

Art Cognitivism: Why a Liberal State Should Fund Art

Jack Alexander Hume

A dissertation submitted in partial fulfilment of the requirements of the degree of
Philosophical Studies MPhil Stud, of University College London (UCL)

September 2021

Statement of Originality

I, Jack Alexander Hume, confirm that the work presented in this thesis is my own.

Where information has been derived from other sources, I confirm that this has been indicated in the work.

Jack Alexander Hume
September, 2021

Abstract

Government funding of the arts has been a common feature of liberal democracies in the post-war era, but it has rarely escaped controversy. Some liberal political philosophers have argued that public arts funding is suspect, because it gives privileged support to some conceptions of the good, namely, those in which art is considered essential (Rawls 1999), or at least certain genres of it, such as Christian art (Brighthouse 1995). Another criticism, common in public debate (but less explored in political philosophy) states that arts institutions are unacceptably elitist, in that they pander to niche aesthetic tastes or perpetuate an elite social caste.

This work aims to clarify these objections – (1) Neutrality, and (2) Elitism – and to develop and defend new approach to defending the public funding of the arts which overcomes them in a manner which other justifications do not. I argue that the best way to justify government funding of the arts is by appealing to cognitive benefits which arise from living in a society with a government-funded arts sector. These are benefits of self-understanding, empathy and imagination, and the ability to be better understood by others.

The first two chapters motivate and clarify the Neutrality and Elitism objections. The third chapter introduces a framework for assessing possible justifications for government funding of the arts against these objections. I argue that Nussbaum's (1997) defence of the civic value of art alerts us to particularly promising strategy, on which public arts funding makes significant contributions to our shared tools for interpreting experiences, cultural histories, and worldviews, inter alia. The final chapter is given to developing and defending this view, which I call Art Cognitivism.

Impact Statement

This thesis develops and defends a new approach to justifying public funding of the arts in liberal democratic states. It also clarifies two objections to government funding of the arts in liberal democratic states and assesses three possible justifications for arts funding. These contributions help connect debates in aesthetics and political philosophy and will be academically beneficial to debates about public arts funding, as well as to debates about the neutrality principle in political philosophy. My original proposal for justifying public funding of the arts may also provide a form of practical guidance to those aiming to design, evaluate, and defend arts funding policies in liberal democratic states.

Acknowledgements

I would like to express my deepest gratitude to my supervisor, Associate Professor Robert Simpson. Rob has provided me with extensive advice and encouragement and this thesis simply would not be possible without him. On top of his intellectual support and mentorship, he has also been extremely accommodating of my circumstances, by arranging to have meetings that were ideal for my time zone in Sydney. I am also grateful to my MPhil colleagues, Alice Harberd and Achilleas Sarantaris. Their feedback was instrumental to the development of my ideas, and their friendship has enriched my experience of graduate philosophy. My parents and siblings were also a constant source of support. Finally, I would like to thank my partner Tash, for her unfailing love and kindness throughout the MPhil Stud degree, and everything else.

Contents

Introduction.....	7
The Neutrality Objection	11
1.1 The Neutrality Principle	12
1.2 The Appeal of Neutrality of Aim	14
1.3 Neutrality and Arts Funding.....	15
The Elitism Objection.....	30
2.1 ‘Elitist Norms’	31
2.2 Cultural Elitism	34
2.3 Acceptable Norms of Cultural Elitism	39
Possible Justifications for Public Arts Funding.....	45
3.1 Mass Market Pessimism.....	48
3.2 Individual Choice and Cultural Structure.....	53
3.3 Civic Education: Empathy, Imagination and Democracy	59
Art Cognitivism	69
4.1 Art Cognitivism: The Bare Bones	70
4.2 Art Cognitivism and Social Justice	74
4.3 Understanding Others, Understanding the World	76
4.4 Private Hermeneutical Resources and Self-Understanding.....	80
4.5 Aesthetic Perfectionism.....	83
Concluding remarks	87
Bibliography	88

Introduction

Government support for the arts has been a common feature of Western democracies in the post war era.¹ Countries including the United Kingdom, Australia, the United States, Canada, and France have established various government organisations and policies with the aim of promoting and protecting the visual, literary and performing arts. Such support has taken a variety of forms, including grants and awards for artists, creative projects and arts institutions (e.g. theatres, galleries, orchestras, live music venues and public broadcasting services) and major investments in the infrastructure of creative venues and precincts. Other measures of support include vouchers, tax-deductible donations and purchases, special visas to attract talented artists and to support significant creative projects, and subsidies to study art in various ways and forms.

This kind and level of widespread government patronage of the arts marks a significant development in both the history of art and of liberal democratic societies. Government support for the arts has decreased barriers to participating in the arts, both as producers, and audience members. Government support for the arts has helped establish political and economic conditions under which artists can produce new and unpopular cultural expressions without encountering significant economic risks. In doing so, it has helped cultural venues open in rural and regional areas and helped increase access to and participation in cultural expressions linked with minority and marginalised groups.

These are the conditions under which artistic traditions of myriad First Nations and migrant cultures have found wider recognition, protection, and support. They are also the conditions under which a great number of small theatre companies and community radio stations have arisen, not to mention major cultural institutions such

¹ This tradition might be traced to the United Kingdom, which in 1946, established the Arts Council of Great Britain by royal charter. Similar government-sponsored organisations gradually came into being across France, Australia, Canada and America, as well as many Western European countries (Caust 2019). More recently, support for government funding of the arts has been encouraged by The Convention on the Protection and Promotion of the Diversity of Cultural Expressions, as adopted by UNESCO in 2005 (Mar & Ang 2015).

as the Tate Modern, *Le Centre Pompidou* and the Sydney Opera House. In short, the tradition of government funding of the arts has shaped distinctive features of the artistic culture we have inherited, most notably by rendering it more artistically and culturally diverse, and socially and economically accessible. This has helped the visual, literary, and performing arts become symbols of free expression for all of us, and not just a cultural elite.

However, public arts funding has rarely escaped controversy. In both public debate and political philosophy, critics have argued that government funding of the arts, whether wittingly or unwittingly, lends undue support for some ways of life over others, and is therefore nonneutral and unjustified, or that it is elitist and therefore inegalitarian.

These criticisms not only pose a formidable challenge to the arts funding advocate but invoke a series of interwoven debates in aesthetics and political philosophy. What role should art play in the well-ordered society? Are cultural policies unacceptably paternalistic? What might be bad about cultural elitism? How can it be true that public funding of the arts operates in the interests of all citizens, if not all of them engage with the goods it sponsors? Without facing these questions, we are at a loss to gauge the force of criticisms against government funding of the arts, let alone figure out the best possible egalitarian justification for arts funding.²

This thesis will (1) clarify two key challenges against public arts funding (Neutrality and Elitism); (2) examine some possible justifications for government funding of the arts, and assess whether they overcome these challenges; and (3) develop a new, egalitarian justification which draws on the merits of existing accounts but escapes their main pitfalls.

² Rawls (1999, pp. 288-291) inspired a wealth of philosophical debate by arguing that public arts funding would seldom be justified unless it appealed to a value which was neutral between competing conceptions of the good. This would seem to rule out appeal to the value of art in itself, and some have taken this to be inherently problematic (Raz 1986; Hamilton 2009). Moreover, many have argued that a Rawlsian liberal framework leaves no scope for government to play a role in shaping culture (Black 1992; Gutmann 1999; Hamilton 2009), or only a very limited role (Brighouse 1995; Quong 2011). These debates were amplified by controversies surrounding the funding choices of the National Endowment of the Arts in the 1980s and '90s (Brighouse 1985; Fiss 1998). Dworkin's seminal paper (1985) provided a neutral defence of government arts funding, but faced criticisms from Carroll (1987), Brighouse (1995), and Kramer (2016). Other defences of government arts funding are found in the work of Nussbaum (1997), Gutmann (1999), Schwartz (2000), Scruton (2006; 2007), and Munoz-Dardé (2013). Beyond the realm of philosophy, questions about the nature and ethics of government arts funding have been taken up by policy researchers (Mar & Ang 2015; Caust 2018; 2019) and Indigenous scholars (Janke 2021).

I will argue that if we want to overcome the Neutrality and Elitism challenges, the best way to justify government funding of the arts is by appealing to cognitive benefits. In short, a government-funded arts sector helps the members of a society to acquire valuable forms of *understanding*. And these forms of understanding are of value to everyone, I will argue, irrespective of their personal ideals, and irrespective of whether they belong to a cultural elite. The things that people come to understand, through a flourishing arts sector, are primarily cultural matters: the histories, experiences, worldviews, and forms of expression that constitute the cultures and sub-cultures that exist within a given society. And through engagement with the arts, these things can come to be understood through different modes, including empathy, introspective reflection, and imagination. I will argue that a government-funded arts sector is the best way to cultivate the goods of understanding, thus construed, across a society.

Before I begin, I note that this thesis does not aim to provide an account of why a liberal state must fund the arts as a matter of justice. Rather, it aims to provide a theory which shows that a liberal state has good reasons to fund the arts, notwithstanding the other demands it faces.

The thesis has four chapters. In chapter 1, I outline the Neutrality Objection, and illustrate that it is not insurmountable, and that suggestions to the contrary presuppose a simplistic view of neutrality and/or an overly pessimistic view of the public value of artistic culture.

In chapter 2, I outline the Elitism Objection. This chapter is more exploratory than the first: it hunts for a language to explain what is bad about cultural elitism, and proposes that some elitist norms are acceptable in cultural institutions if they operate in support of a public arts funding arrangement which is neutral in aim, and improves the interests of the least advantaged.

Chapter 3 assesses three possible approaches to justifying public funding of the arts, as suggested by recent literature in aesthetics and political philosophy: (1) Mass-Market Pessimism (Scruton 2005; 2007), (2) Cultural Structure (Dworkin 1985), and (3) Civic Education (Nussbaum 1997). I argue that while none of these contain all the ingredients required to overcome the Neutrality and Elitism objections, all contain important insights. In particular, I argue that the third – which suggests that literature has the power to cultivate empathy – illuminates a promising strategy, even though it faces a variety of pitfalls.

Chapter 4 introduces my own view: Art Cognitivism. According to Art Cognitivism, the main public value of an artistic culture lies in its ability to supply us with certain cognitive benefits. Namely, opportunities to develop self-understanding, empathy, and to imaginatively explore different ways of life. However, I argue that these benefits are likely to be distributed in an unfair and nonoptimal way without public arts funding, owing to social and economic inequalities.

By drawing attention to the significant cognitive value of the arts, I aim to show what is at stake when the availability and diversity of art is mainly governed by the free market. If government funding of the arts is a key route to promoting the value of being understood, we should invest in the arts out of respect for ourselves and each other.

Chapter 1

The Neutrality Objection

Concern for neutrality has motivated a suspicion of impermissibility towards government funding of the arts among some liberal political philosophers.³ In this chapter I argue that the challenge posed by neutrality is worth engaging with, but that it has been overstated by both its proponents and its critics. Concern for neutrality does not preclude a liberal state from funding art, but simply calls on it to do so on the basis of promoting the interests of all individuals. This sets a firm challenge for liberal proponents of public arts funding: it says that public funding of the arts is only justified if it aims to promote a value – such as self-respect – which is of interest to all individuals. However, to argue, as e.g. Black (1992), Gutmann (1999), Brighouse (1995), Quong (2011), have, that the challenge cannot be met is to adopt a rather narrow account of neutrality, or an overly pessimistic view about the public value of the arts.

First, I detail the neutrality principle and its variants. Second, I defend “neutrality of aim”. Third, I introduce two variants of the neutrality objection, influentially portrayed by Rawls (1999) and Brighouse (1995) respectively. I defend Rawls’ presentation of the objection, and argue that while Brighouse’s objection is misguided, it directs us to insights of fundamental importance to assessing the neutrality of public arts funding arrangements.

³ Notably, there are varieties of liberalism in which the neutrality principle does not play a central role, such as perfectionist liberalism. In order to motivate that neutrality challenge, to begin with, I will set these larger disagreements to the side.

1.1 The Neutrality Principle

The neutrality principle says that, in order to treat citizens as free and equal, states must exercise their powers of coercion in ways that are neutral between competing conceptions of the good life. Here, a *conception of the good* is understood as a view of what makes for a “valuable, flourishing or worthwhile life” (Quong 2011, p. 2). Since every person’s conception of the good takes a stance on what is valuable or worthwhile, no conception of the good is neutral over all other conceptions of the good.⁴

In order to understand how the neutrality principle produces an objection to public arts funding, it will be useful to pin down what neutrality means and consider its appeal. Proponents of the neutrality principle frequently distinguish between two possible formulations:

1. **Neutrality of effect or influence:** the state must not do anything which will advantage some ways of life over others (Rawls 1988, p. 262; Brighouse 1995, p. 38).
2. **Neutrality of aim or intent:** the state cannot intentionally act to favour any particular conception of the good over others (Rawls 1988, p. 262; Brighouse 1995, p. 38; Kymlicka 1989, p. 883).

Which, as we will see, is closely connected with:

3. **Neutrality of justification:** the state must provide reasons for its decisions and actions which are neutral over competing conceptions of the good.

Let us now consider each of these in turn. *Neutrality of effect or influence* (henceforth: neutrality of effect) is widely dismissed as impractical, if not impossible. Firstly, the consequences of individual state decisions and policies are

⁴ In what follows, I will only be referring to *reasonable* conceptions of the good or ways of life, unless I say otherwise. A reasonable conception of the good is one which is consistent with the requirements of justice in a modern liberal democracy, such as that all citizens are free and equal.

often difficult to predict at the level of individuals or different ways of life (Brighouse 1995, p. 39). Taking a wider view, a liberal political regime might also note that there is a certain level of inevitability to nonneutral effects between different ways of life which arises on account of designing a constitution one way or another (Rawls 1988, pp. 262-3). For example, a constitutional regime which protects free speech will be more favourable to ways of life that value open discussion, and inimical to ways of life which require religion to be managed through the apparatus of the state.

Neutrality of aim or intent (henceforth: neutrality of aim) requires that a state only acts for reasons which are acceptable, or not reasonably rejectable, to all citizens, regardless of their conception of the good. Unlike neutrality of effect, this does not preclude the state from acting in ways that have nonneutral consequences between individuals or different conceptions of the good. By choosing to build a bus network in some region of a city over another, a state's actions may immediately benefit certain individuals more than others and come with no obvious direct or indirect benefits to other citizens. By instituting smoking bans in public places, a state policy may adversely affect the preferences of smokers more than other citizens. And by structuring a political regime in ways that protect religious freedom, the state creates circumstances in which religions which require the apparatus of the state to implement their rules are *de facto* disfavoured. However, neutrality of aim does not preclude such actions. It permits them if they aim to promote values all reasonable citizens can accept, or not reasonably reject. This excludes justifications which appeal to the intrinsic value or disvalue of reasonable ways of life. But it does not preclude promoting shared values, such as greater levels of wealth and employment for all; and protection of health or individual liberties such as religious freedom (Franken 2016).

Neutrality of aim is linked with the less stringent requirement, *neutrality of justification*. A state action could not satisfy neutrality of aim if it was justified by appeal to the intrinsic superiority of a particular conception of the good. In this way, neutrality of aim *implies* neutrality of justification. But as Kramer (2015) rightly notes, "not every policy that can be neutrally justified is neutral in its aim or intention" (pp. 14-15). If a government wishes to promote a particular religion through implementing mandatory scripture classes for it in state schools, its intention is not rendered neutral by defending its decision by appeal to educational benefits

alone. This is why separating neutrality of aim from neutrality of justification is important. By formulating the neutrality principle in terms of neutral justification alone, we do not capture the moral appeal of the principle. It is too easy for a state to satisfy neutrality of justification in a spurious or even disingenuous way, while still deliberately trying to advantage a particular conception of the good over others.

Notably, not all liberals think that the neutrality principle – however it is to be defined – should figure prominently in a theory of justice. For instance, some liberals, such as Raz (1986) and Sher (1997), argue that the state is permitted to promote some conceptions of the good, and to discourage others. Throughout this thesis, I will refer to liberals in this camp as *perfectionist liberals*, in contrast to proponents of neutrality, who I will refer to as *nonperfectionist liberals*. Moreover, neutrality of aim is the kind of neutrality I will refer to, unless I suggest otherwise. This is a doctrine which also finds support among nonperfectionist liberals such as Dworkin (1985), Rawls (1988), Kymlicka (1989) and Quong (2011).

1.2 The Appeal of Neutrality of Aim

Before we consider what neutrality of aim means for government funding of the arts, we should pause to consider why we should accept it in the first place. The most common reason given by liberals, put briskly, is that neutrality is an appropriate response to the fact that reasonable people disagree about matters of the good life (Dworkin 1985; Rawls 1988; Quong 2011). The fuller reasoning is that the operations of the state require the exercise of coercion over citizens, if not through particularly coercive policies such as policing, then through taxation. Citizens are rational agents who respond to reasons, and the state disrespects their status as such if it coerces citizens for reasons they cannot accept. Hence, when the state acts for reasons which contradict a citizen's conception of the good – for instance, by aiming to promote a certain religious doctrine whose truth they reject – it fails to treat them with the respect owed to free and equal persons. So it is argued that in order to respect persons as free and equal, states ought to wield their power neutrally (Larmore 1990, p. 351; 2008, p. 148).

There is yet another way of spelling out what is morally problematic about a government acting to promote nonneutral values. A nonneutral value is the subject of

reasonable disagreement. However, we can accept that there is a plurality of reasonable conceptions of the good life, while denying that all have an equal claim to the truth. On this basis, we might think that some people are mistaken about what is in their best interests. And notably, this provides room for paternalism: interfering with the freedom of others on the basis that doing so would improve their life in some way. However, by acting to promote a nonneutral value – e.g. a particular religious doctrine – the state presumes that it is in a privileged position to perceive the truth, or to understand the interests of others. And this seems to disrespect the status of persons as free and equal rational beings.⁵ For these reasons, it is argued that perfectionist policies are nearly always *unacceptably paternalistic* because they treat citizens like children, rather than free and equal rational agents (Nussbaum 2011; Quong 2011).⁶

1.3 Neutrality and Arts Funding

The notion that some art, artworks, or art institutions are in some way *intrinsically valuable* is not uncommon within public and academic debates about the value of art and arts policies. We hear from art critics, teachers, artists and advocates that art is worth engaging with not only for the entertainment, knowledge, or skills it may bring to us. In the context of arts funding, it is said that we shouldn't just support major art galleries and performance spaces to protect jobs and promote tourism, but because they represent cherished aspects of our culture, and that a life without them

⁵ It is worth noting that some forms of liberal perfectionism appear to be less susceptible to this sort of objection. For instance, Raz's (1986) perfectionism aims to protect the ability of citizens to exercise autonomy through selecting among a range of worthwhile conceptions of the good which the state recognises and supports. This view is perfectionistic, because the state restricts its support to conceptions of the good that it considers valuable or worthwhile. However, it does not seem to treat citizens like children, because it does not impose any particular conception of the good or way of life on them.

⁶ In my view, this second defence of state neutrality has the most clout in debate with perfectionist liberals in the debate about public funding of the arts. This is because perfectionist and nonperfectionist liberals both tend to recognise that paternalism is *worse* if it involves the imposition of a nonneutral value, rather than a more plausibly neutral value (Clarke 2006, p. 117). If proponents of neutrality could show that public arts funding was paternalistic, they may therefore persuade perfectionist liberals to *prefer* a neutral justification for public funding of the arts, even if they were unwilling to part ways with liberal perfectionism overall. The reason would be to avoid adopting a kind of unacceptable paternalism, viz. *perfectionist paternalism* (Clarke 2006). I will not pursue this argumentative strategy here.

would be impoverished. By and large, such expressions are perfectionist: they lay claim to matters of the good life not all people may accept. For one thing, not everyone actively engages with the arts, and to suggest that their life is impoverished for this reason seems misguided. To the extent that justifications for arts funding appeal to these notions of intrinsic value and flourishing, they therefore fall into tension with neutrality of aim, and expose arts funding to the charge that it disrespects persons as equals.

There are at least two ways that non-perfectionists may lay this charge. They might object to the notion that (1) art is an element of the good life; or (2) some genres, artistic traditions or institutions are intrinsically better than others. We will discuss each of these in turn. I argue that while both challenges alert us to morally salient dimensions of arts funding, they have often been mischaracterised and overstated by both their proponents and opponents.

1.3.1 Art as an Element of the Good

Consider the following claim. Aesthetic experiences are an important ingredient or essential feature of the good life, even if not all citizens recognise them as such. Therefore, governments ought to do what they can to promote and protect at least some kinds of art. I take it that Rawls was taking aim at roughly this kind of perfectionist view when he said that:

...the principles of justice do not permit subsidizing universities and institutes, or opera and the theater, on the grounds that these institutions are intrinsically valuable, and that those who engage in them are to be supported even at some significant expense to others who do not receive compensating benefits. (Rawls 1999, pp. 291-2)

This passage in Rawls has been the subject of much attention, but not all of it has provided an accurate or nuanced characterisation of Rawls' view. Before characterising Rawls' view, it is worth noting that his position on neutrality and arts funding gained nuance over time (Munoz-Dardé 2013, p. 222 n1). In his later work (see esp. Rawls 2001, pp. 151-2) he expressed some greater tolerance for funding of the arts on partly perfectionist grounds before the basic requirements of justice were

met. Nonetheless, this presentation of the neutrality challenge has found expression by others (e.g. Dworkin 1985; Carroll 1987; Brighthouse 1995; Quong 2011) and retains its force regardless of whether it is ascribable to the later Rawls.

Setting this aside, I would like to start by pointing out what Rawls (1999) is *not* saying. Firstly, he is not saying that art, or ways of life which revolve around art, lack intrinsic worth. He is saying that their intrinsic value cannot under usual circumstances count as a reason for public arts funding. So, what are the caveats? Arts funding on the basis of intrinsic value might be justified if a society has achieved the basic requirements of justice, and citizens have decided via vote to direct public funds to the arts for this reason. (The same applies to public support for any other good not required by justice.)

Nonetheless, some have taken the above passage to mean that Rawls “issues rather strict injunctions against diverting public funds in order to support the arts and humanities” (Black 1992, p. 255), and that he “effectively relegates [cultural goods] to a position where they are certain to suffer systematic neglect” (Black 1992, p. 254; see also Raz 1986 p. 162).⁷ Now, given how rare it is for the basic requirements of justice to be met, it is not completely unfair to say that Rawls *effectively* relegates the arts to a neglected position. However, it is misguided to say that this situation is *certain*. But some other critics of Rawls have also accepted this reading of him, going as far as to say that he “views arts subsidies as unjust” (Schwartz 2000, p. 22), or “government support of culture is unjust” (Gutmann 1999, p. 257).

If this were right, then Rawlsian art lovers would face a tension between wanting to protect and promote (i) a state of affairs under which arts institutions are affordable and fairly widespread; and (ii) a key Rawlsian condition of democratic justice, state neutrality. This apparent dilemma produces a *reductio ad absurdum*: the tradition of arts funding which has developed in most liberal states has rarely if ever been justified, even though state support for the arts does not strike many of us as immediately problematic.

Some non-perfectionist liberals writing after Rawls have also lent force to this pessimistic conclusion. They have presupposed that art is a perfectionist good, and

⁷ Raz (1986) writes, in more general terms: “Anti-perfectionism in practice would lead not merely to a political stand-off from support for valuable conceptions of the good. It would undermine the chances of survival of many cherished aspects of our culture.” (p. 162)

that because of this, public arts funding disrespects neutrality and is therefore suspect in at least most of its incarnations. We see this expressed in Quong:

Public funding of the arts, as well as all other forms of financial incentives whose aim is to direct citizens to choose more worthy or virtuous past times are ... suspect, given the requirement for public justification. (Quong 2011, p. 4; see also p. 89)

But not only does this misrepresent the theoretical landscape, it presents a false picture of the value of the arts. Public funding of the arts is not an inherently perfectionist or problematically paternalistic policy. There are myriad reasons to value and fund the arts, not all of which carry us back to the notion that failing to engage with art leads to an impoverished life, or that citizens should compensate those who actively engage with art because their way of life is intrinsically superior. To give brief mention to one possibility, the arts could be funded in ways that aim to promote and protect the value of free expression.⁸ This carries us back to Rawls, who in fact says that there are ways to fund the arts which are consistent with the demands of neutrality and respect for all citizens, and which are not perfectionist. He writes that:

Taxation for these purposes [funding of universities and the arts] can be justified only as promoting directly or indirectly the social conditions that secure the equal liberties and as advancing in an appropriate way the long-term interests of the least advantaged. This seems to authorize those subsidies the justice of which is least in dispute, and so in these cases anyway there is no evident need for a principle of perfection. (Rawls 1999, p. 292)

Far from rejecting government funding of the arts per se, Rawls suggests that public arts funding can be justified if it

1. aims to promote “directly or indirectly the social conditions that secure the equal liberties” (Rawls 1999, p. 292); and

⁸ For an overview of this kind of approach in an American legal context, see Fiss (1998, esp. 27-52).

2. satisfies *the difference principle*, i.e. advances, in an appropriate way, “the long-term interests of the least advantaged” (Rawls 1999, p. 292).

These conditions correspond to Rawls’ two principles of justice, a full exposition of which lies beyond our scope. However, it is worth alluding to some of the basic requirements of each. The ‘liberties’ referred to beneath (1) include (but are not limited to) freedom of conscience, thought and speech, and freedom from psychological oppression (Rawls 1999, p. 53). As we might note, this leaves scope for funding art on the basis of maximising the equal realisation of such liberties. The question becomes: How might arts funding secure conditions which promote equal access to such liberties? One option might involve arguing that the ability to produce and consume certain forms of artistic expression promotes the conditions of freedom of thought, which in turn enable individuals to exercise the capacity for “forming and revising and in rationally pursuing (individually or, more often, in association with others) their conceptions of the good” (Rawls 2001, p. 45). The approach I develop in chapter 4 – on which public funding of the arts distributes resources that promote certain cognitive goods, including self-understanding, understanding the world, and being understood by others – is consistent with this proposal.

Before I proceed, I wish to draw attention to the sense in which condition (1) connects to neutrality of aim. All members of liberal democratic states have an interest in acquiring equal rights and liberties, and in this way, political liberties are neutral over competing conceptions of the good. However, the aim to promote “directly or indirectly the social conditions that secure the equal liberties” is not synonymous with neutrality of aim, because individuals are not simply citizens, and they may share interests with one another that can be defended without recourse back to political liberties. For instance, we would all seem to have an interest in acquiring knowledge and true beliefs. These are goods in their own right and need not be defended vis-à-vis other political liberties. However, they *could be*. By living in a society in which these goods are knowledge and true beliefs are promoted, all of us would appear better equipped to develop and exercise our freedom of thought and speech. The upshot is that policies which satisfy neutrality of aim may plausibly meet the condition (1), by *indirectly* promoting “social conditions that secure the equal liberties”, even if this is not their point of emphasis.

Moving now to the difference principle, we should note that “primary goods” are the metric on which disadvantage is assessed by it. Rawls uses “primary goods” to refer to things that persons need in order to be free and equal. They are valuable regardless of a person’s conception of the good; and they are required in order for citizens to be “fully cooperating members of society over a complete life” (Rawls 1999, p. xiii). Rawls provides an extended list of such goods which includes a score of liberties and what he refers to as “the social bases of self-respect”, defined as “the recognition by social institutions that gives citizens a sense of self-worth and the confidence to carry out their plans” (2001, pp. 58-9). Here, we again find scope for public arts funding in terms which are consistent with Rawls’ requirements.⁹ In particular, we might aim to theorise the ways in which some arts funding arrangements supply the social conditions under which the realisation of primary goods is made more likely for those who possess the least of them. One strategy – consistent with what I aim to develop and defend in this thesis – would be to preserve and promote cultural expressions which help cultivate self-understanding and self-respect, and the value of being understood by others, among socially and economically disadvantaged groups. In this way, public arts funding would aim to secure the social bases for self-respect among the least advantaged.

To be sure, meeting these conditions is no simple or easy task. And it is probably the case that most existing arrangements haven’t fully satisfied them. However, it should now be clear that the view expressed by some commentators, that Rawls argues that “government support of culture is unjust” (Gutmann 1999, p. 257), is uncharitable. Furthermore, the more moderate, still mistaken view that his theory “effectively relegates [cultural goods] to a position where they are certain to suffer systematic neglect” (Black 1991, p. 254), is not justified before we attempt to meet the challenge. And to indicate that the terms of this challenge are such that they cannot be met without first attempting to do so is to adopt a pessimistic scepticism about the public value of art.

⁹ The value of primary goods can justify support for the arts if doing so allows primary goods to be realised among the least advantaged. Considering this, Gutmann is uncharitable when she says that “[i]f Rawls is right, governmental support of culture is unjust because national monuments, paintings, sculpture, museums, opera, theater, public television, and so on are certainly not primary goods.” (1999, p. 257)

1.3.2 Genre Partiality

But there is another influential challenge that proponents of state neutrality might bring against public funding of the arts, which Rawls does not give specific mention to. This is the view that many artistic genres are closely linked with competing conceptions of the good, such that when they compete for public resources, the awarding of public support to one genre over another amounts to a ranking between competing conceptions of the good. In response, we might say that this presupposes that the conditions specified by Rawls are not met. Arts councils are not appropriately neutral if they are merely ranking genres and artistic projects according to how much cultural support they provide allegedly worthwhile ways of life. Insofar as conflicts of interest exist between those making decisions about arts funding and different artistic genres, they can and should be mitigated.

However, Brighouse (1995) argues that public arts funding is rarely justified even when reasonable steps are taken to avoid such partiality. He says that even when neutrality of aim is met, due to facts about the nature of art, “arts funding is always liable to be a target of reasonable suspicions about nonneutrality” (p. 36). And because liberal states are under an obligation to provide citizens with clearly understandable reasons for their decisions, policies which attract systematic impressions of impartiality should be avoided, or in his words, subject to a “general prohibition” (p. 36). Two premises figure prominently in Brighouse’s argument, and we might refer to them as:

Genre Partiality: “[T]he arts are more intimately connected to the disputes among different ways of life than are many other goods. We talk of Christian art, Muslim art, existentialist art, even Communist art.” (Brighouse 1995, p. 56)

Partiality Avoidance: If all applications of a given policy are “liable to be a target of reasonable suspicions about non-neutrality [of aim]” (Brighouse 1995, p. 36), then the policy at large ought to not be adopted.

Let’s begin with the first. If Christian art competed for public funding against art which overtly transgresses Christian values, and the latter won funding and the former did not, Brighouse would argue that Christians could *reasonably* suspect that

the “real intent [was] to benefit [other] ways of life” and not their own (Brighouse 1995, p. 56). Moreover, Brighouse argues that Genre Partiality makes such impressions widespread enough so that arts funding is “always liable to be a target of reasonable suspicions about non-neutrality” (p. 36). This allegedly places arts funding into a special category of public spending:

By contrast we do not associate highways or railroads, or even baseball stadia, with particular ways of life, because they are, in some important sense, not closely attached to the particularistic interests of those who believe in some and not other ways of life. (Brighouse 1995, p. 56)

Brighouse’s overarching point is that there are some items of public spending which are not susceptible to significant suspicions of nonneutrality, and that the arts are not one of them. This takes us to what I have termed Partiality Avoidance. Brighouse does not give explicit defence to this claim, although his argument presupposes it. Instead, he defends a principle which is very close to neutrality of justification, which he calls “publicity”: liberal states are generally under an obligation to provide justifications for their actions which are “understandable to, and available for scrutiny by, reasonable citizens” (1995, p. 41). This is not an unreasonable or uncommon idea, given that it connects with a common liberal defence of neutrality: in order to respect citizens as rational agents, the state should provide them reasons for its decisions which they can accept. However, Brighouse argues that, in the context of public funding of the arts, Genre Partiality obstructs the ability of states to meet this obligation. According to Brighouse, citizens ought to be able to see the public value of arts funding clearly manifest in individual funding decisions, just as (he suggests) they are likely to in other areas of common public spending. But Genre Partiality, along with the fact that there is little agreement about what constitutes valuable art, means that this link will always be fuzzy to a significant number of people.

Brighouse directs us to a salient dimension of art in the context of public arts funding. It is true that the arts are often more obviously linked with competing conceptions of the good than are many things which receive public support, such as

roads and transport networks.¹⁰ Indeed, much art has overtly political content, aiming to explore, promote, or call to question the decisions and legacies of governments, individuals, and organisations; religious conventions; and norms common to particular ways of life.

Quite notably, the same is true across research in the humanities (Fiss 1998), including philosophy. There are such things as queer and feminist philosophy, Christian philosophy, Islamic philosophy and Marxist philosophy. Now, some people may doubt the public value of philosophy itself. However, a sound argument against the public value of philosophy could rarely be built upon an objection to a single grant or award. Cases may arise where the funds allocated were extravagantly disproportionate, or where the area of philosophy explicitly supported impermissible ways of life. We should not ignore impressions of impartiality altogether: they may reflect corruption or mismanagement, or a parochial view about what constitutes good philosophy. All the same, impartiality should not be assessed at the level of *single* funding choices, but across the full catalogue of funding over an extended period.

Partiality Avoidance does not take this into account, and in fact conflates neutrality of aim with ongoing impressions of neutrality of effect. While suspicions of partiality may not be totally irrelevant to justice, they also cannot constitute a veto against a policy. This is because suspicions of partiality are commonplace and arise in the contexts of policies that operate in our genuine interests. Partiality Avoidance would disallow policies which, on balance, we have reason to support. To help illustrate this point, it will be useful to consider a detailed example from a common public spending that Brighouse himself alludes to: public transport.

Imagine that a particular public transport project has led to a lot of disgruntled citizens expressing concerns of arbitrary favouritism and misuse of taxpayers' money. Citizens from certain regions of the city express scepticism that the project – which will deliver greater public transport to certain regional areas – is worthy of their tax, granted that they themselves will not benefit directly. In response to a swathe of letters and protests, a government official makes a firm statement:

¹⁰ Though, contra Brighouse, I would contest this in relation to baseball stadia. Not all of us visit baseball stadia (not even sports stadia) or watch baseball (or much sport), and it is fair to say that they are closely linked with baseball clubs and the notion that baseball contributes to the good life.

All citizens deserve access to efficient public transport, including those from towns other than our own. This particular project will deliver benefits to citizens mainly in communities X, Y, and Z, but it sits within a broader project aimed at improving transport for the whole city. The goals of this broader project should be assessed in the long-term, and not at the level of an individual project.

Let's take the government official at her word and assume that neutrality of aim is in place. That is: the project which has attracted controversy is but one application of a larger pool of resources allocated to the longer-term goal of establishing a more efficient and safer transport system for the *whole* city. It does not aim at supporting particular citizens for the sake of it. Moreover, let's assume that the strategy surrounding the long-term roll out of this system is publicly available and understandable to reasonable citizens. In this case, if citizens still resisted the project, it would seem that other issues had coloured their judgements, or that they had misunderstood the relationship between this individual project, and the overall funding regime which delivers support directly and indirectly to them via establishing a world-class transport system. Moreover, in this kind of case, we would not be willing to take their complaints about a *single project* to undermine the justification for a public transport system *overall*.

If Partiality Avoidance was correct, then governments would be prevented from undertaking projects like public transport development simply because people suspect (wrongly) that they are not in their interests. But this seems mistaken. It's true that a government has to strike a balance between doing what's in the public interest and bringing the public along with it. But Brighouse's principle of Partiality Avoidance places too much importance on the latter, without giving due weight to the former.

This is not to say that the roll-out of policies which are in the genuine interests of citizens cannot be mismanaged. Bus and train routes may be so poorly mapped out as to fail to bring about their intended benefits. The infrastructure which supports these networks may be so faulty as to require constant repairs, posing ongoing financial costs and safety risks. It goes without saying that all public policies should be the subject of scrutiny. But unless we have a justified view that the benefits of a

certain kind of policy are outweighed by their costs, we should not think that the policy in question is so void of public value that it should be shelved in nearly all cases. This is why we do not take complaints about a single project in the building of public transport system to undermine the case for public transport overall. Holding things equal, we would not aggregate complaints from all regions and across time and say that they constitute a systematic objection to public transport policy. So, why should we, with the arts?

Although arts funding may be more susceptible to suspicions of partiality than many other kinds of public spending, the case of the public transport system illustrates that such suspicions are not enough to suggest that public funding of the arts is not in our interests. Suspicions of partiality should not prevent a policy which has clear, long-term public value. The question becomes: What might the public value of arts funding be? The fact that there is not a readily recognisable answer to this question, and that there is some pessimism towards *finding an answer* most of the public can accept, does not mean that an adequate answer does not exist, let alone that liberals should oppose arts funding outright.

1.3.3 When Unintentional Effects Undermine Neutral Aims

I will now argue that although Brighouse's argument presupposes an unworkable doctrine – Partiality Avoidance – it encourages us to consider which kinds of effects might threaten a policy's neutral aims, rendering it unacceptable. To begin with, it is worth briefly revisiting the distinction between neutrality of aim and effect; and recalling that both Brighouse and Rawls accept neutrality of aim and reject neutrality of effect.

Neutrality of aim requires that a policy does not aim to encourage or discourage any particular way of life. It does not preclude policies which help or hinder some ways of life more than others. A policy must be designed with the intention to secure conditions which promote goods that are valuable to individuals of all ways of life. Brighouse is not wrong to suggest that a policy's satisfying neutrality of aim does not guarantee that its methods will be effective or just. Though, as I have argued above, he is wrong to suggest that suspicions of impartiality can in themselves undermine the public value of a policy, or in some other way preclude its use.

However, there *are* cases in which effects of a policy may undermine the policy's goal. As we have seen, a project for the development of public transport infrastructure may be predicated on a sincerely neutral aim, e.g., to promote safe and effective, low-cost transport for all citizens. Nonetheless, the resources allocated to this aim may be managed in a terribly inefficient and irresponsible way, such as to render the policy, at least in some of its formulations, unacceptably negligent, wasteful, or in simply ineffective at meeting its own aims. Similarly, a vaccination program may fail to achieve its goal of herd immunity through failing to secure sufficient vaccine, failing to effectively distribute it effectively across a population, or perhaps even by creating conditions under which vaccine hesitancy prospers.

It is a matter of definition that if these effects were *unintentional*, they do not discount neutrality of aim. Hence, when such effects are unintentional, but still indicate defects of a policy, neutrality of aim is not the best language for explaining what they imply about the policy in question.¹¹ This suggests that neutrality of aim is not the sole criterion for the success of permissibility of a government policy. Indeed, there are a range of other criteria of assessment which come into play. And plausibly, policies in the cultural sphere will have some criteria for success, in addition to neutrality of aim, that have a distinctly cultural flavour, and which are difficult to measure. For instance, they might aim to promote an appreciation of our national history. But how is this to be measured? By contrast, policies in health, transport, and education often aim at delivering more specific, measurable goods.

A natural worry emerges from this. Even when cultural policies are based on neutral aims in theory, we might worry that, in practice, they distribute benefits in a way which caters to the needs and interests of a select group – namely, those who are interested in arts and culture. This indicates a specific criterion of evaluation we should be concerned with: the criterion of *anti-elitism*.

A cultural policy might grant excessive power to some individuals to determine the shape of public culture, to the effective exclusion or marginalisation of some communities and forms of creative expression. Instead of promoting access to forms of artistic expression for the public overall, it might promote an image whereby

¹¹ Further, as noted in §1.1, state actions cannot avoid nonneutral consequences. As such, neutrality of effect does not provide us with means for evaluating the effects of policies, either.

cultural institutions belong to some groups, and not others. It may not only function to benefit those who are “on the whole, people who are already very well off, because they have been taught how to use and enjoy art” (Dworkin 1985, p. 222), but also further marginalise those who are, on the whole, very socially disadvantaged. Furthermore, this may be the case even when a cultural policy distributes resources to a broad mixture of arts institutions – e.g. theatre companies, art galleries, radio stations, as well as opera and ballet companies – in the hope promoting artistic production and consumption among a broad public. For instance, such institutions may carry out their programming and curation without due consideration for a diversity of artistic expressions, or without due consultation with a broad public. As a result, the policy may uphold an arrangement whereby some ways of life and their affiliated modes of expression are relegated to the sidelines of public culture, while others are given prestige and “the stamp of public acceptability” (Raz 1995, p. 155; Gingerich 2019).

Hence, were the aim of a cultural policy to promote some level of equal influence to shape or enjoy an artistic culture, these effects would indicate that the policy was not succeeding by its own lights. Moreover, the appearance of these effects may even make things *worse*, by reproducing psychological barriers to cultural participation and influence among the least advantaged. Consider the following reasoning:

The Marginalised Consumer: “You want me to attend the state arts festival with you? I don’t really trust a venue like that to put on any kind of cultural festival that speaks to me. It’s not worth my time, they are out to exclude me, honestly.”

The Disenfranchised Artist: “You want me to submit this to the national portrait gallery prize? Are you serious?! I would never submit anything to that. Waste of time. They would never accept anything from *someone like me*.”

These kinds of complaints do not discount the neutral aims behind a cultural policy. Nor should they, taken in isolation, indicate a systematic flaw. The institutions and practices which operate around these judgements might marginalise specific consumers and producers without doing so *deliberately*. But if these expressions

were to reflect *systematic* feelings of exclusion among consumers and artists from specific social groups, it would seem short-sighted to dismiss them. In particular, we would be misguided to dismiss them if a cultural policy aimed to promote opportunities to engage with art (either as a producer or a consumer) for all individuals, and not just a limited group. In this case, widespread impressions of exclusion would be relevant to an assessment of whether a policy's aim – to promote inclusion – was on track to being met.

But while these reflections are linked with Brighthouse's neutrality objection to public arts funding, I argue that they are not appropriately handled by the principle of Partiality Avoidance. They are better handled by an independent evaluative criterion: anti-elitism. This will be the topic of the next chapter.

Conclusion

The most influential debate about public arts funding in liberal political philosophy revolves around the neutrality principle. In this chapter I have (1) described different ways of describing the neutrality principle, and defended *neutrality of aim* as the most plausible among them, (2) characterised two influential ways of expressing the Neutrality Objection, and (3) argued that neither are insurmountable. We can accept neutrality of aim without presuming that existing arts funding arrangements in liberal democratic states are always unjustified, or that new arrangements will necessarily be unjustified. I have argued this in the context of two presentations of the Neutrality Objection, the first stemming from Rawls (1999) and the second from Brighthouse (1995).

Rawls argues that under usual circumstances, public arts funding is not acceptable unless it (1) aims to promote “directly or indirectly the social conditions that secure the equal liberties” (Rawls 1999, p. 292); and (2) satisfies *the difference principle*, i.e. advances, in an appropriate way, “the long-term interests of the least advantaged” (Rawls 1999, p. 292). This means that arts funding would under usual circumstances be unjustified if it aimed to promote art for its own sake, rather than promote a value that is in all of our interests, and in a way which redounds to the least well off. To recall one more specific detail, I argued that in order to satisfy (1), we can simply show how a certain neutral value – such as cognitive benefits relating

to knowledge, understanding, and true belief – are promoted by public funding of the arts. This is because such benefits plausibly contribute, indirectly, to securing “the social conditions that secure the equal liberties”, such as freedom of thought and speech. While this may be a tough challenge to meet, in §1.3.1 I argued that it has been overstated both by its proponents and critics, and that this appears to have been reinforced by a shallow and incomplete reading of Rawls on the one hand, and a pessimism about the public value of arts funding, on the other.

For his part, Brighouse argues that liberals have good reasons to oppose government funding of the arts, even when it satisfies neutrality of aim. But in §1.3.2, I illustrated that his argument presupposed an implausible account of neutrality and played into an unjustified pessimism about the public value of arts funding. However, spelling out why Brighouse’s argument was misguided returned useful insights. The main finding was that, in order to evaluate whether arts funding respects neutrality, we should evaluate it at the level of the social conditions it aims to secure for citizens in the long-term. By focussing at the level of individual allocations of arts funding – just as in the case of individual public transport projects – we risk obfuscating the relationship between token applications of the policy, and its overall aim to establish and protect social conditions which are in our long-term interests as citizens. Arts funding decisions should be fitting with this aim, but no single decision, or set of decisions in a short-term period, should be expected to account for the ambition in its entirety.

In addition, in §1.3.3, I argued that Brighouse’s discussion of Partiality Avoidance alerted us to an independent objection, to which we will now turn.

Chapter 2

The Elitism Objection

Some arts institutions are criticised as elitist. But considering the large literature on arts funding and neutrality, the meaning and significance of this charge remains relatively unexplored. What is elitism? Are arts institutions always elitist? And what is it, exactly, that makes elitism bad, in the context of the arts? In this shorter chapter I argue that some ‘elitist norms’ – e.g. limiting and controlling influence to key decisions to a select group, despite their subjectivity and biases – are more acceptable when they (1) support a policy to achieve its neutral aims; and (2) are in the interests of the least-advantaged.

In §2.1, I provide a rough account of ‘elitist norms’ and argue that they are not always *prima facie* morally bad, and that they can and do serve our collective interests in some cases. In §2.2, I argue that elitist norms in the arts rather easily give rise to criticisms of elitism, because (a) aesthetic disagreements are not uncommon, (b) curation and programming decisions can imply a dismissal of them, and (c) in light of reasonable aesthetic disagreements, aesthetic decisions, curatorial and programming decisions cannot be easily justified by appeal to aesthetic expertise. However, I argue that the most serious case of cultural elitism – which lends significant force to the elitism objection – concerns *systematic marginalisation* from cultural participation and influence, and not aesthetic disagreements alone. This occurs where an individual suffers a disadvantage with respect to their ability to contribute to and participate in shared artistic culture, because of their social and economic disadvantages. Finally, in §2.3 I argue that two conditions – (1) neutrality of aim, and (2) a particular application the difference principle – should regulate the acceptability of elitist norms in cultural institutions. Elitist norms in cultural

institutions are, *ceteris paribus*, more acceptable when they serve the long-term interests of the disadvantaged.

2.1 ‘Elitist Norms’

Before considering what is bad about elitism, we require a working definition of elitism or elitist norms. However, although discussion of elitism is not uncommon in public discourse, there is a relatively small amount of literature on what elitism *is*, and what makes it bad (with some notable exceptions, including Bourdieu 1984; Skorupski 2000; Hamilton 2009; Kieran 2010; Gingerich 2019).¹² In the absence of a ‘standard account’ of elitism, the Oxford English Dictionary (OED) is a useful first point of reference. The OED defines elitism as:

Advocacy of or reliance on the leadership and dominance of an elite (in a society, group of people, etc.). (OED, 2021)

It defines the relevant sense of “elite” in two ways.

...*(a)* a select group that is superior in terms of ability or qualities to the rest of a group or society; *(b)* a group or class of people seen as having the most power and influence in a society, especially on account of their wealth or privilege. (OED, 2021)

Let us refer, loosely, to the norms of “advocacy of or reliance upon” an elite – e.g. an institution which promotes and defers to a particular social group – as ‘elitist norms’. Elitist norms of this kind standardly include gatekeeping practices, i.e. limiting or controlling access to something, particularly *access to* or *influence over* key decisions.

¹² I take the cited work to be relevant, but my own inquiry to be opening a slightly different line of questions. I am mainly concerned to investigate the conditions under which elitist norms are acceptable, and my analysis is restricted to public arts institutions. Other work has come at cultural elitism from slightly different angles. Bourdieu (1984) performed a sociological analysis of elitism in the context of class stratification. More recently, Skorupski (2000) developed a historical theory of the developments of a doctrine he calls “liberal elitism”, which Hamilton (2009) has used to interpret and criticise Scruton’s aesthetics. Gingerich (2019), whose work appears most connected to the questions I am raising, explored the wrong performed on individuals on account of lacking equality of cultural influence across a range of institutions governed by ‘cultural elites’. The key differences between my project and Gingerich’s is that I am concerned with public institutions, and that I am not, ultimately, defending a liberal theory of cultural rights.

I now aim to elicit the intuition that elitist norms are not bad in themselves, and that (at least in public institutions) their wrongness derives from whether or not they serve a legitimate public purpose. Elitist norms which support the influence of skills (*a*) are not in themselves bad, particularly when the domain of skill is connected to the domain of influence, and opportunities to develop the related skills, and exercise influence in the related domain, are governed meritocratically. Elitist norms which grant influence to socially and economically dominant group (*b*) are also not bad in themselves, particularly when the public stands to gain from them.

2.1.1 Superior Skill

It is notable that while elitist norms connote exclusion and inequalities of influence, we do not always regard them as unacceptable. We are not typically fussed when an institution has elitist norms which support an elite of kind (*a*), i.e. a group which has superior skill or ability in some domain.

A national Olympic organisation selects for and promotes superior athletes. It also establishes elitist norms in order to train such athletes, e.g. by attracting the best coaches, and deferring to their judgements. Take another case: a hospital is structured so as to rely upon the leadership and dominance of expert medical professionals, at least *qua* medical decisions. And moreover, the professions of law, accounting, and engineering are predicated on judgements that some individuals are better trained and skilled at performing specific tasks than others, and are owed a relative degree of deference as a result.

This is not to say that no such institutions and their supportive practices are unacceptably elitist. An institution which purports to promote and defer to those with superior skill may not be meritocratic (Hamilton 2009). Racial discrimination, intentional or otherwise, might influence the selection for the American figure skating team, effectively excluding some Americans from membership in their country's 'elite' group of athletes, at least *qua* the Olympics.

Moreover, there are some forms of elitism we find intuitively bad – for instance, those supported by arbitrary accumulations of power and influence. However, if and when the influence and leadership of elites is due to elites having genuine expertise, then most of us don't have a strong normative intuition that opposes elitism – so

long as entry to that elite is meritocratic (Hamilton 2009). This indicates that elitist norms are not inherently unacceptable, and that they are more acceptable when they promote the influence of genuine expertise, in a meritocratic way.

2.1.2 Social and Economic Privilege

The second sense of elite appears to track reasonable judgements of unacceptable elitism much more reliably. When an institution is structured such as to promote benefits for individuals who belong to a powerful and influential group in a society, it is more vulnerable to criticisms of elitism. The distinction draws roughly upon meritocratic and nonmeritocratic norms. Admissions to university degrees inevitably exclude members of the public, either from possible candidacy, or at the stages of selection. But insofar as they are carried out on the basis of merit, we do not judge university admissions *per se* as unacceptable, *ceteris paribus*.

That's when things go well. But university admissions can also be influenced, formally or informally, by standards which favour a socially or economically dominant group.¹³ For instance, an elite university may request statements of intent from applicants without publishing thorough guidelines for what to include. However, if the university has an informal guide for what it looks for, then those with social networks which include knowledge of this informal guide – perhaps through relatives who work at the university, or through peers or family-members who have been successful candidates – will be at an epistemic advantage over those who don't. And insofar as this knowledge travels through networks of wealth and social privilege, it advantages those from a dominant class. This motivates a common complaint about the admissions systems of top universities, which are described as “classist” and “elitist”.

However, there is a useful qualification to be made here. Some institutions, such as the military, present opportunities for the marriage of great skill *and* great power. It is not uncommon for liberal states to refer to their most skilled military units as elite and extraordinarily powerful in wielding force. While some of this may be

¹³ Moreover, these social-epistemic networks are correlated with one's social and economic privileges, such as their belonging to a wealthy, white family.

bragging and posturing, the point stands that some areas of the military are incredibly skilled, and that they wield great force over the safety and security of a country or region. In this sense, a military elite may fall into both (a) and (b). Yet, many people do not judge the norms of elite military units like the S.A.S as unacceptable or inegalitarian. I suspect that this is because the public stands to gain a great deal, physically and psychologically, from such norms being in place.

However, it is at least possible that the existence of a military elite is in our collective interests, yet propagates economic inequalities, by funnelling wealth into an already wealthy class of citizens. Hence, our tolerance of elitist norms does not appear to be a matter of whether they produce *no* inegalitarian effects. There are going to be cases where elitist norms are liable to reproducing inequalities but are nonetheless, on balance, not judged by us as intolerable. And the case of the S.A.S suggests that this is because, put roughly, the goodness of the collective interests they serve (e.g. national security) outweighs the badness of their inegalitarian effects (e.g. economic inequalities).

These brief reflections provide us with some hints about what make elitist norms more tolerable in some cases than others. Elitist norms appear more tolerable when they advocate and defer to individuals with skills the public generally tends to recognise, so long as entrance to the skilled group is governed meritocratically, and not restricted on the basis of class, race, etc. Inversely, elitist norms are much less tolerable when they do not appear to be in our collective interest, or when they reproduce social and economic inequalities to an extent which is, on balance, outweighed by the benefits they provide to the least well-off, and the rest of us.

2.2 Cultural Elitism

Let us now refer to “cultural elitism” as the arrangement whereby cultural institutions – e.g. theatre, ballet, and opera companies, and art galleries and film awards – are governed by elitist norms.

The above reflections might suggest that arts funding arrangements, so long as they are governed by the right kind of elitist norms, may tend to escape ongoing criticisms of cultural elitism. So long as practices surrounding allocations of resources and curation and programming provide influence to those with credible

expertise, the public will not tend to develop resentment and resistance towards the norms of exclusion. And if arts funding arrangements promote the influence of the socially and economically privileged – perhaps, rich, and famous artists or art directors – this might be tolerated if the elite are judged as skilled at what they do, and their influence is judged as likely to serve the public interest.

But this is not the case. Unlike many other areas of public expenditure, “there is no public consensus on the methods and point of art” (Brighouse 1995, p. 56). For instance, while the merits of scientific research are often debated, scientific communities can present the public with recourse to credible expert judgement, which will allay fears of undue partiality or wasteful expenditure. While experts in all domains are likely to disagree on *some* matters, disagreement is more commonplace (and acceptable) in the context of aesthetic judgement. There are some scientific matters whereby the refusal to defer to experts may strike us as unreasonable or irrational, e.g. public health and climate science. However, as Brighouse notes, this is not obviously the case in the arts. And as a result, appeals to aesthetic expertise cannot easily allay suspicions of unjustified favouritism and snobbery (Kieran 2010). To animate this thought, consider the following complaint about public art galleries.

[W]hat creates the perception that art is elitist is the group ... who surround the art; those gatekeepers operating like a kind of impenetrable, closed-shop cabal, whose assembled authority allows them to dictate not only the art we view and should be viewing, but also what our opinions on it should be. Never mind if we don't like their enforced choices; never mind if we don't visit the municipal and regional galleries in the numbers we should. The directors and the curators of these huge public resources carry on unperturbed, confident in their belief that they know better than we do what constitutes art; righteous in their own artistic taste.

These organisations, which attract large amounts of funding to provide art resources, have a duty to the wider population, beyond mere lip service, to consult and include them, and this responsibility should extend to occasionally acknowledging and respecting their demands and desires, irrespective of aesthetic partiality. (Thorpe 2014)

Thorpe, himself a visual artist, does not reject the value of public art galleries per se, but resents the elitist norms which control their curation. He suggests that “the directors and curators” (the elite) curate public galleries according to their own subjective tastes and opinions and are unperturbed by the aesthetic disagreements they share with the community. Without aiming to read too much into this portrayal of anti-elitism, it is worth noting how an appearance of ‘subjectivity’ is used to undermine the authority of the curators. In this way, we might suspect that Thorpe’s complaint is about public galleries conducting themselves in an inappropriately nonneutral way. In the face of reasonable aesthetic disagreement, they should aim to be neutral between competing aesthetic values; whatever this might involve. I do not want to deny that Thorpe’s complaint, and many others, may be usefully framed in this way. However, neutrality is not the whole story.

Part of what indicates that this kind of complaint is not simply about neutrality is that it can arise from members of the public who (like Thorpe) do not object to the public value of state funded arts institutions. They can acknowledge a purpose for which they exist, but judge that the purpose is threatened or undermined by elitist norms, for instance, norms which allow curators to give explicit preference to certain tastes and dismiss outside opinion. (Notably, this kind of complaint is not unique to public art galleries; it may also be raised with respect to the programming and curation of many other public arts institutions, e.g., arts festivals, and state opera, theatre, and ballet companies.)

But there is another kind of complaint which is not fully captured by Thorpe’s complaint, but which is pertinent to our discussion. This kind of complaint does not only (or even necessarily) concern aesthetic differences, rather, it concerns systematic marginalisation from contributions to, and participation within, shared culture. The following is a quote from Lindy Hume, who was the director of a state opera company, Opera Queensland, at the time of writing.

Despite a large female audience, opera is controlled largely by middle-aged blokes who commission other blokes to direct, conduct and design operas composed by dead white men. Some of my favourite composers are dead white men, but the world has changed. There are countless excellent women

composers, conductors, directors, set designers and more. There are no excuses for the industry's casual bias. (Hume 2017)

Like the former complaint, this is partly about exclusion, and 'insiders' and 'outsiders'. However, it is less about aesthetic disagreement (Hume does not explicitly complain about the quality of the programmed works) than it is about marginalisation of some artists and creatives from participation and contribution to our shared culture, on account of their social identity. She argues that women suffer systematic disadvantages in their participation in opera and suggests that this is independent of their talent (and presumably any aesthetic differences, though these may play a role too).¹⁴ In this way, the cultural elitism in question relates to social and economic privilege, and the moral force of the complaint derives from the fact that it reproduces an inequality of participation in artistic culture. We may refer to this as *systematic marginalisation* from artistic culture. Those who are marginalised from artistic production are not only less likely to make artistic works, but to find resources within artistic culture that portray and express important aspects of their experiences. And if it were the case – as I will argue in the following chapters – that some artistic expressions are particularly good at helping us understand the world, then such marginalisation would appear to have a cognitive quality. By belonging to a social group who was marginalised from the production of artistic culture, one would be less likely to have their experiences, culture or way of life understood by themselves and others (cf. Fricker 2007).¹⁵

The kind of complaint that Hume expresses has similarities with complaints raised about the underrepresentation of African American actors among Oscar awardees. In 2016, for the second year running, all actors nominated for Oscars were white. #OscarsSoWhite protests arose, complaining that the cultural elites of the

¹⁴ Another difference is that Hume is arguably a 'cultural insider' (being the director of an opera company herself) though we need not take this subtlety up here.

¹⁵ If we conceive of the value of artistic culture in cognitive terms, then Fricker's conception of "systematic hermeneutical marginalisation" would indicate a possible framework for this kind of marginalisation. However, my view is subtly but importantly different from Fricker's. On the argument I will propose in chapter 4, the purpose of mitigating marginalisation from the production of art is not simply to mitigate hermeneutical inequalities, but to enrich and expand our shared hermeneutical resources, such that we are all in a better position to develop various forms of cultural understanding.

Academy were failing to grant due recognition to actors and filmmakers of colour. But as Gingerich helpfully points out:

#OscarsSoWhite protests are about systemic racism, but they are also about ... a failure of citizens to regard one another as equally capable of contributing to their shared culture. (Gingerich 2019, p. 404)

Arts institutions provide opportunities for individuals to contribute to and participate in the shared culture of their society, through influencing and participating in its artistic culture. When elitist norms function to (1) preference certain aesthetics to the effective exclusion of others, and/or (2) support contributions and participation from socially and economically dominant groups to the exclusion of others, they are naturally subject to criticisms of cultural elitism.

These issues relate to complaints of non-neutrality, but they are not properly captured by them. I have already alluded to one reason why this is the case: they can plausibly arise in cases where arts funding arrangements are governed by a neutral aim – a goal to promote a value which is in our collective interests – which the complainants themselves recognise and support. But there is another reason.

The criticism of cultural elitism may arise from supporters of the arts who, like Thorpe, have had their tastes sidelined by the judgements of cultural elites. However, it may be the case that the process of sidelining their tastes was consistent with fulfilling neutral aims, even if it disgruntled large swathes of the public. To see how this could be so, we might return to the case of the public transport network we discussed in §1.3.2.

Although the language of elitism does not comfortably accommodate the criticisms we discussed with respect to a public transport system, there is a rough parallel. Citizens may resent the roll-out of a public transport system because their own preferences of bus and train connections are not accommodated, and their voices were excluded from decision-making processes. However, the decisions about how the public transport system is being rolled out – even if it does not serve their preferences – may still be in their *interests*, even if they suspect otherwise.

If there is a neutral value which public arts funding promotes, then the curating and programming of cultural institutions may function in roughly the same way. It

may be that, on some occasions, being excluded from decisions, even having one's tastes relegated for a period of time, is in the interests of all individuals.

Therefore, cultural elitism raises a challenge for arts funding arrangements. While exclusion from programming and curatorial decisions is relatively commonplace, it exposes arts institutions to suspicions of cultural elitism which cannot be easily allayed by appeal to aesthetic expertise. The challenge is to face up to the reality of exclusion. What level and kind of exclusion from curatorial and programming decisions is acceptable in the face of this reasonable aesthetic disagreement, and against a background social and economic inequalities?

2.3 Acceptable Norms of Cultural Elitism

I posit that elitist norms in public cultural institutions are more acceptable if:

- (1) they support the achievement of a cultural policy's neutral aims, and
- (2) they satisfy the difference principle, i.e. they are in the long-term interests of the least advantaged.

An arts funding arrangement or cultural policy will be more acceptable if it conduces to a distribution of goods, institutions and social practices which function in this way. This means that the acceptability of elitist norms can be assessed at two levels: a cultural policy at large; and the particular institutions (e.g., art galleries, and opera and companies) it supports. A justification for government funding of the arts which would *preclude* certain genres from recognition, or certain social groups from participation, would be unacceptable. But some level of exclusion is inevitable, and its acceptability increases to the degree that it supports (1) and (2).

At this stage in my thesis overall, I am limited in what I can say about (1). I am yet to consider, let alone defend, a neutral basis on which a cultural policy could be justified. But before commenting on (2), a brief statement is warranted. It seems that a justification for a public arts funding would be unacceptable if it put forward a blanket defence for the priority of expert voices, or a blanket defence of prioritising public opinion. By always prioritising 'aesthetic experts', or 'cultural elites' – art directors and curators, say – it would be snobbish and exclusionary in the way that Thorpe describes, and risk warding away the public rather than encouraging their

contribution and engagement. However, by always prioritising the voice of the public, a cultural policy would also be overly dismissive or sceptical of curators, artists, and art directors; and risk limiting the public to exposure of works they may not know of but may still enjoy.¹⁶ Or as I will suggest, it will significantly decrease the odds of the public being exposed to cultural expressions that are uncommon or unpopular, but whose promotion serves the public interest, by promoting a greater understanding of different experiences, worldviews, cultures and histories. So I will assume that whatever is to be said about the acceptability of elitist norms must not be inconsistent with roughly the following view. Neither the cultural elite nor the public should be excluded from decisions about how to allocate resources within and between cultural institutions. But nor should the opinions of either group always be prioritised.

But we have now gathered enough insight into what grounds the moral force of the elitism objection – inequalities of cultural participation and influence – to say something a bit deeper about (2). Let us begin by stating it in more detail:

The Difference Principle*

In order for elitist norms in cultural decision-making to be justified, they must contribute effectively to improving the interests of the least advantaged.

This is not a reading of the difference principle that Rawls himself articulates (e.g. Rawls 1999, p. 292; Rawls 2001, p. 64). Rather, it is specific application of it I feel is useful to mitigate unfair inequalities in access to cultural influence. Let's consider what this reading of the difference principle implies. What are the "the interests" of the least advantaged we are concerned with? And how might they be affected by insular decision-making and subjective standards of assessment in cultural institutions?

Recall that access to primary goods are the means by which the difference principle assesses disadvantage. Rawls' list of primary goods includes, inter alia, income and wealth, the ability to hold political office, and the social bases of self-

¹⁶ This kind of approach to public arts funding would appear to lapse into a radical form of scepticism about aesthetic expertise (Hamilton 2009, p. 396), and risk limiting protection for important features of our cultural heritage.

respect. I am particularly interested in the latter, which Rawls (2001) describes as “the recognition by social institutions that gives citizens a sense of self-worth and the confidence to carry out their plans” (pp. 58-9).

On the application of the difference principle I propose, arts institutions can uphold inequalities of cultural influence (e.g., in decision-making about resource allocation within and between arts institutions) when this can be expected to function to the benefit of the least advantaged. Thus, to help serve this purpose, some areas of cultural institutions can be governed by elitist norms which might otherwise be intolerable – they can have insular decision-making; and grant special influence to individuals not only the basis of their ‘aesthetic expertise’, but also on account of an individual’s cultural background.

Liberal political philosophers have often described the injustice which occurs when there is an inequality of access to political decision-making, and how this is amplified in societies with large social and economic inequalities. Such conditions may allow, to borrow Rawls’ words, “a few, in virtue of their control over the machinery of state, to enact a system of law and property that ensures their dominant position in the economy as a whole” (2001, p. 131), whether intentional or otherwise. But we should also be concerned to mitigate inequalities of access to cultural influence, which may function in a similar way with respect to culture. At this stage in my thesis, I am yet to theorise what the shared value of access to a certain artistic culture *is*. However, we have seen that anti-elitism derives significant moral force from inequalities of cultural influence (Gingerich 2019). This suggests that the public value of arts funding might be connected with mitigating such inequalities, or inversely, promoting some kind of equality of artistic opportunity. But in virtue of the control over the allocation of resources between or within cultural institutions, a relatively insular group of individuals can unintentionally produce or reproduce an artistic culture which alienates marginalised and disadvantaged groups.¹⁷ I argue that, in general, arts funding arrangements should tolerate exclusion from cultural influence to the degree that it mitigates this kind of inequality.

¹⁷ Compare Rawls (2001), who writes that “[s]ignificant political and economic inequalities are often associated with inequalities of social status that encourage those of lower status to be viewed both by themselves and by others as inferior” (p. 131).

2.3.1 Mitigating Cultural Inequalities

In §2.2 we considered a range of examples of cultural elitism which plausibly would not satisfy the difference principle. The general thrust was that an arts institution e.g. and opera company, whose practices effectively exclude minority or disadvantaged groups, would not appear to be in the best interests of the least advantaged. But to get a firmer handle on the difference principle, we should also consider cases in which letting cultural elites have a decisive say on curation and programming plausibly *would* be in the interests of the least advantaged.

To this end, we might imagine a scenario whereby cultural elites – artists and curators, and bureaucrats with power over cultural policies – take an interest in promoting the cultural expressions of Indigenous groups, despite a lack of populist interest in those cultural expressions. Suppose that these cultural elites work with Indigenous communities and leaders to cultivate their society's tastes in an anti-populist direction. They provide public resources to Indigenous communities to promote the development (and to some degree, the commercialisation) of their cultural expressions, and curate their work within various public art galleries and cultural venues. Over time, they work to increase the recognition and familiarity of Indigenous artwork among the broader public, including by making privately-run galleries a more viable prospect in the absence of government grants.

If, on the other hand, we let populist tastes dictate the curation of major public galleries over the last fifty years, this kind of broader influence of Indigenous art would have been much less likely. Why? Due to post-colonial economic conditions and the low buying power of First Nations peoples, the group of people who had exposure to (let alone an explicit interest in collecting and promoting) Indigenous art in liberal societies was very small. So, arguably, in most cases, a majority vote would not have promoted First Nations art.

But liberal societies are all the richer for cultural elitism *of this kind*. Our societies are enriched by promoting First Nations art, because our culture is enriched by virtue of it reckoning with the perspective of our First Nations peoples. Such cultural expressions help us all to gain a deeper knowledge and understanding of our national history and culture. Moreover, the promotion of First Nations art is in the interests of the least advantaged, namely, Indigenous people themselves, because it

helps to establish the social bases of self-respect for them, not to mention helping to establish a livelihood for many people and communities.¹⁸

2.4 The Bigger Picture

The reflections of this chapter have served a number of purposes. Firstly, they have supported the view that suspicions of elitism are not alone sufficient to preclude the permissibility of arts funding. Elitist norms can plausibly arise within arts funding arrangements which function to support neutral aims and promote the interests of the least advantaged. But this inquiry stemmed from Brighthouse’s argument for the prohibition of art funding. We might wonder, then, what those more sympathetic to Brighthouse’s view would want to take away from it.

Reasonable aesthetic differences might give rise to criticisms of elitism directed at a given cultural institution or institutions. I have argued that this does not itself render the wider cultural policy nonneutral or unacceptably elitist. However, there is a caveat. If feelings of aesthetic favouritism were not a mere artefact of a moment in time (e.g. Black History Month) or a particular institution’s goals (e.g. supporting the work of British Muslim artists) but a systematic feature of the cultural policy itself (“no Christian art allowed”), then the policy would obviously be unacceptable. It would be unacceptable on account of, to coin a phrase, inherent “aesthetic perfectionism”: its adopting an overly narrow and prescriptive view of art, that precludes support for certain kinds of cultural expression and heritage (see diagram below). So I am in agreement with Brighthouse on at least one score: arts funding arrangements should be subject to a “general prohibition” if they prescribe *aesthetic perfectionism*. However, not all cultural elitism does. Cultural elitism does not necessarily threaten neutral aims, or the difference principle.

A justification for a cultural policy which adopts, to borrow a phrase from Kieran (2005), “an overly narrow and prescriptive” account of what “good art should be in the business of doing” (p. 156) is aesthetically perfectionist. Aesthetic perfectionism

¹⁸ For a discussion of related issues in the context of Australia’s First Nations Peoples, see Janke (2021).

overlaps with nonneutrality of aim; and is sufficient for an unacceptably elitist cultural policy.

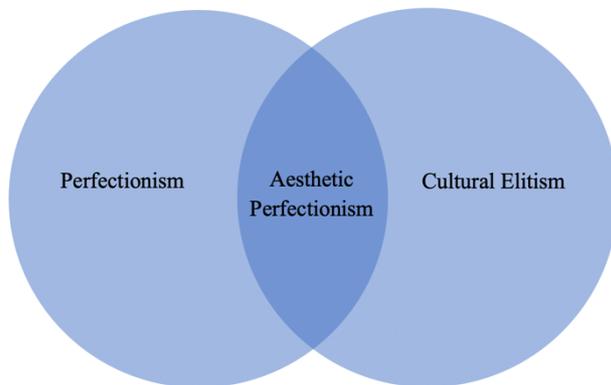


Figure 1. “Aesthetic Perfectionism”, a doctrine precluded by state neutrality.

Conclusion

In this chapter I have aimed to develop a response to the question of what makes a public arts institution – such as a public gallery or opera company – unacceptably elitist. By doing so, I have also developed a framework for understanding when a justification for government funding of the arts is unacceptably elitist.

I have argued that some level of elitist norms – e.g. insular decision-making, and subjective standards in curatorial and programming decisions – are acceptable when they are in the interests of disadvantaged groups and the rest of us. This conclusion provides us with a means to assess liberal justifications for public arts funding against the elitism objection (inversely, it helps us understand how they will satisfy the anti-elitism condition). The adopted standard is not whether an institution promotes goods everyone will directly enjoy; or avoids making decisions in a manner which is arguably subjective or insular. Rather, it is whether these things may (a) function in the interest of the least advantaged and (b) occur within an overall arrangement which secures a shared value for us and is in the interest of the least advantaged. If these things are not in place, then it is likely that the institutional arrangement is unacceptable. Otherwise, cultural elitism may be said to be in the interest of the least advantaged.

Chapter 3

Possible Justifications for Public Arts Funding

The first two chapters of this thesis have aimed to lay out the dialectical territory of arts funding debates in the tradition of liberal political philosophy. In particular, they described two objections liberal arts funding arrangements might encounter in a liberal democratic politics, concerning (1) Neutrality, and (2) Elitism.

The remainder of this thesis shifts our focus slightly away from political philosophy and towards aesthetics, as we search for the best possible argumentative strategy for overcoming the constraints the previous chapters have alerted us to.

In this chapter, I explore three possible strategies for defending the public value of arts funding and consider what key ingredients a possible justification should aim to include. I argue that no single approach contains all the components required to defend the liberal tradition of government arts funding in the post-war era. However, I argue that Nussbaum's (1997) defence of the civic value of art, although it is focussed on literature, alerts us to a new and particularly promising strategy, on which an artistic culture is conceived as providing opportunities to contribute to and draw upon "shared hermeneutical resources" (Fricker 2007; Medina 2013).

To begin, I provide a framework for theorising the public value of an artistic culture a cultural policy might aim to promote and protect. The bulk of discussion is then devoted to assessing three possible strategies.

A Framework for Theorising the Public Value of Arts Funding

It appears that an egalitarian justification for arts funding will contain two key ingredients:

1. **Public Benefit.** An account of how a certain kind of arts sector or arrangement of arts institutions might provide a benefit all citizens have an interest in, regardless of their conception of the good and whether they engage with art directly.
2. **Market Failure.** An account of why this public benefit is significantly less likely to arise in the absence of a certain kind of cultural policy, e.g. an account of why the existence of certain areas of artistic culture are “fragile” (Dworkin 1985 p. 233; Carroll 1987 p. 33).

One might argue that a cultural policy is justified if it aims to insure against the risk of market failure, i.e., to help achieve a socially optimal distribution of a certain kind of public benefit, or public good. The force of this argument will depend on the account given for both (1) and (2). It will depend on how much the Public Benefit claim has purchase on our shared intuitions about human interests. Is it plausibly the case that the value alluded to is one that all citizens have an interest in securing? And is it plausibly the case that this benefit is promoted by a certain kind of artistic culture? It will also depend on the argument provided for market failure. Is there a compelling case that the benefits in question are at significant risk of *not* arising, remaining in place, or being sufficiently accessible to all or most citizens *without* the specified cultural policy being in place? If a justification for public arts funding can provide a satisfactory response to these questions, it would appear to contain the basic elements required to overcome the Neutrality Objection, and to mitigate suspicions of elitism. But before considering how different options fare on these criteria it will help to give a basic description of “artistic culture”.

What is an Artistic Culture?

By “artistic culture” I mean, very roughly, the practices (surrounding both production and consumption) and institutions (e.g., artistic collectives, state-sponsored galleries and theatre companies, private record labels and Spotify and Instagram) which support the production and consumption of art found in a society.¹⁹ I adopt a pluralistic conception of art and artistic value that does not preclude advertising, commercial cinema, Instagram posts, or the scribbles of toddlers, from being art, or having artistic merit.

To place this in the context of my overarching question: I am concerned to investigate whether certain norms of artistic production and consumption are in the interests of all or most members of the public, but unlikely to arise without government funding. In order to answer this question, we can consider theories of artistic culture, or more specifically, theories about *the public value of artistic culture*.

Three Possibilities

Recent work in aesthetics and political philosophy presents a range of strategies for theorising the public value of artistic culture. These strategies include (but are not limited to) appealing to (1) the aesthetic qualities of ‘non-commodified’ artistic expressions (e.g. Adorno and Horkheimer; Scruton), (2) the idea that that artistic culture contributes to the richness and diversity of cultural structure overall, and in turn adds depth to our individual choices (Dworkin 1985; Kymlicka 1995), or (3) the

¹⁹ An alternative definition might have defined artistic culture in terms of the institutions and practices which uphold the distribution of art found in a particular society, or its “material culture”. My definition does not ignore facts about the material distribution of art found in a given society – for instance, the diversity of artistic expressions found in that distribution. However, this kind of material emphasis strikes me as unsatisfactory in a digital age, where many artworks are distributed via the internet, and many encounters with artistic expressions take place in digital settings. In our era, many cultural artefacts appear to have a distinctly digital ontology (e.g. YouTube and TikTok videos, digital photographs, online music and Non-Fungible Tokens) and may therefore lack a material distribution with any obvious geographic centre. My definition accounts for differences between geographic regions nonetheless, by referring to practices of production and consumption.

power of artistic culture to promote civic education and protect democracy (Hutchins 1952; Nussbaum 1997; Schwartz 2000).²⁰

While this is far from an exhaustive list, I take it to provide a helpfully diverse array of options for theorising artistic culture. While no single approach provides all the ingredients required for our inquiry, all point toward important insights the others lack, and by attending to their drawbacks, we are alerted to obstacles any given approach will encounter.

3.1 Mass Market Pessimism

3.1.1 The Frankfurt School

One approach to theorising the value of artistic culture appeals to a distinction between “authentic” representations or artistic expressions, and those which are highly commodified or in some other way not real or genuine.²¹ This distinction operates alongside a highly pessimistic view of the potential for “authentic” artistic expressions to prosper in industrialised capitalist societies, or at least through popular channels of communication. Mass-market pessimism, as we might call it, is linked with the Marx-inspired Frankfurt School and finds one of its definitive twentieth-century expressions in the work of Adorno and Horkheimer (2002).

Adorno and Horkheimer argue that the production of mass culture is controlled by the “culture industry”, which is fundamentally concerned with profit. What is most profitable is what is both easily reproduced and consumable. The artefacts of mass culture – popular films, television, and music – are produced in accordance

²⁰ These options are not exhaustive. Other options include appealing to (1) cultural rights (e.g. Kymlicka 1995; Gingerich 2019), or (2) the notion that free expression is a public good (e.g. Raz 1995). The former approach would seemingly place arts funding in the sphere of justice or “constitutional essentials”, whereas my theoretical goals are open to it not being demanded by justice in this way. Raz’s view – that free expression in the public domain helps to provide a source of validation and self-esteem to all individuals – is one on which I will draw in the following chapter.

²¹ This idea has a long history, and is arguably expressed by Plato in his infamous critique of the Athenian theatre. In Book X of *The Republic*, Plato wrote about his disdain for the mass-entertainment of the Athenian theatre, where human experiences were represented in an overly dramatic and emotionalised way, by people who lacked the training and insight into the human condition which philosophers carried. Hence, the “poets” of Plato’s day were guilty, on his view, of promoting representations of human nature which risked “corrupting” the soul, by playing to its irrational components. For a mass-media-pessimism-style interpretation of Plato’s argument, see Nehamas (1988).

with highly standardised formulae. The effect is that popular culture is filled with artefacts which are highly pleasing, but also highly similar and rarely surprising, or confronting. The forces of the market constrain the expression of certain aesthetic values, such as originality, non-conformity, and works of expression which draw their audiences into critical reflection. Market capitalism in the age of mass production conduces to a distribution of (mass) culture in which most artefacts lack depth, and in which there is little diversity or innovation. The consumer is highly unlikely to be presented with forms of expression which challenge or confront their ways of thinking.²² They are also highly unlikely, if not unable, to have any say in the matter of the mass culture they consume: what they are *able* to consume is determined by a formula of what is most pleasurable for the broadest audience at the lowest price. And granted the all-pervasive nature of *mass culture*, individuals are likely to be mistaken – duped – when they think they have formed *their own* tastes in the mass market.²³ To put the thesis in its most bold form: the consumer cannot exercise choice, because all options are the same.²⁴

If there were a benefit that an artistic culture might promote for individuals, Adorno and Horkheimer give us reason to think that the conditions of market capitalism are inimical to it being realised. However, they express relatively little optimism about the value of authentic artistic expression being realised, in *any* area of capitalist, industrial societies. Due to the economic conditions governing such societies, all aspects of their culture, including their *high culture*, are at risk of being commodified such that their aesthetic value is framed in nearly entirely commercial terms. Hence, there is no reason to think that Adorno and Horkheimer's pessimism about artistic culture would wane in the face of government arts funding.

The upshot is that the work of the Frankfurt School might provide a defence of the Market Failure claim, but their theoretical positions do not indicate a defence of a Public Benefit claim. However, it may be possible to pair their mass-market pessimism with a more optimistic view about the value of some kinds of artistic

²² And when consumers do find themselves engaged in reflection, it is likely to serve a certain commercial function, driving them (under a false pretence of want or need) to consume more.

²³ The same story is told about production: producers lack autonomy over their decisions, because they are controlled by the forces of capitalism.

²⁴ And any tastes they *do* develop do not belong to them, but are orchestrated by the mechanism of capitalism, to serve a purpose in locking consumers in cycles of consumption which divert their attention – as both consumers and workers – from the ways in which they are oppressed.

culture prospering in liberal democratic societies. Roger Scruton, an influential aesthetician, and conservative thinker, pursues this strategy, which he pairs with a defence of High Culture.

3.1.2 Scruton's Account of High Culture

Scruton argues that high culture serves a variety of important emotional, cognitive, and societal functions, which he says benefit all individuals, and not just an elite class. However, he argues that these important functions are unlikely to be properly fulfilled under the conditions of market capitalism and with the waning influence of religion and growing influence of 'multiculturalism'. Though this story may not strike us as particularly democratic or egalitarian, it provides one of the most serious and broad attempts to theorise the value of Western cultural heritage, and in doing so, alerts us to important aspects about cultural heritage which other accounts do not tend to emphasise.

First of all, let us set the mass-market pessimism aspect of his work aside; and focus on his discussion of culture. Scruton defines high culture as:

...the accumulation of art, literature, and humane reflection that has stood the "test of time" and established a continuing tradition of reference and allusion among educated people (Scruton 2007, pp. 1-2).

In defending the value of high culture, Scruton appeals to (1) personal flourishing and (2) common meanings. Concerning personal flourishing, he says that high culture contributes to our well-being and flourishing by guiding us toward higher feelings and the true and beautiful. Concerning higher feelings, he says that artefacts of high culture – perhaps Tchaikovsky's works, or Michelangelo's frescoes – reward us with "higher emotions" such as "awe and elation" (Scruton 2005, p. 44).

Hamilton (2009) refers to this 'well-being' thread of Scruton's arguments as "humanist" (p. 391). In the realm of aesthetic judgement, the idea that high culture brings us deeply valuable aesthetic experiences is not particularly controversial.

People of all walks of life speak of the 'awe-inspiring' nature of masterpieces.

However, Scruton also argues that our experience of such works is not only valuable

for its own sake. Aesthetic experiences of high art also have a role in developing our sense of what is *truly* beautiful and right. Inversely, they play a role in guiding us away from what is banal, mediocre, shallow, ‘fake’ and potentially misleading.²⁵

Scruton’s aesthetics are therefore committed to two epistemological claims, namely, that (i) there are such things as moral truths, and knowledge of these can be gained through aesthetic experiences of high cultural artefacts (Stevens 2012); and (ii) there is such a thing as objective beauty, and our recognition and appreciation of it is strengthened by some aesthetic experiences of high cultural artefacts. These claims operate in tandem with a perfectionist account of human flourishing: the good life consists in being guided by what is true and beautiful. As such, high culture plays an essential role in contributing to our well-being. We might then say that insofar as the state is concerned with protecting and promoting our well-being, it has a duty to protect and promote high culture.

These are bold statements and are sure to attract criticisms from aesthetics and moral and political philosophy. But although Scruton’s views may appear “overly narrow and prescriptive” (Kieran 2005, p. 156), we might note that they walk in the ballpark of other more plausible and common views. For instance, a range of philosophers have argued that art helps us deepen our moral understanding of the world. Taken in the abstract – i.e., referring to art, and not solely to *high culture* – this sort of view finds proponents in Nussbaum (1997), John (2001), Kieran (2005), and Gaut (2007). But to defend this sort of view *solely* for high cultural artefacts appears misled – indeed, *aesthetically perfectionist*.

Scruton is resolute that artefacts of the high cultural canon are superior. Music broadcasted on popular radio is inherently inferior to classical music, on account of its moral-epistemological properties. However, his “standing the test of time” criterion of entry to the high cultural canon appears impossible to explain in ways that don’t result in self-fulfilling prophecies. Cultural items retain an interest and inspiration for audiences in part because of how cultural institutions treat them. It is much easier for music that receives patronage from cultural institutions to retain its appeal across generations. Indeed, this fact lies at the heart of Scruton’s appeal for

²⁵ Scruton speaks of “right feeling” (2007, p. 100), and “right judgement” and experience (2006, p. 21). He says that high culture “reorders” our emotions (2006, p. 60), “transfigures” our being (2006, e.g., p. 23) and in this way “ennobles” (2006, p. 44) our spirit.

the public support of High Culture. However, if we then say “that music stood the test of time” in order to defend its status as a part of the high cultural canon, it would seem as though we are just celebrating a self-fulfilling prophecy.

Moreover, against the backdrop of his account of human flourishing, Scruton’s aesthetics cannot form the basis of a neutral defence of arts funding without sounding, to borrow Dworkin’s (1985) phrase, “haughtily paternalistic” (p. 222).²⁶ Scruton suggests that those who mainly engage with popular entertainment are likely to lead lives which are morally and epistemically inferior to those who mainly engage with high culture. Trying to build an account of the public value of art on the basis of it will be an uphill battle (Stevens 2012).

However, Scruton’s argument that high culture has an inherent cultural or social value gestures towards an approach with more democratic appeal. It begins with the moral epistemological premise that art has the power to help us grasp how we *ought to feel* and *respond* to the world in certain situations. On account of this, a key social value of high culture is that it helps to ‘organise’ the social world such that, in the instance of significant events like the death of a loved one, how we ought to feel and what we can expect from one another becomes a less uncertain affair. High culture shapes our collective responses so that they are governed by shared meanings and values, such that the world becomes socially structured through the educational force of high culture. However, this educational influence wanes as respect and protection of high culture decreases. Thus, for the sake of maintaining a shared culture, Scruton urges us to ensure that the traditions of high culture are kept ‘alive’.

However, even if high culture *does* have this effect on our shared culture, and in ways that most citizens would recognise as in their interests, it remains unclear why we should think that other areas of culture lack this influence (Carroll 1987, p. 33).²⁷ Can we not derive guidance from The Beatles on how to respond to love and heartbreak? Scruton appears to take the truth of his position wholly for granted; and so similar worries about aesthetic parochialism and elitism arise. Notwithstanding

²⁶ Indeed, Scruton (1997) writes: “In a democratic culture, people believe themselves to be entitled to their tastes. But it does not follow that good and bad taste are indistinguishable, or that the education of taste ceases to be a duty” (pp. 497-8). Though this comment is not made in connection to the state itself, it is suggestive that his political morality is supportive of perfectionist paternalism.

²⁷ Carroll raises this point in connection with Dworkin’s (1985) argument for the protection of artistic culture, though it applies to Scruton’s argument as well.

these drawbacks, Scruton's allusion to "common meaning" is not without democratic appeal and finds support in the work of Dworkin (1985). Worries about perfectionism and elitism arise on account of presupposing that certain artistic traditions have a monopoly over the stock of shared meaning and value. If these issues are avoided, an account of artistic culture which couches its public value in shared meaning may hold a lot of promise.

3.2 Individual Choice and Cultural Structure

A second approach, proposed by Dworkin (1985), appeals to the value of autonomy and individual choice, and argues that this is promoted and protected by a rich and diverse artistic culture. Dworkin's argument begins with a "distinction between two consequences our culture has for us" (p. 229). Firstly, "[i]t provides the particular paintings, performances, and novels, designs, sports, and thrillers that we value and take delight in". But at a higher level, it also "provides the structural frame that makes aesthetic values of that sort possible, that makes them values for us" (p. 229). Dworkin's argument concerns the contribution of the arts to "cultural structure", rather than "particular aesthetic events" (p. 232). In this way, it takes a more general view of artistic culture than Scruton's, while retaining a focus on the contribution that artistic culture makes to our overall shared culture.

According to Dworkin (1985), all individuals inherit a "cultural structure" which provides them with the context for choosing between different pursuits, associations, and ways of life (see also Kymlicka 1995).²⁸ At the centre of a cultural structure, Dworkin argues, is a "shared language" (p. 230), which sets a certain range of possibilities for understanding, evaluating, and communicating.

A language can diminish; some are richer and better than others. It barely makes sense to say that people in later generations would prefer not to have had their language diminished in some particular way, by losing some particular structural opportunity. They would lack the vocabulary in which to

²⁸ Kymlicka (1995) draws upon Dworkin's "cultural structure" to defend the value of "societal structure", which provides the "contexts of choice" between different ways of life. However, Kymlicka is not concerned mainly with artistic culture, but shared culture in a broader sense.

express—that is to say, have—that regret. Nor does it make much more sense to say that they would prefer to have a language richer in opportunities than they now have. No one can want opportunities who has no idea what these are opportunities of. Nevertheless, it is perfectly sensible to say that they would be worse off were their language to lack opportunities that ours offers. (Dworkin 1985, p. 230)

The idea is that cultural structure provides us with a shared language, and that it is in our collective and individual interests that our shared language provides opportunity for a vast diversity of rich expressions. This is because our choices – whereby Dworkin (1985) alludes not only to cultural or artistic expressions, but also the development of our tastes and ways of life – are made within a shared language. In this way, the richness and diversity of our shared language gives “depth and complexity” to our choices and shapes the character and opportunity of the “forms of life” (p. 229) available to us.

But how does this connect back to artistic culture? Dworkin suggests that artistic culture plays an integral role in determining the richness and diversity of our shared language. He expresses a similar line of thought to Scruton’s, i.e. that artistic culture contributes “common meanings” to shared culture – a key difference being that Dworkin’s view is not explicitly tied to *high culture*.²⁹ Dworkin writes:

[T]he structural aspect of our artistic culture is nothing more than a language, a special part of the language we now share. The possibilities of art, of finding aesthetic value in a particular kind of representation or isolation of objects, depend on a shared vocabulary of tradition and convention.... Suppose no one had ever found value in narrative invention, that is, in a story. Our language would not then have had the complex resources it does to distinguish between a novel and a lie. Then no one could suddenly, just out of creative inspiration, write a novel. There would be no resources available

²⁹ Scruton (2006) writes: “Inevitably, therefore, a high culture involves a repertoire, an accumulation of works of art and exemplary utterances, which create the common ground in which the new and the surprising are planted” (p. 45)

for him to recognize value in a false narrative, for others to receive what he offered them in this mode. (Dworkin 1985, p. 231)

Thus, Dworkin argues that artistic culture expands our tools of thought and communication in general, and not just for artistic expression. On his view, artistic culture is a kind of *incubator* of, and *library* for the organising categories of our shared language. Narrative fiction, for instance the novel, helped to develop, or at least make vivid the distinction between truth and fiction, and in turn, literary culture keeps this distinction active, or ‘alive’ in our shared culture. Dworkin suggests that these effects are multiplied by the degree of rich genres and forms available. Altogether, artistic culture innovates and preserves the tools we rely on to understand the world, make choices, and communicate with one another.

Dworkin’s argument provides a defence of the Public Benefit claim, seeing as the value of artistic culture is that it helps develop, maintain, and replenish the organising structures of our shared culture. Its value is accessible to us as a shared language is. In this way it is not limited to those who directly engage with art, or dependent upon a perfectionist value, that Art is an Element of the Good, or that some particular genre is inherently superior. But why is this value unlikely to arise *without* state arts funding?

Dworkin (1985) argues that the public value of an artistic culture significantly depends upon its degree of (1) continuity and (2) innovation. He takes for granted that the survival of certain artforms brings a wealth of pleasure to many of us. Nonetheless, he argues that in order for this value to underlie any significant public benefit, it must “[radiate] out from” arts institutions (whether galleries, museums, theatres) into “concentric circles embracing the experience of a much larger community” (p. 231). Dworkin does not explain this statement. However, it seems fair to assume that he intends something like the following. The public value of continuity – via which the cognitive value of an artform remains active in our shared culture – depends upon a certain level of community exposure, which in turn depends on a range of arts institution remaining lively. This is lent intuitive support by revisiting the analogy with a living linguistic language. The survival of a sophisticated but fragile language – one with very few native speakers – may depend for its survival upon experts devoted to studying it.

The second thought is that an artistic culture needs to maintain a tradition of innovation, such that some artforms allow for reinterpretation and development. Once again, Dworkin appears to take this value for granted, though the thought seems sound enough. The public value of artistic culture will wane into banality or irrelevance if it fails to evolve over time; or its traditions are so conservative and fixed that they cannot explore the themes and problems distinctive to a modern age.

3.2.1 Objections to Dworkin

Dworkin's account has much to work in its favour, but it leaves a range of things underexplained, and this leaves it vulnerable to the neutrality objection (Franken 2016, p. 49). We might wonder, for instance, why "the structure of culture is fragile" (Carroll 1987, p. 33; Brighouse 1995, pp. 54-5), especially in light of the mass-production of popular entertainment. And to the extent that items of culture *are* fragile – that their associated practices and appreciation may diminish over time – why single out *artistic practices*? Why not also, or instead, protect roller derby, or niche games, sports, and cuisines (Carroll 1987, p. 33)?

A fairly simple response might point out that some areas of artistic culture *are* fragile. They are fragile insofar as the institutions which support their traditions and practices appear unlikely to survive without ongoing government funding. This sort of fragility is common to arts sectors in liberal states, though its specific details vary across time and from place to place. Those details shouldn't matter. We can simply say that many arts institutions which currently exist will be threatened to close if governments withdraw support for them.

However, this reply does not tell us which of the arts institutions or practices make an essential contribution to the richness and diversity of our share culture. What distinguishes art, or certain artistic practices and expressions, from other areas of culture? One response is that these things are not as rich or sophisticated as those we associate with an established canon of high culture. However, in saying this, we seem to be stepping into a perfectionist claim à la Scruton, that some kinds of culture are intrinsically superior to others in their depth and meaning.

3.2.2 A Possible Retort: Social Goods

One retort, which shares some aspects of Dworkin's account, but also goes beyond it, involves saying that we ought to protect a certain class of shared activities – those through which our society has flourished over time – but withholds judgement on what this class of activities ought to consist of (Munoz-Dardé 2013). It allows the content of this class of activities to be set by historical contingency. A motivating premise is that the well-ordered society includes *some* activities via which individuals flourish and make “find meaning together” (Munoz-Dardé, p. 240), and that we have a joint interest in sustaining these activities.

The value of joint activities may be theorised by reference to what Munoz-Dardé (2013) refers to as “social goods”, which “develop according to a certain degree of local contingency” (Munoz-Dardé 2013, p. 223). Social goods provide us with a source of shared meaning:

It is through coming together and partaking in idiosyncratic but necessarily joint enterprises that we find meaning together. (Munoz-Dardé 2013, p. 240)

Hence, we may argue, as Munoz-Dardé does, that:

The particular [social] goods ... that we are so engaged with need have no special status beyond being the ones that we here have come to sustain. But for us to flourish together, we must be so committed to *some* goods. (Munoz-Dardé 2013, p. 238, emphasis in original)

But social goods are in no way limited to the social practices and traditions which might have evolved around an artistic culture. They may also consist of traditions surrounding “drinking coffee in particular ways in Italy” and “local traditions of playing and watching sports: be that rugby in Wales, football in Spain, golf in Scotland, or baseball throughout the US and Japan” (Munoz-Dardé 2013, p. 223). Hence, in deciding to continue (if not also advance) our support for these traditions, we might concede to Carroll and Brighthouse that things other than artistic culture contribute richness and diversity to our shared culture; but argue that artistic culture is among an array of social goods of vital importance to us, worthy of protection. In

doing so, we may simply appeal to the historical fact that “these particular goods matter around here” (Munoz-Dardé, p. 238).

There are many more details to Munoz-Dardé’s argument, though I shall not explore them here.³⁰ What matters for the moment is that this approach provides a way to side-step suspicions of perfectionism, while still accepting that artistic culture contributes richness and diversity to our shared culture.

However, while an account of social goods appears to be of fundamental importance to a liberal defence of any particular social good, it can only take us so far with respect to our present inquiry. This is because it does not provide us with a detailed theory of any member of the class *social goods*, such as a particular artistic tradition, or artistic culture. Hence, we still require an answer to the question of what makes artistic culture a unique social practice or tradition among others.

As a matter of fact, we spend a lot more resources on the arts than we do other cultural practices. And so while it is quite right to say “the arts matter around here”, the more pressing question is *why do the arts matter so much?* If we slashed our funding of the arts by 50%, would we be significantly hindered in our ability to sustain shared meanings? I strongly suspect, with Munoz-Dardé and Dworkin, that we would. But in order to defend this answer to someone who is not already inclined to agree with us, we need a more detailed explanation of the *particular ways* in which artistic practices create or contribute to shared meanings or a shared language. That they do play some role in this seems *prima facie* plausible. But what is the nature of that role, and what makes it so significant? In what ways are the richness and diversity that artistic practices contribute to our culture distinguishable from the contributions of other activities?

A justification for government funding of the arts which does not provide these details may only be able to say that arts funding is justified *in principle*. It will assume that artistic practices contribute to our shared culture but defer the details elsewhere, such as to aesthetics. However, these details are important, especially if we want to defend policies under which the arts are not only allocated *some*

³⁰ One other crucial piece of Munoz-Dardé’s argument is her claim that it would be unreasonable to demand public resources to be directed *away* from sustaining existing social goods, in order to meet other needs (such as in healthcare), if the social goods in question satisfy a need of individuals. We cannot be reasonably expected to sacrifice a good which satisfies one of our needs, she argues, in order to meet the needs of another (2013 esp. pp. 232-8).

resources, but a significantly greater amount than other activities which plausibly play a role in sustaining our shared meanings, e.g., sport, cuisine, or board games (Carroll 1987).

3.3 Civic Education: Empathy, Imagination and Democracy

Another approach to theorising the value of artistic culture helps to address these questions. According to this approach, the arts – or at least certain artforms or genres, and modes of engaging with them – help citizens achieve a kind of education which “responsible democratic citizenship demands” (Hutchins 1953, p. 54). There have been a range of defences offered of this approach (e.g. Hutchins 1953; Nussbaum 1997; Gutmann 1999; Schwartz 2000). Granted her influence on contemporary debates in aesthetics and moral and political philosophy, I will devote my attention to Nussbaum’s account (1997, see especially pp. 85-113). Although Nussbaum’s defence is offered in the context of literature (and more generally, liberal arts education), I will argue that its appeal to the ‘epistemic value’ of literary culture – in particular, its ability to cultivate empathy and imagination – inspires a defence of the Public Benefit and Market Failure claims which apply to artistic culture more generally.

First, I will outline the main details of her account. I will then illustrate how they suggest a way to add details to Dworkin’s claims about the richness and diversity that artistic culture contributes to shared culture.

3.3.1 Nussbaum’s Account

Integral to Nussbaum’s thesis is a worry about the threat multiculturalism poses to the ability of citizens with different social backgrounds to understand and relate to one another. It helps to begin here.

Epistemic Fragility

Nussbaum (1997) builds her argument upon a number of claims about liberal democracy and political disagreement. Firstly, she emphasises that modern democracies are “inescapably multicultural and multinational” (p. 8). Secondly, she argues that in such multicultural societies, citizens can hardly avoid working, interacting with, or being called upon to consider political questions which deeply affect people with different social backgrounds and experiences to their own. Most individuals will have to work, interact with, or at least make political judgements (e.g. through voting) which directly concern, people with different religious and ethnic backgrounds. But Nussbaum is not only concerned to emphasise the different political belief systems which exist in modern democracies. Fundamentally, she wants to emphasise that multicultural societies contain a plethora of different experiences. Members of different groups differ in their having particular social experiences, owing e.g. to ethnic, religious, sexual, gender, age, and other differences.

With these observations in place, she alludes to an epistemic challenge which arises in an increasingly pluralistic democracy. In such a democratic society, political questions increasingly implicate our social differences without providing us recourse to common experiences and values. Questions about the limits of religious freedom, migration, and gender and sexual equality, Nussbaum argues, are pressing, and characteristic of our age. But they call on citizens to reflect on matters which make competing political beliefs and experiential backgrounds salient, in ways which conduce to disagreement. Nussbaum worries that citizens in a multicultural democracy may not have the psychological resources to respond appropriately. Without active efforts to foster perspective-taking and concern for others, she suggests that increasing pluralism gives rise to a form of identity politics which is corrosive on our individual and collective ability to find common points of view, achieve political resolutions and avoid social conflict.

Literature for Empathy: A Public Benefit

That is the negative story. The positive story is that by promoting a certain kind of literary culture, a society can foster a set of cognitive abilities by which individuals are better able to understand one another.

A society that wants to foster the just treatment of all its members has strong reasons to foster an exercise of the compassionate imagination that crosses social boundaries, or tries to. And this means caring about literature.

(Nussbaum 1997, p. 92)

There are two key claims. One is that through exercise of the imagination, we can gain a deeper understanding and concern for people who are rather different from ourselves. The other is that some kinds of literature are particularly good at cultivating this form of imagination, which Nussbaum interchangeably refers to as “sympathetic imagination” and “empathy”. In *To Kill a Mockingbird*, Atticus Finch makes a straightforward defence of the first claim when he says to Scout:

You never really understand a person until you consider things from his point of view—until you climb into his skin and walk around in it.³¹ (Lee 2010, p. 30)

By use of the imagination, we can place ourselves “in the shoes” of people different to ourselves (Nussbaum 1997, p. 11). We might consider what it is like to be in their position, and in doing so, gain some sense of what it *might* be like. For instance, we might consider, as Scout comes to over time, what it is like to be her brother, or Boo Radley, a man who lives on the same street as Atticus and Scout, but who rarely if ever sets foot outside. By doing so, we may experience feelings that *we* might have had, were we to have found ourselves in a comparable situation, e.g. constantly avoiding setting foot in public.

There are things about each other we may never know or properly understand. But the value of trying to understand each other’s concerns is that doing so prompts

³¹ Nussbaum (1997) speaks in a similar way to Atticus, when she writes that literary fiction helps us consider what it is like “under the skin” (p. 92) of others.

recognition of respect for our differences and similarities – recognition and respect we may lack on account of experiential differences. In this way, it helps fill in epistemic gaps left by experiences we lack; gaps in which ignorance and prejudice may fester. In Nussbaum’s words, it helps us “cross group boundaries in imagination” (1997, p. 111), and hence, to mitigate the epistemic challenges of political difference in modern democracies.

While this is not a particularly controversial idea, we might worry that the imagination supplies a rather blunt heuristic for learning about the experiences and feelings of others and may give us a fairly narrow or even misleading picture of what another person’s life is like (Prinz 2011). However, I don’t think that Nussbaum would deny this. She would simply argue that it is still among the best tools we have for deepening our concern for others, and that literature is particularly good at helping us develop and exercise it in the right sort of way.

The second claim is that some works of fiction are particularly good at helping us develop and exercise our imagination sympathetically, such as to help fill gaps in our understanding reinforced by our experiences. Although Nussbaum (1997) makes this claim about great works of fiction *per se*, she defends the democratic value of *certain kinds* of literary fiction. Specifically, works which portray experiences of individuals who belong to oppressed social groups of which the reader is not a member. For instance, she appeals to Ralph Ellison’s *Invisible Man* (Nussbaum pp. 104-12). Ellison’s novel is narrated by a black man living under Jim Crow, who communicates his experience of systemic racism and the sense of social invisibility it has led him to develop. The reader is invited to sympathise with his predicament:

Being invisible and without substance, a disembodied voice, as it were, what else could I do? What else but try to tell you what was really happening when your eyes were looking through? (Ellison 1992, p. 572, in Nussbaum 1997, p. 88)

The claim is that this kind of invitation to imaginatively sympathise is relatively common within a certain sort of novel, and that it prompts a form of reflection the reader might otherwise have been less likely to engage in.

Critics may object that nothing unique or significant is revealed through such a process. The reader could learn about racial segregation in some other way, e.g.

through reading history, speaking with others, or watching a documentary (Stolnitz 1992). Or perhaps they knew about it already. However, even if this were the case, the kind of imaginative reflection Nussbaum highlights has the power (to borrow Gaut's expression) to "drive home" the significance of a moral belief, such as that racism is repugnant, or that human beings are moral equals (Gaut 2007, p. 247). Moreover, we needn't claim that the mode of reflection or understanding afforded by literary fiction is distinctive or totally unavailable elsewhere. Rather, we can say that some literature is "particularly good at" prompting this form of reflection and concern (Kieran 2005, p. 116).³²

The suggestion is that by engaging with works of literary fiction which portray experiences of individuals from different social groups, we are more likely to develop empathetic dispositions. Moreover, we will make less prejudiced judgements and be more concerned with the welfare of others. We will be better (e.g. more tolerant, less prejudiced) citizens. A culture which fosters an appreciation for the literature Nussbaum has in mind will – she argues – provide a safeguard against the influence of racism, sexism, and various other prejudices.

A Nussbaum-ian defence of the public benefit claim would appeal to our collective interest in living in a society in which prejudice, discrimination and unreasonable disagreement are mitigated. Notably, this is an interest that Nussbaum largely takes for granted. But before considering the drawbacks of her account in the context of our inquiry, we should also note that the plausibility of Nussbaum's claims about literature depend on the strength with which they are stated. To this end, let us make some important qualifications.

Qualifications

We should not want to say that *all*, or even *most*, white readers of *Invisible Man* will develop deeper understanding or concern for the experiences of African Americans. (The following argument also applies to any other text Nussbaum might barrack for.)

³² Kieran's (2005) point is about knowledge: "we needn't hold that the knowledge afforded by art must be distinctive, just that art is particularly good at conveying such knowledge" (p. 116) though it easily applies to understanding and the exercise of the imagination, too.

Some students of the text, perhaps even some *teachers* of the text, may remain relatively indifferent to the lives of African Americans. Indeed, they may even turn a cynical eye on the text, and the wider tradition of ‘moralising’ literature in which it is promoted or encouraged to be taught.³³ And we should not want to say that *all*, or even *most*, people who don’t gravitate to literature, or literary works with social and political content, will be significantly less likely to develop understanding and empathy for the oppressed.³⁴ These kinds of claims would be far too narrow in their outlook (Posner 1997, p. 10; Posner 1998), and imply an epistemic-moral high-ground reminiscent of Scruton’s theory of high culture.

However, we need not take Nussbaum’s thesis, as I have described it, to be saying anything more than the following. Some works of literary fiction, namely those which portray the experiences of oppressed groups of which the reader is not a member, are particularly good at promoting a form of perspective-taking. Moreover, this form of perspective-taking is of vital use in a democracy in which citizens lack common experiences and points of view. Through engaging with such works of literature, not all readers, though some significant number, are likely to gain a keener appreciation of the experiences and suffering of those socially different to them. And nor need we deny that background conditions – including how one was raised, their education, and their own moral and political beliefs – also shape the influence a novel has on their imagination and affect (Nussbaum 1998, p. 352). The point is just that certain works of art, notably literary works, are particularly good at helping some individuals cultivate empathy for the disadvantaged ‘other’.

3.3.2 “Shared Hermeneutical Resources”: a Nussbaum-Inspired Approach

Let us take a step back for a moment to place Nussbaum’s account in the context of the others. Scruton argued that High Culture contributes to our well-being and

³³ We may even want to take a qualified view that, in reading a single text, we do not usually gain new perspectives or capacities: we simply exercise those we have already. In that way, the effect of a text is to amplify what we see in ourselves already.

³⁴ We might also note that Nussbaum’s thesis implies that moral ‘merits’ of an artwork – e.g. properties of an artwork which help us develop or exercise empathy – may count as aesthetic merits. Inversely, moral defects of a work may count as aesthetic defects. But this does not imply that *all* moral properties are aesthetically relevant.

provides our society with a rich stock of shared meanings. We saw that a central drawback of this view was that it presupposes that some artistic traditions have a monopoly on the stock of shared meaning and value. Notwithstanding this, Scruton's view contains traces of a more democratic position, which appeals to the value of shared meanings and values. We saw this idea in Dworkin, who argued that artistic culture provides a certain level of richness and diversity to the structure of our shared culture. Dworkin's argument improved on Scruton's, in that it didn't imply that any particular artistic genres or practices have any greater stock of meaning and value than any other. However, I argued that Dworkin's account lacked the details required to defend the claim that artistic expressions contribute a level of depth and richness to our shared culture which other activities do not.

Though Nussbaum's argument is mainly given to literature, it provides a level of detail and motivation for its claims which is missing in Dworkin's work. If Nussbaum's claims about the epistemic power of literary expression can be fleshed out and applied to artistic practices more generally, they may contain the bare bones of a new and promising strategy for government funding of the arts. However, there are a number of hurdles in the way of it doing so.

The first is that even if Nussbaum is right that reading literature cultivates empathy and promotes a healthy democratic culture, the force of this claim appears contingent on the level of individuals engaging in the kinds of literary culture she defends.

Furthermore, granted that not all literature possesses the qualities Nussbaum appeals to, her defence of literature is bound to exclude and frustrate members of the literary community whose works and interests do not fit her bill. So, it is not just that Nussbaum's account is overly focussed on literature, but that it in fact excludes some genres of literary fiction, implying that they do not contribute a comparable level of civic value. The second obstacle to expanding on Nussbaum's account, then, is finding a defence of the epistemic significance of artistic expression which is not reduced solely to empathy or the political content of certain works, literature or otherwise.

But I am optimistic that these hurdles can be overcome. Literature and artistic expression do a lot more for individuals and shared culture than simply grease the wheels of democracy. Nussbaum implies that the main value of art in a liberal society is simply that it helps us maintain democratic stability. However, human

beings are not only citizens, and empathy and the imagination are not just valuable for democratic purposes. There are useful ways of defending the epistemic value of artistic expressions to sceptical taxpayers or conservatives like Scruton (who worry that modern art promotes a repudiation of cultural heritage) which do not fall back on democracy alone.

Few people would deny Nussbaum's claim that literary fiction provides readers the opportunity to reflect on and exercise concern for the experiences of others. But this is not all that it does. Works of fiction, indeed artistic expressions more generally, also represent contributions to what Fricker (2007) refers to as our "collective hermeneutical resources": our "shared tools" for interpreting social experiences (p. 6) and making sense of the world, ourselves, and each other.³⁵

One value of our shared hermeneutical resources is that they provide the opportunity to take perspective on the experiences, histories, and stories of others, as Nussbaum argues. But a literary culture (indeed, artistic culture more generally) also provides us with numerous other cognitive benefits.

For instance, the arts provide us with the opportunity to develop and preserve modes of expression which reflect our own experiences, histories, and traditions of storytelling. They also help us to make sense of the society we live in. One might be confused about all the cultures and lifestyles they are surrounded by, and this can be alienating and distressing. But having access to good novels and music can help alleviate this. Moreover, this is a good thing for the individual regardless of how it feeds back into democratic culture.

The arts also provide us with imaginative resources that help us take perspective on the ways in which our lives *could* look; what possibilities are open to us within our own culture, and what they would feel like to pursue. Hence, art allows us to counterfactually experiment with different ways of living. Therefore, part of the cognitive value of artistic expression also lies in its facilitating imaginative "experiments of living" (Mill 2015, p. 56).

Altogether, Nussbaum's argument contains the seeds of a new and promising defence of public arts funding, which appeals to a variety of cognitive benefits which

³⁵ Fricker usually refers to hermeneutical resources as tools for interpreting experiences. My use of the term is more general than this: I refer to hermeneutical resources as tools for interpreting and understanding experiences, as well as histories, cultures, and worldviews.

arise through living in a society with a government-funded arts sector. To defend this strategy, though, one would need to show how the cognitive benefits promoted by arts funding do not require engaging with art, and do not exclude certain genres and artforms altogether.

Conclusion

This chapter has put forward a basic framework for theorising the public value of government arts funding. A liberal justification for government funding of the arts might aim to defend two claims: (1) a Public Benefit Claim, and (2) a Market Failure Claim.

A Public Benefit claim will provide an account of why a certain kind of artistic culture is in the interest of all citizens. A Market Failure claim will provide an account of why this value is unlikely to be realised without a government-funded arts sector. If a theory of artistic culture provides a thorough defence of these claims, then it may in principle provide good reasons for all citizens to devote taxes to the enactment of a cultural policy which aims to promote the public benefit in question. To put the same point in another way: a theory of artistic culture which defends these claims robustly may illustrate that we have a shared interest in mitigating against the risk of the stated benefit *not arising*.

We considered three options: (1) Mass-Market Pessimism, and Scruton's High Culture argument in particular, (2) Dworkin's account of artistic culture contributing to the richness and diversity of our Cultural Structure, and (3) Nussbaum's Civic Education defence of literature. Dworkin's argument was that artistic culture provides a certain level of richness and diversity to the structure of our shared culture. This improved on Scruton's defence of High Culture, in that it didn't imply that any particular artistic genres or practices are vested with a special stock of meaning and value. At the same time, it effectively presupposed what it needed to prove (Franken 2016). Why are the arts any better at expanding and enriching our shared stock of meaning, compared with other areas of our shared culture, and why is the richness of artistic culture fragile? Without answering these questions, Dworkin's defence is vulnerable to a suspicion of perfectionism.

Munoz-Dardé's (2013) account of "social goods" indicated a means of limiting this objection. We might accept that a vast range of social practices contribute meaning and value to our shared culture but deny that such social practices are limited to, or even necessarily entail, artistic ones. This can be achieved by defining social goods in a historically contingent way: "the goods that matter around here" (p. 238). This way, the claim that fragile artistic practices – such as those which currently rely upon state support – contribute meaning and value to our shared culture is situated within a larger defence of social goods.

But while this may operate as an important addendum to any purportedly neutral defence of arts funding, it can only take the present inquiry so far. An account of artistic culture which accepts its value on account of its own existence does not explain why the arts are given more funding than other areas of culture. The question once again becomes, in what ways do artistic practices significantly contribute to our shared culture?

Nussbaum's argument for the civic value of literature indicates a useful, if imperfect, response. She suggests that some artistic cultures (certain *literary cultures*) are particularly good at cultivating capacities of imagination and empathy, which help fill epistemic gaps left by our experiences. Moreover, she argues that all individuals have an interest in living in a society in which a certain level of understanding and concern between citizens exists, that this is often missing or fragile in modern multicultural democracies, and that it is protected and promoted through support for literature.

However, I have argued that in order for Nussbaum's account to provide the full ingredients for a thoroughgoing defence of arts funding in the post-war era, it needs to be expanded beyond empathy, democracy, and literary culture. In the next chapter, I will develop a new account, Art Cognitivism, that illustrates this possibility.

Chapter 4

Art Cognitivism

I will now argue the Art Cognitivism presents the best strategy for justifying government funding of the arts in a manner which satisfies the conditions of neutrality and anti-elitism. Art cognitivism is the name I give to the view that the public value of a flourishing artistic culture lies in its ability to provide us with certain cognitive benefits. These include capacities for self-understanding, empathy and awareness of the world we live in, and the benefit of being better understood by others. In §4.1, I provide a basic outline of Art Cognitivism, outlining and defending its Public Benefit and Market Failure claims. I use the following four sections to anticipate and respond to objections.

In §4.2, I argue that, despite appearances, the kind of arts funding policy I am defending is in the interests of all individuals, and not simply the least advantaged. That is, it satisfies both the neutrality condition and the anti-elitism condition.

In §4.3, I further develop this defence. I argue that the cognitive benefits of a governments-funded arts sector are likely to reach us even if we do not engage with art, even if the funded works do not tend to portray and express themes that we judge to be relevant to our own life and culture.

In §4.4, I engage with a challenge posed by the fact that some areas of artistic culture plausibly contain *private hermeneutical resources*. I argue that art cognitivism accommodates this fact.

And in §4.5, I show that art cognitivism escapes the challenge of *aesthetic perfectionism*: it does not adopt an overly narrow or prescriptive view of what constitutes good art, and does not exclude any genres of artforms from arts funding in the way that Scruton's or Nussbaum's does.

4.1 Art Cognitivism: The Bare Bones

In the previous chapter, I defined an artistic culture as the social practices and institutions governing the production and consumption of art in a society. Part of what this definition alludes to is a distribution of social, economic, and material resources via which artmaking and its consumption are made possible.

Art cognitivism conceives of artistic expressions as making significant contributions to our “collective hermeneutical resources” (Fricker 2007, p. 6), i.e. our shared tools for interpreting social experiences, cultural histories, and worldviews, *inter alia*. This means that it conceives of an artistic culture as distributing resources which provide certain epistemic opportunities, as it were. These are opportunities to understand cultural aspects of the society we live in, including the histories, experiences, worldviews, and expressions found within it.

The value of living in a society in which these epistemic opportunities prosper is (1) independent of whether we engage with art; and (2) irrespective of our conception of the good. By discussing these claims, I will offer a basic defence to the Public Benefit claim of art cognitivism. Let us begin here, taking these points in turn.

Through living in a society with a culturally diverse distribution of art, we are more likely to have important dimensions of ourselves understood and recognised by others. To put the point another way, we are less likely to have these dimensions of ourselves ignored, misunderstood, or to remain unfamiliar and alien (Raz 1995). This is because a more diverse artistic culture is likely to better equip others with resources for understanding our experiences, e.g. by the fact that it is more likely to contain portrayals and expressions of people similar to us. This is one key way in which we are likely to benefit from living in a society with a thriving and diverse artistic culture *regardless of whether we engage with art* (I will give this a more nuanced defence in §4.3).³⁶

³⁶ It is worth emphasising that “not engaging with art” does not equate to actively avoiding all kinds of it or rejecting arts funding in all its guises. This makes the explanation of public benefit owed to the individual who does not engage with art more general than what Feinberg (1994) refers to as the problem of the “philistine”, “indignant taxpayer”, who despises art and goes to great pains to avoid it. It is also different from the challenge Brighouse (1995) and Schwartz (2000, esp. pp. 124-9) discuss, namely, of explaining the benefit of arts funding to the individual who is offended by some works which are publicly funded.

Moreover, our interest in living in a society in which these forms of cultural understanding prosper *cuts across competing conceptions of the good*. All of us have an interest in understanding the society in which we live. We have an interest in finding tools which help us to make sense of our feelings and experiences (Fricker 2007); and which teach us about the significance of our culture and history. Moreover, we have an interest in not feeling baffled by the lives and cultures of others, and in not having false beliefs about them. A diverse artistic culture promotes these cognitive interests.

Hence, the Public Benefit claim of art cognitivism is that a flourishing and diverse artistic culture – one which does justice to the variety of cultures, worldviews and experiences found in a multicultural society – cultivates certain cognitive benefits. These are benefits of understanding oneself, understanding others, and being better understood by others. Precisely (i) how these benefits arise, (ii) how at least one of them is likely to arise for all of us, and (iii) why we all have an interest in them, are matters I will return to in the sections which follow. For now, let us turn to the Market Failure claim of art cognitivism.

I argue that the kind of thriving and diverse artistic culture which optimally promotes these capacities for cultural understanding is likely to be missing without public funding of the arts. If this is right, then without public arts funding, we all face a hermeneutical deficiency. But what grants this claim?

My argument is essentially about *improving our resources* for understanding the social world. Consider an analogy: without a diverse array of history books, it would be more difficult (though not impossible) for us to learn about a diversity of histories. Similarly, I claim that without a diversity of available artistic expressions, it would be more difficult for us to develop various forms of cultural understanding. So my argument fundamentally relies on the view that artistic expression disseminates forms of understanding which are more difficult – though not impossible – to get elsewhere.³⁷ We may learn about cultural history through

³⁷ Hence, I do not claim that the cognitive value of art is *nonreplaceable*. In this way, despite discussing “gaps in artistic culture”, I am avoiding a commitment to the kind of modal claim that Fricker (2007) makes, when she writes that a gap in shared hermeneutical resources makes an individual “unable to render their experiences intelligible” (p. 171, emphasis my own) to others. In §4.4, I will argue that the modal claim that one is *unable* to understand their experiences (or those of others) involves a negative epistemic judgement which is unwarranted.

conversation and nonfiction literature, for instance. But the arts are *particularly good* at familiarising us with some aspects of different cultures, experiences and ways of life (Nussbaum 1997), and in helping us interpret and see the significance of our own experiences and beliefs (Gaut 2007).

To recognise this, it pays to briefly reflect on the fact that artistic expressions are often intimately connected with cultural practices and histories, even partly *constitutive* of them. For instance, the artistic traditions of Australia's First Peoples represent the longest unbroken traditions of cultural expression in the world. Such traditions – including of song, dance, painting, and storytelling – store and communicate cultural knowledge and understanding of Australia's First Peoples (Janke 2021). But in addition, they also familiarise non-Indigenous people with important elements of Indigenous culture and history. If Indigenous Australians lacked resources for practicing and protecting their rich cultural expressions, then all Australians – Indigenous and non-Indigenous alike – would face a hermeneutical deficit with respect to understanding Indigenous culture (I will return to this in §4.4).

But we might accept that the arts play a role in contributing to our shared hermeneutical resources but wonder why this role is not able to be performed *without* arts funding. Why can't Indigenous art be promoted by a free market? My claim does not deny that it can be (indeed, it is). Rather, I am saying that the free market is unlikely to provide conditions which conduce to its protection and promotion in public culture. It is a brute fact that artistic expression “depends upon material things” – materials to paint with, studios to record in, and often a “room of one's own” (Woolf 1977, p. 116). But not all individuals have such resources at hand (not to mention those which assist in the development of one's talents), and some social and cultural groups face significant economic disadvantage in this respect. In this way, economic disadvantage leads to gaps in our shared artistic culture, which as I suggest, represent gaps in our shared hermeneutical resources.

But one might want to question the kind of counterfactual claim I am making, that without public arts funding, we are worse off, because the market alone is likely to leave significant gaps in our shared artistic culture. What makes me so confident that, without public arts funding, gaps in our artistic culture are unlikely to be filled? Why couldn't they be filled by philanthropists, for example?

Philanthropists are not answerable to the public in the way that liberal states are, and so we might fear placing our prospects for cultural understanding in their hands.

However, major philanthropic gifts have made artistic culture in liberal societies more culturally diverse, including through promoting the artistic expressions and cultural heritage of Indigenous and migrant populations. My argument does not discount these contributions, but I suggest that public arts funding is overall a better tool than philanthropy for promoting cultural understanding.

A more moderate version of this claim would be that public arts funding mitigates the hermeneutical risks attached to a free market not giving rise to a diversity of cultural materials. But I think we are licensed to say something stronger than this, on account of how things have played out in the real world. The artistic cultures of liberal societies have become much more culturally heterogeneous and representative in the post-war era, and this shift has significantly and demonstrably been driven by the forms of arts funding which have been characteristic of that period.³⁸ We might speculate about whether this kind of diversity might have arisen *without* public arts funding during the same period. We might also speculate about whether arts funding will continue to have this effect in the future. However, I take it to be a plausible conjecture (though open to empirical inquiry) that public arts funding has a better track-record at promoting culturally diverse materials than free market and philanthropy, and hence, that public arts funding has a better track record at promoting cultural understanding en masse.

As I indicated while discussing Nussbaum in the previous chapter (§3.3.2), the notion that artistic culture consists of, or contributes to, a shared language for understanding ourselves and one another shares key features with theories we have already discussed. Scruton argues that artistic culture provides us with resources for understanding and preserving our cultural heritage. And notwithstanding his overly narrow and prescriptive view of what constitutes good art, he suggests that art may help to bring us in touch with important elements of our cultural history, which I support. Dworkin (1985) argues that artistic expressions – songs, paintings, novels, films, etc. – contribute and preserve conceptual innovations in our shared language, which in turn help us to express and interpret our experiences (p. 230). And

³⁸ Kymlicka (1995) discusses this in connection to liberal societies in the twentieth century, Radbourne (1997) discusses this in connection to Australian culture, and Janke (2021) discusses this in connection to the cultural expressions of Australia's First Peoples.

Nussbaum claims that art, particularly literary fiction, has a significant role in developing our capacity for empathy.

But my view goes beyond what Scruton, Dworkin and Nussbaum have said about the contribution that artistic expression makes to our shared language. This is not just because it stipulates a set of cognitive benefits linked with a diverse artistic culture, seeing as Nussbaum's work does that as well, if in connection to literature and empathy. The major theoretical significance of art cognitivism is that it explains how an artistic culture has the power to provide cognitive benefits which redound to the least well-off along with the rest of us, *regardless of whether we engage with art, and irrespective of our conception of the good*. It therefore illustrates how arts funding can satisfy the conditions of neutrality and anti-elitism.

These are the bare bones of art cognitivism. I argue that the purpose of public arts funding should be to promote cognitive benefits which (i) we gain irrespective of whether we engage with art ourselves, (ii) are neutral over competing conceptions of the good, and (iii) improve the hermeneutical position of all individuals, regardless of their social and economic position. To promote the cognitive benefits in question, a cultural policy should aim to correct market failures corresponding to gaps in our artistic culture. And due to economic facts about the buying power of some social groups, such gaps will often be correlated with social disadvantage.

4.2 Art Cognitivism and Social Justice

However, my suggestion that public arts funding may often involve correcting for market failures corresponding to economic inequalities gives rise to a worry. If art cognitivism often involves distributing resources to the least advantaged, it resembles a mechanism for distributive justice. And while the goal of promoting artistic opportunity among the least advantaged is not objectionable, it would seem to overlook other purposes we might want public funding of the arts to serve. In particular, one might worry that art cognitivism relegates the value of mainstream or traditional forms of cultural expression and heritage to the sidelines, or simply reduces artistic value to social justice.

However, this is not the case. The market failure claim of art cognitivism is not that hermeneutical inequalities prosper when art is governed mainly by a free

market, that this is unjust, and therefore, that arts funding is needed to correct “hermeneutical injustice[s]” (Fricker 2007). I accept that individuals can be marginalised from the production of artistic expression, and in this way, marginalised from “significant hermeneutical production” (Fricker, p. 156). But the public benefit of arts funding, as I conceive of it, does not lie in correcting for this occurrence, even though it involves doing so. Two observations help to show why this is the case.

Firstly, the fact that gaps in our resources for understanding culture are correlated with economic disadvantage is not a design of art cognitivism, but a feature of the world we live in. Even in a socialist utopia, my view is still likely to prescribe arts funding. Plausibly, all human societies will contain gaps in the extent to which their cultural expressions portray and explore varieties of human experience, history, and culture. Art cognitivism suggests that in order to promote understanding of ourselves and one another, we should aim to fill such gaps.

Secondly, the goal of increasing our cultural understanding does not have to be pursued at the cost of support for the kind of artistic culture someone like Scruton defends. Art cognitivism does not ignore traditional modes of cultural expression, or the value of the cultural heritage linked with a socially dominant group. To the contrary, it comfortably accommodates the hermeneutical claims Scruton makes, but denies that they are limited to a particular domain of expression or strand of cultural heritage.

The catch is that in order to fulfill the aim of alleviating hermeneutical deficiencies, as I have argued above, we should promote underrepresented forms of cultural expression. To some extent, this may involve shifts of resources from the culturally mainstream to the culturally marginal. But more common cultural expressions will not lack a claim to public resources, and even if they are not prioritised by a cultural policy, they will not be excluded from the public square.

Moreover, as I argued in §2.3, a cultural policy would be unacceptably elitist if it precluded support for any particular genre or artform. Art cognitivism makes sense of this claim, by saying that the prohibition of support for any branch of cultural expression would pose a loss of cultural understanding. All the same, it calls on us to consider which forms of cultural expression are most absent from our shared culture or at most risk of decay. The best way to promote our capacities for cultural understanding is to use public resources to promote these. Precisely what this would

look like in action is a socially contingent matter, and its further details are best decided by policymakers. But the form of public arts funding I am defending is not one on which we “take from the rich to give to the poor”. No doubt, my proposal brings good news for proponents of distributive justice. But my key claim is that all of us – rich and poor alike, culturally marginal and mainstream alike – have an interest in living in a society with a richer stock of hermeneutical resources. In this way, we all have an interest in public funding of the arts.

4.3 Understanding Others, Understanding the World

But some readers might want to accept the basic logic of the above section – i.e. that the kind of public art funding I am defending is not *simply* a mechanism of distributive justice – but reject the idea that they stand to cognitively benefit from public arts funding.

This expression of scepticism appears most likely to arise from members of, for lack of a better phrase, the cultural mainstream. These are individuals whose ways of life, worldviews and preferred forms of meaning-making and expression are (relatively speaking) comfortably accommodated by the socially dominant or widely available forms of expression in their society, even without public arts funding. Such individuals may engage with the arts, or they may not. The point is that for them, an art cognitivist-inspired public funding scheme would not, on balance, prioritise support for expressions which represent their own culture and heritage. In this way, it would not appear to help cultivate their capacity for self-understanding (at least in respect to one’s own culture and conception of the good), and by the same token, the capacity of others to understand *them*.

This is a valid concern. However, it’s worth noting that nothing I have said suggests that members of the cultural mainstream should expect to have their capacity for self-understanding *undermined* by the kind of cultural policy I am defending. Nor should one expect that the policy I am defending would leave cultural minorities *disadvantaged* with respect to understanding the cultural mainstream. Nonetheless, if there were an expectation of an ongoing and nontrivial cognitive benefit which arose for members of the cultural mainstream, it would

probably arise someplace else, such as from an increased ability to understand others, and the society they live in.

The individuals in question may not be very interested in gaining skills to interpret cultures, experiences, faiths, worldviews, etc. that are not their own. They may even find the suggestion that they do have this interest rather patronising. Therefore, the burden of the art cognitivist is to show that even if it is not our preference to learn more about others, being better equipped to understand them is nonetheless in our interests, and this interest is one which can be defended without recourse to a particular conception of the good.

In order to highlight the cognitive benefit such individuals are likely to gain by being better equipped to understand others, it pays to reflect on the kind of cognitive deficit a person bears when they are nearly totally lacking in tools to interpret cultures and experiences which are not their own. These are cases in which people hold such an incomplete or distorted picture of the world they live in, that they feel baffled and disorientated when they encounter subcultures that don't fit within their worldview.

To adopt an example, consider a devout religious person who believes that homosexuality is abnormal and rare. Let's call her Sally. Sally is a happy person who leads a fulfilling life. But for all she knows, there are no gay people living on her street. If there were, she may even prefer not to know about them – or at least not to speak to them or learn about the details of their lives – seeing as open homosexuality conflicts with her view that homosexual relationships are unnatural, and not a source of pride or fulfillment. In any case, she's of the view that homosexuality is rare, and that it is usually a source of pain and suffering, unless it is rectified through prayer and repentance.

Consider what Sally might feel when she notices that a new bookshop has opened on her local strip of shops and wanders inside to take a look. The walls are lined with posters of bare-chested men and men wearing women's stockings and makeup. There are young and happy men frolicking about the store, some wearing effeminate earrings and clothing. Startled by the experience, Sally fixes her eye on someone in the shop who appears more 'normal' than the others. She feels a sense of relief and smiles at him, shortly before he plants a kiss on the cheek of man wandering down the aisle next to him.

We can imagine Sally feeling totally baffled, even abhorred by what she sees in this bookshop. It is an epicentre for a gay subculture she has seldom been exposed to and would not have imagined to exist. Her primary exposure to gay culture has been through the moral language of her conception of the good, in which it is painted as uncommon and disordered. The mere existence of this store challenges her view that homosexuality is not a source of fulfillment, and her suspicion that very few gay men frequent her area of town. She is left to grapple with the view that homosexuality is more common than she has been led to believe, and in fact the source of pride and meaning for members of her community.

I am not so interested in the moral implications of Sally's attitudes towards gay culture and homosexuality, but her deficit of cultural understanding. I am interested in the fact that the tools for social interpretation she carries – imparted on her and reinforced through the language and expressions used within her own community and culture – have left some aspects of the social world unimaginable and beyond her belief. She is lost for words and doesn't know what to say about what she's encountered; it is incomprehensible to her.

We need not assume that the confusion and disorientation Sally experiences is a symptom of confusion about her own sexuality or conception of the good. For all intents and purposes, it is not. One might lead a reasonably happy, fulfilling, and autonomous life, by their own lights, without knowing very much about the history, culture, and experiences of an oppressed group. Upon gaining more knowledge and familiarity with gay culture, Sally and others like her may not significantly revise their conception of the good or way of life. But by becoming more familiar with lives of gay people and with gay culture, people in Sally's boat gain a more accurate and complete understanding of the world. They are less likely to carry false beliefs (for instance, that homosexuality is rare, and that gay men are typically unhappy), and they are also less likely to find gay people in their society incomprehensible.

Public arts funding can help expand our resources for intercultural literacy, and therefore alleviate deficits in our shared resources for understanding the social world, including the lives and experiences of others. The photographic works of the American artist Robert Mapplethorpe (1946-1989), suggests a paradigmatic example. Mapplethorpe's work (which has received major support from public funding agencies) is celebrated for helping to develop a visual language for the experience of gay men, particularly during the AIDS epidemic (Fiss 1998; Schwartz

2000). It explores the complexities of homoerotic desire, and challenges traditional conceptions of sexuality and intimacy, and ways of seeing the human body.

These artistic expressions helped to close a gap in our shared hermeneutical resources, namely, a gap with respect to our tools for recognising, understanding, and imagining the experiences of gay men. To be clear, the main beneficiaries of this were gay men. Forms of self-understanding, pleasure and desire that were a salient part of their form of life (for some gay men, at least) became legible parts of the culture of Western societies, in a way that they weren't before. This helped those individuals be better recognised, understood and appreciated by others, and in this way, helped them to secure the social basis for self-respect.

But it wasn't only gay men (indeed, gay women and non-binary people too) who benefited from that. So did straight people, in some measure. If you are a straight person living in a world with gay people in it, and those people are incomprehensible to you, that is a bad state to be in. It is worth briefly reflecting on why this is so.

Nussbaum (1997) might tell us that ignorance and confusion are damaging to democracy. As we have seen, she argues that a lack of empathy and understanding conduces to forms of disagreement and irresolution that threaten the democratic process. Others, such as Kymlicka (1995) want to say that being ignorant, unaware or confused about the nature and value of different conceptions of the good is bad because it negatively affects our autonomy, i.e. our ability to freely govern our own lives.³⁹ I do not want to deny that the cognitive benefits I am describing may be beneficial to democracy, autonomy, and various other goods. However, my emphasis is on the value of cultural understanding *in itself*. I argue that gaining a greater understanding of different cultures found in one's society is a benefit in its own right.⁴⁰ It is a cognitive benefit that need not be cashed out with respect to any other value, such as democracy, or autonomy.

³⁹ The thought is that leading an autonomous life requires having, and being aware of, different life options to choose between (Kymlicka 1995; Raz 1986). Hence, being unaware or ignorant about different life options would be bad for our ability to choose between them.

⁴⁰ One way of expressing this line of thought is that cultural understanding is good for our well-being. Hooker (2015) argues that knowledge is an element of well-being. The claim that understanding is an element of our well-being, or contributes to it, would be subtly different to Hooker's claim, granted that understanding does not obviously reduce to knowledge, and vice-versa (Baumberger 2014).

However, what about members of the cultural mainstream who *don't engage with art*? After all, Sally might be in this camp. What benefit does she gain, nonetheless, from living in a society with a government-funded arts sector?

Even if we do not actively 'engage with art' – for instance, if we do not visit museums, or the theatre, or read books – we can hardly avoid the psychological influence of artistic culture. As Scruton and Dworkin tell us, artistic culture is a component of our *shared culture*. It finds its way onto billboards advertising exhibitions and television dramas, and into book reviews within newspapers and magazines. And as Sally's example illustrates, artistic culture may even find its way onto our local strip of shops. In this way, it reaches us indirectly, whether we directly and deliberately engage with it or not (Dworkin 1985; Carroll 1987). Even if the accompanying cognitive effects are subtle, they are not insignificant.

How does this link back to an argument about government arts funding? Well, the bookshop which Sally encountered would be less shocking to her had she been exposed to gay culture more over time, and this would be more likely if she lived in a society with a government-funded arts sector: the kind of society in which Mapplethorpe's works were on billboards, magazines, and bookshops.

Altogether, a society with a thriving and diverse artistic culture is one which helps cultivate a *shared culture* in which people are more likely to be exposed to, and develop a basic familiarity with, expressions and portrayals of (a) experiences they have not themselves had; and (b) cultures and ways of life to which they do not belong (Raz 1995). We can count on a greater sense of familiarity, at the very least, to help us avoid bafflement in the face of difference.

4.4 Private Hermeneutical Resources and Self-Understanding

So far, my point of emphasis has mainly been on the public value of artistic expression qua *shared* hermeneutical resources. For instance, I have argued that artistic expressions such as Mapplethorpe's help to expand our shared hermeneutical resources, helping (a) gay men (and gay women, and non-binary people) to render intelligible their experiences in the public square, and (b) straight people to interpret and comprehend the lives and experiences of gay men. But I now wish to draw

attention to the fact that artistic expressions may facilitate activities of meaning-making which are in an important sense *private*. They can express forms of knowledge and understanding which *belong* to certain cultures and are not intended to be easily accessed and understood by others.

Australia's First Peoples face significant prejudice and discrimination, overwhelming poverty, and represent just 3.3% of the Australian population. Until relatively recently, they have faced systematic barriers to artistic contribution in Australia as well. But construing the value of artistic expressions in terms of contributions to shared resources threatens the central value of Indigenous cultural expressions.

Indigenous Australians commonly speak of their cultural expressions as "intimately linked with country and knowledge" (Janke 2021, p. 60). In the words of acclaimed First Australian visual artist Banduk Marika, "Indigenous cultural information is carried in art" (in Mellor and Janke 2001, p. 51). In this way, Indigenous Australians recognise their cultural expressions as having a significant hermeneutical dimension.⁴¹ And protecting the opportunity to participate in these traditions, including by protecting them from commercial exploitation (Janke 2021) therefore appears to be fundamental to respecting Indigenous Australians in their capacity to participate in and know their own culture.

But to imply that the cultural expressions of Australia's First Peoples are publicly valuable mainly because of their contributions to shared hermeneutical resources would be fundamentally misguided. One outcome of protecting Indigenous cultural expressions is that it may increase recognition and respect for the richness and diversity of cultures of Australia's First Peoples among non-Indigenous Australians, in no small part by mitigating the dispersion of false and unauthorised reproductions of Indigenous cultural expressions. However, we should not mistake this for non-Indigenous Australians coming to *understand* or *know* Indigenous culture in the same way that Indigenous Australians do.

⁴¹ Janke (2021) writes that "Indigenous knowledge includes traditional and contemporary knowledge in recorded form; artistic, oral, creative, and written knowledge; cultural practices and beliefs; stories and oral histories; geographic and genealogical information; and information about plants and animals" (p. 388).

Most importantly, to imply that support for Indigenous artistic practices *increases the self-understanding* of First Australians would also be misguided, in that it would imply that (a) without government aid, First Australians would be vulnerable to not knowing about themselves, and (b) most forms of cultural support would increase the level of self-understanding among First Australians. These statements belie the complexity and heterogeneity of Indigenous cultures, and presuppose a negative epistemic judgement of First Australians qua *self-knowledge*. Indeed, this kind of “negative [epistemic] judgement” about “some citizens’ ability to effectively advance their own interests” is precisely what Quong (2011, p. 96) and others would find rejectable about some arts funding policies – and in this case, I am in full agreement.

Hermeneutical resources can be shared insofar as their meanings and use are open to all individuals. Mapplethorpe’s work helped to bring about self-understanding and self-interpretation among gay and non-binary people, through its exploration of experiences and social histories relating to people who identify as gay, queer, non-binary etc. But it also provided other people with an understanding of what it is like to be gay, and the social and political histories linked with that identity. Private hermeneutic resources can cultivate self-understanding, and public hermeneutic resources can cultivate empathy. What is ‘private’ may still lie in the public domain, but its full meanings and significance may be, in some important sense, cognitively restricted. It follows that arts funding policies, by helping the expressions of the least advantaged enter public culture, can promote private hermeneutical resources *and* shared hermeneutical resources.

So, what should the point of emphasis be, for cultural policies which aim to provide cognitive benefits to the least advantaged? Something like this: providing opportunities to participate in practices which may develop, communicate, and store cultural knowledge and understanding, for the groups in question. Moreover, we can say that artistic opportunities provide opportunities for self-exploration and development, but we should not take a lack of participation in shared artistic culture as evidence of poor self-understanding. But on top of this, an important dimension of sharing such artistic expression is *being better understood by others*. To be clear, it is not the only value, though it is an important one, partly because it helps the group in question to secure the social bases for self-respect.

4.5 Aesthetic Perfectionism

I have now given coverage to the different cognitive benefits public arts funding is likely to provide if it aims at promoting a diversity of cultural materials. But there seems to be a final obstacle in the way of my claim that art cognitivism is the best way to satisfy the conditions of neutrality and anti-elitism.

Critics may argue that it relegates non-cognitive aesthetic values to the sidelines of public support. In this way, it might appear to fall into the domain of *aesthetic perfectionism*, by adopting an “overly narrow and prescriptive” account of what good art should be “in the business of doing”, to borrow Kieran’s (2005, p. 156) expression once again. After all, not all artworks may have an obvious claim towards *closing gaps* in our private or shared hermeneutical resources for understanding culture. If this is right, then genres such as instrumental music and abstract art may not receive support.

The first thing to say, in reply, is that insofar as artistic expressions are comfortably referred to as things which express or invite interpretation and are linked with certain cultures and ways of life (Brighouse 1995), we cannot easily say that they have *no* cognitive value. Though perhaps this point says very little. If all art elicits or invites interpretation of *something*, and this is the litmus test for public support, then the cognitive value of art has now been inflated to a point of near meaninglessness. But my point is that all artistic genres appear to sit within a broader cultural web of hermeneutical practices, building upon and making allusions to one another. The public value of artistic culture is built upon “aesthetics events”, to borrow Dworkin’s expression (1985), but it does not boil down to them.

The point is not that art cognitivism will not rank one genre, artistic project, or arts institution as more deserving than another. It inevitably will do this. The point is rather that, in doing so, it will not rank any such genre, artistic project or mode of expression as intrinsically superior to any other. It simply regards some such projects and expressions as in need of more urgent public support, *qua* the overall public value of an artistic culture. Moreover, it does not preclude any artistic expression from public support, and its conception of what art should be funded is dictated by where there is new opportunity to publicly explore and represent themes and expressions which exist in our society already but have not found their way to the fore. In this way, the art cognitivist carries a rather thin set of aesthetic

commitments. If classical music is underrepresented, but reflective of an important cultural history, it has a *prima facie* claim to support.

Conclusion

This chapter has outlined a new strategy for justifying public funding of the arts in a liberal democratic state, inspired by the notion that artistic expressions constitute a special class of *shared hermeneutical resources* (Fricker 2007).

I began by arguing the public value of a government-funded arts sector lies in the cognitive benefits that it promotes (§4.1). I argued that these are benefits *in their own right* and need not be cashed out in connection to democracy or autonomy. They arise for us *irrespective of whether we engage with art*, and are valuable to us *independent of our conception of the good*. Moreover, these benefits are much more likely to arise when an arts sector approximates a certain level of cultural diversity in the materials that it distributes throughout our society. Without public arts funding, our shared artistic culture is less likely to contain artistic expressions which reflect the common concerns, experiences, histories, etc. of minority and low-income groups. Because these expressions are an important class of *shared hermeneutical resources*, their absence leaves us all with a certain hermeneutical deficiency. Without public arts funding, we are less well equipped to develop and exercise certain forms of cultural understanding that are in our interests as individuals.

I devoted the rest of the chapter to anticipating objections. The first was that art cognitivism appears simply to be in the interests of the least advantaged, or to reduce artistic value to social justice (§4.2). However, although art cognitivism advocates for mitigating artistic (or hermeneutical) inequalities, it does this for our shared purposes. We all have an interest in living in a society with a richer and more diverse stock of hermeneutical resources, because this cultivates our capacities for understanding ourselves and others, and indeed, leaves others better able to understand *us*.

However, my opponent might accept my claim that art cognitivism is not a mechanism of distributive justice but remain sceptical that its cognitive benefits will reach her. In §4.3 I engaged with this challenge. I argued that the benefit of living in

a society with a more culturally heterogeneous culture was that it would leave us in a better position to *understand others*. This is cognitively beneficial even to those who have little preference in learning about others, seeing as we all have an interest in not being *confused* or *mistaken* about the world we live in, and in not viewing the lives and cultures of others – such as gay men – as *baffling* and *incomprehensible*. Even if arts funding does not directly support cultural expressions that reflect our own experiences, cultures, ideals and histories, it nonetheless promotes the value of understanding others, and of avoiding ignorance, confusion and misunderstanding.

But this gives rise to yet another challenge (§4.4). It would seem that my emphasis, by this point, may be leaning too hard toward *understanding others*, without paying due respect for the fact that some elements of cultural expressions may be, in an important sense, uninterpretable to outsiders. I argued that this is a valid concern, but that it does not discount the power of e.g. Indigenous art to cultivate knowledge and understanding of Indigenous cultures among non-Indigenous people. In funding Indigenous art, a state can aim to promote understanding of Indigenous cultures for non-Indigenous peoples, and to promote sources of meaning, understanding and knowledge which are private to Indigenous peoples. This is an important distinction, but these goals need not conflict, and can work alongside one another.

Finally, in §4.5 I argued that art cognitivism escapes a charge I levelled at Scruton, i.e. precluding some artworks and genres from public support altogether. Despite its emphasis on cognitive value, art cognitivism escapes this charge, because its conception of cognitive value is broad enough such that its aesthetic commitments are very minimal. What is of cognitive value is a contingent matter and is not aesthetically narrow or prescriptive. The art which has the greatest claim to support is that which helps to fill gaps in the themes and expressions missing in the distribution of art currently found in a society, and which is relevant to life in that society. This includes abstract art and instrumental music, if these things connect to culture and history, for example.

If these reflections are right, then art cognitivism represents the best strategy of those seen in this thesis, for satisfying the conditions of neutrality and anti-elitism. If a government-funded arts sector helps to cultivate our capacities for understanding experiences, cultural histories, the world, and to avoid confusion and ignorance, then its value is independent of our personal ideals, and whether we engage with art. It

promotes values which are in all our interests. And if these values redound to the least well off – as I have shown – then arts funding does not just pander to a cultural elite.

Concluding remarks

Respect for neutrality has understandably led some liberals to tread around government funding of the arts with immense caution. However, this caution has sometimes lapsed into a pessimism about the public value of arts funding. In this thesis I hope to have shown that, at the very least, this pessimism is misguided.

Moreover, a large focus on neutrality also appears to have left the related issue of anti-elitism relatively unexplored. But I have suggested a framework for marrying these challenges together, by arguing that arts funding arrangements which promote deference to cultural elites are acceptable to the extent that they (1) support a cultural policy's neutral aims, and (2) contribute effectively to improving the interests of the least advantaged.

I argued that in order to overcome the challenges of neutrality and anti-elitism, the best way to justify government funding of the arts is by appealing to their cognitive benefits. Respect for neutrality does not restrict government funding of the arts, because a government-funded arts sector can promote cognitive benefits which are in the interests of all of us. Moreover, such cognitive benefits can be promoted in ways which improve the interests of the least advantaged.

However, we should take care to note that while Art Cognitivism provides *good reasons* for a government to fund the arts, it does not demand that a liberal state fund art. All I have shown is that a liberal state has good reasons to fund the arts, but not that these should not be weighed and balanced against its other demands. Precisely what these other demands are, and how they ought to be weighed, are contingent matters, and they are also beyond my scope. However, we may confidently say that the neutrality principle leaves a lot more scope for government arts funding than both proponents and critics of neutrality have suggested.

Bibliography

- Banfield, Edward, *The Democratic Muse: Visual Arts and the Public Interest*. (New York: Basic Books, 1984).
- Baumberger, Christoph. “Art and understanding: in Defence of Aesthetic Cognitivism.” *Bilder Sehen. Perspektiven Der Bildwissenschaft*. (March) (2014), pp. 1-24.
- Bourdieu, Pierre, *A Social Critique of the Judgement of Taste*. (Harvard University Press, 1984)
- Black, Samuel, “Revisionist liberalism and the decline of culture”. *Ethics*, 102(2), (1992), pp. 244-267.
- Brighouse, Harry, “Neutrality, publicity, and state funding of the arts”. *Philosophy & Public Affairs*, (1995), pp.35-63.
- Carroll, Noël, “Can government funding of the arts be justified theoretically?”. *Journal of Aesthetic Education*, 21, no. 1 (1987), pp. 21-35.
- Caust, Josephine, “The arts funding divide: Would ‘cultural rights’ produce a fairer approach?” in *The Routledge Companion to Arts Management*. (Routledge, 2019), pp. 220-233.
- Christman, John, “Anti-Perfectionism and Autonomy in an Imperfect World: Comments on Joseph Raz’s *The Morality of Freedom* 30 years on”. *Moral Philosophy and Politics*. 4, no. 1 (2017), pp. 5-25
- Clarke, Simon, “Debate: State Paternalism. Neutrality, and Perfectionism”. *Journal of Political Philosophy*, 14, no. 1 (2006), pp. 111-121
- Cowen, Tyler, *In praise of commercial culture*. (Harvard University Press, 2000).
- Dworkin, Ronald, “Can a liberal state support art?”, in *A Matter of Principle* (Harvard University Press, 1985), pp. 221-233.
- Ellison, Ralph, *Invisible Man* (New York: Random House, 1992).
- Feinberg, Joel. “Not with My Tax Money: The Problem of Justifying Government Subsidies for the Arts”, *Public Affairs Quarterly*, Vol. 8, no .2 (1994), pp. 101-123.
- Fiss, Owen, *The irony of free speech*. (Harvard University Press, 1998).
- Franken, Leni, *Liberal Neutrality and State Support for Religion*. (Springer, Cham, 2016).

- Fricker, Miranda, *Epistemic injustice: Power and the ethics of knowing*. (Oxford University Press, 2007).
- Gaut, Berys, "Art and knowledge". *The Oxford handbook of aesthetics*, (2003) pp. 439-441.
- _____, *Art, emotion and ethics*. (Oxford University Press, 2007).
- Gingerich, Jonathan, "Remixing Rawls: Constitutional Cultural Liberties in Liberal Democracies", *NEULR*, 11 (2019), pp. 401-65.
- Goldie, Peter. "Virtues of art." *Philosophy Compass* 5, no. 10 (2010), pp. 830-839.
- Goldstein, Ilana Seltzer, "Visible art, invisible artists? the incorporation of aboriginal objects and knowledge in Australian museums." *Vibrant: Virtual Brazilian Anthropology* 10 (2013), pp. 469-493.
- Graham, Gordon. *Philosophy of the arts: An introduction to aesthetics*. (Routledge, 2005).
- Gutmann, Amy, "Chapter 9: Educating Adults", in *Democratic Education (Revised Edition)*. (Princeton University Press, 1999).
- Hamilton, Andy, "Scruton's Philosophy of Culture: Elitism, Populism, and Classic Art". *British Journal of Aesthetics* 49, no. 4 (2009), pp. 389-404.
- Hooker, Brad, "The elements of well-being." *Journal of Practical Ethics* 3, no. 1 (2015), pp. 15-35.
- Horkheimer, Max, and Adorno, Theodor W., "Dialectic of Enlightenment (cultural Memory in the Present)." *Trans. Edmund Jephcott. Ed. Gunzelin Schmid Noerr*. (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2002).
- Hume, Lindy, "Opera needs to tackle its biases. The future of the industry depends on it", *Guardian*, accessed 18, 2021, <https://www.theguardian.com/music/2017/sep/14/opera-needs-to-tackle-its-biases-the-future-of-the-industry-depends-on-it>
- Hutchins, Robert M., "The great conversation: The substance of a liberal education" (William Benton, 1952).
- Janke, Terri, *True Tracks: Respecting Indigenous Knowledge and Culture*. (New South Publishing, 2021)
- John, Eileen, "Art and Knowledge", in *Routledge Companion to Aesthetics*, ed. Berys Gaut, and Dominic McIver Lopes, (2001), pp. 329–340.
- Kieran, Matthew, "Art, Imagination, and the Cultivation of Morals". *The Journal of*

- Aesthetics and Art Criticism*. 54, no. 4 (1996), pp. 337-251.
- _____, “The Vice of Snobbery: Aesthetic Knowledge, Justification, and Virtue in Art Appreciation”, in *Philosophical Quarterly*. 60, no. 239. (2010), pp. 243-63.
- _____, *Revealing Art*. (Routledge, 2005).
- Kramer, Matthew H., “Paternalism, Perfectionism, and Public Goods.” *The American Journal of Jurisprudence* 60, no. 1 (2015), pp. 1-27.
- Kymlicka, Will, “Liberal individualism and liberal neutrality.” *Ethics* 99, no. 4 (1989), pp. 883-905.
- _____, *Multicultural citizenship: A liberal theory of minority rights*. (Clarendon Press, 1995).
- Larmore, Charles E., “Political liberalism”. *Political theory*, 18, no. 3 (1990), pp. 339-360.
- Lee, Harper, *To kill a mockingbird*. (Random House, 2010).
- Mar, Phillip, and Ien Ang, “Promoting diversity of cultural expression in arts in Australia: A case study report.” (Western Sydney University: Institute for Culture and Society, 2015)
- Medina, Jose, *The epistemology of resistance: Gender and racial oppression, epistemic injustice, and the social imagination*. (Oxford University Press, 2013).
- Mellor, Doreen, and Janke, Terri, *Valuing Art, Respecting Culture: Protocols for working with the Australian Indigenous visual arts and craft sector*. (Potts Point, NSW: National Association for the Visual Arts Ltd, 2001).
- Mill, John S., *On Liberty, Utilitarianism, and other essays*, Ed. Mark Philp and Phillip Rosen (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2015).
- Munoz-Dardé, Véronique, “In the face of austerity: the puzzle of museums and universities”. *Journal of Political Philosophy*, 21, no. 2 (2013), pp. 221-242.
- Nehamas, Alexander, Plato and the mass media. *The Monist*, 71, no. 2 (1988), pp. 214-234.
- Nozick, Robert, “Symposium on the Public Benefits of the Arts and Humanities.” *Art and the Law*, 9 no. 2 (1985), p. 166.
- Nussbaum, Martha, *Cultivating Humanity: A Classical Defense of Reform in Liberal Education*, (especially “Chapter Three: Narrative imagination”, pp. 85-113), (Harvard University Press, 1997).

- _____, “Exactly and Responsibly: A Defense of Ethical Criticism”. *Philosophy and Literature*, 22 (1998), pp. 343-65.
- _____, “Perfectionist Liberalism and Political Liberalism”. *Philosophy & Public Affairs*, 39/1 (2011), pp. 3-45.
- OED Online, “elite, n.2 and adj.”. (Oxford University Press, September 2021).
<https://www-oed-com.libproxy.ucl.ac.uk/view/Entry/60492?rskey=HRTmsu&result=2> (accessed September 14, 2021).
- _____, “elitism, n.”. (Oxford University Press, September 2021). <https://www-oed-com.libproxy.ucl.ac.uk/view/Entry/60494?redirectedFrom=elitism> (accessed September 14, 2021).
- Plato, “The Republic: Book X”, in *Plato: Complete Works*. Eds. Cooper, John M., and Douglas S. Hutchinson. (Hackett Publishing, 1997)
- Posner, Richard, “Against ethical criticism”. *Philosophy and Literature*, 21(1), (1997), pp. 1-27.
- _____, “Against Ethical Criticism: Part Two”. *Philosophy and Literature*, 22(2) (1998), pp. 394-412.
- Prinz, Jesse, “Against empathy”. *The Southern Journal of Philosophy*, 49 (2011) pp. 214-233.
- Quong, Jonathan, *Liberalism without perfection*. (Oxford university Press, 2011).
- Radbourne, Jennifer, “Creative nation—a policy for leaders or followers? An evaluation of Australia's 1994 cultural policy statement.” *The Journal of Arts Management, Law, and Society* 26, no. 4 (1997), pp. 271-283.
- Rawls, John, *A theory of justice: Second edition*. (Harvard university press, 1999).
- _____, “The priority of right and ideas of the good”. *Philosophy & Public Affairs*, (1988), pp. 251-276.
- _____, *Justice as fairness: A restatement*. (Harvard University Press, 2001).
- Raz, Joseph, *The Morality of Freedom*. (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1986).
- _____, “Free Expression and Personal Identification”, in *Ethics in the public domain: essays in the morality of law and politics*. (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1995).
- Schwartz, David T. *Art, education, and the democratic commitment: A Defence of State Support for the Arts*. (Springer Science & Business Media, 2000).
- Scruton, Roger, *Modern culture*. (A&C Black, 2006).
- _____, *Culture Counts: Faith and Feeling in a World Besieged* (New York:

- Encounter Books, 2007).
- Sher, George. *Beyond neutrality: Perfectionism and politics*. (Cambridge University Press, 1997).
- Stevens, Christopher W., "Who's Afraid of Roger Scruton?", in Zangwill, Nick and Andy Hamilton (eds.), *Scruton's Aesthetics* (Hampshire: Palgrave Macmillan, 2012), pp. 250-66.
- _____, "Embracing Scruton's Cultural Conservatism," *British Journal of Aesthetics*, 49 (2009): 371-88.
- Stolnitz, Jerome, "On the cognitive triviality of art". *Aesthetics and the Philosophy of Art: The Analytic Tradition: An Anthology*, 32, no. 3 (1992), pp.191-200.
- Skorupski, John, "Chapter IX: Liberal Elitism", in *Ethical explorations*. (OUP Oxford, 2000).
- Thorpe, Mackenzie, "Is Art Still Elitist?", *Raconteur*, accessed August 18, 2021. <https://www.raconteur.net/is-art-still-elitist/>
- Woolf, Virginia, *A Room of One's Own*. (Grafton, An Imprint of Harper Collins Publishers, London, 1977).