

Is the Ethical Evaluation of Art Relevant to Art Criticism? Focus on Noel Carroll's Defence of Ethical Evaluation of Art

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Abstract

A popular view is that art is evaluated solely based on its artistic or expressive qualities. Since these qualities are often regarded as unrelated to ethics, the ethical evaluation of an artwork is considered irrelevant to art criticism. This viewpoint suggests that art and ethics have separate values that cannot be used to assess each other. The value of art is fundamentally different from that of moral values. The proponents of this perspective regard aesthetic values as the sole criterion for assessing the worth of an artwork. They argue that ethics and aesthetics are autonomous as ethics concerns right or wrong, while aesthetics is solely a matter of beauty. So, art should be evaluated on the basis of its aesthetic qualities. Focusing on Carroll's defence of the ethical evaluation of art, this paper argues that aesthetics and ethics are not autonomous. There is a rational ground that relates both of these fields. Consequently, the ethical evaluation of art is relevant.

Keywords: *ethical evaluation, cognition, emotion, overridingness thesis, aggregation of aesthetic and moral perceptions .*

Introduction

A prominent perspective in philosophical discussions about art is that art is created for its own sake. This view holds that an artist has no external purpose or goal. Art is an end in itself. According to this perspective, the value of art is determined solely by its artistic qualities related to aesthetic experience. The ethical evaluation presupposes certain social or political ideals and judges whether an artwork is moral or immoral based on these external "ends". The critics of this approach argue that such external "ends" are not a matter of art. Art has its autonomous sphere that deals with beauty or aesthetics or the critique of beauty or

aesthetics. The question of whether an artwork has worse moral implications is not a matter of evaluation of art. The evaluation of an artwork is an evaluation that focuses on an “intrinsic form” that simply deals with the artistic or aesthetic characteristics of an artwork. The critics who oppose the ethical evaluation of artwork have been of the view that ethical consideration is relevant only when there is an external or transcendental “end”. The “end” of art is art itself. Art is neither morally good nor bad. It does not lie in the sphere of morality.

This study begins its inquiry from Noel Carroll’s work *Art and Ethical Criticism*, which by examining arguments against the ethical evaluation of artwork, highlights how the ethical evaluation of artwork is relevant to art. In section one, I focus on the arguments against the ethical evaluation of art. The critics of the ethical assessment of art mainly proceed with their arguments based on the distinction between the nature of moral and aesthetic judgments. They explain how ethical judgments are the result of cognition, which involves facts and reasoning, whereas aesthetic judgments arise from emotion, inner feelings and subjectivity. Additionally, they reject the consequentialist approach to evaluating art, contending that ethical critics have no solid ground for claiming that artworks lead to specific behavioral consequences. They believe that such assumptions are rooted in an insufficient and inaccurate understanding of the negative effects of art on human behavior. We thoroughly discuss these arguments in section one.

In section two, we focus on Carroll’s response to critics of the ethical evaluation of art. Here, we explain how Carroll argues that the rigid demarcation between cognitive and emotional thought is based on a narrow conception of knowledge. We elaborate on Carroll’s idea that artists’ emotions can reinforce moral beliefs by portraying or imagining the moral dimension of human life. We will examine how Carroll demonstrates the relevance of ethical evaluation, as it assesses whether the author’s imagination accurately represents the moral dimension of an act or not.

In section three, we assess the problem of the relevance of the ethical evaluation of art by exploring various debates on the nature of the relation between moral values and artistic values. Here our main concern will be that the relevance of ethical criticism can only be established if there is a unique interaction between moral value and the value of “artwork form”. Here, we also analyse Eaton’s idea of the integration of moral value and aesthetic value. Through an analysis of various possible ways of interaction between morality and aesthetics, we reach the point that the problem of ethical evaluation of artwork stems from the mistaken idea of incommensurability between cognitive and emotive judgements. Our analysis will demonstrate that while aesthetic and moral perceptions are distinct,

they are inseparable. They are two aspects of a single experience. This unique relation provides a ground for the ethical evaluation of an artwork.

1. Arguments against Ethical Criticism of Art

In his work *Art and Ethical Criticism*, Carroll thoroughly discusses the arguments against ethical criticism of art. The first argument is based on the idea that art and ethics are autonomous and cannot evaluate each other. According to this view, art exists for its own sake and does not serve moral ends. This idea is rooted in “aestheticism”, which asserts that art deals with beauty alone (Carroll, 2000, p. 351). Art has no other purpose and does not aim for practical benefits or external goals. The only criterion for assessing a work of art is whether it promotes or provides an aesthetic experience. If it does, it is considered good; if it does not, it is seen as bad. The belief in the autonomy of art presumes “formal qualities” as its common characteristics which focus solely on balance, order, or beauty. This unique nature of aesthetic experience positions art as an autonomous discipline, suggesting that it should be evaluated only on this basis.

According to this peculiar nature of aesthetic experience, one cannot have aesthetic experience unless he has disinterested-sympathetic attention or contemplation of an artwork. This means that if someone approaches an art object with the aim of setting aside all intentions and judgments except for his aesthetic appreciation, he will genuinely experience the artwork in its full essence. The autonomists insist that critics should focus solely on their aesthetic experience and set aside other interests when evaluating artwork. If they have personal motivations, such as practical concerns or moral values, they cannot fully appreciate the artwork, and as a result, they will be unable to determine whether the artwork is good or bad (Carroll, 1999, pp. 172-3). Moreover, the true effect of aesthetic experience also depends upon sympathetic attention. If the viewer has a sympathetic attitude towards artwork, they will take art as autonomous and assess it solely on its own merits rather than applying any external criteria. Carroll explains that the idea of the autonomy of art leaves no room for the relevance of ethics for art evaluation (Carroll, 2000, p. 352).

This perspective suggests that artworks should be evaluated using criteria that are applicable to all forms of art. Autonomists argue that ethical values should not be a basis for evaluation, as most artworks are unrelated to ethical considerations. For instance, pure music and artistic designs or color arrangements cannot be classified as either moral or immoral. Therefore, artworks should not be assessed using ethical criteria, as these do not serve as a common standard for appreciating art (Carroll, 2000, p. 353).

Carroll identifies that the second argument against the ethical evaluation of artwork is developed in the context of the difference between the nature of cognitive and emotive judgments. This argument contends that art cannot contribute to ethical knowledge at all, as knowledge is derived from cognition, which involves facts, explicit thought, and reasoning, whereas art is rooted in emotions and proceeds through feelings and subjectivity. The belief that art can provide a basis for learning perfect moral views is misguided. An ethical assertion is a knowledge claim, whereas an expression of art is not a knowledge claim at all (Carroll, 2000, p. 354).

According to Carroll, the third argument against the ethical evaluation of artwork is based on an anti-consequentialist perspective. This argument challenges the idea that evaluating art from an ethical standpoint is relevant, particularly because some artworks might have specific negative effects on the behavior of audiences or readers. The main point of this argument is that critics who evaluate art ethically often claim the existence of certain behavioral effects without providing sufficient evidence. Ethical critics position themselves as authorities and assert that an artwork produces either good or bad consequences. Anti-consequentialists argue that these critics lack a solid foundation for making such definitive claims about the behavioral effects of artwork (Carroll, 2000, p. 355). However, an ethical critic provides some evidence suggesting that some artworks have bad consequences for individual life, but what are the exact consequences are difficult to prove. The debates on the consequences of such artworks have been controversial. The ethical critics of art take some behavioral effects as evidence for their critique without having sufficient and conclusive knowledge of human behavior (Carroll 2000, p. 356). Thus, for anti-consequentialists, the ethical criticism of art is not relevant to art critique.

2. Carroll's Response to the Objections Regarding Ethical Evaluation of Art

Carroll addresses all the above objections to ethical criticism of art. As we have seen, the first argument against the ethical evaluation of artwork is based on the idea of the autonomy of art. The idea of the autonomy of art presumes that the common denominator of art is its "formal characteristics" that provide an opportunity for aesthetic experience to viewers. It is independent of practical benefits and consideration of "moral ends". Carroll argues that though the ethical dimension may not be a common denominator of art, asserting that evaluation criteria must be a common denominator is problematic for the reason that in the history of art and literature, there is no such a common denominator that can be

identified in a conclusive sense. Carroll explains that artworks may have resemblances with each other in various ways but there are no essential common features of artworks. Even the aesthetic theory of art, which claims that aesthetic experience is the common denominator of art as art provides an opportunity for aesthetic experience, it overlooks the fact that aesthetic experience is itself highly controversial and undefined. There is no clear concept of aesthetic experience. One “object” can have different aesthetic effects on different people. The aesthetic is culturally contextual. Furthermore, even if it is said that aesthetic experience arises from the “significant form” presented in artworks, we may say that many artworks lack such a “significant form”. For example, works like Morris’s *Dirt* and John Cage’s *4’ 33”* do not possess identifiable significant forms. This raises the question of how such work can provide an opportunity for aesthetic experience. Thus, art has no global common denominator to evaluate artwork (Carroll, 2000, p. 358).

As we have seen, the autonomists believe that the sole purpose of art is art's is to provide an aesthetic experience, which can only be achieved if the viewer remains disinterested in all other interests. By suspending all of the other interests, we can attend an artwork as an artwork i.e. to attend art for its own sake rather than other external interests. In response to this view, Carroll identifies two key points. First, not all artworks are created to afford the aesthetic experience only; many are produced with other intended interests. For instance, some artworks are produced and conceived with an interest in social and moral issues. They may have religious and social-political intentions along with the intention to produce aesthetic qualities. So, it is not right to say that artwork only provides an opportunity for aesthetic apprehension. Second, in viewing art the viewers do not limit their reaction to merely aesthetic feelings. They must also consider the messages and intentions conveyed within the artwork. Consequently, viewers cannot be entirely “disinterested,” as their engagement often involves responding to interests that exist outside the art itself. For example, a feminist novel is not created merely as art for the sake of art. It has a social message and it motivates to think about these messages (Carroll, 1999, p. 178). Similarly, many of the artworks are created for religious motivation and moral education. In this case, art is for the sake of religion or for the sake of morality. Thus, if art can indeed be created for various external interests, why should not it be evaluated based on these interests?

As we have seen, one of the objections to ethical criticism is that it considers some artworks as a means of contributing to ethical knowledge. Opponents of this perspective argue that such an approach is not justifiable on rational grounds. They

explain that knowledge is a matter of cognition that proceeds through facts and explicit thought and reasoning. In contrast, art involves emotions and proceeds through feelings or subjectivity. Critics of ethical criticism assert that art lacks cognitive value. They believe that art does not make knowledge claims, and even when an artwork expresses moral views or other assertions, these cannot be regarded as insights or understandings since they operate on an emotive rather than a rational level. Carroll responds to this argument by arguing that it relies on a narrow concept of knowledge. Knowledge is not merely a matter of propositions like “what is the case” (or what is “x”). Knowledge can also encompass “how is the case” (what “x” is like). Therefore, when an artwork has a moral dimension, it is not simply because it states that “x” is moral or immoral (or “x” is good or evil), as we already possess that information. Instead, it has moral dimensions because it contributes to ethical knowledge in a different way. It reveals what the possible cases of “x” being moral or immoral might be. For example, a novel can afford ethical knowledge not in the sense that it tells us that slavery is bad, but by conveying what may be the cases of slavery (or knowledge of what slavery is like). It creates or highlights the cases of suffering relating to slavery. Carroll illustrates this point by emphasizing that emotive language enhances moral beliefs and motivates us to understand how immoral is evil. What Carroll explains is that even though art is not a source of knowledge in the same way that science, philosophy and history are, it can contribute to our understanding of facts of life in another way. Art portrays life situations in such a way that readers not only become more aware of the facts of life but also become attentive to the severity of facts and their implications. As Carroll states, art captures flavour of the facts (Carroll, 2000, p. 362).

From this perspective, we can say that art contributes to ethical learning. According to Carroll, life situations portrayed in literature are highly relevant to moral reasoning. He explains that an author, through his power of imagination and by employing appropriate literary devices, creates scenarios that evoke the emotions of readers or viewers and thus, in turn, invite them to contemplate the consequences of moral or immoral aspects of life situations. For instance, in “Crime and Punishment,” the author, through his power of imagination, creates a situation and conveys the feelings of a murderer. This engages the readers and educates them about the repercussions of murder and the challenges faced by someone who has committed such an act. It prompts readers to reflect on the evil of murder and to understand what a murderer’s life is like. According to Carroll, this is the “acquaintance approach” to knowing moral knowledge (Carroll, 2000, p. 363). Moreover, fiction has the power to portray moral scenarios that encourage

readers to reevaluate their moral beliefs. However, it may be that some fiction propagates an unjust critique of moral norms. Ethical criticism can address the problem. In ethical criticism, the art critic assesses whether the author's imagination accurately portrays the moral dimension of an act or not (Carroll, 2000, p. 364).

As we have seen, opponents of ethical criticism of art and literature argue that ethical criticism relies on inconclusive knowledge of human behavior and often criticizes art primarily for its negative impact on human behavior. However, Carroll counters that ethical criticism does not attempt to predict the effect of artwork on the behavior of the reader or viewer. Instead, it assesses the quality of moral experience that artwork provides when the audience engages with it (Carroll, 2000, p. 370). We know that when fiction has a significant moral dimension, it engages the audience's moral emotions in a certain way and encourages them to participate in formulating moral judgment and responses. In ethical criticism of art, the critics simply focus on whether an artwork empowers audience's moral power to understand moral issues correctly or merely confuses or distorts them. What Carroll explains is that his approach to ethical criticism of art does not involve the approval or disapproval of the moral insight of an artwork based on its effects on human behavior. Instead, it assesses whether artwork properly shapes one's moral experience or misdirects it (Carroll, 2000, p. 370). In other words, Ethical critics of art concentrate on the quality of the content rather than its potential future implications. Moreover, Carroll suggests that if we cannot predict how the artwork will affect the moral behavior of the audience, we can justifiably question the form of moral messages that the artwork conveys.

3. Relevance or Irrelevance of Ethical Evaluation of Art: The Assessment of the Problem

We can assert that the relevance of ethical evaluation is considerable because ethical inquiry is essential for assessing artworks that poorly exhibit moral dimensions and influence our ethical experiences. However, we cannot shift moral responsibility to the artist without determining whether such artworks were intentionally created to misdirect ethical experiences. Therefore, the issue of shifting moral responsibility is crucial for understanding the relevance of ethical evaluation of art. It may be that artist have no intention of directing or misdirecting moral experience or wrongly exhibiting moral values; they simply create characters of different mindsets to represent their responses to moral values. In this sense, such artworks do not bear moral responsibility. This is consistent with the

autonomist's claim that art is for its own sake, rather than for moral ends. As a result, there is no justification for ethical criticism of art.

Zhen Li focuses on this issue by arguing that nothing can ethically be evaluated unless it meets the criterion for moral responsibility. He states that an action can only be subjected to ethical inquiry if it satisfies two conditions. First, it must be a controlled action; in other words, it must be a free action. Second, it must meet an "epistemic condition", which implies that the agents must be aware of their actions. Li explains that a controlled action is one performed by an agent when he has the ability to choose otherwise. If someone take action X but is unable to refrain from doing X, he cannot be responsible for acting X. For instance, if a person is forced to act wrong at gunpoint, we cannot blame him for his action. Moreover, if a person performs action Y and has the ability to not to act Y but is unaware of the nature of Y and its consequences, he also cannot be blamed for his action. For instance, a child cannot be blamed for upsetting another person (Li, 2023, p. 2479).

In order to understand the relevance or irrelevance of ethical criticism to art, Li also focuses on the distinction between artwork as a product and the artist as an agent who creates art. He argues that an artwork, as a product, cannot be held morally responsible because it is not an agent in the true sense. To illustrate his point, he uses the analogy of a snake bite. If a snake causes harm to a person, the snake itself cannot be blamed. However, if someone intentionally places the snake in the person's path, then the agent who places the snake becomes responsible for the harm caused. In this way, if the artist fulfils the condition of being an intentional agent, he can be held morally accountable and thus can be blamed for his art (Li, 2023, p. 2483).

What Li explains is that for an artist to be believed morally responsible, he must have free will in creating artwork and an awareness of the consequences of his work (Li 2023, p. 2486). If either of these two conditions is not fulfilled, the artist cannot be held morally accountable and we cannot blame him. Regarding the condition of free choice, in most cases, the author is free to create artwork. However, there are circumstances in which an artist may produce an artwork without being aware of its consequences. Based on these two conditions, Li identifies three specific situations in which ethical criticism of art becomes irrelevant. First, if an artist freely creates or performs an artwork but is unaware of its consequences. Second, an artist is aware of the consequences of his work but cannot avoid them. Third, an artist is aware of the consequences and has the ability to avoid them, but is unaware that his act is immoral (Li, 2023, p. 2487). Thus, Li concludes that to conduct a moral critique of an artwork, an understanding of the

author's condition is necessary. Without adequate knowledge of the "freedom condition" and "epistemic conditions" of an artist's act, his work cannot be evaluated on moral grounds.

What follows from Li's analysis is that we cannot blame an artist if we are not aware of the artist's conditions discussed above. However, it is a considerable challenge to know the artist's conditions simply by focusing on the artist's product. In most cases, we are familiar only with the artist's product or the intrinsic quality of the artwork rather than the artist's conditions. This means we can evaluate the quality of artwork, but we may lack insight into the artist's circumstances. This implies that the relevance of ethical criticism hinges on whether there is a relation between "moral value" and the "intrinsic form" of an artwork. Without this relation, ethical evaluation becomes irrelevant. Ted Nannicelli focuses on this issue. He follows the "interactionist" position, which argues for a unique interaction between the "intrinsic form" of an artwork and its moral value. According to the interactionists, ethical flaws negatively impact an artwork. Conversely, if there is no ethical flaw in an artwork, its overall value is enhanced. This suggests that there is a significant interaction between the "intrinsic form" of an artwork, which pertains to its artistic quality, and its moral value (Nannicelli, 2017, p. 403). However, we have seen that there is a trend in the philosophy of art that denies the interaction between ethics and art, as it believes that art or aesthetics is an autonomous sphere.

The idea of autonomy of art ultimately leads to the belief that art, as aesthetic or beauty, is the supreme value and is entirely irrelevant to morality. This perspective does not take into account the consequences of artwork for any form of value structure and simply pursues art for the sake of art (Barrett, 1982, pp. 140-141). Moreover, if aesthetics or artistic value is intrinsically good, art would not concern itself with the potential suffering and humiliation it may cause for humans. However, the history of art shows that it often cares deeply about humans and condemns humiliation. We see that art has served as a means of actualizing human dignity, indicating that there is significant merit in asserting the interaction between art and morality. Nicola M. Pless discusses this point. He explains that art and literature can be seen as a key source for promoting human dignity. Through art and literature, individuals can feel self-worth which, in turn, promotes human dignity (Pless et al., 2017, p. 229).

According to Pless, artists react against human humiliation by giving form to their dignity and relating it with others. They create a broader meaning of life and self-identity (Pless et al., 2017, p. 223). Obviously, this occurs within a value structure and moral sense of the audience. Thus, we can argue that artwork takes

moral responsibility, allowing us to evaluate art on ethical grounds. This view aligns with Carroll's responses to the critics of the ethical evaluation of art. Carroll argues that ethical critics of an artwork simply focus on whether the artwork deals audience's moral power to understand moral issues correctly or merely confuses or distorts them. If an artwork distorts moral experience, it loses its overall worth.

While it is generally accepted that ethical flaws negatively affect artwork, it remains unclear how this occurs, as there is a significant gulf between artistic quality or "intrinsic form" of an artwork and its moral value. Eaton focuses on this issue. She notes that while surveys about specific artworks indicate that moral values may affect the aesthetic experience, it is still argued that aesthetics and morality are two metaphysically and epistemologically different enterprises. The proponents of this perspective believe that there can be "ugly generous men" and "beautiful mean men". They consider moral and aesthetic senses as two distinct faculties that do not depend on each other (Eaton, 1992, p. 221).

If aesthetic and ethical values are distinct, Eaton raises the question: why do some specific artworks' lovers claim that their aesthetic appreciation changes when it is discovered that such an artwork violates specific moral values (Eaton, 1992, p. 222)? For instance, a person who admires the beauty of a leather jacket might feel irritation upon realizing that it is made from lambskin. Why does he irritate if the aesthetic is an independent feeling? One possible explanation is that his aesthetic appreciation changes because he scrutinises his aesthetic feelings by prioritising his moral interest over his aesthetic interest as Eaton mentions (Eaton, 1992, p. 222). This position is usually labelled as the "moral overridingness". According to the concept of "moral overridingness", although moral consideration and aesthetic consideration are distinct, moral consideration has a greater status and is more admirable for those who care about morality. However, Eaton argues that there can be instances where individuals prefer aesthetic consideration even though they generally admire morality. In specific cases, they may choose aesthetic pleasure without feeling much regret (Eaton, 1992, p. 222). Similarly, there can be instances where people prefer moral consideration even though they generally admire aesthetics. Humans' preferences for ethical or aesthetic considerations do not imply that one overrides the other. Aesthetics and ethics cannot be blocked off. They can influence decisions, though their impact can be moderated. In other words, Eaton explains that the "Overridingness thesis" is problematic as it takes the separation of ethics and aesthetics for granted.

For Eaton, morality, aesthetics and other human concerns don't need to be considered with a rigid separation as it is not necessary to have one concern the others have to be blocked off (Eaton, 1992, p. 227). Although humans may

consider issues from various perspectives, such as moral, aesthetic and scientific perspectives, these perspectives are not like separate bundles. They can intrude on each other and the intrusion of one does not necessarily dilute the other. There may be interesting links or common perspectives between them. For instance, Eaton argues that aesthetics and morality both have a link. Both instigate from human “sentimentality” (Eaton, 1992, p. 229).

According to Eaton, human sentimentality serves both moral and aesthetic roles simultaneously. It provides a relation between ethics and aesthetics (Eaton 1992, p. 229). We cannot separate moral or aesthetic roles from human sentiments. If someone is sentimental, he is sentimental about both morality and aesthetics at the same time. One is sentimental about artwork due to the effects of its formal qualities, but it occurs with moral consideration, such as what is the consequence of this artwork and what is its overall goodness, or how it serves human well-being. Similarly, one is sentimental about morality as he restrains himself from what he believes to be immoral. But it occurs with aesthetic consideration, i.e. the expression of the immoral; how something is immoral (Eaton, 1992, p. 229). In other words, aesthetic judgments simultaneously demand the reference of moral principles and moral judgements depend upon aesthetic consideration. For instance, as we have seen in the case of Carroll, the understanding of “slavery is evil” is inherently connected to the comprehension of “how slavery is evil”. Thus, when an artwork portrays the cases of slavery, it simultaneously has a reference to the moral principle that slavery is evil. Ethics and aesthetics are not necessarily separated and both can co-exist.

Eaton explains that the overridingness of morality over aesthetics or vice versa is misguided (Eaton, 1992, p. 230). The overridingness thesis provides a false basis for evaluating artwork, as it takes the separation of morality and art for granted. For Eaton, an artwork should not be admired purely on a moral or aesthetic ground, but rather admired by an aggregation of both moral and aesthetic grounds (Eaton, 1992, p. 230). For example, she discusses the case of an evaluation of a beautiful painting created through colour effects, using a goldfish dipped in paint, which ultimately dies after spreading colours across the canvas. Eaton explains that people who do not know the way the painting was created enjoy its beauty through aesthetic experience. However, as they know the creation process, the aesthetic experience of a fair number of people changes. While these people still see the same colours, the colours no longer please them as much as they did before. As far as deliberation to block moral consideration in aesthetic experience is concerned, Eaton argues that most of the people report that they cannot deliberate to overlook the moral violation involved in creating the painting,

making it difficult for them to enjoy the beauty of the painting as they enjoyed it before they were unaware of the way the painting was created. Thus, Eaton concludes that this shift of experience is not simply due to separate perception; rather, it is because of the aggregate of perceptions. The aesthetic and moral perceptions are different but inseparable. They are two aspects of one experience (Eaton, 1992, p. 232). The change in aesthetic experience shows that aesthetic and moral perceptions are not entirely separated, otherwise, the change in experience would not manifest.

What Eaton explains is that human perception, due to its complexity, is understood in different components, such as reason and emotions. These components represent two aspects of a single “unified self”. Similarly, reality, due to its complexity, is found in different ways, such as goodness and beauty. But they are also two aspects of one reality. In this perspective, ethics and morality are equal partners. As a respondent of reality, humans have a strong interest in both aesthetics and ethics. Humans use aesthetics for a better understanding of ethics. If morality involves making the right decision or action at the right time, art and literature teach humans how to take such action and how to choose the best time for right action, as this often depends on the specific situation humans encounter in life. Life situations are best explained or expressed by art (Eaton, 1997, p. 363).

That is the point that Carroll explains in his response to the critics of the ethical evaluation of art. We have seen how Carroll emphasizes that art contributes to ethical knowledge in a special way. Art and literature can afford ethical knowledge in the sense they create stories or symbols for portraying life situations in such a way that readers not only become more aware of the facts of life but also become attentive to the severity of facts and their implications. Artists, through their power of imagination and by employing appropriate literary devices, create scenarios that trigger emotions in readers or viewers. This engagement invites them to contemplate the consequences of moral or immoral aspects of life situations. Carroll effectively demonstrates how emotive language can strengthen moral beliefs. In this context, there is a connection between aesthetics and ethics. This connection establishes the relevance of an ethical evaluation of art.

Conclusion

The foregoing discussion leads us to conclude that although morality as a cognitive discipline and aesthetics as an emotive discipline appear to be distinct areas of study, they have a unique relationship. Carroll rightly points out that while ethics teaches about good or bad, aesthetics exhibits good or bad artistically, thereby deepening our understanding of moral values. Carroll’s defence of ethical

criticism argues against the strict separation between morality and aesthetics, suggesting that such a separation assumes a narrow conception of moral knowledge. A narrow concept of moral knowledge emphasizes mere acquaintance of moral facts, while a broader concept of knowledge also includes an understanding of the severity of the moral facts. Carroll convincingly demonstrates that some artworks create a scenario of the moral aspects of life situations for depicting them artistically and motivate us to contemplate moral values. Thus, one can evaluate such artworks based on ethical consideration by assessing whether such artworks exhibit the moral aspect of life situations appropriately or misrepresent them. Therefore, it is reasonable to assert that the role of ethical criticism is relevant in the evaluation of artworks.

Moreover, Eaton's conception of "aggregation of aesthetic and moral perceptions" also provides a ground for the relevance of ethical criticism of art. This idea aligns with Carroll's viewpoint, as it also recognizes that aesthetics plays a crucial role in shaping our understanding of ethical knowledge. Eaton convincingly argues against a strict separation between morality and aesthetics, explaining why the aesthetic experiences of a fair number of people change when they know something deemed aesthetically good is a result of morally questionable actions. This shift in overall perception is not merely a result of a separate perception. It is the aggregate of perceptions. When Humans prefer ethical or aesthetic considerations, they do so not because one overrides the other. Instead, aesthetics and ethics are interconnected and cannot be separated. They can influence our decisions, though their impact can be moderated. Therefore, Eaton's idea of "aggregation of aesthetic and moral perception" provides a plausible ground for the relevance of ethical criticism of artwork. We can conclude that artwork should not be admired purely on a moral or aesthetic basis, but rather appreciated through the integration of both moral and aesthetic dimensions

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