

## KNOWING ART

# PHILOSOPHICAL STUDIES SERIES

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VOLUME 107

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# KNOWING ART

Essays in Aesthetics  
and Epistemology

*Edited by*

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and

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 Springer

A C.I.P. Catalogue record for this book is available from the Library of Congress.

ISBN 978-1-4020-5264-4 (HB)  
ISBN 978-1-4020-6785-3 (PB)  
ISBN 978-1-4020-5265-1 (e-book)

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Published by Springer,  
P.O. Box 17, 3300 AA Dordrecht, The Netherlands.

*www.springer.com*

Cover art: Claude Cormier, *Blue Tree*, Cornerstone Gardens, 2004. Photo Courtesy of Cornerstone Gardens, Sonoma, California, 2004.

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## **Editors' Acknowledgements**

This collection is the culmination of a three-year campaign, beginning with a conference at the University of British Columbia, to open up new frontiers of inquiry into the epistemology of art and aesthetic judgment. We first of all thank the contributors for their endurance as well as their skill. We acknowledge the Social Sciences and Humanities Research Council of Canada for a grant that made this campaign possible. Our thanks also go to James Kelleher at UBC for copyediting, to Floor Oosting at Springer for her help with the publication process, and to Keith Lehrer, aesthetician-epistemologist, for well-timed encouragement and sound advice. Finally, a special thanks to Claude Cormier of Claude Cormier Architectes Paysagistes in Montreal for permission to reproduce his Blue Tree garden, which was installed in 2004 at the Cornerstone Gardens in Sonoma, California, and which adorns the cover of this book.

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# Introduction

Matthew Kieran and Dominic McIver Lopes

We often think of art and knowledge (or science or inquiry) as in competition with one another. Skepticism about art's aspirations to teach us anything – or at least anything important – is deeply rooted in philosophy: Plato took it upon himself time and again to defend what he took to be true inquiry from the arts, and Arthur Danto (1986) has argued that Plato's project of debunking art's epistemic aspirations shaped subsequent philosophy. Even some artists line up with the skeptics. W. H. Auden, for example, lamented that "poetry makes nothing happen" and that his own political poetry of the thirties failed to "save a single Jew" (Carpenter 1981: 413). However, a moment's reflection is enough to make us rethink Plato's skepticism. It seems clear that we would know far less than we do without art. It seems first that we would know less about the world and ourselves – think of an educational regime without literature and painting. It also seems obvious that we would know less about art itself – who does not know *something* about movies and music for example? Finally, much great art would be less great were it truly severed from knowledge and inquiry – think of the portrait or the nineteenth-century novel. Such appeals to appearances do not, of course, refute Platonic skepticism. What we need is an epistemology of art – a theory of what we know about the world *through* art and what we know *about* art from art itself.

## KNOWING THROUGH ART

In the *Republic*, Plato argued that art is dangerous and should be banned from the ideal state, since it affords only the illusion of knowledge and stirs up baser passions. The idea that we can gain insight or understanding from

art is, Plato claims, a foolish myth. This skepticism partly grows from Plato's metaphysics, but the core argument can be separated from the metaphysics. Art is a product of the imagination. Looking at a painting or reading a novel engages us in a make-believe world, which the work's artistry prepares us to be moved by and respond to. But knowledge is contact with reality, not make-believe. So art cannot generate knowledge except by accident.

The first to answer Plato was Aristotle. Focusing on tragedy, Aristotle articulated in the *Poetics* what has come to be called 'cognitivism.' That is, art works can have cognitive value by affording us insight, knowledge, or understanding; and in the right conditions a work's cognitive value is part of its value as art. Cognitivism does not imply that cognitive value is necessary for artistic value. Rather, cognitive value counts towards artistic value.

Recently, philosophers have revisited the ancient debate between Plato and Aristotle in light of the best new work on art on one hand and knowledge on the other hand. Thus contemporary non-cognitivists mount a refined critique of cognitivism which poses at least four distinct, stepped challenges; and contemporary cognitivists have replied to all four challenges.

The Triviality Challenge: art cannot afford knowledge or at least knowledge worth having. It offers only trivial or banal truths (Stolnitz 1992).

The motivation for this challenge derives from Plato. How could a product of imagination, which functions to sustain games of make-believe, yield truth? After all, if make-believe worlds are imaginative creations, then they need not reflect the way the world actually is. The point of imagination is that it enables us to think beyond the confines of actuality. So it is a mistake to take what happens in make-believe as a window on reality. Jane Austen's characters are realistically portrayed, but we cannot infer from the way people are in Austen's fictions to the way people actually are.

Furthermore, consider what people often put forward as insights to be gleaned from fictions. Orwell's *1984* is said to convey the suppression of individuality that comes with totalitarianism, Tolstoy's *Anna Karenina* is said to illuminate the misery of a loveless marriage, and Austen's *Emma* is said to show the dangers of self-deception. Yet none of this do we *learn* from art works. Maybe reading *Anna Karenina* gets me to see that a loveless marriage is a terrible thing because I'd never thought about it before. Even so, the 'insight' remains commonplace and trivial.

The challenge can be put as a dilemma. Either we already believe the messages art works convey or we do not. If we do, art does not teach us anything. If we do not, then art does not afford knowledge since nothing ties make-believe to the truth about the actual world.

Several replies are available to the cognitivist. One is that the challenge applies only to fictions, but not all art works are fictions. Another argues

that the kind of knowledge art affords is non-propositional – practical know-how, phenomenal knowledge, or access to ways of understanding the world that cannot be expressed in propositional terms (Wilson 1983; Nussbaum 1990; Graham 2000: 44–64). A third proposes that, whether or not art works afford knowledge, they cultivate cognitive virtues and thereby have cognitive value (Kieran 2004: 138–47; Lopes 2005: ch. 4). The most direct strategy is to show that art can indeed afford propositional knowledge (Kieran 1996, 2004: ch. 3; Gaut 2003: 442–4, forthcoming: ch. 7).

The Warrant Challenge: even if art affords significant true belief, it does not warrant belief, and knowledge requires warrant. Perhaps we can and do acquire true beliefs from art. By reading Conan Doyle’s stories about Sherlock Holmes, I may come to believe all sorts of truths about London – that Baker Street is near Great Portland Street, for example. Nonetheless, I may also acquire false beliefs, for example that there was a house at 221b Baker Street. The trouble is that there is no way of telling *from a fiction* which beliefs I glean from it are true and which are false. If I want to know whether Baker Street is near Great Portland Street, I must look outside the fiction – say, at a map. If I want to find out whether there was a house at 221b Baker Street, I should consult the relevant historical sources (Stolnitz 1992: 196). This is no surprise: whatever the purposes of art works are, truth telling is not one of them (Lamarque and Olsen 1994). So art works do not have the right kind of resources to warrant (or justify) a belief.

A promising line of response to this challenge starts with the premise that in many cases the ultimate test of knowledge is experience. My map of London might be incorrect, but I trust it because I have evidence that it was made by someone who checked the locations of Baker Street and Great Portland Street. The same goes for fictions. Zola and Dickens wrote psychological realist novels, were social reformers, and sought to expose and campaign against social injustice partly through their novels. So I have reason to trust the characterization of French miners in *Germinal* or the factories of the English Industrial Revolution in *Hard Times* (Gaut 2003).

The Uniqueness Challenge: even if art works warrant important true beliefs, they do not convey knowledge in any distinctive manner (Stolnitz 1992). Areas of inquiry such as philosophy or science are characterized by their objects of study and the methods they prescribe for learning about those objects. To learn about the physical world, perform experiments, analyze the data, and consider it in relation to theoretical assumptions about physical entities and to preferred physical theories. To deepen philosophical understanding, attend to what makes a question a philosophical one, obey empirical side-constraints, outline the putative justificatory relations

between claims, look for suppressed premises, seek reflective equilibrium between intuitions and theoretical models, or search for inferences to the best explanation. By contrast, art delimits no distinctive area of enquiry and no distinctive methods of inquiry.

Cognitivists might dispute this clean characterization of distinctive areas and methods of enquiry. They might also claim that there is an object and method of inquiry particular to art – namely art itself. Many works employ distinctively artistic methods to reflect on the nature, methods, and materials of art itself. A more direct response denies that the uniqueness challenge needs to be met. Perhaps art has no distinctive object of inquiry but art works deploy distinctively artistic methods in getting us to see a whole range of truths or crystallize our understanding in many different areas. *To Kill a Mocking Bird* conveys what is wrong with racism and so might a philosophy article, *Enduring Love* deepens our sense of the evolutionary and cultural complexities of love just as much as biological science, Robert Graves's *I Claudius* brings to life the trials and tribulations of Rome's transition from Republic to Empire as much as a decent history book. What is distinctive of art is not the object but the methods of inquiry. For example, artistic devices get us to care about characters or see things in a new light. And maybe these methods are not wholly unique to art, though art works make particularly good use of them to promote understanding (Kieran 1996, 2004; Gaut 2003, forthcoming).

The Relevance Challenge: even if the Uniqueness Challenge can be addressed, a work's affording knowledge is no part of its artistic value. After all, we highly value works which make incompatible claims. Sartre's *Road to Freedom* trilogy embodies a conception of radical human freedom diametrically opposed to that manifest in Kafka's *Trial*, but we value both authors' works highly. It follows that their truth is irrelevant to their value as art (Lamarque and Olsen 1994; Lamarque 2006). Consider a novel like David Peace's *GB84*, which dramatizes the bloody, violent miners' strike that took place in Thatcher's Britain in 1984 and that was to decide the fate of the country for a decade or more. Key figures in the strike are faithfully represented, as is its trajectory, but they interact with various fictional ones. Now, the novel might have contained a lot more historical information than it does. We would then learn more about the strike. But this additional learning might not add to the novel's value as literature. If learning about the miners' strike were relevant to the value of the novel as art then it should follow that the more I learn the greater the novel. The point is not that we cannot learn from art works; it is rather that the learning is irrelevant to artistic value.

The cognitivist must reply by stating when the cognitive content of a work is relevant to its artistic value. Adding facts to *GB84* is irrelevant to its value as a novel when the new facts are in some sense extraneous to what it is doing artistically. Yet some historical facts are relevant because they capture the darkest days of Thatcherism: the sense of paranoia endemic on all sides, the idealistic incompetence of the miners' leaders, and the Orwellian practices of a state set on obliterating the union. One way forward explores how artistic devices fold the cognitive content of a work into our experience of it as art (Beardsmore 1973; Kieran 1996, 2004; Gaut 2003, forthcoming). Thus works engage our imagination; so perhaps when facts are imagined, they are relevant to artistic value. Likewise, works guide our affective responses; so perhaps facts are relevant when they engage affective responses (Gaut 1998, forthcoming). Of course, showing a link to imagination or affect is not enough to answer the Relevance Challenge. The cognitivist must show that imagination or affect are engaged in *artistically* relevant ways. She must say when imaginative or affective responses are internal to the artistic value of a work.

Cognitivists must address each of these four challenges, either by meeting them or by showing why they are misplaced. The papers in part I attempt to develop the resources available to cognitivists.

Dustin Stokes's "Art and Modal Knowledge" takes on the claim that art cannot provide us with non-trivial propositional knowledge. He argues that our experiences of art works can give rise to reliably formed beliefs about modal truths (truths about possibilities). The argument requires a substantial discussion of different types of modality and the prospects for modal knowledge *per se*. The upshot of this discussion is that coherent and consistent imaginings non-accidentally track modal truths. When we form beliefs on the basis of such imaginings, they are justified. It does not follow that fictions reliably track modal truth, for fictions can represent metaphysically impossible states of affairs. The claim is a weaker one. Fictions suggest candidate possibilities for our consideration. By stepping back from the fiction and reflecting on its consistency and coherence, we can find out if what is fictional is also possible. The argument is a direct response to the Triviality Challenge, for modal knowledge is anything but trivial – we use it in scientific, philosophical, and ordinary reasoning. There is good reason to think that fiction, because it makes full use of imagination, is especially good at prompting modal knowledge.

Stacie Friend's "Narrating the Truth (More or Less)" focuses on how works can enable us to learn about history in ways that are tied to their artistic value. Through a detailed consideration of Gore Vidal's *Lincoln*, Friend disputes non-cognitivist claims that the standard aim of fiction

conflicts with acquiring factual knowledge, that acquiring factual knowledge is a trivial achievement, and that information transmission is irrelevant to the value of literary works. Friend starts by drawing on recent work in cognitive psychology to outline a two-stage model of learning from a text. The first stage is that of comprehension by constructing a situation model of the text's content. Here a reader's comprehension is indicated by their making inferences to integrate prior knowledge with incoming information. At the second stage, readers integrate new information in the situation model with long-term belief structures (which enables access and application across contexts). Here integration and organization are crucial. Readers who are more active at the first stage are better at the second. Friend shows that *Lincoln* possesses many features which depend on narrative devices and which prompt the kind of inferences that result in the integration of new information with other beliefs in long-term memory. Hence an analysis of the narrative devices Vidal employs, given recent work in cognitive psychology, shows how the resources of artistic mediation enhance our ability to learn and retain factual information.

In "Fiction and Psychological Insight," Kathleen Stock argues, against philosophers as diverse as Stolnitz and Carroll, that some psychological depictions in fiction reveal themselves as possibilities of human experience. Readers of these fictions may thus acquire new psychological knowledge, independent of prior or subsequent evidence. The first stage in the argument details how fictions can render the actions of characters intelligible. There is a weak sense of intelligibility that amounts to merely showing how a character's mental state or action fits a background of ends. Stock argues that something stronger is possible: fictions can also make intelligible a character's background of ends. To do this, they need only show how an end might count as desirable. Stock recognizes that one might deny that fictions are sources of psychological knowledge because we cannot generalize from the intelligibility of fictional characters to psychological principles that fit real people. However, she argues that this objection mistakenly assumes that psychological knowledge is acquired from fiction inductively – that we generalize from make-believe to reality. On the contrary, just seeing the actions of fictional characters as intelligible constitutes psychological knowledge.

Derek Matravers, in "Pictures, Knowledge and Power," takes a critical look at a cognitivist assumption that underlies the practice of many art historians. As T. J. Clark articulates the assumption, paintings provide historical evidence that reliably informs us about the ideology of the paintings' viewers. Clark adds that accessing the evidence requires a semiological

framework only available to the specialist historian. Matravers argues that Clark's assumption about knowledge of ideology can be preserved while dropping the need to apply a semiological framework. Through a detailed philosophical reconstruction of Clark's writings on Manet's *Olympia*, Matravers argues that we learn from the painting by applying visual concepts to what is visually presented. Furthermore, some concepts which we use to structure our perceptions apply only to paintings. Thus we do not 'read' *Olympia* as a nude, but rather the idea of 'the nude' is made visible to us by painting – and only by painting. *Olympia* is therefore a distinctively pictorial source of knowledge about ideology. But not every ideological concept can be visually presented by a painting. Matravers is skeptical of Clark's claim that paintings provide evidence of ideologies of 'modernity' and 'class.' These concepts do not configure our visual experiences of paintings.

Peter Goldie's paper, "Charley's World: Narratives of Aesthetic Experience," argues that direct acquaintance with an art work can lead both to appreciating the work as art and to insight into the world. Goldie focuses on an episode in Somerset Maugham's *Christmas Holiday* which illustrates how we can 'come to see' aesthetic properties of a work with the help of a suitably informed critic. The episode suggests an account of how an art work's aesthetic properties and value can be accessed through perceptual experience, and Goldie extends the account to explain appreciation through imagined experiences. The reader of *Christmas Holiday* can imagine projecting himself into Charley's situation, and thus experiencing a work that Charley is described as seeing. Imaginings like this can change our understanding and also our aesthetic dispositions. Goldie's view challenges the idea that first-hand experience of an art work is required for aesthetic appreciation, but it accommodates the weaker idea that appreciation requires some connection to experience. It is just that the connection is sometimes less direct than is commonly supposed.

Keith Lehrer's paper, "Knowing Content in the Visual Arts," concerns how we know the content of a work of visual art. Lehrer presents several paradoxes, such as how a work's content can both be known to an observer and recognized repeatedly if its content is ultimately ineffable. Dissolving the paradoxes leads to the view that to know what a work of visual art is like is to see it as exemplarizing sensory experience. Exemplarization is related to Goodman's notion of exemplification, but Lehrer contrasts his account with Goodman's semantic theory of representation. He also extends his account to explain knowledge of the emotional content of art works and to explain how knowledge of what a visual work of art is like figures in discursive, propositional knowledge about the work of art. Lehrer closes



with the suggestion that the role of experience in concept formation sheds light on Arnold Isenberg's (1949) account of critical communication as perception – a theme of several papers in part II of the collection.

## KNOWING ABOUT ART

Whatever the prospects for gaining knowledge through art of such matters as human psychology, the good life, or counterfactual possibility, one might also wonder about the prospects for knowing about art works themselves. What can we know about art? How do we know it?

Setting aside skepticism about the possibility of knowing anything at all, we obviously know a lot about art works. I know that *Mona Lisa* resides in Paris, that she is painted in oil on poplar panel, and that she is somewhat disfigured by craquelure. Moreover, I know these things in just the way I know that it snowed on Grouse Mountain today, that glycol lowers the freezing point of water, and that Wayne Gretsky is a fine stick-handler. In all of these cases, I have a belief, the belief is true, and it is warranted by evidence. It is important to remember that warrant can flow from different sources. One important source is the senses: I have seen *Mona Lisa*'s craquelure and Gretsky's stick-handling. Another is the testimony of others: I cannot tell just by looking that the *Mona Lisa* is painted on poplar, but my belief is warranted because reliable sources assure me that it is (just as they warrant my belief that glycol freezes at a lower temperature than water). To explain many things I know about the *Mona Lisa*, I can get my epistemology off-the-rack. The same standards apply to what I know about the *Mona Lisa*'s poplar panel as apply to what I know about hockey and chemistry.

Here is something else I know about *Mona Lisa* that differs in kind from the cases mentioned above: I know that the painting depicts a woman. Likewise, I know that Somerset Maugham's *Christmas Holiday* tells a story about how Charley is changed by getting to know Lydia and a painting by Chardin. In one case my knowledge comes from perception, whereas it comes from language in the other case; and that is an important difference (Lamarque and Olsen 1994; Lopes 2005). Even so, the cases belong to a kind: they are knowledge of the meaning of a work – they are interpretations. We also know the meaning of non-artistic representations – ordinary conversations, for example. However, most philosophers agree that, when it comes to art works, interpretation should take into account such matters as the work's genre, its art-historical context, and its value on different possible interpretations. Only a specially tailored epistemology explains

what goes into knowing the meaning of an art work, and a great deal of effort has gone into constructing theories of pictorial and narrative interpretation (e.g. Iseminger 1992; Lopes 1996; Hopkins 1998; Stecker 2003).

The essays in part II concern a third kind of knowledge about art: critical judgment ('judgment' for short). This refers not only to the judgments of professional critics. As Robertson Davies notes,

it is particularly displeasing to hear professional critics use the term 'layman' to describe people who are amateurs and patrons of those arts with which they are themselves professionally concerned. The fact that the critic gets money for knowing something, and giving public expression to his opinion, does not entitle him to consider the amateur, who may be as well informed and sensitive as himself, an outsider (1990).

Indeed, judgment belongs to anyone who pays attention to or argues about art. It is one product of looking at, listening to, or reading works of art; and it is the currency we use to exchange opinions about art – it is the currency of critical reasoning (which is, again, not a monopoly held by professionals).

That hardly distinguishes judgment from other knowledge about art, such as interpretive knowledge. We should add that only judgments attribute aesthetic properties. Frank Sibley famously listed some paradigms: "unified, balanced, integrated, lifeless, serene, sombre, dynamic, powerful, vivid, delicate, moving, trite, sentimental, tragic" (2001*b*: 1). For Sibley, aesthetic properties are perceptual, they supervene on non-aesthetic properties, and there are no rules to pick them out – taste is needed. Furthermore, Sibley's list divides between formal properties (like 'unified') and emotive ones (like 'moving'), and there is some dispute about whether contextual properties (like 'original,' 'influential,' and 'passé') or cognitive ones (like 'profound,' 'insightful,' and 'false') should be included. Philosophers disagree about Sibley's conception of aesthetic properties and the wisdom of extending his list of paradigm aesthetic properties to include contextual and cognitive ones (e.g. Walton 1970; Zangwill 2001).

They also disagree about whether judgments always attribute *aesthetic value properties*. An extreme position is that judgments only attribute descriptively thin value properties. Thus Kant (1793/2000) took 'judgments of taste' to attribute only beauty or ugliness. A less extreme position takes judgments to attribute value properties which vary in descriptive thickness. On this view, all the properties on Sibley's list, extended or not, are merits or demerits when attributed in judgments. To judge a painting delicate is to attribute to it a merit or a flaw. The most moderate position allows some judgments to be evaluative and some to be non-evaluative. 'Delicacy'

is evaluative in some judgments and value-neutral in others. (Perhaps the only essentially evaluative critical properties are descriptively thin ones like ‘beauty.’)

None of these disagreements are epistemic; but if some beliefs are judgments which figure as elements in critical reasoning, a cluster of interconnected epistemic issues arises. It is a datum for many philosophers (following Isenberg 1949) that critical reasoning is somehow perceptual. So one issue is the relationship between judgment and perception. Another datum is that critical reasoning involves norms, and so a second issue is whether the norms figure in critical reasoning as principles. A third issue is whether it is right to think of judgment as an element in reasoning in the first place.

Judgments are elements in reasoning only if they are genuine. A genuine judgment tracks reality; it is compelled by evidence. Given suitable evidence, it leaves the judge no room for discretion. A handy model is Crispin Wright’s account of genuine assertions, which are:

associated with conditions of such a kind that one who is sincerely unwilling to assent to such a statement when, by ordinary criteria, those conditions obtain, can make himself intelligible to us only by betraying a misunderstanding or some sort of misapprehension, or by professing some sort of skeptical attitude (Wright 1980: 463; see also Pettit 1983: 20–3).

So if a work is genuinely judged delicate then your dissent is unintelligible if you insist that you understand the work, that you know what delicacy is, and that you are not in the grip of some skeptical hypothesis (you are not, for instance, a brain in a vat). The intelligibility of your dissent from a genuine judgment leaves room for misunderstanding. It even leaves room for skepticism. It does not leave room for discretion on your part.

One might think that if there is ever room for discretion, it is to be found in criticism. Beauty, we say, is in the eye of the beholder. We mean her heart, of course. Or rather, we mean that beauty depends on the beholder’s response. Part of the point of going to an art gallery or a concert with friends is that each member of the company responds differently. Some of the most useful criticism is highly personal and reveals as much about the critic as it reveals about the work. If this is right and art critical judgments depend upon responses that are discretionary, then judgments are not genuine. No wonder there is no point in disputing matters of taste.

At the same time, however, we *do* dispute meaningfully in matters of taste in art. Art would not be even half of what it is for us were it to put us

beyond disagreement. It is no injustice to the taste of espresso to deny its power to spark reasoned debate. We are quite happy for some to like and others to dislike espresso, and recognizing that others' preferences are not my preferences in no way undermines my opting for espresso every time. Here debate is pointless. By contrast, it is an injustice to Manet's *Olympia* to deny its power to spark reasoned debate. In saying that *Olympia* is a good work of art I make a claim upon the judgment of others – namely, to agree with me – and I incur an obligation to give others my reasons. I also recognize that I might be wrong in my judgment. I find Cy Twombly's oversized diminutives pathetically indulgent, but my assurance depends on my seeing that I might be wrong. It depends, in particular, on seeing that I might be missing something that someone more expert can point out to me and that will lead me to retract my judgment. As a matter of fact, we do revise our judgments of art works – what we once thought subtle, elegant, or moving is now revealed to be leaden, gauche, and stilted.

So then, are judgments genuine? We are pulled in opposite directions, and we are right to seek a compromise. Tradition offers one (e.g. Hume 1757/1987; Kant 1793/2000). Some properties are response-dependent – for example, colors, if they are dispositions to cause certain experiences. Likewise the properties attributed in judgments, for they depend on aesthetic responses. Nevertheless, if responses are governed by norms, then there is a point to disputing attributions of response-dependent properties. According to tradition, the norm is the response of an unbiased judge. So judgments are both response-dependent and genuine, given a refined account of genuine judgment: if a work is genuinely judged delicate then your dissent is unintelligible if you insist that you understand the work, that you understand delicacy, that you are not in the grip of some skeptical hypothesis, and that you admit no bias in your response to the work.

Jesse Prinz, in “Really Bad Taste,” rejects tradition's compromise, arguing that judgments are thoroughly biased and moreover that bias makes a positive contribution to criticism. He therefore proposes a different compromise, which he calls pluralistic sentimentalism. That is, there are many norms governing aesthetic responses (that is the pluralism) and aesthetic responses are emotions (that is the sentimentalism). Each norm represents a bias when viewed from an external perspective but also sets a standard for those who uphold the norm. This suggests another refinement to genuine judgment. If a work is genuinely judged delicate then your dissent is unintelligible if you insist that you understand the work, that you understand delicacy, that you are not in the grip of some skeptical hypothesis, and that you uphold the norm on which the work is judged delicate. Judgment is genuine although biased and response-dependent. It follows that judgments

are warranted by a special kind of knowledge – knowledge of what causes appreciation in people who uphold the relevant norms. Mistakes here trigger errors in judgment.

In “Solving the Problem of Aesthetic Testimony,” Aaron Meskin also addresses the genuineness of judgment, and connects that issue to the relationship between judgment and perception.

Skeptics aside, most agree that testimony warrants empirical belief. The testimony of scientific experts warrants my belief that whales are mammals and the testimony of my son warrants my belief that his dog was fed today. However, many claim that testimony cannot warrant judgment. According to Richard Wollheim’s ‘acquaintance principle,’ judgments are warranted only by first-hand, perceptual experience of works (Wollheim 1980: 233). Some take this asymmetry to show that judgment is not genuine – to vindicate, what Meskin calls ‘anti-realism.’ The idea is that anti-realism explains the asymmetry by analyzing judgment as requiring a response (e.g. an emotion) that is available only upon first-hand acquaintance and not via testimony. Meskin responds that some anti-realist theories, including Mackie-style error theory and Ayer-style expressivism, actually obliterate and thus cannot explain the asymmetry. He also argues that Alan Gibbard’s (1990) ‘norm-expressivism,’ which is kin to Prinz’s pluralistic sentimentalism, also fails to explain the asymmetry. Judgment, once subject to norms, takes warrant from testimony. It is norms that allow us to defer to others.

To solve the puzzle of aesthetic testimony, Meskin conjoins three claims. Judgment is highly unreliable except in certain circumstances. And we know this. Finally, we more often know when we are in such circumstances than when others are. As a result, we trust ourselves, as critics, more readily than we trust others.

If Meskin is right, Wollheim’s acquaintance principle goes too far in locating judgment’s warrant in first-hand experience alone. Still, perceptual experience does seem to play some special role in judgment. In his classic 1949 essay on “Critical Communication,” Arnold Isenberg voiced a view that has since been widely adopted. Isenberg proposed that criticism functions to guide perception, to lead a work’s audience to see it in a certain way. Criticism fails if it persuades you, for example, that Manet’s *Olympia* is aggressive and yet you cannot see it as aggressive.

The insight that criticism is a guide to perception seems to stand in some tension with the insight that criticism is a rational activity. In “Critical Reasoning and Critical Perception,” Robert Hopkins aims to reconcile the insights. He begins by pinpointing the incompatibility between perception and reasoning. Perception is receptive to and puts us in contact with the world. Thus it is entirely self-supporting. Seeing *Olympia*’s aggression

is enough to know that the painting is aggressive. At the same time, in reasoning, premises are in principle sufficient to adopt the conclusion. Nothing more is needed to establish 'q' than 'if p then q' plus 'p.' So perception leaves no place for reasoning and reasoning leaves no place for the receptivity of perception.

These features of perception and reasoning indicate what reconciliation requires. It must be that some reasons are ineffective without the receptivity of perception and some perceptions are composed of reasons as elements. Hopkins proposes that perception is sometimes a process composed of subsidiary perceptions structured as reasons. Critical reasoning, in particular, is a perceptual process made up of subsidiary perceptions structured like reasons.

James Shelley, in "Critical Compatibilism," also takes up the question of what it is for a judgment to serve as a reason in criticism. Isenberg (1949) formulated a view that has since come to be called 'particularism' (and that has spread to other areas of philosophy, notably ethics). According to particularism, in criticism there is no appeal to general principles. Reasoning like '*Olympia* is good because it is aggressive' does not imply a norm linking aggressiveness to goodness. Particularism is usually set against generalism. Sibley, a generalist, held that there are general reasons in criticism, since reasons in criticism "have a consistency about them" (2001c: 104).

As we have seen, Isenberg views criticism as guiding perception and he seems to have thought that view brings particularism along with it. In fact, the perceptual model of criticism is consistent with both particularism and generalism. It is consistent with generalism provided that the general reasons that figure in criticism are perceptual.

Shelley argues that, appearances aside, particularism as defined by Isenberg and generalism as defined by Sibley are compatible. In criticism, no appeal is made to general *principles* but there are general *reasons*. This implies only that general reasons are not general principles – that a reason can "have a consistency about it" without being a principle. A principle has a consistency about it because it applies in all relevantly similar cases. A reason need not have the same kind of consistency about it. Instead, it need only be open to refinement in response to what Shelley calls a consistency challenge. A consistency challenge is, Shelley suggests, part of the logic of criticism.

The epistemology of judgment cannot be taken 'off the rack.' Judgments are thought to be response-dependent in a way that diminishes the quality of testimonial warrant for judgment and even challenges the assumption that they are elements in critical reasoning. If they are elements in critical reasoning, then they may not apply consistently across cases, as do other

kinds of reasons. Finally, critical reasoning might implicate perception in a way that provokes a new look at deep assumptions about perception and reasoning.

Art engages us at every level – emotionally, to be sure, but also as moral agents and as members of the inquiring species. This fact is best viewed as an opportunity for research. Recognizing that art is a conduit to knowledge about ourselves and our world is crucial to understanding art and also to understanding knowledge. Recognizing that critical judgment has special features makes it a good case study in the epistemology of value (which also includes moral epistemology). The biggest obstacles to accepting the epistemic aspirations of art is a narrow view of art and a narrow view of knowledge (both were obstacles for Plato). Put another way, by knowing more about knowing art, we have a chance to deepen our theories of art and knowledge.