

fail to include enough material to provide a good overview. Non-specialists may need to supplement it with another, single-author text, as there isn't enough explanatory material included for it to stand alone. With these caveats, I recommend this book heartily.

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*Art and Knowledge.*

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Many of us believe that a work of art has taught us something profound about the world. As intuitively strong as this belief can be, it is notoriously hard to justify. How can we learn about the world by attending to, say, a novel about persons who never existed? Resolving such worries is the aim of James Young's *Art and Knowledge*. Young presents a bold case for 'aesthetic cognitivism', the idea that 'every item properly classified as a work of art can contribute to human knowledge' (1). According to Young, 'artworks can provide an understanding of aspects of reality. If so, like science and history, art must represent the aspects of the world into which it provides insight' (23). In light of this, he has two goals: to outline how artworks represent the world, and to show that such representation contributes to knowledge.

Towards the first goal, Young develops the notion of *illustrative representation*. Unlike scientific theories, which represent in virtue of semantic conventions, 'illustrations represent because an experience of the illustration has something in common with experience of the object represented' (26). In this manner, artworks can represent not only particular objects, but also types; this allows Young to class fictional works as representational. Also pivotal is his claim that there is *indirect* illustrative representation. This is crucial because important forms of illustration in literature (descriptive illustration) and music (the representation of emotion) seem to be largely indirect, depending on the association of descriptions with character types (50) and the association of forms of motion with emotional states, respectively (58). Young's theory of illustration is able to accommodate representation by many different art forms, and different sorts of representation within art forms.

Having established that the arts represent, Young argues that such representations give us knowledge. Unlike science, which provides theories about the world, the arts provide *perspectives*: ways of thinking or feeling about something. A perspective is not a set of propositions, but rather the *practice* of seeing something in a certain manner. As such, a perspective cannot be true, but it can be *right*, when it 'aids people who adopt it in the acquisition of knowledge' (69). Artworks only give us knowledge, of course, if the perspective they provide is a right one; just as scientific theories only give us knowledge if they are confirmed by evidence, so 'the perspectives provided by the arts are in need of justification' (67). But how does art provide justification for the rightness of the perspectives it offers? According to Young, artworks 'can provide illustrative demonstrations of the rightness of a perspective. That is, artworks can put audiences in a position to recognise the rightness of a perspective' (69). This is in contrast to scientific theories, which must be rationally demonstrated by (inductive) argument from empirical evidence.

So far we know that artworks can deliver knowledge, but must *all* artworks? Young argues that 'art ought to be defined in such a way that only items with cognitive value count as artworks' (1). Given that Young is a relativist about art, holding that what counts as art is what an artworld decides, this is a trivial claim. However, he also offers practical reasons why all artworlds should adopt a definition of art in terms of cognitive value. 'If everyone acted in his best interests', he says, 'only one artworld would exist and all artworks would have cognitive value' (21).

The book's final two chapters explore ramifications of this reconceptualization of art. First Young applies his conception of art to the issue of evaluating artworks. He admits that 'even the cognitive value of artworks is ... partly relative to audiences' because people may find the knowledge delivered by a work to be more or less valuable according to their different interests (120). Nonetheless, because we have 'objective interests', of which we may be unaware, works that provide knowledge serving these have a high value for us, however low we estimate their aesthetic worth. Thus the value of artworks is not radically relative: some judgements of artistic value can be wrong (117).

Young proceeds to extract 'a few generally applicable criteria of aesthetic value', including: 'works of art with a high degree of aesthetic value can contribute importantly to the knowledge of an audience', 'good artworks will not be attempts to make statements', and 'a work has high aesthetic value only if it investigates an important subject'. In the book's final chapter, Young wields these principles to argue that 'something has gone dreadfully wrong in modern art' (134). His target is 'avant-garde' art, which strives to produce something 'new and unlike what has previously been produced' (137). In seeking this, it either represents trivial or inappropriate subjects or else abandons illustration altogether for bald and often incoherent assertion. If devotees of the avant-garde are not uncomfortable by this point, they will be

after reading the book's final section, a discussion of whether it is permissible to destroy avant-garde artworks.

Yet Young can hardly be accused of philistinism. His knowledge of art, and his passion for it, is everywhere evident. He genuinely seems to want to help restore dignity, importance and purpose to artists. Perhaps to that end, he writes in a clear prose that is accessible to non-philosophers and yet never wants for rigour or depth. His book, I suspect, is intended to appeal not only to philosophers, but to the denizens of the artwork as well (after all, it is principally they who must carry out the revolution for which he is agitating). In this regard I think *Art and Knowledge* succeeds admirably.

And yet, my worries linger. According to Young, *Pride and Prejudice* justifies the rightness of the perspective 'first impressions are a poor guide to character' because we directly recognise that statements following from the perspective are true. But true where? In the artwork? Assuredly not, since the perspective of any artwork would be automatically demonstrated. True everywhere, in virtue of some necessary connection between concepts? Surely not; this is clearly an empirical matter. In our experience, perhaps? Occasionally Young seems to endorse this response (88). Perhaps, if I reflected, I would realize that statements that follow from the perspective are true in my experience. Does this give me justification for the perspective? It seems the most I can say is that the perspective rings true *to me*. Does it lead to truth in any contexts beyond the narrow confines of my daily life? Maybe, but the artwork gives me no basis for thinking so.

This criticism, based upon one example, by no means does justice to the subtlety or scope of Young's discussion of illustrative demonstration. Nonetheless, on the whole it does seem that Young's heavy reliance on this non-rational capacity to simply 'recognise' truths undermines his position. I would not speak for others, but what I can grasp without the aid of rational argument or any evidence beyond my personal experience is pretty limited and uninteresting. If aesthetic cognitivism must come to this, perhaps the game is not worth the candle.

This recalcitrance notwithstanding, *Art and Knowledge* is a wonderful read: a persuasive, erudite, and entertaining attempt to confront a problem that is too often brushed aside with empty mottos and wishful thinking. Perhaps you too have felt this problem in your bones, and wonder if it can be resolved. Read this excellent book, and find out.

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