused to human beings by unjust social institutions.²¹³ One may expand upon this and claim that some cognitive values, and not just those that have an ethical dimension, by being the central focus or central aim of a work of art, can be considered to be aesthetic value. However, there still remains the question of how exactly this central goal of providing moral understanding, as an example of cognitive value, is connected to the aesthetic value of the work. What is the difference between a work of philosophy, the central goal

²¹³ Martha C. Nussbaum, "Exactly and Responsibly: A Defense of Ethical Criticism," *Philosophy and Literature* 22(1998): 359-61.

of which is providing moral understanding, and a work of literature that shares the same central goal? In order to clarify the difference, and mark out the distinctive value of an artwork *qua* art, we cannot help but return to *how* the central goal, to provide moral understanding, is realized.

In this respect, I note Noel Carroll's discussion of the aesthetic relevance of moral understanding provided by certain works of art. Similar to Nussbaum, Carroll focuses on the central aims of a work of art when he considers its aesthetic value. Yet at the same time, he attends to the central *aesthetic* aims in particular, that is to say, to absorb the attention of the audience and elicit the prescribed response. He suggests that a moral virtue in an artwork can count as an aesthetic value when it serves such aesthetic aims; on the contrary, if a moral defect inhibits an artwork's prescribed responses from ideally morally sensitive audiences, the moral defect counts as an aesthetic defect.²¹⁴ According to Carroll, the moral virtues in a work can absorb the attention of the audience by "providing genuine, eye-opening moral insight; exercising and enlarging the audience's legitimate moral powers of perception, emotion, and reflection; challenging complacent moral doxa; provoking and/or expanding the moral understanding; calling forth educative moral judgments; encouraging the tracing out of moral implications or the unraveling of

²¹⁴ In Carroll's account, morally sensitive audiences seem to be those who cannot respond to immoral works of art in the prescribed way due to the immorality. As opposed to actually morally sensitive audiences, Carroll appeals to 'ideally' morally sensitive audiences for his account. For actual audiences can fail to respond to works of art in the prescribed way for many reasons even when the works themselves have no defects that block the prescribed response. Or actual audiences can fail to catch some immoral character of artworks. For example, in the midst of a war, audiences who are ordinarily morally sensitive will miss the inhumanity portrayed in the treatment of enemy soldiers in a propagandistic artwork – Noël Carroll, "Art and Ethical Criticism: An Overview of Recent Directions of Research," *Ethics* 110 (2000): 378.

morally significant metaphors that have import for the audience's lives."²¹⁵ As demonstrated, the moral virtues that Carroll attends to as those that serve aesthetic aims are of cognitive character. Accordingly, Carroll seems to hold to a view of cognitive aestheticism with an emphasis on moral virtues.

Another philosopher who presents a view of cognitive aestheticism in the discourse of ethical criticism is Amy Mullin. In her discussion of the relationship between moral defects and aesthetic defects, she writes, "I do not limit aesthetic relevance to questions about how eloquent or absorbing or original the work is in its presentation of morally relevant material."²¹⁶ In her view, imaginative exploration through works of art is what we value and seek in art; imaginative exploration is what constitutes, in part, the aesthetic value of art.²¹⁷ According to Mullin, art with a moral dimension is aesthetically successful when it renders an understanding of the range of moral views, especially less familiar moral views (whether immoral, amoral, or hypermoral), familiar and accessible to people so that people can adopt such points of view temporarily.²¹⁸ Thus, the moral virtue Mullin attends to as the one that serves an aesthetically relevant function is that which makes possible certain understandings, and thus contributes to the advancement of understanding. Just as Carroll does, Mullin attends to the moral dimension of a work of art that is of particularly cognitive character; while

²¹⁵ Carroll, "Ethical Criticism," 378.

²¹⁶ Amy Mullin, "Moral Defects, Aesthetic Defects, and the Imagination," *The Journal of Aesthetics and Art Criticism* 62 (2004): 255.

²¹⁷ Mullin, "Moral Defects," 258.

²¹⁸ Mullin, "Moral Defects," 255.

Carroll locates the aesthetic relevance of the moral dimension in its contribution to the aesthetic aim of eliciting the prescribed response from audiences, Mullin locates this aesthetic relevance in the imaginative exploration of moral possibilities which certain artworks bring about.

Note here also the similarity between Gaut and Mullin. As Gaut builds his version of aesthetic cognitivism upon a broadly conceptualized notion of artistic means that include affective and experimental imagination, Mullin builds her version of aesthetic cognitivism upon a broadly conceptualized notion of aesthetic value that includes imaginative experience in art appreciation. Gaut and Mullin in fact present different views with regards to the aesthetic relevance of the moral defects of works of art. Gaut, on the one hand, while acknowledging that the moral merits of a work of art are sometimes aesthetic merits and moral defects sometimes aesthetic defects, denies the possibility of moral defects to be aesthetically valuable. Mullin, on the other hand, claims that what is aesthetically relevant is the quality of the imaginative experience, rather than the correctness of the artwork's moral dimension. According to Mullin, although a work sometimes fails to engage us because of its immoral contents, this does not mean that the moral defect is an aesthetic defect.²¹⁹ The work fails in this regard not because of the immorality of the perspective offered by the work, but because the work fails to produce and engaging imaginative experience of the work's moral point of view; it is just a case of an aesthetic defect, not a case of a moral defect being an aesthetic defect. Even a work

²¹⁹ See Chapter 4 of this dissertation concerning the difficulties involved in defining immorality in art

with moral defects -in the sense that it articulates an immoral point of view- can be aesthetically valuable *due to* those defects to the extent that the work succeeds to lead us to imaginatively explore the immoral content, which we otherwise would not willingly or easily be able to explore. However, regardless of their different positions regarding immorality and aesthetic value, Gaut and Mullin both consider the role of the imagination to be essential to the cognitively and aesthetically valuable experience of art; in Gaut's account imagination is the artistic means by which the cognitive value of an artwork is conveyed, and in Mullin's account the imaginative experience provided by art appreciation is one of the significant aesthetic values of art.

This consideration of the discourse of ethical criticism, and Carroll's and Mullin's discussion in particular, suggests that aesthetically relevant moral values are of a particularly cognitive character, and thus some cognitive values are aesthetically relevant. Now, extending the range of the discussion from moral understanding to understanding in general, I turn to answer to the main question of this chapter, "Is cognitive transformation, as a cognitive value, aesthetically relevant?"

The Aesthetic Relevance of Art's Capacity to Lead Cognitive Transformation

In order to discuss whether cognitive transformation through art is of aesthetic value as well as cognitive value, I will begin with a brief summary of my discussion of reconfiguration and particularization in chapter 2 and 3. Since these are two distinctive ways in which artworks can lead to the cognitive transformation of the subjects who

experience a work of art, the aesthetic relevance of these two supports my claim of aesthetic relevance of cognitive transformation. Then I will add other considerations that strengthen the claim.

The reason I attend to reconfiguration and particularization in my discussion of art's cognitive value is not that these two processes operate in art only. In fact they are easily found in other domains of human practice; for example, thought experiments play an important role in many disciplines, including science and philosophy, and they often function through reconfiguration and particularization. However, reconfiguration and particularization operate with a degree of efficiency in art that cannot be found in other domains. As I discussed earlier regarding reconfiguration, with the aid of Nelson Goodman's account of the symptoms of aesthetic symbols, certain aspects of art – such as syntactic density, semantic density, and relative repleteness – call for maximum sensitivity of discrimination, which means that almost every variation in art bears significance, that even subtle connotations and shadings of meanings can be expressed, and that there are hardly any aspects that do not affect the identity of a work of art. Since reconfiguration is about refocusing, reweighing, reorganizing, and in so doing providing new perspectives on objects, sensitivity of discrimination in art tends to facilitate reconfiguration. Also, when we encounter works of art, we do not merely look through the symbols to what they refer to, for we also attend to the way the referent is referred to or presented by aesthetic symbols, the choices made in the creative process, and the

significance of each aesthetic choice to the extent we can discern it.²²⁰ In this way, in experience of works of art, we tend to respond more sensitively to reconfigurations in art than we do in other domains. Furthermore, the relative freedom to experiment in art is combined with art's capacity to provide its audience with a significant degree of guidance with regards to where to focus their attention – in virtue of the artist's design of the work - to increase the efficiency with which reconfiguration can be facilitated.

The operation of particularization is also prominent in art for several reasons. The first is that the activity of appreciating a work of art means that we choose to focus on particularized details of the work with heightened attentiveness and responsiveness. Second, art can emphasize and draw out much of the details of an object or a situation that normally we may be unfamiliar with or ignore. Third, the design of artworks makes it easier for us to attend to salient and relevant details that are crucial to understanding the given object or situation. In addition, particularization operates through the active engagement of our emotions and imagination; particularization not only facilitates the engagement of our emotions and imagination by providing carefully designed and selected details, but the engagement of our emotions and imagination also determines the success of particularization. For although works of art manage to provide us with salient and significant details, it is our emotions and imagination that arrange and connect the details and makes sense of them as a whole. Considering the intimate relationship between reconfiguration and particularization as discussed in chapter 3, the active

²²⁰ I use “symbols” as a very general term that covers letters, words, texts, pictures, diagrams, maps, models, etc., as Goodman does in his account of the symptoms of the aesthetic. See Goodman, *Languages of Art*, xi, and chapter 2 of this dissertation.

engagement of our emotions and imagination should be apparent in reconfiguration as well as particularization, and accordingly in the cognitive transformation which is accomplished by these means.

In short, the aesthetic relevance of cognitive transformation is obvious when we consider the extent to which reconfiguration and particularization, which generate cognitive transformation, depend on certain features of art *qua* art: sensitivity of discrimination, non-transparency of symbols, and the engagement of our emotions and imagination in art appreciation. Moreover, in relation to the active engagement of our emotions and imagination, there is another reason why art's capacity to generate cognitive transformation in the subject should be seen as aesthetically valuable. It is commonly assumed that a certain value of art is aesthetically relevant when it is intimately related to what we value and seek in experience of works of art. The active engagement of our emotions and imagination is certainly one of the things we value and seek in art, as Mullin suggests, and cognitive transformation in which such engagements are involved should be considered as both aesthetically and cognitively valuable.

However, the active engagement of our emotions and imagination is not the only thing we seek in art. We seek pleasure in art as much as we seek the imaginative and emotional engagement, and as a matter of fact, we sometimes value these forms of engagement for the pleasure they can provide. As I discussed earlier, we visit a work of art in order to experience pleasure, cognitive as well as sensory pleasure; among the cognitive activities involved in our experience of art are free experimentation with ideas and the testing out of associations and connections between the elements of the work of

art in ways that are interesting and satisfying. In this sense, cognitive pleasure is part of what initiates, sustains, and guides our cognitive activities during our experiences of art, and which in turn leads to cognitive transformation. The active role of pleasure in encouraging cognitive engagement is another reason in favor seeing cognitive transformation as relevant to aesthetic value.

Furthermore, cognitive transformation through art can lead us to be better equipped for future experiences, including future experiences of art. In my discussion of reconfiguration, I discussed this issue in terms of cognitive flexibility. When experiences of artworks that provide alternative perspectives through reconfiguration accumulate, these can change something deep down in our cognitive condition, something that may be a precondition for acquiring an advanced understanding of the world we live in. This may change our perceptual habits in a way that we become more careful and hesitant with regards to dogmatically believing that one way of understanding is the correct one, and we begin to consider more possibilities for organizing and making sense of the information we are provided with. We may also become more capable of shifting our perspectives and embracing other possibilities, which is to say that our cognitive flexibility is enhanced. Also, as I showed in my discussion of particularization, one's perceptual abilities can be honed by certain kinds of experience, in particular those in which we consider the details of particular situations with heightened attentiveness and flexibility. Art is remarkably effective in providing these kinds of experiences, and accordingly art can effectively cultivate our ability to appreciate the world we live in its complexity and richness. Although the transformation of our cognitive condition

contributes to our future experience in general, it especially contributes to our future experience of art. Aesthetic experience, to the extent that it is meaningful and enjoyable, requires that our cognitive flexibility and perceptual abilities to be developed to a considerable degree, and thus our capacity for appreciating and enjoying works of art develops as our experience with works of art accumulates. This change of our cognitive condition in relation to art appreciation is an important value that we seek in our experiences of art, and thus it can be another reason why art's capacity to lead to cognitive transformation is an aesthetic value as well as cognitive value.

Conclusion

In this dissertation, I explored the cognitive value of art. The cognitive value of art, understood generally in terms of the provision of knowledge, has been discussed by many philosophers who typically focus on issues concerning the means by which knowledge is acquired in the arts and the range of knowledge that art might be thought to present. However, in focusing on knowledge as the end-product of art, philosophers have tended to neglect the subjective aspect of the cognitive value of art and the importance of the process of experiencing art wherein the subject who experiences art goes through a particular kind of transformation. Here I have argued that the principle cognitive value of art resides in the *cognitive transformation* of the subject that occurs throughout the process of experiencing works of art.

I started with examination of two major knowledge-based approaches to the cognitive value of art, *propositional* and *non-propositional* theories, in order to show that they cannot be the ground of a comprehensive account of art's cognitive value. What I find the most problematic is their neglect of the subjective aspect of aesthetic experience. Readers, viewers, and appreciators of art frequently speak of the cognitive value of artworks in terms of the kinds of personal transformations they undergo in the experience of works of art, and knowledge-based approaches do not provide an explanation for the phenomenon. Thus, there is a need for an alternative account that takes into consideration the subjective aspect of art's cognitive value, and I claim that the cognitive transformation of the subject should be the key focus of any such account.

Among the pre-existing discussions relevant to this matter, the moral cultivation approach seems the most promising with regards to developing an account of cognitive transformation because it rightly attends to the process of experiencing art and the changes of the subject brought about by experiences of art. However, due to its exclusively moral focus, this approach misses some significant cognitive values of art, specifically with regards to art's contribution to our understanding outside the realm of the moral. Moreover, the moral cultivation approach often carries the unintended burden of the consequentialist implication that art leads to morally virtuous behaviors, which is refuted by the frequent disconnection between moral virtue and frequent exposure to art. On account of these issues, I suggested that the contribution of art to the advancement of our understanding should be considered in terms of cognitive transformation instead of either moral cultivation or knowledge acquisition.

My discussion of cognitive transformation through experiences of art began with an analysis of reconfiguration and particularization. On the one hand, reconfiguration in art can contribute to our understanding not only by shedding light on thus far underemphasized or neglected aspects of objects, and by doing so enriching and supplementing our perception, but also by offering guidance with regards to what to attend to, and in so doing clarifying our perception. More importantly, frequent exposure to diverse perspectives, which are embodied in works of art through the operation of reconfiguration, enhance our cognitive flexibility, which in turn is a precondition for acquiring an advanced understanding of the world. We also become more capable of shifting our perspectives and embracing other possibilities.

On the other hand, particularization contributes to the advancement of understanding by supplementing the insufficiency of our normal, everyday experiences and cultivating our perceptual abilities so that we may have more enriched experiences. There are certain matters that are important to us that can be understood properly only in their particularity, due to the ultimately unique character which result from being embedded in particular concrete contexts, and this kind of understanding requires the perceptual abilities to deal with the complexities and ambiguities of the world. These perceptual abilities can be cultivated only by using them in many different situations, and for this reason, the advancement of our understanding calls for having sufficiently diverse and complex experiences. Aesthetic experiences, in which we engage with heightened attentiveness and sensitivity, are thus preferred to the so-called 'experiences' that we pass through every day with numb senses. Art can help in providing aesthetic experiences in

virtue of the operation of particularization, which can provide access to a wide range of unfamiliar and intense experiences, and experiences that we -audiences and artists- may share in common. Particularization thus affords a foundation upon which mutual understandings between human beings may be built. This supplementation of our experiences contributes to the advancement of our understanding by providing opportunities for cultivating perceptual abilities, and these cultivated perceptual abilities enable us to have more enriched future experiences that will again further cultivate our perceptual abilities.

After elucidating how reconfiguration and particularization contribute to cognitive advancement, I discussed, with the aid of Dewey's philosophy of experience, how they lead to cognitive transformation. Dewey considers experiences in terms of our interaction with our environment and our goal of survival, which consists of two dimensions: the primary and secondary dimension. In the primary dimension, we engage with and respond to the environment with entrenched habits that have been formed from our previous experiences, and at this level our experience is relatively fluid and apprehended as a qualitative whole. However, it is inevitable that some objects and events will appear as obstacles, and then we begin to have doubts about the way we have interacted with our environment. The unease from these doubts triggers a transition from a primary to a secondary dimension of experience that is characterized by reflection, analysis, and reconstruction. By analyzing the features and elements of the experience, examining the causal relations, and reconstructing the ways we engage with the environment, the secondary dimension of experience equips us with a new habit by means of which

previous obstacles are no longer obstacles and our experience of our environment can be fluid and apprehended as a qualitative whole once again.

Following Dewey, I suggested that this movement back and forth between the primary and secondary dimensions of experience entail a transformation of the subject and explored how the transition between these primary and secondary dimensions occurs in our experience of works of art. Art triggers this transition through the operation of reconfiguration and particularization. Reconfiguration, on one hand, is embodied in works of art through marking out new boundaries within and between objects, and this can cause unease to a perceiver who approaches with his entrenched habits that are tailored for previous boundaries. Particularization, on the other hand, through presenting the same object in newly or differently particularized contexts, challenges a perceiver to modify his way of interacting with the object. In these ways art distinctively and effectively causes the transition between the two dimensions of experiences, which can lead the experiencing subject to undergo cognitive transformation.

I have also discussed the nature of the cognitive transformations that occur in thus far described way. First, the transformation is something that should be considered in terms of cognitive advancement instead of moral advancement; not only because the transformation can happen outside of the realm of the moral, but also because a moral focus tends to lead us away from any consideration of the value of art *qua* art, while focusing on the moral effects of art on audiences regardless of whether the effects come from the appropriate understanding of the work. Second, the transformation is reciprocal in the sense that the object as well as the subject of an experience is transformed. The

transformation of the subject occurs for the very purpose that the object that used to be an obstacle to the life-sustaining activities is to become in accordance with the subject. However, because the subject is transformed in some way, the object cannot be the same in the eyes of the transformed subject. Third, there can be multiple instances of transformation resulting from the interactions between a single subject and a single object. Due to the reciprocity of the transformation, once the subject is transformed, the object is perceived differently in the eyes of transformed subject and remains as something that may still deserve another visit; if the subject was previously struggling with feature A of the object, now the subject may have to struggle with feature B, which has been previously overshadowed by A, or surfaces in the subject's struggle with A. The culmination of one experience can create the conditions for a new interaction between the subject and the object that can lead to further transformations.

Lastly, I discussed whether cognitive transformation is aesthetically valuable as well as cognitive valuable. I started with the critique of Young's account, which is an example of an account that exclusively focuses on knowledge as a product in consideration of art's cognitive value, in which I claimed that Young allows for no room in which to consider the intimate and rather complex relationship between pleasure and the cognitive value of art. Pleasure can not only be accompanied by diverse ways of cognitive advancement, but it in fact can significantly contribute to our cognitive advancement by motivating us to experience works of art and to cognitively engage with them in the first place. In this regard, I discussed two features of our cognitive engagement with art, drawing on John's work, the first being that pleasure-seeking is

integrated into our engagement with art and the second being that pleasure-seeking is bound up with the aesthetic qualities of art, in order to show the intimate relationship between pleasure and the aesthetic value of art, between pleasure and the cognitive value of art, and between the aesthetic and cognitive value of art. I also noted that reconfiguration and particularization, which lead to the cognitive transformation of the experiencing subject by developing cognitive flexibility and perceptual abilities respectively, essentially depend upon features of art *qua* art. And, the cognitive pleasure and the active engagement of our imagination and emotions, which are necessarily involved in the cognitive transformation, are what we seek and value in art *qua* art. Based on the notion that a certain value of art is aesthetically relevant when it is intimately related to features of art *qua* art, and what we value and seek in art *qua* art, I suggested the aesthetic relevance of cognitive transformation as it is occasioned through art.

I started this dissertation with the goal of overcoming the limitations of previous accounts of art's cognitive value. In particular, I attended to the knowledge-based accounts that neglect the subjective aspect of our experiences of art by focusing only on knowledge as an objective end-product of the experience, and to accounts with a moral focus that leave unanalyzed the ways in which art might involve a personal cognitive transformation outside the sphere of the moral. Furthermore, in the process of constructing this alternative account, I aimed to elucidate the relevance and applicability of these already existing discourses, including the discourse of ethical criticism, which have been predominant in the discussion of the cognitive value of works of art, as well as the discussion concerning the relationship between the emotive and cognitive elements of

our experience -including Dewey's and Aristotle's- to my own account. I hope this dissertation achieved these goals and it can contribute to a more comprehensive discussion of the cognitive value of art.

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