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Philosophy of Technology and Aesthetic Cognitivism

Abstract

In this chapter I explore one way in which methods drawn from philosophy of technology can be used to meaningfully address open problems within the philosophy of art: in this case, how to speak meaningfully about the cognitive functions of artworks. I outline a model of the cognitive functions of artworks that is grounded in a theory of knowledge capable of accounting for non-propositional performances. Armed with this theory of knowledge, I argue that the cognitive function of artworks should not be understood either propositionally nor experientially, but instead in terms of the 'affordances'—that is, the increase in performative capacities—that they provide.

In diesem Kapitel untersuche ich eine Möglichkeit, wie Methoden aus der Technikphilosophie genutzt werden können, um offene Probleme innerhalb der Kunstphilosophie sinnvoll anzugehen: in diesem Fall, wie man sinnvoll über die kognitiven Funktionen von Kunstwerken sprechen kann. Ich skizziere ein Modell der kognitiven Funktionen von Kunstwerken, das auf einer Wissenstheorie beruht, die in der Lage ist, nicht-propositionale Leistungen zu berücksichtigen. Ausgerüstet mit dieser Erkenntnistheorie argumentiere ich, dass die kognitive Funktion von Kunstwerken weder propositional noch erfahrungsbezogen verstanden werden sollte, sondern stattdessen im Sinne der ‚Affordanzen' – d.h. der Steigerung der performativen Fähigkeiten –, die sie bieten.

Introduction

Despite the fact that philosophy of technology and philosophy of art are both materially-oriented disciplines, there is remarkably little overlap between the two subfields—at least within philosophy proper. This should strike us as strange. There are few principled reasons as to why philosophers of technology and philosophers of art should have so little to do with one another. After all, philosophers of technology and philosophy of art share a number of foundational questions: questions about how and why material objects look the way they do; the ways in which meaning is expressed and/or communicated by those objects; the functions they fulfil and their appropriateness for those functions; the ways in which they both influence and are influenced by the cultures in which they are embedded. Even in domains (such as ethics and philosophy of design) where there exists a prima facie obvious connection between art and technology, the terrain lies largely untilled.

This division is even more baffling when we acknowledge that 'art objects' and 'technical objects' do not, in any way, constitute discrete categories. Artworks

have technical features; technical objects have aesthetic features. Analyses of art objects, for example, that fail to consider the technical aspects of those objects are obviously (and necessarily) incomplete: interrogating, for instance, the aesthetic features of Louise Bourgeois' enormous sculpture *Maman* (1999), or Frank Gehry's Guggenheim Museum Bilbao (1997), without taking stock of the set of technical tools, methods, and materials that made those objects possible is to clearly miss the point. This criticism also cuts the other way: in spite of the high modernist injunction that form should follow function, there is no unambiguous and well-motivated way to disentangle aesthetics from engineering when it comes to analysing the design and proper functioning of technical objects.[1] There is, in short, no obvious principled reason why we could not (or should not) talk about technology using the philosophy of art, or talk about art using the philosophy of technology.

The unwillingness to speak across the aisle, as it were, strikes me as a problem. Both philosophy of technology and philosophy of art have developed extremely powerful and precise analytical methods and conceptual schemas to help address, and in some cases dissolve, the various problems around which the two respective subfields are oriented. Unfortunately, many of these methods and schemas remain within their respective silos; they are simply not accessible to scholars working outside of those narrow fields. This is where the problem lies. Given the wealth of foundational problems and concerns that is shared between the two disciplines, I think that there is obvious utility in sharing the methods and schemas that have been developed to address those selfsame problems and concerns. Unfortunately, this kind of disciplinary cross-pollination is very rare in practice.

Given that observation, in this chapter I will explore one example wherein methods from philosophy of technology can be used to meaningfully address an open problem within the philosophy of art: in this case, how to speak meaningfully about the cognitive *functions* of artworks. I outline a model of the cognitive functions of artworks that is grounded in a theory of knowledge capable of accounting for non-propositional performances. Armed with this theory of knowledge, I argue that the cognitive function of artworks should not be understood either propositionally nor experientially, but instead in terms of the 'affordances'—that is, the increase in performative capacities—that they provide. In making this case, I hope to demonstrate the basic soundness of the intuition I've outlined here: that philosophers of technology and philosophers of art share a non-trivial number of questions and concerns; and, as a corollary, that there are good pragmatic reasons to share the

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1　For more information, both Barry Allen: A*rtifice and Design: Art and Technology in Human Experience,* Ithaca: Cornell UP 2008 and Glenn Parsons: *The Philosophy of Design,* Cambridge: Polity Press 2015 provide convincing analyses of the issues intrinsic to the high modernist distinction between form and function.

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methods and schemas that those two disciplines have developed in response to those selfsame questions and concerns.

Aesthetic Cognitivism

In philosophy of art, the idea that art can express what is called 'cognitive value' or 'cognitive functions' is called 'aesthetic cognitivism'. Speaking broadly, aesthetic cognitivism refers to a cluster of positions that all hinge upon the assumption that art can, as Gordon Graham claims, "at its best" constitute a form of understanding, and is thus deserving of the "same evaluative status as science".[2] Or, per Nelson Goodman, "the arts must be taken no less seriously than the sciences as modes of discovery, creation, and enlargement of knowledge in the broad sense of advancement of the understanding"[3]. In short, the argument is that artworks have the capacity to *teach* us.

More specifically, Christoph Baumberger identifies aesthetic cognitivism as the confluence of two claims: the *epistemic* claim that "artworks have cognitive functions", and the *aesthetic* claim that "cognitive functions of artworks partly determine their artistic value".[4] Per the epistemic claim, aesthetic cognitivists claim that artworks possess cognitive functions, and that these cognitive functions can teach audiences about a given state of affairs in a substantive, non-trivial way. This does not imply that artworks *must* possess cognitive functions, of course; only that artworks are capable of having cognitive functions. Moreover, and per the aesthetic claim, these functions partially determine the aesthetic worth of those artworks. They are among the plurality of artistic values that we properly invoke when making assessments of beauty. Out of these two criteria, the epistemic and the aesthetic, it is the first that is the object of our attention here.

So, what does it mean, exactly, for an artwork to have cognitive functions? What does it mean for artworks to have pedagogic or didactic potential and consequently, as John Gibson says, be "active and competent players in the field of knowledge"[5]? Gibson identifies two main approaches: that artworks offer either *philosophical* knowledge or *phenomenal* knowledge. I will briefly gloss and critique these approaches in turn.[6]

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2 Gordon Graham: "Aesthetic Cognitivism and the Literary Arts," *Journal of Aesthetic Education* 30/1 (1996), p. 1.

3 Nelson Goodman: *Ways of Worldmaking*, Indianapolis: Hackett 1978, p. 102.

4 Christoph Baumberger: "Art and Understanding: In Defence of Aesthetic Cognitivism." In *Bilder Sehen: Perspektiven der Bildwissenschaft,* ed. by Marc Greenlee et al., Regensburg: Schnell + Steiner 2013, p. 41.

5 John Gibson: "Cognitivism and the Arts," *Philosophy Compass* 3/4 (2008), p. 575.

6 For those interested in reading more about both these approaches and concomitant criticisms, I take Gibson's (2008) summary and analysis to be authoritative.

Scholars such as Noël Carroll and Catherine Elgin argue that the contents of artworks should be understood as analogous to thought experiments.[7] The appeal of this approach is obvious: philosophers and scientists regularly employ fictions and metaphors—philosophical zombies, brains in vats, cats in boxes—in order to point to propositional facts about the world. Artworks perform a similar task, so proponents of this view claim, in that they also use falsehoods to gesture meaningfully towards true claims. Gibson writes of this approach that "thought experiments enlist fictions to lead us toward a worldly truth, and this jibes very well with what many of the representational arts seem interested in doing: inviting us to explore the human situation by asking us to imagine human life from a variety of perspectives"[8]. Thus, artworks facilitate the generation of propositional facts both novel and true.

Meanwhile, Dorothy Walsh and Alex Burri, among others, have argued that works of art offer phenomenal rather than philosophical knowledge: what it would be like to be in a war zone, or have an affair in 19th century France, or fight a dragon.[9] As a consequence, this position is premised upon a different set of epistemic commitments to those who argue that artworks instantiate philosophical knowledge. Knowledge, for phenomenalists about cognitivism, is more than possessing the right set of propositions. Instead, they endorse (even implicitly) the idea that knowledge can also be visual, embodied, spatial, practical, or whatever; not just know-that, but also know-how (and many other kinds of 'know-' besides). Given that view phenomenalists about cognitivism claim that artworks participate in this process: they are artefacts that can capture and communicate these experiential forms of knowledge in a non-trivial way.

Unfortunately, both of these approaches raise unresolved concerns. With respect to the philosophical approach, the clear difference between thought experiments and artworks is that thought experiments are accompanied by an explanatory apparatus that expresses the propositional facts, instead of the facts being expressed by the thought experiment itself. Given that, does it make sense to say that the thought experiment actually instantiates truth claims, or do the truth claims reside within the accompanying apparatus? This is not at all clear. Indeed, I think it's entirely plausible to say that, contra Carroll and Elgin, truth claims are not a feature of thought experiments at all. While artworks and thought experiments might indeed be relevantly similar, if truth claims associated with a given thought experiment

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7   See Noël Carroll: "The Wheel of Virtue: Art, Literature, and Moral Knowledge." *The Journal of Aesthetics and Art Criticism* 60/1 (2002), pp. 3–26 and Catherine Elgin. "The Laboratory of the Mind." In *A Sense of the World: Essays on Literature, Narrative, and Knowledge*, ed. by John Gibson, Wolfgang Huemer, and Luca Pocci, London: Routledge 2007, pp. 43–54.

8   Gibson: "Cognitivism and the Arts," p. 581.

9   See Dorothy Walsh: *Literature and Knowledge*, Middletown: Wesleyan UP 1969 and Alex Burri: "Art and the View from Somewhere." In *A Sense of the World: Essays on Literature, Narrative, and Knowledge*, ed. by John Gibson, Wolfgang Huemer, and Luca Pocci, London: Routledge 2007, pp. 308–17.

actually reside in the explanatory apparatus that accompanies that experiment, it's not at all clear how artworks or thought experiments can themselves contain or instantiate propositional truth claims. This ambiguity poses an issue for any account of art's cognitive functions within the propositional knowledge approach.

Regarding the phenomenal approach, while there is a wealth of evidence that suggests some fruitful link between exposure to the arts and development of certain interpersonal capacities like empathy,[10] experiences expressed by artworks are not sufficiently granular to *actually* afford an audience the phenomenal experience represented. For example, while I've read a number of books set in war zones, I am not so delusional as to think that this means I have experience of being in a war zone. Instead, and at best, a book set in a war zone offers me an opportunity to examine what I *might* be like in a war zone, in light of another's testimony—although there obviously is no way to test this counterfactual. Any phenomenal knowledge I might thereby acquire is about myself, rather than the phenomenon in question.

Given these issues, I will use this opportunity to present a third approach to aesthetic cognitivism. This approach, like the phenomenal approach, is premised upon a theory of knowledge capable of captured non-propositional knowledge. However, unlike the phenomenal approach, this third approach to cognitivism is not built around the claim that artworks can share experiences with us in some finely-grained way. Instead, I think that the cognitive value of artworks lies in the particular performances that they afford: what I call the 'performance' approach to aesthetic cognitivism.

Performative Knowledge

When I say that knowledge is 'performative' rather than propositional or experiential, I am not being metaphorical. Knowledge, I claim, is not simply something you possess, but is instead something you *do*. In the words of post-pragmatist philosopher of technology Barry Allen, it is a "form of success, a superlative perfor-

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10 For a small selection of the scholarship in this field, refer to: Raymond A. Mar et al.: "Book-worms Versus Nerds: Exposure to Fiction Versus Non-Fiction, Divergent Associations with Social Ability, and the Simulation of Fictional Social Worlds." *Journal of Research in Personality* 40 (2006), pp. 694–712. Raymond A. Mar and Keith Oatley: "The Function of Fiction Is the Abstraction and Simulation of Social Experience." *Perspectives on Psychological Science* 3/3 (2008), pp. 173–92. Maja Djikic et al. "On Being Moved by Art: How Reading Fiction Transforms the Self." *Creativity Research Journal* 21/1 (2009), pp. 24–29. David Comer Kidd and Emanuele Castano: "Reading Literary Fiction Improves Theory of Mind." *Science* 342/6156 (2013), pp. 377–80. P. Matthijs Bal and Martijn Veltkamp: "How Does Fiction Reading Influence Empathy? An Experimental Investigation on the Role of Emotional Transportation." *PLOS ONE* 8/1 (2013), p. e55341. Loris Vezzali et al.: "The Greatest Magic of Harry Potter: Reducing Prejudice." *Journal of Applied Social Psychology* 45/2 (2015), pp. 105–21.

mance"[11]. Merely possessing a fact does say anything about the knowledge you have; instead, you can only demonstrate your knowledge by employing that fact as part of some kind of performance. I have written about my views on Allen's theory of knowledge elsewhere, so I will not give a full account of this view here.[12] However, a brief summary may be helpful.

Allen, in both *Knowledge and Civilization* (2005) and *Artifice and Design* (2008) argues that knowledge, properly understood, is a species of superlative performance.[13] A 'performance', as I take Allen to mean it, is 'an intentioned activity with an intended outcome', with intentional action glossed as a confluence of beliefs, desires, and intentions.[14] In particular, Allen gestures towards a theory of action similar to that endorsed by philosopher Michael Bratman. In Bratman, any given intention is, as Kieran Setiya writes, "a distinctive practical attitude marked by its pivotal role in planning for the future"[15]. Under this description, having an intention is not simply being in possession of some desire. Instead, to possess an intention is to *commit* to a certain course of action. Saying "I want to go to the gym today" is not an intention; saying "I will go to the gym today" is.

Given that, a performance must have a goal or object in mind: it is fundamentally ends-oriented. As Bratman writes, intentions are "conduct-controlling pro-attitudes, ones which we are disposed to retain without reconsideration, and which play a significant role as inputs to [means-end] reasoning"[16]. Most of the other actions that human beings voluntarily do constitute performances of one kind or another. Catching a train, tying your shoelaces, or eating a hamburger are all kinds of performances, as all of which are kinds of intentional action that have given outcomes in mind. Consequently, performance itself is an unremarkable phenomenon. To call something a performance is simply to situate it within the broader context of intelligible human action. In that respect, knowledge is a kind of performance.

In addition, Allen argues, a knowledge performance must be superlative. Saying that a performance is superlative is not to imply that that performance merely meets whatever constitutes the success criteria for that specific performance. Succeeding in catching a train, or tying one's shoelaces, or eating a hamburger is, in most cases, a pretty unremarkable achievement. These kinds of successes, assuming that you have

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11 Allan: *Knowledge and Civilization*, p. 67.
12 See Ryan Wittingslow: "Bloody-Minded Metaphysics: Barry Allen Vs. The World." *Contemporary Pragmatism* 13/2 (2016), pp. 129–42. In addition, a revised and extended version of this paper is included in my forthcoming monograph.
13 Cfl. Allan: *Knowledge and Civilization* and Barry Allen: *Artifice and Design: Art and Technology in Human Experience*. Ithaca: Cornell UP 2008.
14 Bertram F. Malle and Joshua Knobe: "The Folk Concept of Intentionality." *Journal of Experimental Social Psychology* 33 (1997), pp. 105.
15 Kieran Setiya: "Intention, Plans, and Ethical Rationalism." In *Rational and Social Agency: The Philosophy of Michael Bratman*, ed. by Gideon Yaffe and Manuel Vargas, New York: Oxford UP 2014, p. 56.
16 Michael Bratman: *Intention, Plans, and Practical Reason*, Cambridge: Harvard UP 1987, 20.

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the normal, everyday capacities that most people possess, are merely habitual or reliable. Instead, a superlative performance is a successful performance that is also *exemplary*, because it meets its success criteria in some remarkable or novel way.

By this, I take Allen to mean three things. First, that superlative performances carry with them a dimension of risk. Success is not a forgone conclusion when one is performing superlatively; were that the case, success would be habitual or reliable. Second, superlative performances must radically exceed the success criteria of the given performance; otherwise, of course, they would only succeed in the normal, non-superlative way. Finally, and in radically exceeding their success criteria, superlative performances challenge our assumptions. As Allen writes, they "change the world where they work, remaking it to fit them, and not passively fitting an antecedently given nature of things. They are unpredictable because they change our idea of what is possible"[17]. It is in violating our previously-held categories that superlative performances are rendered recognisable.

For Allen, superlative performances *are* knowledge: they are, matter-of-factly, apperceptually available instantiations of knowledge in our common world. They are the proof in the pudding; they are where rubber hits the road. Facts may be true or false, but it is in knowing how to wield those facts (or physical tools, or experiences, or concepts, or whatever else you might be employing in the given case) with discretion, with acumen, with mastery. That is why knowledge is an *accomplishment*, as Allen writes:

> The achievement, the accomplishment, is what distinguishes knowledge, making it different from belief, opinion, error, and so on. Knowledge is neither metaphysically 'real', being an artifact with no reality apart from us, nor merely nominal, since it depends on effectiveness, and not just conventions of discourse. What distinguishes knowing is not where it comes from but the performance it achieves.[18]

It is, I think, a profound insight: one that radically reframes and corrects how we should properly conceptualise knowledge. Moreover, Allen's theory of knowledge also gives us the foundation from which to develop a richer picture of how artworks can possess cognitive functions: a picture that is *performative*, rather than propositional or experiential. We can do this by expanding upon Allen's performative theory of knowledge with the notion of 'affordances', particularly as affordances are employed by philosophers of technology.

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17   Allan: *Knowledge and Civilization,* p. 69.
18   Ibid., p. 25.

The term 'affordance' is, of course, taken from the scholarship of psychologist James J. Gibson. In *The Ecological Approach to Visual Perception* he glosses the term thus:

> The affordances of the environment are what it offers the animal, what it provides or furnishes, either for good or ill. […] I mean by it something that refers to both the environment and the animal in a way that no existing term does. It implies the complementarity of the animal and the environment.[19]

Affordances, Gibson thinks, are material and environmental factors that facilitate or 'afford' certain behaviours, whether in humans or in non-human animals. So, soft soil affords squirrels a place to store acorns; caves, tall trees, and the eaves of houses affords bats a place to sleep during the day; the Earth's magnetic field affords migratory birds the ability to travel between breeding and wintering grounds due to the interaction between the Earth's magnetic field and light-dependent magneto-receptors in birds' eyes.[20]

It's a powerful idea, and one that has proved influential in disciplines outside of psychology. Philosophers of technology, for instance, use 'affordances' in much the same way that psychologists do: to capture the ways in which a given tool can increase our capacities in some way, or makes a desired outcome possible or easier to realise. Swimming goggles, for instance, afford us the ability to better see underwater. Paintbrushes afford us the ability to more precisely apply paint. Rockets afford travelling to the moon. However, it is important not be too deterministic about affordances. Even though an artefact might be designed with an affordance in mind, there is more than one way to use an artefact. A screwdriver, for example, is designed in such a way as to drive screws into some substrate material or another. However, screwdrivers can also be used to open tins of paint, or to chip ice out of your freezer, or to perform a violent felony, or whatever. The screwdriver affords all these behaviours—though, it must be admitted, some more readily than others.

Affordances, in short, provide a means of conceptualising what different technologies *do* for us, in that they privilege (though don't determine) certain modes of use. As a consequence, affordances give us a way of unpacking how different technologies can facilitate superlative performances. By virtue of offering affordan-

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19 James J. Gibson: *The Ecological Approach to Visual Perception*, Boston: Houghton Mifflin Harcourt 1979, p. 127.
20 For more information, see Anja Günther et al.: "Double-Cone Localization and Seasonal Expression Pattern Suggest a Role in Magnetoreception for European Robin Cryptochrome 4." *Current Biology* 28/2 (2018), pp. 211–223, and Atticus Pinzon-Rodriguez, Staffan Bensch, and Rachel Muheim: "Expression Patterns of Cryptochrome Genes in Avian Retina Suggest Involvement of Cry4 in Light-Dependent Magnetoreception." *Journal of the Royal Society Interface* 15/140 (2018), pp. 1–9.

ces, technology makes certain kinds of performances possible. Naturally, many of these performances are habitual and perfectly humdrum (catching a bus to travel quickly across town, for instance). However, technology can also facilitate the kinds of superlative performances that constitute instantiations of knowledge: using super-computers and rocketry technology, by example, to land the 2011 *Curiosity* rover—a delicate and enormously complex scientific vehicle the size of a small car—on the surface of Mars.

Affordances *also* give us a way to speak about the cognitive functions of technology, without forcing us to get bogged down in questions of meaning or content (whether propositional, experiential, or otherwise). That is, the cognitive function of a given piece of technology lies not in the propositional or experiential knowledge that it somehow instantiates, but rather in what it can teach us via the performances that that technology can afford. This is because performances, in the sense that Allen employs the term, are 'public'. If a given artefact affords a certain performance, this performance is accessible by sense and intuition: the effects are both clear and measurable. Thereafter, in order to link an affordance with its concomitant performance we need only provide a causal account of how the affordance made the performance possible.

Consider, for instance, Galileo's telescope. As Don Ihde argues, the power of that telescope (and indeed, any telescope) lies in what it allows us to do: that is, by letting us see very far away. In doing so, the telescope gave Galileo access to parts of the universe that were hitherto inaccessible by the naked eye, affording him the opportunity to make new and better descriptions of the universe.[21] This affordance, of course, was integral to Galileo's ultimate superlative performance: the *Dialogue Concerning the Two Chief World Systems* in which he robustly defended heliocentrism in light of his observations. As Derek de Solla Price writes:

> Galileo realised that he had manufactured for himself a revelatory knowledge of the universe that made his poor brain mightier than Plato or Aristotle and all the Church Fathers put together. […] His little tube with lenses clothed the naked eye, allowing it to exceed all previous human experience.[22]

In short, the experiences afforded by the telescope fully comprise the didactic or pedagogic potential—that is, the cognitive functions—of the telescope; the affordances provided and the cognitive functions are one and the same. It is via the affordances on offer that Galileo's telescope taught him something about the structure of our solar system in a substantive, non-trivial way, thus making his superlative performance possible. Moreover, this is the case for all instances of technology: assuming

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21 Don Ihde: *Technology and the Lifeworld*, Bloomington: Indiana UP 1990, p. 42–58.
22 Derek J. de Solla Price: "Notes Towards a Philosophy of the Science/Technology Interaction." In *The Nature of Technological Knowledge. Are Models of Scientific Change Relevant?*, ed. by Rachel Laudan, Dordrecht: Springer Netherlands 1984, p. 108–9.

that we're comfortable with Allen's claim that knowledge should be understood as a performative capacity rather than as a thing possessed, the question of how technological objects can possess cognitive functions is not difficult to cash out. The affordances provided by different technologies are the cognitive functions of those technologies; the cognitive functions of different technologies are the provided affordances.

So, what does this mean for artworks? I've of the view that they too are a kind of technology, despite a number of claims to the contrary.[23] They are, after all, the products of human intention in the same way that other tools are the products of human intention: they are designed and created for a given purpose.[24] Given that, does this imply that artworks can provide affordances? I think yes. In the event that artworks possess cognitive functions—if they are indeed "active and competent players in the field of knowledge", to again quote John Gibson—we can and should also expect them to provide affordances. They should, in short *do* things for us in some significant, identifiable, and measurable way. Furthermore, in increasing our performative capacities in some significant, identifiable, and measurable way, the affordances offered by artworks should be empirically available in exactly the way that any performance (catching a bus, eating a hamburger, defending heliocentrism in light of your empirical observations) is empirically available. It is in offering affordances that artworks have the capacity to teach us.

Conclusion

Let's take stock. In this chapter I've quickly outlined a particular conception of aesthetic cognitivism: one premised upon the notion that knowledge, properly understood, constitutes a species of superlative performance. Knowledge, per the scholarship of Barry Allen, is a performative accomplishment of an outstanding kind: not a merely habitual success, but a success that vastly exceeds the success criterion inherent to the intended outcome of that performance. Technologies participate in these performances by offering affordances. Affordances feed into superlative performances by facilitating those performances: that is, they *afford* certain courses of action that would otherwise be difficult or impossible. It is via affordances that we can cash out the idea that technologies, including artworks, possess cognitive functions.

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23 cf. Alva Noë: *Strange Tools: Art and Human Nature*, New York: Hill & Wang 2015.
24 There is obviously *much* more to say on this subject, and I apologise for my glibness. Unfortunately, a full account of the ways in which artworks constitute a class or kind of technical object exceeds the ambit of my analysis here.

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While I think that this approach is both philosophically robust and avoids the problems identified within the standard approaches in aesthetic cognitivism, there remain unanswered questions. One might ask, for instance, that if artworks constitute a special class of technologies, does that imply that at least some of the affordances—and thus the cognitive functions—of artworks are also categorically differentiable from the affordances provided by non-artwork technologies? While I don't yet have a good answer for this (though my intuitions lean, albeit cautiously, towards the affirmative), I also don't think that a full account of the differences between artwork and non-artwork affordances is necessary for my thesis to obtain. The cognitive functions of artworks are not premised upon their capacity to share propositional or experiential knowledge, but should instead be understood in terms of the affordances, or increase in performative capacities, that they provide.

Furthermore, I believe that this particular case demonstrates the basic soundness of the intuition with which I began this chapter: that there is obvious utility in bringing philosophy of art and philosophy of technology together in conversation. In this particular instance, I employed two concepts drawn from philosophy of technology—the performative epistemology of Barry Allen, and the idea of affordances—to help clarify some outstanding issues in aesthetic cognitivism. In doing so, I trust that I have made clear two things. First, that philosophy of art and philosophy of technology share a non-trivial number of questions and concerns; and second, that there are good pragmatic reasons to share analytical methods and conceptual schemes between those two disciplines.