1

IS ETHICAL CRITICISM A PROBLEM? A HISTORICAL PERSPECTIVE

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1 Is There a Problem about Ethical Criticism?

In recent discussion, the question whether "ethical criticism" of art is possible and appropriate has been understood as the question whether ethical merits or flaws in works of art, but especially the latter, are themselves also aesthetic merits or flaws of those works, again typically the latter, or only merits or flaws of those works considered from some non-aesthetic point of view, not *qua* works of art.[1] Noël Carroll has written that "philosophers from Plato through Hume supposed that the pertinence of ethical criticism to art was unproblematic. It is only since the late eighteenth century that the view took hold that the aesthetic realm and the ethical realm are each absolutely autonomous from the other."[2] This correctly assumes that there cannot even be a question about whether an ethical criticism of a work is also an aesthetic criticism unless the ethical and the aesthetic are considered to be separate dimensions of value in our experience and its objects, and suggests that the separation between the ethical and the aesthetic that underlies the contemporary discussion was made only in the late eighteenth century. Presumably Carroll supposes that the decisive event that made this separation in the late eighteenth century was Kant's insistence in his 1790 *Critique of the Power of Judgment* that judgments of taste are disinterested, while moral judgments express the interest of pure practical reason. What I want to argue here is that while the idea of the disinterestedness of aesthetic judgment may have been an eighteenth-century innovation, it was only later adapters of the idea, in the late nineteenth century and again in the second half of the twentieth century, who thought that it makes ethical criticism of works

of art problematic; neither Kant himself nor those of his predecessors who first introduced the idea of the disinterestedness of judgments of beauty, namely Anthony Ashley Cooper, the third Earl of Shaftesbury, and Francis Hutcheson, thought that the disinterestedness of judgments of taste in general precluded the centrality of ethical issues to works of art in particular, and thus the appropriateness of ethical criticism of such works. Moreover, I believe, they were right to think that there is no problem about ethical criticism, although I will not attempt to defend this position independently. Carroll himself does so quite ably.

Before turning to details, two comments are in order. First, it may be useful to distinguish between two different issues that have been central both in eighteenth-century discussions of the relations between art and morality and in recent discussions, although they have not always been distinguished. One of these issues is what has come to be called the issue of ethical criticism; the other is what might be called, adopting an eighteenth-century term, the issue of aesthetic education. The former is the question of whether an ethical dimension can be essential to a work of art *qua* work of art, so that an ethical criticism of the work is also an aesthetic criticism of it, not an independent criticism. The second is the question of whether the experience of works of art and the cultivation of the skills and sensibilities necessary to the full and proper appreciation and enjoyment of (at least some kinds of) works of arts is advantageous for the development of moral sensitivity, judgment, or even commitment, thus whether aesthetic education makes a contribution to moral development. In the most general terms, the former question is thus whether the ethical makes a contribution to the aesthetic, and the latter is whether the aesthetic makes a contribution to the ethical. Both of these questions were extensively discussed in the eighteenth century, and both have figured in the recent discussion of the relation between aesthetics and morality as well.[3] But because of the focus of the present volume, my discussion in this paper will focus on the topic of ethical criticism rather than aesthetic education.

My second preliminary point is that although the idea of the disinterestedness of judgments of taste and therefore of a significant distinction between the aesthetic and the ethical was certainly one major development in eighteenth-century aesthetics, that century was a period of intense activity in aesthetics, with a wide array of theories on offer, and the line of thought that leads from Hutcheson to Kant – or more precisely, from Hutcheson to one element emphasized in Kant's initial analysis of pure judgments of taste in general, but hardly mentioned in his analysis of the creation and reception of works of fine art in particular, a distinction that

will become important as I proceed – was hardly the only approach in eighteenth-century aesthetics or even the predominant one. On many eighteenth-century accounts of art and our experience of it, ethical criticism would have seemed even less problematic than I will argue it was for Kant and other theorists of disinterestedness. For many eighteenth-century theorists, art was defined as the communication of truths and emotions, and in particular morally significant truths and emotions, through media accessible to our senses and imaginations, and our enjoyment of art was essentially connected to our appreciation of both the form and the content of such communication. On theories such as this, there could be no question that ethical criticism is apposite to the criticism of art *qua* art.

2 The Sensible Representation of the Moral

I will briefly illustrate this kind of aesthetic theory, which if anything was the dominant kind of theory in the eighteenth century, before turning to the theories emphasizing disinterestedness, which have seemed to recent writers to create a problem about ethical criticism.

German aesthetics before Kant was dominated by Wolffians, including Alexander Gottlieb Baumgarten, Georg Friedrich Meier, Moses Mendelssohn, and Johann Georg Sulzer. Christian Wolff himself did not use the term "aesthetic" – that would be introduced by Baumgarten in 1735[4] – but ascribed the pleasure of what we would call aesthetic response to the sensible, or clear but indistinct, cognition of perfection; the aesthetic qualities of an object, conversely, would be its perfections insofar as they are suitable for sensible cognition and are so perceived. Thus, "Beauty consists in the perfection of a thing, insofar as it is suitable for producing pleasure in us" by means of the sensory cognition of that perfection.[5] Wolff defined perfection, very abstractly, as the harmony or concordance of the parts of an object with one another and with the aim of an object.[6] In the case of representational arts such as painting, the aim of the object is representation, and the perfection of representation is similarity,[7] but what is represented should also be a perfection, and moral perfections are certainly among the perfections that can be represented by such art. In this case, the moral significance of what is represented thus makes an essential contribution to the overall perfection of the object, and ethical criticism of the content of the work of art would be part of the criticism of it as a work of art. Baumgarten placed greater emphasis than Wolff on the perfection of the representation itself rather than of the represented content when he transformed Wolff's formula that beauty is the sensible

cognition of perfection into the definition of beauty as "the perfection of sensible cognition as such."[8] But Baumgarten's enumeration of the specific perfections of representational art include not only such formal features as "wealth," "truth," "clarity," and "liveliness" (*ubertas*, *veritas*, *claritas*, and *vita cognitionis*), but also "magnitude" (*magnitudo*), which is typically the *moral* magnitude of that which is represented. Baumgarten made it clear that art typically represents morally significant content in a number of passages in his classroom lectures on the *Aesthetica*. He said that "Everything that we are to think beautifully must be aesthetically great . . . For this it is requisite that the objects of thought be great, and then that the thoughts of the object be made equal or proportionate, and that finally both not be without important consequences, but must rather be fruitful and touching."[9] Even more explicitly, he said that "nothing can be beautiful that is not moral, because insofar as I would think beautifully I must think morally and virtuously."[10] Likewise, Baumgarten's disciple Meier said that "For a sensible representation to enjoy the greatest possible beauty," it must have formal merits such as "wealth," and thus for example "A beautiful cognition must represent a great variety in a single image," but it must also possess "The magnitude of cognition, the noble, the sublime, etc. For the sake of this beauty sensible cognition must not only represent great, suitable, important, noble objects, and so on, but must represent them in a way that is suitable and proportionate to their magnitude."[11] This makes it clear that both the moral quality of what is represented by a work of art and the way in which it is represented contribute to the beauty of the work, and thus that criticism of the moral content of a work is just as much a part of the criticism of it as a work of art as is criticism of the way in which the content is presented.

Moses Mendelssohn's aesthetics of "mixed emotions," developed in the later 1750s, thus at the same time as the work of Meier's just cited, remains within the same general framework. Mendelssohn recognized the possibility of beautiful representations of morally negative or disturbing content, because he held that the activity of representing is itself an "affirmative determination of the soul" and thus something we take pleasure in, so that while

> We cannot perceive a good action without approving it, without feeling inside a certain enjoyment of it, nor can we perceive an evil action without disapproving of the action itself and being disgusted by it[, y]et recognizing an evil action and disapproving it are affirmative features of the soul, expressions of the mental powers in knowing and desiring, and

> elements of perfection which, in this connection, must be gratifying and enjoyable . . . [Thus,] considered as a representation, a picture within us that engages the soul's capacities of knowing and desiring, the representation of what is evil is itself an element of the soul's perfection and brings with it something quite pleasant that we by no means would prefer not to feel than to feel.[12]

Thus for Mendelssohn the fact that the content of art typically has moral significance does not mean that beautiful art can represent only what is morally good. But the moral status of the content interacts with the more formal merits of the artistic representation in forming our overall response, and certainly the moral demerits of the work can outweigh its other merits; thus moral assessment of the content of a work is certainly relevant to the assessment of its beauty or aesthetic merit as a whole.

Johann Georg Sulzer also recognized that art aims to produce pleasure both by setting our cognitive powers into activity through the formal features of its object and by arousing our deepest feelings. Thus he wrote that "the essence" of art "consists in the fact that it impresses the objects of our representation with sensible force, its end is the lively affection of our minds, and in its application it aims at the elevation of the spirit and the heart," and that "The fine arts also use their charms in order to draw our attention to the good and to affect us with love for it. Only through this application does it become important to the human race and deserve the attention of the wise and the support of regents."[13] Sulzer recognized that the arts could "affect us with love for" the good through their depiction of the ugly, including the morally ugly, as well as through their depiction of the good,[14] and thus like Mendelssohn he did not assume that morally valuable art can represent only what is morally valuable. But he firmly held that the vivification of our moral sentiments is a proper, indeed perhaps the central, aim of fine art as such, and thus that moral criticism of the effect of a work is a proper part of the criticism of it as a work of art.

These writers represented the mainstream of German aesthetics before Kant, and for all of them ethical criticism was clearly part of the criticism of art as such, not a separate and alternative form of criticism. None of them emphasized or even discussed the idea of the disinterestedness of judgments of taste. Kant would introduce that idea to German aesthetic discourse, having appropriated it from British aesthetics. Even so, we will see, he did not take the disinterestedness of aesthetic judgment to make ethical criticism entirely separate from the criticism of art as such. Before we turn to Kant and other theorists of disinterestedness, however, let us

take a brief look at exemplary French and British writers for whom, like the Germans we have just considered, it was patent that the affection of our moral feelings was central to the aims of art and thus that ethical criticism was part and parcel of aesthetic judgment.

Among the major contributors to aesthetics in eighteenth-century France, Denis Diderot is an interesting case, because some of his theoretical writings espouse what could be the basis for a separation between ethical and aesthetical values in works of art that is, however, clearly belied by his own extensive critical practice. In his essay on beauty in the *Encyclopédie*, published in 1752, Diderot locates our sense of beauty in the contemplation of such formal properties as "order, relation, arrangement, symmetry, propriety, impropriety, etc.," and says that "I therefore term 'beautiful,' independently of my existence, everything that contains the power of awakening the notion of relation in my mind."[15] If "beauty" stands in for a general category of aesthetic qualities, this seems to limit such qualities to formal qualities of objects that are not obviously moral in nature. And if such relations as "propriety" and "impropriety" might seem to be moral in nature, thereby immediately subtending the ethical under the aesthetic category of beauty, Diderot seems explicitly to reject such a supposition by clearly separating a moral species of beauty from other, properly aesthetic, species of beauty. Thus he writes:

> Either we consider the relations apparent in men's actions, and we have *moral beauty*; or in works of literature, and we have *literary beauty*; or in musical compositions, and we have *musical beauty*; or in the works of nature; and we have *natural beauty*; or in the mechanical creations of man, and we have the *beauty of artifice*; or in the likenesses provided by works of art or of nature, and we have *imitative beauty*.[16]

This suggests that while there might be grounds for distinguishing among literary, musical, natural, artificial, and imitative beauty, they are all genuinely aesthetic sorts of beauty, while moral beauty is something else altogether. Further, Diderot seems to lend support to such a position when he illustrates his conception of "propriety" as a relation in a specific work of art, Pierre Corneille's play *Horace*. His argument is that our response to the beauty of a character's action or statement is not a direct response to his expression of a moral quality, but rather a response to the "propriety" or relation *between* the agent's moral character and his manner of expression. Thus, the beauty of propriety does not seem to be ethical, but rather aesthetic, and our pleasure in it seems to be independent of a purely moral judgment.

However, in his more mature critical practice, Diderot strongly suggests that it is an aim of art *qua* art to arouse our emotions by appealing to our moral sensibilities, and thus that it would be an entirely apposite criticism of a work of art as such that it in some way expressed a morally defective rather than appropriate moral attitude or quality: that would directly interfere with its goal as a work of art. Thus in an essay "On Dramatic Poetry" from 1758, he writes that

> The poet, the novelist, and the actor make their way into our hearts by indirect means. They touch our souls all the more strongly and the more surely because we are relaxed, because we offer ourselves to the blow. The sufferings with which they move me are imaginary, I agree, but they move me all the same. Every line rouses an impulse of concern in me for the misfortunes of virtue and moves me to expend my tears on them. What could be more pernicious than an art that instilled in me a feeling of complicity with an evil man? But, by the same token, what art could be more precious than the one that imperceptibly makes me feel concern for the fate of a good man, that draws me out of the quiet and comfortable situation I myself enjoy in order to accompany him . . . ?[17]

And in the "Notes on Painting" appended to his review of the Salon of 1765, he says that "One should inscribe over the door of one's studio: Here the unfortunate will find eyes that will weep for them. To make virtue attractive, vice odious, and ridicule effective: such is the project every upstanding man who takes up the pen, the brush, or the chisel should make his own."[18] Both of these statements suggest that the arousal of morally significant and appropriate emotions by the vivid and engaging depiction of characters is an essential aim of art, and thus that the criticism that a work of art "that instilled in me a feeling of complicity with an evil man" is "pernicious" is an entirely proper judgment of it *as a work of art*, not an independent judgment of the object under some non-aesthetic category. However Diderot's abstract definition of beauty should be understood, he seems far from seeing ethical criticism of art as alternative to aesthetic criticism of it.

Among writers on aesthetics in mid-eighteenth-century Britain, the most influential was no doubt Henry Home, Lord Kames, the Scottish lawyer who published *Essays on the Principles of Morality and Natural Religion* in 1751 and the *Elements of Criticism* in 1762, a book that remained continuously in print well into the nineteenth century and was quickly translated into other European languages. (I will return to the earlier British writers Shaftesbury and Hutcheson in Section 3 below.) The 1751 *Essays* contain an important criticism of Hutcheson's and Hume's attempt to

found all of moral philosophy on our natural approbation of benevolence, among other riches, but its interest here is its initial chapter on "Our Attachment to Objects of Distress," Kames's contribution to the great eighteenth-century debate about the paradox of our pleasure in tragedy. Kames's argument here is based on the premise "that naturally we have a strong desire to be acquainted with the history of others. We judge of their actions, approve or disapprove, condemn or acquit; and in this the busy mind has a wonderful delight."[19] The pleasure that we take in judging of the actions and, as it turns out, the feelings of others, is central to our experience of art as well, because "whatever may be the physical cause, one thing is evident, that [the] aptitude of the mind of man to receive impressions from feigned as well as from real objects, contributes to the noblest purposes of life."[20] Thus, not only history but also novels and plays are "the most universal and favourite entertainments," because in them we "enter deep into the concerns" and "partake of [the] joys and distresses" of other human beings. In particular tragedy, a "feigned history," "imitation or representation of human characters and actions," "commonly makes a stronger impression than what is real; because, if it be a work of genius, incidents will be chosen to make the deepest impressions; and will be so conducted as to keep the mind in continual suspense and agitation, beyond what commonly happens in real life."[21] We enjoy this, according to Kames, because the experience of even painful events, whether real or feigned, as in art, is not itself necessarily painful:

> Thus the moral affections, even such of them as produce pain, are none of them attended with any degree of aversion . . . Sympathy in particular attaches us to an object in distress so powerfully as even to overbalance self-love, which would make us fly from it. Sympathy accordingly, though a painful passion, is attractive; and in affording relief, the gratification of the passion is not a little pleasant.[22]

Because of this fact, "tragedy is allowed to seize the mind with all the different charms which arise from the exercise of the social passions,"[23] and indeed the *point* of tragedy as a paradigmatic form of art is precisely to so "seize the mind." Anything about a tragedy that would stand in the way of our sympathetic response to its characters, including anything morally inappropriate in their depiction, would thus block the intended effect of the tragedy, as a work of art, and an ethical criticism of the characters and actions of the tragedy would thus be an aesthetic criticism of it.

Kames's theory of art in the *Elements of Criticism* is based on the premises that "A man while awake is conscious of a continued train of perceptions and ideas passing in his mind,"[24] that "we are framed by nature to relish order and connection" in such trains of perceptions and ideas,[25] and that "Every work of art that is conformable to the natural course of our ideas, is so far agreeable; and every work of art that reverses that course, is so far disagreeable."[26] Our pleasure in art is based in the way that our experience of it facilitates, or, as the earlier discussion of tragedy suggests, intensifies, this natural course of ideas and perceptions in the mind. This does not mean that works of art must necessarily represent or imitate the order of objects and events in nature, but that the flow of our ideas and perceptions in *response* to works of art must be natural in the appropriate sense. Kames then argues that central, if indeed not foremost, among the "ideas and perceptions" that are to be put into a natural flow by works of arts are our emotions and passions, and thus that it is central to the success of art that it arouse these responses and let or make them flow in a natural way. "Passions, as all the world knows, are moved by fiction as well as truth" even though man is a creature "so remarkably addicted to truth and reality."[27] Kames does not see a paradox here that needs to be resolved, but an empirically obvious fact about human nature. His theory is that verbal descriptions as well as pictorial representations can produce "ideal presence," or sensory imagery so rich and yet distinct "that I perceive the thing as a spectator; and as existing in my presence; which means not that I am really a spectator, but only that I conceive myself to be a spectator, and have a perception of the object similar to what a real spectator hath."[28] And since perceptions can lead directly to emotions and passions, that means that ideal presence can produce emotions and passions just as forceful as those created by the perception of real objects. Ideal presence, in turn, can be created by "speech, by writing, or by painting," because "A lively and accurate description of an important event, raises in me ideas no less distinct than if I had originally been an eye-witness; I am insensibly transformed into a spectator; and have an impression that every incident is passing in my presence." And "in idea we perceive persons acting and suffering, precisely as in an original survey: if our sympathy be engaged by the latter, it must also in some degree be engaged by the former, especially if the distinctness of ideal presence approach to that of real presence."[29] Whatever in a work of art would prevent the engagement of our emotions, then, would be a defect in it as a work of art. If moral defects in the characters depicted or in the expression of an author's attitude toward such characters would stand in the way of such engagement of our emotions, that would be an artistic

failure in the work, something standing in the way of the work's achieving that which makes art valuable for us. An ethical criticism of a work of art is therefore a criticism of it as a work of art.

3 The Theory of Disinterestedness

For a large number of writers who are very much in the mainstream of eighteenth-century aesthetics, then, art aims to engage our emotions and passions, and anything that would stand in the way of that engagement would be an artistic failure. For such writers, ethical criticism, that is, criticism of the ethical attitudes depicted or expressed in a work, would not be independent of aesthetic criticism, because the flaws so criticized would prevent the work from having the effect that is central to its value as art. The mainstream of eighteenth-century aesthetics cannot be seen as anticipating the rigid separation between aesthetic and ethical domains on which the more recent assumption that there may be a problem about ethical criticism has been based. Let us now consider whether the theorists of disinterestedness who have been so central to recent conceptions of eighteenth-century aesthetics actually raise a problem about ethical criticism of the arts.

The identification of disinterestedness as a criterion of the aesthetic has been traced back to Anthony Ashley Cooper, third Earl of Shaftesbury.[30] In a famous passage in "The Moralists," first published in 1709 and then included in his *Characteristicks of Men, Manners, Opinions, Times* in 1711, Shaftesbury wrote that the idea that one should require "the *Property* or *Possession* of the Land" for "*Enjoyment* of the Prospect" of, for example, "this delicious *Vale* we see beneath us" is "absurd," that the idea that "the *Beauty* of . . . *Trees*" is connected to "some certain relish by which [their] *Acorns* or *Berrys* . . . become as palatable as the *Figs* or *Peaches* of the Garden" is "sordidly luxurious," and that the "set of eager *Desires*, *Wishes* and *Hopes*" that "certain powerful FORMS in *Human* Kind" draw after themselves are in "no-way sutable . . . to your rational and refin'd Contemplation of *Beauty*."[31] Shaftesbury did not actually apply the term "disinterested" to the "contemplation of beauty" that he distinguished in these ways from those pleasures that are dependent upon possession and use or consumption of their objects. He did, however, use the term "disinterestedness" in another of his writings, namely "Sensus communis: An Essay on the Freedom of Wit and Humor," also first published in 1709, in order to contrast a "mercenary" and self-regarding attitude in which moral rules are observed only for fear of punishment or hope

of reward with a truly virtuous attitude in which virtue is perceived to be "a *good* and *right* Inclination" "of it-self," something with "Intrinsick Worth or Value." Being virtuous for the sake of an extrinsic reward is what would leave "no room" for "*Disinterestedness.*"[32] Insofar as Shaftesbury sought to characterize the contemplation of beauty as disinterested, what he meant was that our pleasure in it is independent of the fulfillment of hunger or sexual desire in the same way in which virtue is independent of the enjoyment of a reward or the avoidance of punishment. But that does not mean that beauty, in particular the beauty of art, has nothing to do with moral goodness. On the contrary, Shaftesbury's separation of the contemplation of beauty from the fulfillment of desire and of true virtue from mercenary and self-regarding interest was meant precisely to open the way for the recognition that at bottom beauty and moral goodness are closely connected, thus "That *Beauty* and *Good* are still the same."[33] And since the good is just what is harmonious, and harmony is the true nature of the universe, beauty, goodness, and truth are just different ways in which symmetry and order are presented. Thus, in arts like architecture, beauty not only can but must be connected to utility, and in imitative arts such as painting and literature beauty is inextricably connected to the truthful depiction of both the outward features and the inner characters of its subjects. So Shaftesbury wrote that "*Beauty* and *Truth* are plainly join'd with the Notion of *Utility* and *Convenience*, even in the Apprehension of every ingenious Artist, the *Architect*, the *Statuary*, or the *Painter*."[34]

> AND thus, after all, the most natural Beauty in the World is *Honesty*, and *Moral Truth*. For all *Beauty* is TRUTH. *True* Features make the Beauty of a Face; and true Proportions the Beauty of Architecture; as *true* Measures that of Harmony and Musick. In Poetry, which is all Fable, *Truth* still is the Perfection. And whoever is scholar enough to read the antient Philosopher, or his modern Copists, upon the nature of a Dramatick and Epick Poem, will easily understand this account of *Truth*.[35]

For Shaftesbury, the disinterestedness of the aesthetic did not separate it from the ethical, but connected it to the latter.

This philosophical position was reflected in Shaftesbury's critical writing. His most extended piece of criticism, "A Notion of the Historical Draught of Hercules" (1713), was not a direct criticism of an actual work of visual art, but rather based upon a literary description of the choice of Hercules by the sophist Prodicus, as recounted in Xenophon's *Socratic Memoribilia* (2.1.21), a description that gave rise to many subsequent paintings. In the chapter of this essay (to which he devoted much effort in

the waning months of his life) that considers ornament, and in a passage that considers in particular the proper balance between non-human and human figures in an illustration that has a human situation like the choice of Hercules as its central subject, Shaftesbury wrote:

> But if . . . the human species be that which first presents itself in a picture; if it be the intelligent life, which is set to view; it is the other species, the other life, which must then surrender and become subservient. The merely natural must pay homage to the historical or moral. Every beauty, every grace must be sacrificed to the real beauty of this first and highest order. For nothing can be more deformed than a confusion of many beauties: and the confusion becomes inevitable, where the subjection is not complete.[36]

This passage argues specifically that in a painting or other work of art the depiction of that which does not have direct moral significance must be subordinated to the depiction of that which does. But more generally it implies that *every* beauty or grace in a work must be consonant with the conditions of moral beauty and grace. This does not mean, to be sure, that art must depict only that which is morally beautiful or graceful; after all, a depiction of the choice of Hercules will include a figure representing vice as well as one representing virtue, and makes its point only by depicting vice as well as virtue. But it does mean that in the judgment of a work of art that has a moral subject at all, the judgment of its moral content is as much of a judgment of it as a work of art as is the judgment of any more purely formal merits, and indeed that in the work itself and thus in a proper judgment of it the formal merits must be subordinated to its moral merits. In other words, a separation between ethical and aesthetic criticism was the furthest thing from the thought of the founder of the theory of aesthetic disinterestedness.

The first Treatise of Francis Hutcheson's *Inquiry into the Original of our Ideas of Beauty and Virtue* (1725), the inquiry *Concerning Beauty, Order, Harmony, Design*, defines the response to beauty as "a Sense, because of its Affinity to the other Senses in this, that the Pleasure does not arise from any Knowledge of Principles, Proportions, Causes, or of the Usefulness of the Object,"[37] and thus seems to separate aesthetic response from all consideration of utility and/or moral value. But the title page of the first edition of Hutcheson's work proudly stated that in it "The Principles of the late Earl of SHAFTESBURY are explain'd and defended, against the Author of the *Fable of the Bees*,"[38] and Hutcheson's characterization of aesthetic response as like a sense rather than an intellectual

judgment was meant to prepare the way for his characterization of moral judgment too as a form of sense, not to separate the aesthetic and the moral. The paragraph immediately following Hutcheson's claim that aesthetic "Perception is justly called a Sense" makes it clear that, like Shaftesbury, he intended to argue only that aesthetic response and judgment should be independent of any mercenary considerations of *self*-interest, not independent of the moral in general:

> And further, the Ideas of Beauty and Harmony, like other sensible Ideas, are necessarily pleasant to us, as well as immediately so; neither can any Resolution of our own, nor any Prospect of Advantage or Disadvantage, vary the Beauty or Deformity of an Object: For as in the external Sensations, no View of Interest will make an Object grateful, nor View of Detriment, distinct from immediate Pain in the Perception, make it disagreeable to the Sense; so propose the whole World as a Reward, or threaten the greatest Evil, to make us approve a deform'd Object, or disapprove a beautiful one; Dissimulation may be procur'd by Rewards or Threatnings, or we may in external conduct abstain from any pursuit of the Beautiful, and pursue the Deform'd; but our Sentiments of the Forms, and our Perceptions, would continue inevitably the same.[39]

This distinction of our genuine response to beauty from any prospect of advantage or expectation of reward does not mean that a response to moral qualities is not part and parcel of our response to beauty. On the contrary, Hutcheson observes in his discussion of "Original or Absolute Beauty," that is, beauty in non-representational objects, typically objects of nature, that the "most powerful Beauty in Countenances, Airs, Gestures, Motion" of human beings "arises from some imagin'd Indication of morally good Dispositions of Mind,"[40] although, in light of the previous section, these must be dispositions to which we respond immediately, thus as if it were sensorily, rather than through any judgment of our own advantage or otherwise. And in the case of representational art, our response to what Hutcheson calls "Relative or Comparative Beauty" likewise involves an immediate response to moral qualities. Here Hutcheson argues that we take pleasure in an "exact Imitation" that is independent of the beauty of the content that the imitation represents, but also that "the Imitation of absolute Beauty may indeed in the whole make a more lovely piece."[41] He then argues explicitly that works of art need not depict only morally admirable characters or actions, but at the same time that in our response to a work of art our moral responses are inextricably intertwined with what might be thought to be our responses to its more purely formal features:

> The same Observation holds true in the Descriptions of the Poets either of natural Objects or Persons; and this relative beauty is what they should principally endeavour to obtain, as the peculiar Beauty of their Works. By the *Moratae Fabulae*, or the $\eta\theta\eta$ of Aristotle, we are not to understand virtuous Manners in a moral Sense, but a just Representation of Manners and Characters as they are in Nature; and that the Actions and Sentiments be suited to the Characters of the Persons to whom they are ascrib'd in Epick and Dramatick Poetry. Perhaps very good Reasons may be suggested from the Nature of our Passions, to prove that a Poet should not draw his Characters perfectly Virtuous; these Characters indeed abstractly consider'd might give much more Pleasure, and have more Beauty than the imperfect ones which occur in Life with a mixture of Good and evil: But it may suffice at present to suggest against this Choice, that we have more lively Ideas of imperfect Men with all their Passions, than of morally perfect Heroes, such as never really occur to our Observation; and of which consequently we cannot judge exactly as to their Agreement with the Copy. And further, thro' Consciousness of our own State, we are more nearly touch'd and affected by the imperfect Characters; since in them we see represented, in the Persons of others, the Contrasts of Inclinations, and the Struggles between the Passions of Self-Love and those of Honour and Virtue, which we often feel in our own Breasts. This is the Perfection of Beauty for which Homer is justly admir'd, as well as for the Variety of his Characters.[42]

What is crucial about this passage is that it makes manifest Hutcheson's unquestioning assumption that the point of a work of art is to engage our passions of "Honour and Virtue," although to do this requires the depiction of morally imperfect as well as perfect characters, but in a proper light. On this assumption, the failure of a work of art to engage our moral sensibilities because of an imbalance between its morally less perfect and more perfect characters or for any other moral reason would be its failure *as a work of art*. Again, there is no suggestion in Hutcheson's account of the sense of beauty that ethical criticism is distinct from aesthetic criticism, or the criticism of a work of art as a work of art.

But in recent discussions the paradigm theorist of the disinterestedness and thus the autonomy of the aesthetic is always Kant, and my argument that the authors of the theory of disinterestedness did not intend to make a problem for the ethical criticism of art can only be made convincing by means of an analysis of Kant's theory of fine art. I say Kant's theory of *fine art* because the heart of my argument will be that Kant clearly intended to show that our experience and judgment of fine art are more complicated than the case of the pure judgment of beauty with which he begins the exposition of his theory of taste, and that it is the moral content of art that makes our experience and judgment of it complicated.

Kant is of course famous for two claims: the claim that "The satisfaction that determines the judgment of taste is without any interest"[43] in the existence of its object, the beautiful, unlike our pleasure in either the useful or the good; and the claim that the beautiful "pleases universally without a concept."[44] Both of these claims are to be explained by the theory that our pleasure in the beautiful arises from the "animation of [the] faculties [of] the imagination and the understanding to an activity that is indeterminate but yet, through the stimulus of the given representation, in unison, namely that which belongs to a cognition in general," and thus a "sensation whose universal communicability" can be "postulated by the judgment of taste." That is, our pleasure in a beautiful object is caused by a free yet harmonious play of the imagination that is not determined by any concept, and therefore not by any concept of the practical use or moral value of an object that could reflect or generate an interest in its existence, but which, precisely because it does involve cognitive faculties shared by all normal human beings, can be imputed to all as the response they too would have to the object, at least under optimal circumstances. These are the claims with which Kant opens the "Analytic of the Beautiful" of the "Critique of the Aesthetic Power of Judgment," which is in turn the first half of the *Critique of the Power of Judgment*. Or as Kant puts his position in the Introduction to the whole work, employing more of the technical terminology that he develops for his conjoined exposition of his aesthetics and his reconstruction of traditional teleology,[45]

> If pleasure is connected with the mere apprehension of the form of an object of intuition without a relation to a concept for a determinate cognition, then the representation is thereby related not to the object, but solely to the subject, and the pleasure can express nothing but its suitability to the cognitive faculties that are in play in the reflecting power of judgment, insofar as they are in play, and thus merely a subjective formal purposiveness of the object. For that apprehension of forms in the imagination can never take place without the reflecting power of judgment, even if unintentionally, at least comparing them to its faculty for relating intuitions to concepts. Now if in this comparison the imagination (as the faculty of *a priori* intuitions) is unintentionally brought into accord with the understanding, as the faculty of concepts, through a given representation and a feeling of pleasure is thereby aroused, then the object must be regarded as purposive for the reflecting power of judgment. Such a judgment is an aesthetic judgment on the purposiveness of the object, which is not grounded on any available concept of the object and does not furnish one.[46]

Precisely because in aesthetic response so explained the power of judgment is "independent of concepts and sensations that are related to the determination of the faculty of desire and could thereby be immediately practical," Kant observes that the feeling of pleasure generated in this way possesses a kind of autonomy.[47] In this way Kant can reasonably be thought to have argued for the autonomy of the pleasure in the beautiful from all concepts, *a fortiori* from moral concepts, and thereby to have argued for the autonomy of the aesthetic vis-à-vis the ethical.[48]

But it would be a mistake to infer from this thus far reasonable conclusion that Kant has argued for the autonomy of *art* and the judgment of it from all ethical concerns and criticism. For what Kant has been analyzing in the theses thus far considered is the case of *pure* aesthetic response and judgment, which occur in response to objects of natural beauty like flowers, birds, or crustacea, works of decorative art such as wallpapers and borders, and what are, at least for Kant, marginal cases of fine art such as musical fantasias (without a theme)[49] – but not in response to what are for Kant paradigmatic cases of fine art, such as works of literature or representational painting. For Kant, our response to fine art *as such* is much more complicated than the simple case of pure aesthetic response and judgment with which he begins for expository purposes, and centrally involves a moral aspect. Kant does not develop a theory of criticism, but it is only natural to assume that since on his account a moral aspect is central to our experience of fine art, criticism of works of art on ethical grounds will not be extraneous to criticism of them as works of art but part and parcel of such criticism of them.

No doubt simplifying somewhat, we can think of Kant's analysis of our experience and judgment of fine art as being developed by the addition of four points to his initial analysis of "pure" aesthetic judgment. (Kant's account of our experience of the sublime also adds an ineliminable moral element to his picture of aesthetic experience, but since he thinks of the experience of the sublime as paradigmatically a response to nature rather than to art, and the recent debate about ethical criticism has clearly been a debate about the place of such criticism in the criticism of art only, I will not discuss Kant's account of the sublime here.)[50]

The concept of adherent beauty

The first step comes in Kant's addition of the concept of "adherent beauty" to his initial conception of "free beauty." Free beauty is beauty that "presupposes no concept of what the object ought to be," while adherent beauty "does presuppose such a concept and the perfection of the object

in accordance with it." As examples of adherent beauty, Kant mentions "the beauty of a human being (and in this species that of a man, a woman, or a child), the beauty of a horse, of a building (such as a church, a palace, an arsenal, or a garden house)," and says that in cases of such objects the intended purpose of the object and the concept which reflects that purpose place certain constraints on the forms that we can find beautiful in those objects:

> One would be able to add much to a building that would be pleasing in the intuition of it if only it were not supposed to be a church; a figure could be beautified with all sorts of curlicues and light but regular tattooing, if only it were not a human being; and the latter could have much finer features and a more pleasing, softer outline to its facial structure if only it were not supposed to represent a man, or even a warrior.[51]

There are several points to be noted here. First, although Kant does say that strictly speaking in an object with adherent beauty "perfection does not gain by beauty, nor does beauty gain by perfection,"[52] thereby suggesting that the judgment of an object's perfection in light of some practical or moral concept and the judgment of its beauty are two separate judgments about a single object, as the modern theorist who would strictly distinguish ethical from aesthetic criticism of a work of art supposes, Kant belies this claim by his acceptance of adherent beauty as a species of beauty rather than simply a contrast to it. Although the response to and judgment of adherent beauty does involve a determinate concept of what the object is supposed to be, Kant does not deny that adherent beauty is a kind of beauty at all, only that it is not the *same* as free beauty. But if it is to be a kind of beauty at all, then we must suppose that our response to it does involve a free play of the imagination and understanding, not just a subsumption of the object under a determinate concept, although, as the last quotation suggests, that free play must take place *within* certain boundaries set by the concept associated with the intended purpose of the object. Thus, for example, while the concept of church – let's take the case of a cathedral church, with its requisite cruciform floor plan – does place certain constraints on what forms we can find beautiful in a church, it cannot by itself determine what form a beautiful church must have; the difference between a beautiful church and an indifferent one must consist in the fact that the former but not the latter stimulates a free play of imagination and understanding within the boundaries determined by the concept of a church.[53] Second, although Kant emphasizes cases in which the intended purpose of an object merely places a limit

on what forms we could find beautiful in it, his own examples also suggest that there will be cases of adherent beauty in which we feel that there is a harmony *between* those aspects of the form of the object that are determined by its concept and those that are not – thus, an especially beautiful church will be one in which we have a sense of unusual harmony between the mandatory features of its floor plan and other, optional features of its design and decoration; a beautiful arsenal will be one which does not merely have strong walls and secure openings, but whose overall form somehow freely and harmoniously expresses the ideas of strength and security, and so on.[54] Finally, although Kant does not directly apply his conception of adherent beauty to the case of representational *fine* art – on standard eighteenth-century analyses, architecture, which involves considerations of utility but not representational content, is a *mixed* art[55] – Kant's analysis of fine art is clearly along similar lines to his analysis of adherent beauty: in fine art, the intended purpose of a work as well as its intended content clearly both constrain the form of the object but also enter into free play with the form and matter of the object, in such a way that ethical considerations do not remain external to the work's character as a work of art but become part and parcel of it. If that is so, then responses to the ethical content or significance of a work are not separable from the response to it as a work of art, and ethical criticism is thus part of aesthetic criticism, or the criticism of a work as a work of art, not independent from it.

Kant's theory of fine art

So let us now turn to the second step in what we can take to be Kant's argument for rather than against ethical criticism of art, namely his theory of fine art proper. We need not consider every step of Kant's exposition, but can focus on several main points. First, in his distinction of fine art from mere handicraft, Kant emphasizes that works of fine art must both follow certain rules of their medium or genre yet also leave room for the free play of our cognitive powers:

> It is not inadvisable to recall that in all liberal arts there is . . . required something compulsory, or, as it is called, a mechanism, without which the spirit, which must be free in the art and which alone animates the work, would have no body at all and would entirely evaporate (e.g., in the art of poetry, correctness and richness of diction as well as prosody and meter), since many modern teachers believe that they can best promote a liberal art if they remove all compulsion from it and transform it from labor into mere play.[56]

This already makes it clear that our response to and judgment of a work of art as such, like our response to and judgment of adherent beauty, will be mixed, not simple or pure, involving both the satisfaction of rules and the free play of imagination and understanding. Second, Kant tries to explain that beautiful or fine art has the somewhat paradoxical purpose of producing that free state of mind that is characterized precisely by not being (at least fully) determined by a concept: "Beautiful art . . . is a kind of representation that is purposive in itself and, though without an end, nevertheless promotes the cultivation of the mental powers for social communication," which means that the pleasure we take in fine art as such "must not be a pleasure of enjoyment from mere sensation, but one of reflection; and thus aesthetic art, as beautiful art, is one that has the reflecting power of judgment and not mere sensation as its standard."[57] This means that while fine art is produced both in accordance with certain determinate rules that flow from its medium and genre and in accordance with the aim of pleasing, it must find a way to stimulate the free play of imagination and understanding that is consistent with those constraints. Next, Kant emphasizes that paradigmatic works of artistic genius have content, indeed typically moral content, yet that such moral content does not merely set boundaries within which the work may stimulate the free play of our mental powers, but rather is part of what the mind plays with in responding to the work, or something that enters into harmony with the form and matter of the work. This is the gist of Kant's theory of "aesthetic ideas" as the source of the "spirit" that is essential to a work of genius. He defines an aesthetic idea as a "representation of the imagination that occasions much thinking though without it being possible for any determinate thought, i.e., concept, to be adequate to it, which, consequently, no language fully attains or can make intelligible." An aesthetic idea has intellectual and indeed typically moral content:

> One can call such representations of the imagination ideas: on the one hand because they at least strive toward something lying beyond the bounds of experience, and thus seek to approximate a presentation of concepts of reason (of intellectual ideas), which gives them the appearance of an objective reality

(but presents that content in a way that cannot be determinate and mechanical, but must be part of a free play of the imagination, understanding, and, now, reason);

> on the other hand, and indeed principally, because no concept can be fully adequate to them, as inner intuitions. The poet ventures to make sensible

> rational ideas of invisible beings, the kingdom of the blessed, the kingdom of hell, eternity, creation, etc., as well as to make that of which there are examples in experience, e.g., death, envy, and all sorts of vices, as well as love, fame, etc., sensible beyond the limits of experience, with a completeness that goes beyond anything of which there is an example in nature, by means of an imagination that emulates the precedent of reason in attaining to a maximum.[58]

Kant then concludes that in a work of art, its content, again typically moral content, does not merely constrain the work, but is "enlarged" by the work:

> Now if we add to a concept a representation of the imagination that belongs to its presentation, but which by itself stimulates so much thinking that it can never be grasped in a determinate concept, *hence which aesthetically enlarges the concept itself in an unbounded way*, then in this case the imagination is creative, and sets the faculty of intellectual ideas (reason) into motion, that is, at the instigation of a representation it gives more to think about than can be grasped and made distinct in it (although it does, to be sure, belong to the concept of the object).[59]

The free play of the imagination in response to a work of art is thus a free play *with* its content, which Kant assumes to be moral content, rather than a play *within* the bounds set by that concept. Kant also assumes the essentiality of content to the experience of art in his scheme for the division of the fine arts, which is based on "the analogy of art with the kind of expression that people use in speaking in order to communicate to each other." This analogy leads us to classify the arts as arts of either word, gesture, or tone ("articulation, gesticulation, and modulation"), and on this basis to divide the fine arts into "the arts of speech, pictorial art, and the art of the play of sensations."[60] This classification would make no sense if content were not part of what fine art plays with.

Since content thus enters into the free play of imagination, understanding, and reason stimulated by paradigmatic cases of artistic genius, and Kant takes it to be self-evident that such content will typically consist of moral ideas, our response to those ideas in that context must be part of our response to such works as works of art, and criticism of their moral content, at least insofar as that content does bear on the free play of our mental powers, will be part of the criticism of such works as works of art.

Constraints on beautiful representation of the ugly

Finally, let us consider two further points on Kant's view of the relation between the aesthetic and the ethical. First, in a section somewhat

misleadingly entitled "On the relation of genius to taste," Kant takes a position in the eighteenth-century discussion of the possibility of beautiful artistic representations of ugly or tragic objects. Because "A beauty of nature is a beautiful thing" but "the beauty of art is a beautiful representation of a thing,"[61] he argues, it is quite possible for a beautiful work of art to represent something that is not itself beautiful. Indeed it may even be the case that "Beautiful art displays its excellence precisely by describing things that in nature would be ugly or displeasing," such as "The furies, diseases, devastations of war." Presumably this means that fine art can also provide beautiful depictions of that which is morally ugly, so the mere fact that a work of art represents something that would be liable to ethical criticism is not itself necessarily a ground for criticism of the work as a work of art. Kant limits the possibility for beautiful representation of the ugly, however, by stating that "one kind of ugliness cannot be represented in a way adequate to nature without destroying all aesthetic satisfaction, hence beauty in art, namely, that which arouses loathing" (*Ekel*).[62] He does not define what he means by "loathing" in this context; since this restriction on the scope of beautiful representation was in fact a commonplace,[63] perhaps he felt no need to do so. Kant uses the term several times in his handbook of anthropology, however. In one place he uses it to connote the feeling of nausea caused by something that powerfully offends the outer senses of taste or smell,[64] but in another place he uses it to connote the emotional character of our response to arrogant excess in luxury and debauchery.[65] In the latter case loathing is clearly a moral sentiment. On Kant's account, then, we would be incapable of responding to beauty in a work of art that represented something morally loathsome, and such a work could be criticized on that ground.

Moral content as a source of enduring and self-sustaining interest

A contemporary defender of "autonomism," that is, the view that ethical and aesthetic criticism are two separate forms of criticism even when they have the same object, could, however, argue that all that Kant has shown here is that an ethical defect in a work sufficient to arouse loathing could *prevent* any aesthetic response to it at all, but not that such an ethical defect is itself an aesthetic defect. However, a further observation that Kant makes could justify a claim that moral content is necessary for the enduring interest of a work of art, and thus that criticism of the ethical power of a work of art is criticism of its success as a work of art. In a

subsequent section "On the combination of the beautiful arts in one and the same product," where Kant takes initial steps toward a conception of complex arts, such as opera, as *Gesamtkunstwerken*, he says that even though what is "essential" in all beautiful art "consists in the form, which is purposive for observation and judging," nevertheless the pleasure produced by such form "is at the same time culture and disposes the spirit to ideas, hence makes it receptive to several sorts of pleasure and entertainment." Truly successful art produces pleasure through more than the mere "matter of sensation (the charm or emotion), where it is aimed merely at enjoyment, which leaves behind it nothing in the idea, and makes the spirit dull, the object by and by loathsome (*anekelnd*), and the mind, because it is aware that its disposition is contrapurposive in the judgment of reason, dissatisfied with itself and moody." From this Kant concludes that "If the beautiful arts are not combined, whether closely or at a distance, with moral ideas, which alone carry with them a self-sufficient satisfaction, then the latter," that is, becoming loathsome and making reason dissatisfied with itself, "is their ultimate fate."[66] Even if Kant must allow that pure aesthetic judgment of the free beauty in the form of an object is an *autonomous* source of pleasure in it, independent of any practical or moral foundation, a pleasure that may first pique our interest in the object, he is not prepared to allow that our pleasure in a work of art can be *enduring* or *self-sustaining* unless that work has some moral content sufficient to sustain our satisfaction in it. But if it is part of the intention in producing or experiencing a work of art that it sustain our pleasure in it, then the criticism that it contains no ethical content sufficient to do so would be a criticism of its success *as a work of art*, and in this way ethical criticism would become part of aesthetic criticism.

It could well be argued that Kant has gone too far here. In his theory of fine art he has argued that a truly satisfying response to a work of art must ultimately be a free play involving not only imagination and understanding but also reason, the faculty of ideas. He could now be taken to have argued that reason must be engaged by a work in order for it to sustain our satisfaction with it and with ourself for being pleased by it. But for Kant himself reason can be theoretical as well as practical, so he ought to allow that a work might sustain our interest and satisfaction by adequately engaging either our theoretical or our practical reason in a free play with our imagination and understanding. And indeed it would seem plausible to suppose that some works of art, for example Bach's *Art of the Fugue*, do sustain our interest by engaging our theoretical rather than practical faculties. But widening Kant's point in this way would not undermine his assumption that many works of art do aim to sustain our

interest by bringing moral ideas into play with their more purely formal features, and that criticism of a work of art that attempts to do this for failing to succeed in doing so, either because of the inadequacy or defect of its moral content or because of its failure to put that moral content into a pleasing play with its formal features, would be criticism of it for failing to achieve its goal as a work of art. Criticism of a work for failing to have moral content adequate to engage us or for having moral content that prevents us from being engaged by it would then be just as much of a criticism of it as a work of art as criticism of it for failing to present an engaging moral content in an engaging way.

For Kant, then, ethical criticism can certainly be part of the criticism of a work of art, or of aesthetic criticism as that concept is now understood. Failure to see this can only be due to failure to see that for Kant the response to and judgment of fine art is more complex than the pure aesthetic response to and judgment of a free beauty of nature. Thus, enlisting Kant in support of the contemporary position of autonomism would be anachronistic, even if it might be correct that *later interpretations* of Kant have led to this contemporary position.

4 Coda: The Beautiful as that which is Complete in itself

At this point, we have reached the conclusion that one broad stream in eighteenth-century aesthetics took it to be obvious from the outset that the aim of art is to move our moral sentiments through the vivid means of sensible representation, and that while the theory of disinterestedness that culminated in Kant may have begun with a conception of pure aesthetic judgment, separate from all moral considerations, the theory of *art* that this approach developed also concluded that art must always or at least often have engaging moral content if it is to generate an enduring and satisfying response. On either approach, ethical criticism cannot be separated from the criticism of the success of works of art as such; rather, the criticism of a work of art that it has content that leaves us ethically indifferent or repulsed would be criticism of its success *as art*. We could conclude our capsule history here. However, let us instead conclude with a quick look at another eighteenth-century aesthetician who in fact has a much better claim than Kant himself to be the author of the idea of "art for art's sake," and thus of the position of autonomism that has recently been supposed to raise a problem for the ethical criticism of art. This is Karl Philipp Moritz.

Moritz published a brief "Essay on the unification of all fine arts and sciences under the concept of that which is complete [or perfect, *Vollendeten*] in itself" in the *Berlinische Monatsschrift* in March 1785 (in the same issue as that in which Kant published his essay "On the Volcanoes on the Moon," so certainly Moritz's essay did not escape Kant's attention). In this essay, Moritz argued that a beautiful work of art "does not have its end outside of itself, and does not exist on account of the perfection of something else, but only on account of its internal perfection. One does not contemplate it in order to use it, rather one uses it only insofar as one can contemplate it."[67] He thus claimed that a beautiful work of art does not please because it satisfies any independent interest of its audience or its artist; rather it pleases us because its self-perfection or self-containment "draws our contemplation entirely to it, distracting us from ourself for a while, and causing us to lose ourself in the beautiful object; and just this loss, this forgetting of the self, is the highest degree of the pure and unselfish satisfaction which the beautiful affords us."[68] Here Moritz implies that our pleasure in the beauty of a work of art arises precisely from the fact that it does not engage any of our other interests, moral interests included, thereby producing a state of blissful detachment from our usual preoccupations. This passage, far more than anything in Kant's invocation of disinterestedness, anticipates Schopenhauer's conception of the blissful state of pure will-less, self-less knowing as the essence of the experience of beauty,[69] although in his published works Schopenhauer refers only to Moritz's autobiographical novel *Anton Reiser* in an essay "On the Different Periods of Life."[70] And through Schopenhauer, Moritz's view of the inner perfection of the beautiful rather than the conception of disinterestedness in Shaftesbury, Hutcheson, and Kant would have led to the late nineteenth-century conception of art for art's sake and the recent conception of autonomism.

But even for Moritz, this view of the inner perfection of beautiful art proved too simple, and in a more extended essay "On the pictorial [*bildende*] imitation of the beautiful" published in 1788, three years after the previous essay, he offered a further analysis of beauty that connects it more closely with moral qualities, thereby opening the way for the position that our response to the moral qualities suggested by a work are part of our response to it as a work of art, not independent of that response, in turn opening the way to a defense of ethical criticism. In this essay Moritz argues that the beautiful must be distinguished from the *useful*, but that in this regard it is like the *noble*, and indeed that it *is* the noble insofar as it "*strikes our senses* or can *be grasped by our imagination*."[71] Moritz does not reach this conclusion by simply forgetting or rejecting his

earlier conception of beauty, but rather by conceiving of the noble as well as the beautiful as a form of internal, self-contained perfection that is contrasted to the merely useful: the concept of the noble is a "concept of the non-useful [*Unnützen*], insofar as it has no end, no aim outside of itself for why it exists," and thus "is connected most closely with the concept of the beautiful, insofar as that too *needs* no final end, no aim outside of itself for why it is, but rather has its entire value and the final end of its existence within itself."[72] Perhaps Moritz's conception of the noble was influenced by the conception of the good will as unmotivated by any desire for an object other than itself that Kant had promulgated in the *Groundwork for the Metaphysics of Morals*, which had appeared in 1785 a few months after Moritz's earlier essay; in any case, in the present essay he uses this conception of the noble to link the beautiful and the morally good more closely than Kant himself had ever done. Ultimately, he arrives at a neo-Shaftesburian (and thus neo-neo-Platonic) position that the beautiful and the good are virtually the same, the former just being the latter in a sensory guise. Thus he can conclude that "Every beautiful *action* must necessarily also be noble,"[73] and thus that every beautiful imitation must be an imitation of something noble. On this account, of course, a criticism of the moral quality represented or exemplified by a work of art will certainly be a criticism of its aesthetic quality.

My argument has been, then, that many eighteenth-century aestheticians assumed from the outset that at least one of the central functions of art is to make moral truths vivid to us and arouse our moral sentiments, and that they would have regarded anything in a work of art that would prevent that as a failure of it as a work of art, thus in our terms as a proper object of aesthetic criticism; that those theorists who emphasized the disinterestedness of aesthetic response meant only to emphasize that our pleasure in beauty is not mercenary and self-regarding, and that when they came to the case of art in particular they shared with their contemporaries the assumption that moral content is central to art, and thus that criticism of the moral content of a work or of its effect would be part of the criticism of it as a work of art; and that even the one eighteenth-century writer who did clearly anticipate the later idea of "art for art's sake" which is the source of the contemporary doubt about ethical criticism of the arts could not himself sustain such a conception, but instead associated beauty so closely with nobility that he too could not maintain a rigid separation between aesthetic and ethical criticism. I have no doubt that this overarching eighteenth-century assumption that for many works of art ethical criticism is a proper part of the

criticism of works of art as such could be defended, even for much contemporary art, but I trust that I can leave that task to other contributors to this volume.

Notes

1 See for example Berys Gaut, "The Ethical Criticism of Art," in Jerrold Levinson, ed., *Aesthetics and Ethics: Essays at the Intersection* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1998), pp. 182–203, at pp. 182–3; Berys Gaut, "Art and Ethics," in Berys Gaut and Dominic McIver Lopes, eds., *The Routledge Companion to Aesthetics*, 2nd edn. (London: Routledge, 2005), pp. 431–43, at p. 432. Gaut has defended the position that ethical flaws are at least sometimes *pro tanto* aesthetic flaws; that is, aesthetic flaws but ones that may sometimes be outweighed by other aesthetic merits in a work. The position that ethical flaws are not intrinsically aesthetic flaws, dubbed "autonomism," has been defended by, among others, Daniel Jacobson, in e.g., "In Praise of Immoral Art," *Philosophical Topics* 25 (1997): 155–99.

2 Noël Carroll, "Art and Ethical Criticism: An Overview of Recent Directions of Research," *Ethics* 110 (January, 2000): 350–87, p. 350.

3 Of course I have borrowed the name "aesthetic education" from Friedrich Schiller's *Letters on the Aesthetic Education of Humankind* (1795), but Schiller's work was his distinctive contribution to a discussion that had been going on throughout the century, not the innovation of a new topic. In recent literature, the question of aesthetic education has been especially associated with Martha Nussbaum and Noël Carroll; see especially Carroll's essay "Art and the Moral Realm," in Peter Kivy, ed., *The Blackwell Guide to Aesthetics* (Malden, MA, and Oxford: Blackwell, 2004), pp. 126–51, where his discussion of "epistemic arguments" (pp. 129–40), which is the most extensive part of his discussion, actually concerns what we can learn from the experience of art that contributes to our moral education and development.

4 See Alexander Gottlieb Baumgarten, *Meditationes philosophicae de nonnullis ad poema pertinentibus*, §116; translated as *Reflections on Poetry* by Karl Aschenbrenner and William B. Holther (Berkeley and Los Angeles, CA: University of California Press, 1954), p. 78.

5 Christian Wolff, *Psychologia empirica*, new edn. (1738; reprint, Hildelsheim: Georg Olms, 1968), §404, p. 344.

6 For example, Christian Wolff, *Philosophia prima sive ontologia*, new edn. (1736; reprint, ed. Jean Ecole, Hildesheim: Georg Olms, 1962), §503, p. 390.

7 Christian Wolff, *Vernünfftige Gedancken von Gott, der Welt, und der Seele des Menschen* (German Metaphysics), new edn. (Halle: Renger, 1751), §404; cited from Christian Wolff, *Metafisica Tedesca*, ed. Raffaele Ciafardone (Milan: Bompiani, 2003), p. 344. This is a bilingual German-Italian edition.

8 Alexander Gottlieb Baumgarten, *Aesthetica*, §14; cited from Hans Rudolf Schweizer, *Ästhetik als Philosophie der sinnlichen Erkenntnis: Eine Interpretation der "Aesthetica" A. G. Baumgartens mit teilweiser Wiedergabe der lateinischen Textes und deutscher Übersetzung* (Basel: Schwabe, 1973), p. 115.
9 Cited from Bernhard Poppe, *Alexander Gottlieb Baumgarten: Seine Bedeutung und Stellung in der Leibniz-Wolffischen Philosophie und seine Beziehungen zu Kant: Nebst Veröffentlichung einer bisher unbekannten Handschrift der Ästhetik Baumgartens* (Borna-Leipzig: Robert Noske, 1907), §177, p. 154.
10 Baumgarten, cited from Poppe, *Alexander Gottlieb Baumgarten*, §182, p. 156.
11 Georg Friedrich Meier, *Betrachtungen über den ersten Grundsatz aller schönen Künste und Wissenschaften* (Considerations on the first principle of all fine arts and sciences) (Halle: Carl Hermann Hemmerde, 1757), §22; reprinted in Meier, *Frühe Schriften zur ästhetischen Erziehung der Deutschen*, ed. Hans-Joachim Kertscher and Günter Schenk (Halle: Hallescher Verlag, 1999), vol. 3, pp. 170–206, at pp. 192–3.
12 Moses Mendelssohn, *Rhapsody or Additions to the Letters on Sentiments*, from his *Philosophische Schriften*, part 2 (Berlin: Voss, 1761), translated in Mendelssohn, *Philosophical Writings*, ed. Daniel O. Dahlstrom (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1997), pp. 131–68, at pp. 133–4.
13 Johann Georg Sulzer, "Künste; Schöne Künste," in his *Allgemeine Theorie der schönen Künste*, enlarged 2nd edn., ed. Friedrich von Blankenburg (Leipzig: Weidmann, 1792–4), vol. 3, pp. 72–95, at pp. 75–6.
14 See Sulzer, "Häßlich," in *Allgemeine Theorie*, vol. 2, pp. 457–9.
15 Denis Diderot, "On the Origin and Nature of the Beautiful," in *Diderot's Selected Writings*, ed. Lester G. Crocker, trans. Derek Coltman (New York: Macmillan, 1966), pp. 53–4.
16 Diderot, "On the Beautiful," p. 55.
17 Diderot, "On Dramatic Poetry," in *Diderot's Selected Writings*, p. 104.
18 Diderot, "Notes on Painting," in *Diderot's Selected Writings*, p. 225.
19 Henry Home, Lord Kames, *Essays on the Principles of Morality and Natural Religion*, ed. Mary Catherine Moran (Indianapolis, IN: Liberty Fund, 2005), p. 17.
20 Ibid., p. 18.
21 Ibid., p. 17.
22 Ibid., p. 20.
23 Ibid.
24 Henry Home, Lord Kames, *Elements of Criticism*, ed. Peter Jones, (Indianapolis, IN: Liberty Fund, 2005), vol. 1, p. 21.
25 Ibid., p. 26.
26 Ibid., p. 27.
27 Ibid., p. 66.

28 Ibid., p. 68.
29 Ibid., p. 69.
30 Most famously by Jerome Stolnitz, "On the Origins of 'Aesthetic Disinterest'," *Journal of Aesthetics and Art Criticism* 20 (1961): 131–43; and "On the Significance of Lord Shaftesbury in Modern Aesthetic Theory," *Philosophical Quarterly* 11 (1961): 97–113.
31 Anthony Ashley Cooper, third Earl of Shaftesbury, "The Moralists," in Anthony Ashley Cooper, *Characteristicks of Men, Manners, Opinions, Times*, ed. Philip Ayres (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1999), vol. 2, pp. 102–3.
32 Shaftesbury, "Sensus communis," *Characteristicks*, vol. 1, pp. 55–6.
33 Shaftesbury, "The Moralists," *Characteristicks*, vol. 2, p. 112; see also vol. 2, p. 104.
34 Shaftesbury, "Miscellaneous Reflections," *Characteristicks*, vol. 2, p. 215.
35 Shaftesbury, "Sensus communis," *Characteristicks*, vol. 1, p. 77.
36 Anthony Ashley Cooper, third Earl of Shaftesbury, "A Notion of the Historical Draught or Tablature of the Judgment of Hercules," in Anthony Ashley Cooper, *Second Characters or the Language of Form*, ed. Benjamin Rand (1914; reprint, Bristol: Thoemmes Press, 1999), p. 53. Rand provides Xenophon's account of Prodicus's description of the choice of Hercules in a footnote at pp. 30–32.
37 Francis Hutcheson, *An Inquiry into the Original of our Ideas of Beauty and Virtue in Two Treatises*, ed. Wolfgang Leidhold (Indianapolis, IN: Liberty Fund, 2004), 1.1.13, p. 25.
38 See Francis Hutcheson, *An Inquiry concerning Beauty, Order, Harmony, Design*, ed. Peter Kivy (The Hague: Martinus Nijhoff, 1973), p. 3. The author of the *Fable of the Bees*, of course, was Bernard Mandeville, who argued that private vices can become public virtues, that is, that selfishness rather than virtuousness can be the source of a thriving economy and polity that is beneficial to all.
39 Hutcheson, *An Inquiry into the Original of our Ideas of Beauty and Virtue*, 1.1.14, p. 25.
40 Ibid., 1.2.9, p. 33.
41 Ibid., 1.4.1, p. 42.
42 Ibid., 1.4, p. 43.
43 Immanuel Kant, *Critique of the Power of Judgment*, ed. Paul Guyer, trans. Paul Guyer and Eric Matthews (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2000), §2, 5:204.
44 Ibid., §9, 5:219.
45 For the latter, which I will not discuss here, see Paul Guyer, *Kant's System of Nature and Freedom: Selected Essays* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 2005), chapters 11–13, pp. 277–372; and Paul Guyer, *Kant* (London and New York: Routledge, 2006), chapter 10, pp. 335–59.
46 Kant, *Critique of the Power of Judgment*, Introduction, §7, 5:189–90.
47 Ibid., §9, 5:196–7.

48 The passages cited in this paragraph should make it clear that Kant, like his predecessors Shaftesbury and Hutcheson, did not mean to make the disinterestedness of aesthetic response the *cause* of its pleasurableness, as is suggested by Gordon Graham in *Philosophy of the Arts: An Introduction to Aesthetics*, 2nd edn. (London and New York: Routledge, 2000), p. 169; disinterestedness is a property *of* aesthetic pleasure, which allows judgments about it to be universally valid.
49 Kant, *Critique of the Power of Judgment*, §16, 5:229.
50 I have discussed Kant's account of the sublime in *Kant and the Experience of Freedom* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1993), chapter 6, pp. 187–228, and *Values of Beauty: Historical Essays in Aesthetics* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2005), chapters 8–9, pp. 190–241.
51 Kant, *Critique of the Power of Judgment*, §16, 5:230.
52 Ibid., 5:231.
53 Gordon Graham defends such a view of the relation between function and beauty in architecture in *Philosophy of the Arts*, pp. 146–7.
54 For further analysis of the variety of kinds of adherent beauty that are possible, see my "Free and Adherent Beauty: A Modest Proposal," *British Journal of Aesthetics* 42 (2002): 357–66; reprinted in *Values of Beauty*, chapter 5, pp. 129–40.
55 See, for example, Charles Batteux, *Les Beaux-Arts réduit à un même principe*, ed, Jean-Remy Mantion (Paris: Aux Amateurs de Livres, 1989), p. 82, or, in the version Kant may have known, Charles Batteux, *Einschränkung der Schönen Künste auf einen einzigen Grundsatz, aus dem Französichen übersetzt, und mit verschiedenen eignen damit verwandten Abhandlungen begleitet von Johann Adolf Schlegel*, 3rd edn. (Leipzig: Weidmanns Erben und Reich, 1770), pp. 21–2.
56 Kant, *Critique of the Power of Judgment*, §43, 5:304.
57 Ibid., §44, 5:306.
58 Ibid., §49, 5:314.
59 Ibid., §49, 5:315; emphasis added.
60 Ibid., §51, 5:320–21.
61 Ibid., §48, 5:311.
62 Ibid., 5:312.
63 See Johann Adolf Schlegel's comment, in a footnote to his translation of Batteux, that "Only *loathing* (*der Ekel*) is excluded from those disagreeable sentiments the nature of which may be transformed by imitation. Here art would waste all its effort." In Batteux, *Einschränkung der schönen Künste*, p. 111n.
64 Kant, *Anthropologie in pragmatischer Hinsicht*, §21, 7:157.
65 Ibid., 7:249–50.
66 Kant, *Critique of the Power of Judgment*, §52, 5:326.
67 Karl Philipp Moritz, "Über den Begriff des in sich selbst Vollendeten," in Moritz, *Werke*, ed. Horts Günther, 2nd edn. (Frankfurt am Main: Insel Verlag, 1993), vol. 2, p. 544.

68 Ibid., p. 545.
69 See Arthur Schopenhauer, *The World as Will and Representation*, trans. E. F. J. Payne (Indian Hills, CO: The Falcon's Wing Press, 1958), book 3, §41; vol. 1, p. 209.
70 See Arthur Schopenhauer, *Parerga and Parlipomena*, trans. E. F. J. Payne (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1974), vol. 1, p. 482.
71 Karl Philipp Moritz, "Über die bildende Nachahmung des Schönen," in Moritz, *Werke*, ed. Horts Günther, 2nd edn. (Frankfurt am Main: Insel Verlag, 1993), vol. 2, p. 558.
72 Ibid., p. 556.
73 Ibid., p. 554.