

Intellectual Creativity, the Arts, and the University

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Abstract. As virtues of intellectual character are commonly discussed, they aim at *propositional* intellectual goods. But some creative works – especially those in music and the visual arts – are not primarily intended to gain, keep, or share propositional goods such as truth, knowledge, and understanding. They aim at something else. Thus, to conceive of intellectual creativity in a way that accords with standard discussions of intellectual virtue is to exclude paradigmatic works of the creative intellect. There is a kind of puzzle here: it appears that theorists cannot maintain both the commonly-discussed notion of intellectual virtue and the claim that works such as Beethoven's Ninth or Monet's Water Lilies are central cases of intellectually virtuous creativity. We provide a two-part solution to the puzzle. First, we suggest that some works of music and visual art can convey propositional goods. Second, we appeal to the notion of *acquaintance* as an epistemic good that is conveyed through creative works in a way not conveyed in standard prose works. In this respect, intellectual creativity is the virtue that breaks the propositional mold of much contemporary virtue epistemology. This insight, we argue, helps to clarify the arts' intellectual contribution to university life.

Keywords: intellectual virtues, creativity, acquaintance, education, university.

Introduction

In recent decades, virtue epistemologists have made major contributions toward the collective aim of understanding human cognition. They have developed competing and complementary accounts of such phenomena as intellectual virtue, intellectual vice, intellectual faculties, and intellectual skills. They have put these accounts to work in analyses of knowledge and justified belief. And, they have explored individual intellectual virtues, such as curiosity, intellectual autonomy, intellectual humility, open-mindedness, intellectual courage, intellectual perseverance, and intellectual creativity. The last of these is the focus of the present paper.

At a first approximation, intellectual creativity is a disposition to gain, keep, or share truth, knowledge, or understanding in ways that are new and epistemically valuable. After examining extant attempts to precisify this account, we spend the bulk of the paper addressing a puzzle. As virtues of intellectual character are commonly discussed, they aim at *propositional* intellectual goods. However, some exemplary creative works – especially those in music and the visual arts – are not primarily intended to gain, keep, or share propositional goods such as truth, knowledge, and understanding. They aim at something else (e.g., depicting a scene, producing certain affective states, expressing abstract concepts, etc.). Thus, to conceive of intellectual creativity in a way that accords with standard discussions of intellectual virtue is to exclude paradigmatic works of the creative intellect. This in turn obscures the intellectual contribution that music and the visual arts make to a university culture devoted to the pursuit of cognitive goods. If a university is essentially an institution devoted to the pursuit of propositional knowledge, and if music and the arts do not issue in such knowledge, it becomes unclear how music and the arts contribute to a university's intellectual culture.

It appears that something has to go here: we cannot maintain both the commonly-discussed notion of intellectual virtue and the claim that works such as Beethoven's Ninth or Monet's Water Lilies are central cases

of intellectually virtuous creativity. We suggest a two-part solution to the puzzle. First, we suggest that some works of music and visual art can convey propositional goods. Second, we appeal to the notion of *acquaintance* as an epistemic good. This notion, already acknowledged by some virtue epistemologists, draws attention to intellectual goods that are not propositional in nature. With the cognitive realm thus broadened, the works of painters, sculptors, and musicians can take their rightful place within it – and within the university – as expressions of intellectually virtuous creativity.

1. Creativity as an Intellectual Virtue

In theorizing about a phenomenon, it can help to begin with clear cases. To that end, consider the following exemplars of intellectual creativity:

- In the 1543, Nicolaus Copernicus published his *On the Revolutions of the Heavenly Spheres*, a work proposing a radical replacement for the Aristotelian-Ptolemaic model of the universe. Copernicus's sun-centered system would eventually replace the old geocentrism, literally turning our understanding of the universe inside out (Gribbin 2002, ch. 1; McGrew 2009, 8).
- A generation after Copernicus, Johannes Kepler developed a model according to which planets orbited in an elliptical pattern. (Previous astronomers, including Copernicans, had believed in circular orbits.) Kepler thereby afforded heliocentrism a predictive accuracy unavailable to the Copernican model (Gribbin 2002, 50ff.; McGrew 2009, 8).
- Modern astronomy reached its pinnacle with Isaac Newton, whose laws of motion and principle of universal gravitation enabled physicists, for the first time, to understand the movements of celestial objects and ordinary earthbound objects according to the same simple set of laws. To formulate these laws, Newton would need a new mathematical instrument of his own invention: the calculus (Gribbin 2002, 180ff.; McGrew 2009, 8).

- In the eighteenth century, Immanuel Kant proposed a reorientation of epistemology that paralleled the reversal occasioned by Copernicus's model. Namely, Kant rejected a model of cognition on which human minds conform to the objects in their environment. Instead, Kant proposed that the objects themselves conform to our minds (Kant 1999).
- In 1848, Elizabeth Cady Stanton drafted a Declaration of Sentiments, a document creatively building upon the United States Declaration of Independence in order to show that women have the same inalienable moral rights as their male counterparts and should therefore have the same legal rights (Flexner 1959, ch. 5).
- Impressionist painters such as Claude Monet and Pierre-August Renoir broke away from their predecessors in both their methods and by what they sought to capture. Painting in open air and other common spaces rather than in studios, and with bold, brightly colored strokes, the Impressionists drew attention to the transient features of light on the objects around them (Gombrich 2011, 519–21).
- Ludwig van Beethoven revolutionized music at the outset of the Romantic period, composing symphonies that were much longer than previous works, and that contained unprecedented thematic density and richness. The innovative last movement of his Ninth Symphony departed from tradition in combining vocal (choral and soloist) elements with instrumental music (Taruskin 2005, 675).

As paradigmatic examples of intellectual creativity, these cases must be included in any acceptable account of the virtue.

1.1. Creativity: The Basic Account

In developing his own account of intellectual creativity, Matthew Kieran begins with what he identifies as the standard view of creativity simpliciter. On this view, creativity is a disposition to create things that are *new* and *valuable*, and to do so with *skill* and *understanding* (Kieran 2019, 167). The newness clause is intended to rule out works that merely repeat the features of past creative products. The value clause is needed to rule out works that lack the relevant good-making features (e.g., structure, fore-

thought, or craftsmanship). The skill and understanding clauses are needed to rule out new and valuable creations that come about by accident.

1.2. Intellectual Creativity

What do we need to move from an account of creativity simpliciter to an account of *intellectual* creativity as a character trait? Roughly, we need a context and set of aims, a relevant capacity, and means of exercising that capacity. With these factors in mind, consider Jason Baehr's account of intellectual creativity:

(C*) An intellectually creative person is skilled or competent, (i) in the context of pursuing or transmitting epistemic goods, at (ii) identifying new or unexpected possibilities and (iii) organizing or rearranging a given set of elements in a way that reflects these possibilities and instantiates one or more values proper to the activity in question (Baehr 2018, 47).

When is such creativity not merely a trait, but a *virtue* of intellectual character? Baehr argues in detail – and we agree – that creativity is virtuous when it meets the other standard requirements for such virtues: right motivations, right emotions or affections, and sound judgments (Baehr 2018). That is, intellectual creativity is virtuous when its agent is motivated at least in part by intellectual goods, has appropriate affective states (e.g., delight) vis-à-vis those goods, and makes reasonable judgments about when and how to engage in creative expression.¹

¹ Important questions arise along each of these dimensions. For a creative act to count as intellectually virtuous, must intellectual goods be the agent's sole or primary motivation? Which affective states are appropriate, and why? And, what principles might guide good judgment about selecting creative projects?

Such questions deserve extended consideration, which is beyond the scope of this paper, devoted as it is to addressing a particular puzzle about creativity (but for helpful discussion, see Baehr 2018). In the absence of extensive discussion, we offer the following brief gestures. Regarding *motivation*, virtuous creativity does not require that intellectual goods be the agent's sole motive. (A starving artist might be exercising virtuous creativity in painting a landscape *both* to convey acquaintance with the scene *and* to put bread on the table). However, a virtuously creative act does require more than a shallow, passing interest in intellectual goods – say, of the sort that is easily

We assume that Baehr's account of intellectual creativity is substantially correct, but suggest the following expansions to his understanding of the trait and the virtue.

First, in clause (i), Baehr focuses on pursuing and transmitting epistemic goods. To this we add the task of *preserving* such goods. Often, this sort of preservation requires creativity. Ancient cultures exhibited intellectual creativity in inventing the techniques and tools required to preserve knowledge in writing – e.g., alphabets, stone tablets, papyrus and parchment scrolls, and so on. The first-century inventors of the codex showed creativity in moving beyond the scroll to the format of the modern book, which allowed them to preserve knowledge in a more portable, durable format. Medieval Irish monks exhibited intellectual creativity not only in their preparation of illuminated manuscripts, but also in their efforts to keep those manuscripts safe from Viking raiders (Cahill 1995, 211ff.). Johannes Guttenberg's printing press with moveable type was a tremendously creative advance beyond the scribal copying system. The advent of digital computing marked a massive advance in the ability to store large amounts of knowledge and information in increasingly smaller spaces. All of the exercises of intellectual creativity involved in the invention of these technologies had the preservation of knowledge among their aims.

To be sure, such acts of knowledge preservation are also often undertaken with the intention to transmit epistemic goods to others. However, this need not be the case – one can exercise creativity in preserving knowledge even if one does not intend to transmit the knowledge further. If this is right, then our suggested broadening of (i) is correct.

overridden by a desire for material gain. One way to capture this is to say that the agent must deeply value the relevant intellectual goods for their own sake. Regarding *affective* states, we are not committed to the claim that delight in a creative work is the only appropriate state. Indeed, disdain for – and even destruction of – a work might be appropriate. Such disdain might even be an appropriate part of the creative process. The determinants of what is appropriate will include whatever the right aesthetic principles are. These, however, are matters beyond the scope of this paper and the authors' expertise. Similar remarks apply to the judgment component. We thank an anonymous referee for helpful discussion of these matters. We have not done justice to the relevant concerns.

Clause (ii) concerns identifying and conceiving of new or unexpected possibilities within the context of acting for the sake of intellectual goods. Clause (iii) concerns organizing or rearranging the possibilities mentioned in (ii), and in thereby instantiating a value appropriate to the given activity. This is where our second suggested expansion of Baehr's account arises. (Alternatively, perhaps we are simply making explicit what is implicit in the account.) In any case, notice that creative works can relate to their predecessors in a large number of ways, some of which are not explicitly identified in (ii) or (iii). Consider the following intellectual acts:

- Making a distinction between two items previously conflated;
- Noticing a logical relation between claims (e.g., entailment) that had not been noticed before;
- Negating a claim heretofore affirmed;
- Forming a synthesis between two views previously thought to be at odds;
- Exploring the merits of a new idea;
- Generating hypotheses;
- Generating methods for testing hypotheses;
- Posing questions (Kieran 2019, 173);
- Rearranging objects or colors in space;
- Rearranging musical notes;
- Building upon previous work (this may itself involve noticing an entailment, negating a claim, forming a synthesis, rearranging objects, etc.).

We take no official view about whether these activities are implicit in Baehr's account, but we do think a complete account of intellectual creativity should include them. Perhaps one way to understand the matter is that such activities are ways in which one might satisfy clauses (ii) and (iii) of Baehr's account.

Third, we suggest that the intellectual goods identified in an account of intellectual creativity should include *knowledge by acquaintance*.²

² One might sensibly wonder whether the account must include *know-how*. We think that it should, and we suggest that this notion is already captured in the skill component of Baehr's account.

While virtue epistemologists often focus on propositional intellectual goods such as knowledge, true belief, and rational belief, they also include a grasp of non-propositional epistemic goods – thus Linda Zagzebski’s broader notion of “cognitive contact with reality” (Zagzebski 1996, 45ff., 167). In a similar vein, Robert Roberts and Jay Wood regard acquaintance (direct, non-propositional awareness of an object) as “not just a justifier in propositional knowledge, but as an epistemic good in its own right for which virtues are often an interesting kind of condition” (Roberts and Wood 2007, 51). In short, though propositional epistemic goods have garnered the lion’s share of attention from virtue epistemologists, goods like acquaintance are sometimes included. This is *prima facie* reason to think that there is room for acquaintance in an account of intellectual creativity among the cognitive aims of creative works. We provide further motivation for this inclusion below. To see how this motivation arises, we must first set out a puzzle.

2. A Puzzle

In many cases, it is easy to see how creativity can be a distinctively intellectual virtue. Recall the cases of Copernicus, Kepler, Newton, Kant, Stanton, the medieval Irish monks, and Guttenberg. In such examples, the goods sought or achieved are propositional. The vast majority of cases discussed in the virtue epistemology literature are of this sort.

But this gives rise to a puzzle. In some disciplines (e.g., music and the visual arts), the main goods produced seem not to be propositional in character. Thus, we can imagine a musician having just played a moving piece of her own composition. When asked, “What does it mean?” she might sensibly reply, “If I could say it, I would not have had to *play* it.” Or we might imagine an artist standing back from a freshly completed painting. When we ask what propositions the work is intended to convey, she might respond with a quizzical look. Cases like these can leave the virtue epistemologist feeling a certain tension. On the one hand, intuitively, these are clear cases of intellectual creativity. We devote concert halls and art exhibits to the display of such creative works. Moreover,

the works clearly involve the intellect. This explains why we call some of them “works of genius,” and why we devote entire university departments to studying them. And yet, these manifestations of intellectual creativity are an odd fit with standard treatments of intellectual virtues, which tend to emphasize propositional epistemic goods, such as true belief, knowledge, rationality, and understanding.

3. Toward a Solution

We propose a two-part solution to the puzzle. First, in some cases, music and visual art *can* convey propositional content, including true belief and propositional knowledge. Second, where they do not, they often provide acquaintance (that is, knowledge by acquaintance) with a wide range of worthy objects. Their capacity to impart epistemic goods, whether propositional or non-propositional, allows such creative works to express intellectual virtue, in addition to the aesthetic values they express. In what remains, we illustrate how our proposed solution applies to a range of different examples.

3.1. Vocal Music

Vocal music – whether with or without instrumental accompaniment – presents itself as a relatively “easy case” in which music can convey epistemic goods. Given that vocal music often involves lyrics – and lyrics are composed of words – lyricists and vocalists are not barred from conveying propositional truths. To suppose otherwise would be to suppose that once an artist’s words are set to music, they lose their capacity to express propositions. But why should that be?

Hymns are an obvious example of lyrics that convey propositions purported to be true and knowable. Consider the following lines from Luther’s “A Mighty Fortress”:

Let goods and kindred go,
This mortal life also:
The body they may kill:

God's truth abideth still;
His kingdom is for ever. (Robinson 1876, 165)

These words convey propositional content about God's triumph over evil – specifically, the proposition that God's kingdom endures in spite of worldly ills.

One might object that Luther's propositions are false and unwarranted, and thus do not convey epistemic goods of the sort that interest virtue epistemologists. But such an inference is hasty and not to the point. It is hasty because Luther's hymn can still convey knowledge of weaker propositions – e.g., that Luther *believed* that God would triumph over evil – even if the propositions Luther embraces are false and unwarranted. The inference misses the point because it does not seek to reject Luther's lyrics as epistemic good-bearers because they are musical lyrics, but rather, on purely epistemic grounds. But then one can simply submit another example (such as John Lennon's secular hymn "Imagine", or U2's "Sunday Bloody Sunday," which describes and laments the Troubles in Northern Ireland) to make the point: song lyrics often express propositions. They thereby provide their hearers with candidates for truth and knowledge. Given that song lyrics sometimes express propositions, to show that such lyrics *never* convey truth or knowledge, one would need to show that all lyrics are false or unwarranted – a heavy dialectical burden to bear.³

It does not matter that the language used by lyricists is often figurative. Usually, people can recognize (or at least assume) the underlying propositions packaged in expressive language and metaphor. When Billy Corgan, frontman of the Smashing Pumpkins, sings "The world is a vampire," he does not mean to convey the proposition that the world is actually a blood-sucking creature of the night (Smashing Pumpkins 1995). He means to convey something along the lines of "The world is filled with people who just want something from me." "Vampire" is a metaphor for

³ We take the cases we discuss to provide strong *prima facie*, common sense evidence for the claim that musical lyrics express propositions, and that such propositions are candidates for truth and knowledge. These considerations are not decisive, but we take common sense to deliver "the view to beat." For a parallel position regarding literature, see Gaut 2006, 116.

their parasitic behavior of profiting from his success while sucking him dry. In general, figurative or expressive language may communicate some claim about the world, the artist's experience of the world, or the artist's emotions. Nor are Corgan and his lyrics outliers here – we could multiply examples in their dozens without even leaving the genre of 1990s era grunge rock.

To be sure, not all cases of vocal music convey propositional content: there are (1) cases of vocal music without lyrics, and (2) cases of vocal music with lyrics in which the words do not mean anything. But neither poses a threat to our claim that vocal music, in general, *can* convey propositional truths, and that those truths can be directly conveyed as propositions or packaged in metaphor.

3.2. Purely Instrumental Music

When considering what sort of epistemic goods can be conveyed by music, pure instrumental music poses a challenge. Because pure instrumental music is not accompanied by words, it seems that whatever epistemic goods it conveys must be non-propositional. However, epistemologists tend to be largely concerned with propositional knowledge – knowledge that can be verbalized in the form of propositions and communicated through language. This is unsurprising, given that language tends to be the medium used in the interpersonal exchange of knowledge and ideas. The late musicologist Charles Seeger referred to this tendency as the “bias of the linguistic point of view,” and he saw it as a limitation to relating the sort of knowledge acquired through musical experience (Seeger 1924, 249). Given that (1) pure instrumental music lacks propositional content, and (2) words cannot adequately represent the musical experience (as emphasized by Seeger), it seems that we must move beyond the traditional “knowing-that” in order to make sense of how pure instrumental music can be an *intellectually* creative activity. Our solution, therefore, is to note that the realm of epistemic goods includes not only propositional epistemic goods but non-propositional epistemic goods as well. Specifically, we think *knowledge by acquaintance* is a non-propositional epistemic good conveyed by pure instrumental music.

3.2.1. Knowledge by acquaintance as a non-propositional epistemic good conveyed by pure instrumental music

Knowledge by acquaintance involves experiencing or encountering an object, whether currently or at some point in one's past.⁴ As Roberts and Wood remark, "When we say that someone is acquainted with something, we do not mean that she is currently in immediate contact with it. We mean that she *has had* such contact and carries within her, via memory, aptitudes of recognition, belief formation, and understanding that are consequent on that earlier contact" (Roberts and Wood 2007, 51). This sort of knowing is classically juxtaposed with mere knowledge by description, in which one knows propositions about an object without ever having experienced that object. The distinction between these two types of knowledge is motivated by the fact that acquaintance provides knowledge that one cannot acquire by description alone. Thus, to say that music can convey knowledge by acquaintance is to say that music can convey knowledge one cannot acquire through description alone. It is to insist that the cognitive realm is not exhausted by the propositional realm. Such insistence is intuitively plausible: I know Edvard Grieg's "In the Hall of the Mountain King" because I have heard it before – not because it was described to me by words strung together to express a proposition.

In *Speech about Music: Charles Seeger's Meta-Musicology* (2019), Malik Sharif makes a similar observation: "[O]ne can have perfect propositional knowledge of the physical and neuro-physiological facts of human auditory perception and its stimuli, but one will nevertheless know something that one has not known before when one actually hears a clarinet being played for the first time" (Sharif 2019, 62). Sharif contends that knowledge by acquaintance of music cannot be reduced to propositional knowledge without losing some aspect of the musical experience. One might conceive of a description in "an ideal state a perfection," but "given that humans are evidently limited and imperfect, this argument does

⁴ By "object," we mean some "chunk" of reality. "Object" need not be an ordinary physical object or state of affairs comprising such objects. It could be an emotion, activity, sensation, etc.

not establish the equivalence of both kinds of knowing a performance in the present world” (Sharif 2019, 64). No real-world description of a performance will ever be complete enough to render the distinction between knowledge by acquaintance and knowledge by description obsolete. The suggestion that we might be able to use our imagination and description to “recreate” a musical performance in our minds also will not do, since “sensual imagination triggered by description still needs a repertoire of sensual acquaintance as a foundation to build on” (Sharif 2019, 64). In other words, a description of “In the Hall of the Mountain King” as “starting soft and growing increasingly louder” can only be “recreated” in my imagination if I am already acquainted with soft and loud music.

Needless to say, something is lost when the experience of hearing music is discussed solely in terms of propositional descriptions. Language, by its very nature, is inadequate for representing the musical experience: “[T]he linear character of speech forces one to discuss various aspects of a piece or a performance separately, for example, harmony, rhythm, melody, instrumentation. However, in musical experience these aspects are not separated but rather present themselves at the same time” (Sharif 2019, 65). However, music itself is not the only object or “chunk” of reality musical experience can acquaint us with. Musical experience can acquaint us with more than just a combination of notes, rhythms, and dynamics. In the next section, we explore possible *objects* of acquaintance that can be accessed through pure instrumental music.

3.2.2. Objects of Acquaintance

Objects of acquaintance are “chunks” of reality rather than propositions about the way the world is. Our task in this section is to consider possible objects of acquaintance that can be accessed through pure instrumental music.⁵ Whether these objects are generated by the musician or simply realized in the performance is not our concern. That is, we make no metaphysical commitments about whether these objects depend on the

⁵ Note that transmitting knowledge by acquaintance is also a common aim of vocal music. For instance, political protest songs often aim to acquaint their hearers with certain moral or political values, or with affections such as outrage at injustice.

performance as generated products, or whether they exist independent of and/or prior to the performance. Moreover, we do not claim these objects are always accessed through pure instrumental music, nor do we claim that pure instrumental music provides the only access to these objects. Our claim is that pure instrumental music *can* provide access to these objects, thus underscoring its value as an intellectually creative activity.

An obvious object of acquaintance musical experience grants us access to is the “chunk” of reality that is music itself. Upon hearing “In the Hall of the Mountain King” for the first time, the object I am acquainted with is the “chunk” of reality that is “In the Hall of the Mountain King.” That is, I am acquainted with the notes, rhythms, melody, harmony, and dynamics that constitute the piece. Musical experience might also acquaint us with emotional “objects,” in which our experience of a performance arouses or is accompanied by certain emotions.

Another possible object of acquaintance worth considering is Seeger’s “musical point of view,” in which one knows “music as music.” It was this sort of knowledge that Seeger thought could not be adequately represented by words. Our consideration of Seeger’s knowing “music as music” as an object of acquaintance is motivated by Sharif’s suggestion that the “musical point of view” is a kind of knowledge by acquaintance (Sharif 2019, 63). According to Seeger, the musical point of view is the musician’s perspective on music (Seeger 1924, 247), and it can only be acquired through “the complex habit, foresight, feeling, etc. of a skillful musician during the act of musical composition, performance, or audition” (Seeger 1925, 16). Although Seeger appears to emphasize the “musical point of view” as unique to the experience of the musician, it seems that a similar notion of knowing “music as music” could be extended to include the experience of the audience. We see no reason why the “musical point of view” could not be acquired through active listening.

What one takes as possible objects of acquaintance may depend in part on one’s metaphysical views. For instance, the idea that pure instrumental music grants us access to the Beautiful may appeal to Platonists, but it will not gain much traction with those holding to other metaphysical views. In *Art and Faith: A Theology of Making* (2020), Ma-

koto Fujimura suggests that the creative act of “Making” acquaints us with the divine nature of our “Maker” (God). According to Fujimura, “our journey to ‘know’ God requires not just ideas and information, but actual making, to translate our ideas into real objects and physical movements” (Fujimura 2020, 6). Although Fujimura seems to have the physical, visual arts in mind, there is no reason why his idea of “Making” cannot be extended to music-making activities. Of course, Fujimura’s theology of Making presupposes that there is an all-loving, all-powerful creative God. The theology of Making will not appeal to those who do not accept a theistic worldview.

The Romantics identified still further objects of acquaintance. These may seem less plausible to contemporary metaphysicians, but we include them in our survey, given their historical importance. In the early 19th Century, Romantic aesthetics contended that pure instrumental music could disclose “higher metaphysical truths.” Schopenhauer attributed music’s ability to get at the “thing in itself” (the will) to its abstract nature: “[Music] never expresses appearances, but solely the inner nature, the of-itself of all manifestation, the will itself” (Dahlhaus 1989a, 73). In his 1810 review of Beethoven’s Fifth Symphony, E. T. A. Hoffman emphasizes music’s disclosive nature by invoking imagery similar to that of Plato’s Cave: “[...] Beethoven’s instrumental music discloses to us the realm of the tragic and the illimitable. Glowing beams pierce the deep night of this realm and we are conscious of gigantic shadows which, alternately increasing and decreasing, close in on us nearer and nearer [...]” (Bonds 2014, 116). For Hoffman, pure instrumental music – what he refers to as “absolute music” – is superior to vocal music because it allows us to access the sublime:

Beethoven’s music sets in motion the mechanisms of dread, fear, horror, pain, and kindles that infinite longing that is the essence of romanticism. Beethoven is a purely romantic composer, and for that very reason a genuinely musical one, and this may explain why he is less successful in his vocal music – which does not admit the indefinite longing but merely presents the affections given in the test as though experienced in the domain of the Infinite – and why his instrumental musical seldom appeals to the masses. (Dahlhaus 1989b, 90).

Although we are by no means committed to the Romantic claim that pure instrumental music can acquaint us with higher metaphysical goods (such as the thing in itself or the sublime), we do not want to discount the possibility that music can disclose “chunks” of reality that would otherwise go beyond our experience.

Thus far, we have argued that works of music can convey cognitive goods, both propositional and non-propositional. We now turn briefly to the visual arts.

3.3. The Visual Arts

Works of visual art – whether in painting, photography, or sculpture – do not typically state propositions. This need not keep such works from *conveying* truth and propositional knowledge, at least given relevant background knowledge. If I know I am looking at two separate portraits of John Stuart Mill, I can know that Mill had a long nose, and that his hair receded with age. If I know that a certain painting of Monet’s depicts the cathedral at Rouen, I can know by viewing the painting that the cathedral has three towers. If I also know a bit about the history of architecture, I can know that the cathedral has Gothic features. Similar cases can be multiplied without end.

Even when they do not directly convey propositional knowledge, some visual works do something that propositions do: namely, represent states of affairs. That is, they represent ways things are or could be. Recall in this connection Wittgenstein’s Tractarian picture theory of the proposition:

4.01 A proposition is a picture of reality. A proposition is a model of reality as we imagine it.

4.021 A proposition is a picture of reality: for if I understand a proposition, I know the situation it represents...

Wittgenstein is clear that such propositions-as-pictures are truth-bearers:

4.022 A proposition *shows* its sense. A proposition *shows* how things stand if it is true. And it *says that* they do so stand.

One need not endorse Wittgenstein's view that propositions *are* pictures to endorse the weaker claim that works of visual art can do the work of representation. Indeed, because representational works are structurally isomorphic to that which they represent, their ability to represent is in one way less mysterious than that of words on a page, which bear no such structural similarity to what they represent.

Representational works accomplish the task of representation through different modes (e.g., painting, photography, sculpture). They represent objects of different kinds (e.g., humans, animals, landscapes, light) and with differing degrees of precision. Consider the differences in representation among the following painters, who worked in relatively close temporal and geographical proximity to each other. In briefest outline:

- The Realist painter Gustave Courbet (1819–77) seeks to depict his subjects precisely as they are, without idealization, without the implements of the studio, without artificial posing, and without artificially bright coloring. As E.H. Gombrich puts it, Courbet “wanted not prettiness but truth” – that is, fully accurate representation (Gombrich 2011, 511). Thus, his “Bonjour, Monsieur Courbet” shows the artist himself in pedestrian colors and plain dress, toting painter’s gear across the countryside as he happens upon a friend.
- Impressionist painters such as Claude Monet (1840–1926) and Pierre-Auguste Renoir (1841–1919) were no less concerned with accuracy than their Realist predecessors were. However, they sought to draw attention to novel subject matter (especially light and its effects on objects) and to previously neglected aspects of their subject matter – e.g., the liveliness of a Parisian open-air dance (Gombrich 2011, 517–21). In order to accomplish these aims, they painted quickly and with broad strokes, so as to capture a scene before it vanished with the changing daylight (*viz.* Monet’s cathedral paintings).
- Though his works were still representational, Vincent Van Gogh (d. 1890) departed from both Realists and Impressionists in show-

ing a relative lack of concern for accuracy in representation. Instead, Van Gogh used vibrant colors and striking forms to express his own inner states. As Gombrich puts it, “Van Gogh wanted his paintings to express what he felt, and if distortion helped him to achieve this aim he would use distortion” (548).

Despite important differences, all of these artists seek to acquaint their viewers with various chunks of reality – ordinary objects, light, emotions, thoughts, imaginings, and so on.⁶ Despite their differences, in all cases the artists seek to provide their audience with acquaintance knowledge of some object or other. They try to show others, say, *what it is like* to view a particular scene, or to feel a given emotion. And – we hope this is uncontroversial – some works of visual art succeed in achieving these ends. This enables the works to convey intellectual goods, thereby satisfying the characteristic aim of intellectual virtue (in this case, the virtue of intellectual creativity).⁷ This feature of the works suffices to secure their role in the intellectual culture of a university devoted to cognitive goods. Without such works and the academic departments that support them, universities would convey fewer cognitive goods than they in fact do.

Conclusion

We have argued that epistemic goods, including true belief, propositional knowledge, and acquaintance can issue forth from creative works in music and the visual arts. Thus, provided the other relevant conditions for intellectual virtue are met, such works can be expressions of intellectually virtuous creativity. In claiming this, we do not hereby claim that intel-

⁶ We construe “reality” here broadly to include both the actual and the fictional, and to include both states of affairs in the external world and states of a human mind. We do not hereby endorse any particular view about the metaphysics of actualia and possibilia.

⁷ Space does not permit a treatment of abstract art. But even here, the artist often seeks to acquaint the viewer with *some* feature of reality. Consider Piet Mondrian’s famous geometrical paintings with primary colors and black, white, and grey shading. Though no object is represented, the artist seeks to acquaint the viewer with important features of reality, namely, the precisely ordered laws of the universe, and with beauty itself (Gombrich 2011, 582).

lectual goods are the only, or even the primary, goods to be gained by encountering such works (cf. Gaut 2006). In most cases, they are not – and we doubt that many theorists would think otherwise. Our modest aim has been to show that intellectual goods are among the goods that creative works of music and visual art convey. This claim suffices to solve the puzzle that gave rise to the present paper – for it helps show that creative works can express a distinctively *intellectual* kind of virtue. A secondary aim of the paper has been to highlight the importance of acquaintance as an epistemic good – both for the purposes of understanding intellectual creativity and for the purpose of understanding creative works themselves. Reflection on creativity suggests that discussions of intellectual virtues can benefit from breaking out of their confined propositional mold – a move that would involve exploring epistemic goods that cannot be expressed in words.

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