

# **Can the ethical evaluation of art be justified?**

## **Focusing on the point of view of feminism**

**HAN, hyejung**

**(Ph.D. Candidate, Ewha womans university)**

1. Introduction
2. Definition of concepts : ‘artistic value’ and ‘moral value’
  - (1) Artistic value vs Aesthetic value
  - (2) Moral Aspects of a Work of Art
3. Common Denominator : non-propositional knowledge, imagination
  - (1) Non-propositional knowledge
  - (2) Imagination
4. Conclusion

In this paper I assert that a feminist approach in art criticism could offer an appropriate response for evaluating works of art. Therefore, I examine standards of art evaluation by characterizing artistic value. I focus on the relationship between artistic value and moral value in relation to feminist art criticism, because one of the important issues in feminist art criticism concerns moral criticism of specific artworks. Sometimes we feel moral disgust when we face images or characterizations of women in art. Do these moral responses impact artistic values? I believe that one can evaluate the moral domain of some art. There are two competing positions: “moderate moralism”(Noël Carroll’s version) and “cognitive immoralism”(Matthew Kieran’s version). Regardless of their differences, I claim that both capture the same important aspects of the appreciator’s responses. These have implications for feminist art criticism.

## 1. Introduction

Since the 1970s, female artists have connected actively, and feminism discourse in art criticism have emerged. The Women's Art Movement in 70's directly affected the development of the feminism discourse. Nowadays, there are various approaches in feminist art criticism that can't be explained by one methodology. Feminist art criticism deals with various subjects. I divide them into three themes in my discussion that follows.

The first theme is feminist critiques that analyze the portrayal of women as objects in art representation. Male artists have created most of the images and characters of women in artworks. Many depict women to realize the male subject. For instance, women are spoken for (rather than being allowed to speak for themselves), their tragedies are displayed for pleasure, and they are even considered objects that man must overcome to achieve his higher purpose.

Second, female creators. It is hard to find female creator's names in art history. It is even harder to find a female artist described as a "genius" in the art historical canon. In Linda Nochlin's essay "Why Have There Been No Great Women Artists?"(1971), she claimed that this situation arose because women could not approach the art system easily. Nochlin analyzed that institutional prejudice and practical obstacles have obstructed women over centuries. However, it appears that the problem is not solved when chances are given equally to men and women. One reason is that women trained. Craig Owens said "in order to speak, to represent herself, a woman assumes a masculine position; perhaps this is why femininity is frequently associated with masquerade, with false representation, with simulation and seduction. Montrelay, in fact, identifies women as the "ruin of representation"."<sup>1)</sup> Thus, in this case, the critical reflection on the art world must be accompanied. It naturally leads to the final theme.

Third, standards in art criticism. In *Old Mistresses: Women, Art and Ideology* (1981), Pollock and Parker, criticizing Nochlin's equal-rights feminism, claimed that the deep structure of sexism and the systematic means by which patriarchy continually reproduces must be changed.<sup>2)</sup> They contended that it is more critical to examine art discourse and practice than to make a list of "great women artist." They pointed out that art criticism

---

<sup>1)</sup> Craig Owens, "The Discourse of Others: Feminists and Postmodernism", *Feminists and Postmodernism*, , p.59.

<sup>2)</sup> Michael Hatt & Charlotte Klonk, "8. Feminism", *ART HISTORY-A Critical Introduction to its Methods*, Manchester University Press, 2006.

evaluates female artists and male artists differently. This situation reveals itself in the case of Abstract Expressionism which is considered 'neutral' because there is no figure. Critics connected Helen Frankenthaler with nature and wrote about her using nature metaphors like "flowing" and "flowering" that remind us of motherhood or femininity. On the other hand critics used terms like "action" and "struggle" to evaluate Jackson Pollock's paintings. My discussion is in this context. By probing the relationship between artistic value and moral value, I suggest standards of evaluating artworks anew.

The debate about the relationship between art and morality lies in the philosophy of art which involves the connection between art itself and outside art (moral, political, cognitive aspect). Plato asserts that the moral value of all artwork overrides artistic value. Kant's aesthetic theory provokes the debate. Romanticism developed Kant's "disinterestedness" and established the autonomy of aesthetic domain. Romanticism suggests that artwork is supposed to afford an aesthetic experience that is independent of other interests. They believe art has a unique basis for the assessment for art itself. This perspective led to Formalism and New Critics in 20th century. However "disinterestedness" is called into question. The concept of "disinterestedness" is considered not pure or neutral but a product of male subject. After Carroll's essay "art and ethical criticism" (1996), the contemporary version of the debate has begun in the analytic philosophy of art.

However, the concept of the autonomy of art has still sustained artistic value. Defenders of the autonomy of art insist that art should be not evaluated by other standards and moral evaluation is never appropriate for artwork. They believe that the autonomy of art can protect art from social, economic and political practices and concerns and encourage artists to be more creative.

I admit the position of defending the autonomy of art has some insight, but characterizing artistic value in terms of moral values does not harm art's status and it does not degrade the value of art. Thus, we need to focus on the complexity of artistic value, especially related to moral evaluation, rather than seeking distinctive points.

I think the most important task in feminist art criticism is to clarify the intimate connection between art and morality. As I described above, we often put moral questions in artwork, which affects on our response. The problem is complicated if artwork is artistically inspired but morally troubling. I believe there are two possible explanations for this problem. Carroll insists that artistic value can decrease due to moral flaws. On the

other hand, Kieran contends that artistic value can increase in virtue of these moral flaws. Even though “moderate moralism” and “cognitive immoralism” both have controversial points, I can find two common insight to explain the relationship.

## 2. Definition of concepts : ‘artistic value’ and ‘moral value’

Before beginning my discussion, I need to define what I mean by ‘artistic value’ and ‘moral value’.

### (1) Artistic value vs Aesthetic value<sup>3)</sup>

Art criticism establishes the justification for evaluating art and art experience. ‘Artistic value’ and ‘aesthetic value’ are competing concepts for are used to explain art experience. Art experience means the experience that appreciators can only get from art. How can we explain characteristics of the experience that an audience could get from artwork? what is the meaning of art experience? What makes art experience different from other cultural praxis? ‘Artistic value’ and ‘aesthetic value’ would answer those questions concerning art experience.

I claim that ‘artistic value’ is a more appropriate concept for explaining art experience for two reasons.

The first reason is that my discussion focuses only on art experience. The ‘aesthetic’ is a broader term, but my discussion is restricted to art itself. Traditional aestheticians regard ‘the aesthetic’(aesthetic experience or aesthetic value) as a unique way to perceive artwork. For them, aesthetic values are identified with artistic values. ‘The aesthetic’ is based on Kant’s idea of ‘disinterestedness.’ Traditional aestheticians think that ‘the aesthetic’ usually refers to perceptual or formative properties of artworks such as color, shape, rhythm etc. On the other hand, artistic value includes various values of artworks (cognitive, moral, political value, etc.), other than aesthetic values. I assume that appreciators can derive various values from art experience. In addition, when ‘the aesthetic’

---

<sup>3)</sup> Bohdan Dziemidok, “On the Need to Distinguish Between Aesthetic and Artistic Evaluations of Art”, *Institutions of Art: Reconsiderations of George Dickie’s Philosophy*, 1994.

is used, it explains the appreciation of both nature and art. Thus, it gives an unclear description when discussing art experience.

The second reason is that aesthetic values can not explain all sorts of artworks, especially after avand-garde. The aesthetic focuses on formative aspects of artwork, as I said. However, in contemporary art, art evokes our cognitive aspects by questioning the formal structure and conventions of the art's genre. It intentionally hinders our engagement with formal aspects.

Therefore, I insist that 'artistic value' is more appropriate than 'aesthetic value' for theorizing art experience. As I consider later, Carroll uses the term 'aesthetic value' not 'artistic value.' However, by 'aesthetic value', technically he means 'artistic value', as Dickie points out.<sup>4)</sup>

## (2) Moral Aspects of a Work of Art

What does it mean for an artwork to have a moral aspect? A specific part of the artwork can be evaluated morally. Here we can think of four candidates.

The first case is the artist's morality. For instance, although there are no issues with Polanski's *The Pianist*, the creator himself was indicted for sexual assault of a child. The next case is more complicated. Director Kim ki deok has won a number of prizes and international recognition for his film's artistry, but his movie has aroused massive controversy over the scenes that glorify misogyny, sexism and violence against raped woman. Many defenders of his film have changed their evaluations after he was on sexual charges. His immorality impacted on the evaluation of his film. It is worth treating, but I do not deal with this problem. We can not always consider the morality of artists and artists' intention when we appreciate artwork. In effect, artwork can be interpreted as being completely separate from the artists' intention or morality.

The second case is an effect on the appreciator. Although in *Lolita*, the author Vladimir Nabokov does not defend Humbert, who is a paedophile, some description of the text can encourage some pedophiles to behave like Humbert. This is a point that concerned Plato with regard to art. However I do not deal with this because it is impossible to prove the causality between artwork and reader's actual behavior. There are only assumptions

---

<sup>4)</sup> Dickie, "THE TRIUMPH IN TRIUMPH OF THE WILL", p.155.

about the causal link. Furthermore, even if art influences a specific effect, this can be understood in the socio-economic context. For example, *The Catcher in the Rye* is famous for arousing deviant behavior in the reader. However the effect should be considered along with the circumstances of the United States at that time, such as McCarthyism, hippie culture, and counterculture.

The third case is character's personality. Here, we can think about villains. However, we can not say that the artwork is immoral because it depicts villainy.

Thus, I maintain that the moral aspect of art should be the perspective which prescribes and call for our response. It is the perspective that artwork ultimately endorses. This perspective must not be equated with the view of the character, artists, or narrator. Rather, it is similar to the concept of 'implied author', a term used in modern England-American literary criticism. 'Implied author' delivers reliable content to readers. For example, Humbert is an immoral character, but we do not necessarily need to agree with his perspective; we are even invited to criticize him. Artwork can invite us to entertain a specific moral aspect. My discussion deals with that perspective.

### 3. Common Denominator : non-propositional knowledge, imagination

"Moderate moralism" and "cognitive immoralism" have differences in two regards. Regardless of their differences, they capture the same phenomenon of appreciation.

#### (1) Non-propositional knowledge

The artistic realm is intrinsically different from the moral realm. Moderate autonomism holds that, although some artworks can be evaluated morally, their moral value has nothing to do with their artistic value. Carroll and Kieran disagree with this view, both insisting on a specific point of contact at which each realm can meet. The question then is, where is this point? Carroll's answer is "moral response," while Kieran's answer is "cognitive value." Both insist that appreciators can attain knowledge through these points. They argue that obtaining knowledge is part of the artistic value of certain artworks.

#### ① Carroll

Let us assess Carroll's basic idea.<sup>5)</sup>

---

<sup>5)</sup> Noël Carroll, "Moderate Moralism", *British Journal of Aesthetics*, July 1996; "Art and Ethical Criticism: An

“whenever morality is relevant to aesthetic evaluation, then the relation is such that the pertinent moral defects will only count as artistic defects, and the moral virtues will only count as artistic virtues. That is, moderate moralism ... does not allow that a moral defect in an artwork might sometimes contribute to the positive aesthetic value of an artwork”(2000, 379)

According to Carroll, artistic value and moral value have a contact point for moral response. With some artworks, the appreciator’s moral response is the key element. Especially with narrative artworks, moral response is integral to artistic value. By artistic value, he means characters and plot. By moral response, he means moral judgement and emotions.

It is of the nature of narrative to be incomplete. No author is absolutely explicit about the situations she depicts. Every narrative makes an indeterminate number of presuppositions and it is the task of readers, viewers and listeners to fill these in. Part of what it is to follow a story is to fill in the presuppositions that the narrator has left unsaid. If the story is about Sherlock Holmes, we presuppose that he is a man and not an android, though Conan Doyle never says so. ... (1996: 227)

Narrative artworks are, as we argued, incomplete structures. Among other things, they must be filled in by the moral responses of readers, viewers and listeners. Securing the right moral response of the audience is as much a part of the design of a narrative artwork as structural components like plot complications. Failure to elicit the right moral response, then, is a failure in the design of the work, and, therefore, is an aesthetic failure. (1996: 232-33 )

Moral response is the product of imaginative engagement. The audience engage their imagination in certain situations experienced by characters. For the audience’s

imagination, the characters must be well rounded and plot must be well structured, considering the effect on the audience.

Carroll cites Aristotle's discussion of character in *Poetics*. Aristotle contends that the main character of the tragedy must embody a certain kind of moral aspect. If we pity him, he must not be an evil character. If he is evil and meets a tragic end, we think he deserves it. Moreover, he is not supposed to be perfect morally; if he is, we are very angry about what happens to him. In the same way, narrative artwork is designed to consider the effect of characters and events on the audience.

As a result, the audience can gain some kind of knowledge from imaginative engagement in artworks. Of course, many, including Plato, have disagreed with the idea that art can provide knowledge. They insist that this kind of knowledge is trivial and that we cannot learn new moral knowledge from art. *Crime and Punishment* does not teach us that murder is bad. We already know this before we read it.

To counter this argument, Carroll argues that the kind of knowledge he insists upon is not propositional knowledge but know-how or "knowledge of what such and such is or would be like." (2000, 362) *Crime and Punishment* gives the knowledge that "what it would be like to live as a murderer." And moral understanding gives us the ability to apply abstract moral precepts to concrete situation.

"A form of knowledge by acquaintance. ... By providing richly particularized episodes of ... the novelist engages the reader's imagination and emotions, thereby giving the reader a "feel" for what it was like to live in ... the kind of knowledge that art excels in providing and that the best ethical critics look for ... In entertaining alternative courses of action, there is a place for the imagination. ... It engages the imagination and the emotions in a way that yields a feeling for what being a killer is like that one can consult in one's imaginative reflections on this alternative line of action. ... not only relevant to deliberating about how one should act; it is also pertinent to making judgments about others. ... art and literature are on the only means for conveying knowledge of what *X* would be like, this is one of their leading specialties, and they have developed and continue to develop an astonishing number of strategies to this end (an end to which a substantial number of artists and writers have been and still are primarily committed.)" (2000: 362-3)

As Carroll noted above, narrative artworks can be complete with the audience's moral response. At this time narrative artworks can not help depending on the audience's



antecedent moral beliefs, concepts and feelings.(1996: 228) Actually Carroll's theory relies on the role of the audience. He proposes a "morally sensitive audience" to be the ideal audience.

## ② Kieran

In contrast, Kieran<sup>6)</sup> claims Carroll's explanation for establishing an internal relationship between art and morality is not enough.(2006, 132) The fact that we rely on our moral understanding to engage with artwork doesn't mean that moral evaluation of art can be justified.

"Where a work tries via artistic means to convey insight or get us to understand states of affairs and attitudes a certain way then the cognitive content of the work is relevant to its value as art."(2006, 132)

According to Kieran's theory, artistic value and moral value are not connected directly; they are mediated by cognitive value. The moral aspects of art can give us cognitive value such as insights.

These arguments show how artistic value is connected to moral value.

"What matters is whether the means of representation penetrate and shape our grasp of the thoughts and attitudes conveyed through the representation. Where they do so, our responses are intimately tied to the experience as shaped by engagement with the work. In which case the putative insights are internal to the work as art." (2005: 123)

"... what it represents, through the use of media, styles, genre constraints and individual working, that constitutes part its content. our evaluation of the means of representation is often concerned with whether they 'fit' what they are being used to represent." (2005, "illuminating the familiar")

---

<sup>6)</sup> Matthew Kieran, *Revealing arts*, 2005; ""Art, Morality and Ethics: On the (Im)moral Character of Art Works and Inter-Relations to Artistic Value", 2006.

Kieran cites Van Gogh's *The Potato Eaters*. In this painting, Van Gogh conditions us to understand the peasants in a certain way. Van Gogh causes us to think that the peasants' lives have an Earthbound simplicity and goodness that we should respect. That is this painting's cognitive value. He is successful in his painting in that the audience has certain beliefs, attitudes, and emotional responses toward the peasants. The intention of Van Gogh seems to align with the artistic properties such as rough brushstrokes, the direction of the peasants' gaze, and the composition of their sitting position.

For Kieran, cognitive value means intelligibility and coherence. It is not propositional knowledge. Like Carroll, Kieran also offers non-propositional knowledge of art.

"... such abstract reason cannot tell us, at least in any rich way, about how it feels to have certain perceptions, responses, emotions and attitudes. This kind of non-propositional knowledge is akin to knowing how to perceive, respond or act and knowing what it is like to be a certain way. On such a view, art works could afford us imaginative acquaintance with perceptions, responses and attitudes that more formalised cognitive activities concerned with propositional knowledge cannot. This kind of non-propositional knowledge is a function of experience - what the sensation of anguish is like, what feeling horrified at one's isolation from the world might be like, what it may be like to see oneself in terms of utter detachment from the world." (2005: 116-7)

### ③ Cognitive Aspects of Moral Responses

According to Carroll and Kieran, appreciators can obtain non-propositional knowledge from a point of contact at which artistic and moral value can meet. By reacting morally (or for Kieran, as we will see, also immorally) the audience can gain insight and understanding of themselves and the world.

Kieran's cognitive value and Carroll's moral value appear similar in terms of cognitive aspects. However, Kieran attempts to distinguish his cognitive value from Carroll's, insisting that his cognitive value is different from Carroll's moral value. (Kieran 2006:) I think this is because Kieran interprets Carroll's "moral response" as merely moral emotion. Kieran fears that if the emotional response of the audience is too strong, the audience loses the rational ability to see the artistic elements. Moralism is in danger of not

paying attention to artistic sensitivity and making art into mere moralism. In other words, moral emotions are so strong that they overlook artistic value, and they cannot enable deeper reflection. As a result, although moralists, despite moral deficiencies, recognize the excellence of the work, they do not properly evaluate it because of their moral interests.

I believe that Carroll's moral reaction is not limited to moral emotions. His moral response includes cognitive elements such as belief and judgment as well as emotion. Carroll claims that the emotions have a conceptual dimension.(1996: 230) (Carroll defends that emotion has cognitive part.) Emotion that Carroll explains as moral responses as follows. "Part of what is involved, then, in the process of filling in a narrative is the activation of the moral powers - the moral judgements and the moral emotions - of audiences."(1996: 228) Moral responses necessarily offer us some kind of knowledge because moral responses include judgements and recognition as well as the feeling.

## (2) Imagination

For Carroll and Kieran, the biggest difference between artistic and moral values is the direction they take. Carroll's moderate moralism claims that the moral flaws of certain artworks can sometimes decrease their artistic values. Kieran's cognitive immoralism holds that the artistic value of artworks can be enhanced by their moral flaws. The reason for the difference is that they are in conflict with the character of the imagination. However I believe they agree with the nature of imagination. Both emphasize the experience that the audience is absorbed in artwork.

### ① Carroll

Carroll's moderate moralism claims that the moral flaws of certain artworks can sometimes decrease their artistic values. His position is "moderate" because he admits that some artworks might have no moral aspects, and he does not insist that moral considerations trump all others. Moral flaws can count inasmuch as they are artistic flaws. Moral standard of art evaluation is not a final and ultimate standard of art. Even if an artwork has a moral flaw, it can still be a good piece of art.

"Are there immoral art works that are aesthetically commendable because of their moral defectiveness? Few, if any, examples come to mind"(2000, 380)

Carroll established the relationship between art and morality like this because of the audience's imagination. Carroll argues that the purpose of a work of art is to elicit a certain response from the audience, which includes a moral response. In the case of immoral works, however, due to the imaginative resistance of the audience, moral defects become artistic defects. (Carroll actually does not use the term “imaginative resistance”; Moran<sup>7)</sup> coined the term.)

The concept of “imaginative resistance” is based on Hume’s argument. Hume argues that there must be a moral agreement between the artwork and the audience. For the audience to appreciate the work, some degree of moral consent is required. Let us consider the relevant quotation from Hume.

“...where the ideas of morality and decency alter from one age to another, and where vicious manners are described, without being marked with the proper characters of blame and disapprobation; this must be allowed to disfigure the poem, and to be a real deformity. I cannot, nor is it proper I should, enter into such sentiments; and however I may excuse the poet, on account of the manners in his age, I never can relish the composition. The want of humanity and of decency, so conspicuous in the characters drawn by several of the ancient poets, even sometimes by HOMER and the GREEK tragedians, diminishes considerably the merit of their noble performances, and gives modern authors an advantage over them. We are not interested in the fortunes and sentiments of such rough heroes: We are displeas'd to find the limits of vice and virtue so much confounded: And whatever indulgence we may give to the writer on account of his prejudices, we cannot prevail on ourself to enter into his sentiments, or bear an affection to characters, which we plainly discover to be blameable.”(*On the Standards of the Taste*, 32)

According to Carroll(1996, 379), this imaginative resistance does not mean that the audience will put the brakes on voluntarily, but rather that the car is broken and the accelerator has not been stepped on. In other words, there is a problem in the structure of the work itself. As mentioned earlier, the ideal audience is morally sensitive, and when the audience try to imagine an immoral situation or character, they encounter imaginative resistance. However, Carroll argues that if artistic defects are caused by moral defects, the overall artistic value is not lowered but is rather reduced in only that part.

---

<sup>7)</sup> Moran, R., “The expression of Feeling in Imagination”, *Philosophical Review*, 1994, 75-106.

The same is true of moral merit. The reason why moral advantage can be an aesthetic advantage for Carroll is because it promotes the moral comprehension of the audience. Works of art need to make the audience absorb them. The audience's ability to do so depends on the artistic value of the work in regard to, for example, structure or character. The higher the artistic value, the better the audience's absorption, which promotes moral understanding.

## ② Kieran

Kieran's cognitive immoralism holds that the artistic value of artworks can be enhanced by their moral flaws. Vice versa, a work's artistic value can be lessened in virtue of its moral value. As in Carroll's view, this does not apply to all kinds of art.

Kieran doubts imaginative resistance. When the audience discovers the immoral side of the work, does it really show imaginative resistance? Kieran argues that the audience can react immorally to the immoral aspects of the work. The audience can have an immoral response "when cognitive value is greater than resistance to responding." and "to outweigh our reluctance to indulge in the responses sought from us, then the immoral character of the work turns out to be an artistic virtue rather than a vice."(2006: 138) Kieran argues that the purpose of artworks is not to "absorb" the audience but to cause them to react perceptually, emotionally, and cognitively to the work. In the first step, the work needs the audience to absorb it, and then, in the second step, the audience can reflect on it and gain some insight.

"many works aim not only to engage us but to get us to respond to them - perceptually , emotionally and intellectually. So it is internal to the purpose of many works, as art, that they aim to get us to respond in certain ways. The way the paint itself is shaped and coloured, the posing of the figures, the structural composition, the facial expressions, figurative gestures, allusions, allegories and metaphors we find in paintings are all there, in the way they are, in order to shape our responses in some way. So it is a mark of a work's success if it gets us to respond in the way that it is shaped to do. Sometimes failing to respond as solicited is a mark of a failing, lack of sensitivity or ignorance in ourselves, but often the failure is down to faults in the work." (2005: 74)

Kieran describes the reaction of the audience, using *Man Bites Dog* as an example. It is a fictional film based on a documentary format. The documentary follows a man,

filming his everyday life. At the beginning of the movie, the audience laugh at his humor and rejoice in his actions. As the film progressed, the atmosphere became darker because the main character starts to commit a crime, a vicious rape. The filmmaker observing the main character's crimes starts to actively participates in him, and the film takes on a dark and catastrophic tone. The audience is supposed to experience the entire process of committing crimes. The audience is tempted to have fun as they watch the crime committed. At this point, the audience react immorally. We know that murder is morally bad, but we can react immorally because it gives us the following insights; how the media and even ourselves are conspiring to what we earnestly criticize. Immoral response may bring about cognitive values, an understanding of ourselves and the world. When we have a morally problematic experience, there are times when our reaction can lead to a deeper understanding. By reacting to what it feels like to be a killer, a certain kind of knowledge is acquired.

Kieran denies Hume, arguing that good artistic skill can overcome moral resistance, and we can accept what we see as good art. If the work is rich in artistic skill and imagination, it is possible to fully enjoy and appreciate it with a immoral sympathy.

Kieran argues that viewers can withhold moral judgment if they can benefit from the insight that art can offer. He compares the psychological state of the audience to the "suspension of intellectual belief" by Coleridge. We actually appreciate intellectually and morally problematic artwork(2005: 86), because we can suspend our moral judgement if the work deepens our understanding.

Kieran argues for a certain insight that can only be gained by reacting in a morally problematic way. He uses Bacon's work as an example.(2005, 85) Kieran says that Bacon's description of humanity is morally detestable. Bacon's notion of humanity rejects life, so we should not accept it. It shows a world full of pain, a dark moment of life. But life is not always this way. Bacon's point of view causes viewers to refuse the world and gives them a passive attitude. According to Kieran, because this is an insult to humanity, it must be morally rejected. However, the appreciator can gain insight through appreciating these morally problematic works while withholding actual moral judgment. Bacon's humanity is certainly an explanation for humans, but it is generally a false and morally harmful idea. Nevertheless, it can be realized that there are certain important aspects of human beings to be discerned through Bacon's paintings. Thus, because some works show immoral aspects, they make the audience understand the work and give them insight.

Furthermore, in some cases, using Norman Rockwell as an example, Kieran argues that if we can appropriate emotions so easily through the work, the artistic value decreases *in virtue of* the moral value.

### ③ Imaginative Resistance

Carroll and Kieran have different positions on imaginative resistance. However, in my opinion, both consider the role of the imagination in similar ways.

First and foremost, they emphasize that the audience should be “absorbed” in artworks. For Carroll, the audience must be completely immersed for appreciating artwork properly as I cited above. For Kieran, the audience can experience it through art. The experience gained from the artworks means not just watching from a third party’s point of view but adopting the perspective of the character directly or experiencing the situation vividly.(2005: “the triviality of art?”) This is similar to “being absorbed.” This kind of experience gives the audience certain capabilities or abilities. Kieran argues that if the characters in a movie burst into laughter, the audience does not just imagine laughing but is actually able to laugh along. Kieran(2006) repeatedly points out how easily the audience can be seduced into an immoral character.

Carroll and Kieran agree with the level of awareness of immorality. They actually mean that the audience should approve of that moral/immoral view to be absorbed in the artworks. The opposite of them is as follow: Stecker<sup>8)</sup> claims that it is enough for us simply to recognize immoral character. It is simply a level of perception of moral or immoral characters. According to Stecker, just knowing what kind of moral position the work prescribes is enough to appreciate the work.

Then, the following question arises: why does imaginative resistance occur for Carroll? However, I would like to change the question: Carroll insists that an imaginative resistance could occur in Kieran’s examples?

I believe that Carroll thinks that there is no imaginative resistance in Kieran’s examples such as Bacon’s work. We must ask whether Bacon’s work is really immoral. Bacon speaks to one aspect of humanity. The final interpretation of his work appeals to the moral point of view. Bacon causes us to dig into the deepest recesses of our minds. The same goes for *Dog bites man*. What we learn from Bacon is the moral value of one side of human nature. To exemplify the case in which an immoral work has artistic merit, Kieran should suggest a clearer example.

---

<sup>8)</sup> Stecker, “Immoralism and the Anti-Theoretical View,” 150–6.

Above all, I think that the reason for their disagreement is that their concepts of “moral value” are different. Kieran usually refers to an immoral value in terms of “immoral characters.” He keeps referring to “immoral character” to mean immoral value. Just because immoral characters appear, it is difficult to say that the work is actually immoral.

Moreover, Kieran’s another example, Norman Rockwell’s work, is not appropriate to explain his argument. The artistic value of Norman Rockwell’s painting is low, not because of its moral value but because of the artist’s unsuccessful artistic skills. It shows a poor artistic skill that makes it difficult for moral reaction to occur.

#### 4. Conclusion

Here, I discuss the intrinsic relationship between artistic and moral value in art evaluation. Like in Carroll’s and Kieran’s analyses, imaginative engagement in artworks is so strong that appreciators can absorb themselves in art as a primary experience. That is why appreciators’ response to artworks can be essential for art evaluation. The perspective that artworks support does nothing but affect the appreciator in evaluating art. Thus the appreciator’s moral response to art can affect her evaluation of art.

However, this does not automatically lead to the contention that defends art censorship. I insist that art cannot and must not be censored. To restrict a specific art form or theme is practically impossible. Even if we prohibit the form or theme of art at issue now, we cannot censor the possibility of art in the future. We cannot anticipate what art forms and themes are to come. The freshness and shock of breaking its own form and content are art’s virtues.

Especially in feminist art criticism, censorship is a thing we must be careful of. In the feminist approach, many works of art are morally uncomfortable. If the ultimate artistic value of the work is lowered based on morally uncomfortable points, feminist art criticism can fall into mere moralism. When moral flaws negatively affect artistic values, they are not supposed to be the all-things-considered standard of artistic value judgment. The moral standard is not the overriding standard. If a work gives up its value because of its moral flaws, we will have to give up most of what we now think of as “art.” This includes many female nudes and male-centered novels and may eventually lead to a redefinition of “art.” Advocates of the autonomy of art have always feared the connection with morality because of this problem.



However, if we break the relationship between art and morality because of the fear of mere moralism or censorship, we overlook the power of the imagination. Both Carroll and Kieran have captured the power of the appreciator to absorb themselves in art. When we appreciate art, we do not just exist as others outside of the work but experience it vividly. Of course, there is a slight difference in how the audience interprets this experience through art, but they are at least focusing on the extremely important point where the audience encounters it. There are also times when absorption leads to knowledge, giving us highly important insights into human beings and the world. In this way, the audience do not simply engage their imagination outside the work from a distance; when they appreciate the work, they engage their imagination based on their beliefs, feelings, and understanding.

Thus, we should tackle the following problem: Censoring art with moral defects harms the important characteristics of arts, but we cannot ignore these moral defects. To do so would be to overlook the power of imaginative engagement.

Karatani Kojin offers a solution to this problem. According to Kojin, Kant established the realm of “disinterestedness” which makes appreciators divide or “bracket” each domain independently. Kant’s aesthetic attitude yields pleasure in collating the various reactions triggered by the object in parentheses. The audience is forced to enclose the displeasure she feels in parentheses. When audience ignore their reaction, they must experience some discomfort. In response to this, Kojin calls for “bracketing” and “unbracketing” in art appreciation and criticism. This suggests that it can give new energy to art criticism.

“The African American novelist James Baldwin did not feel like reading Shakespeare's *Othello* because of its discriminatory stance toward blacks. ... But the real problematic originates less in Baldwin's stance than in that of white, English-speaking audiences, who see *Othello* merely as art. It is not that they attempt to bracket the discrimination that enraged Baldwin but that they omit this from the beginning. They would maintain that those who degrade Shakespeare for such a minor flaw do not understand art. ... My point is that they should unbracket the race issue in Shakespeare, at least once. ... if, in a text, a woman is described mainly as an aesthetic representation of desire, the unbracketing of the sexual representation is not a simple denial of the work. If the text is strong enough, it will accommodate different interpretations. And when we commit

ourselves to rereading the text from alternative positions, we would again bracket that particular critique. Yet the new reading, of course, is not, and should not be, an erasure of the critique. (Kojin Karatani, "Uses of Aesthetics: After Orientalism", 1998: 153-4)

## Bibliography

- Kojin Karatani, "Uses of Aesthetics: After Orientalism", 1998
- Stecker, "Immoralism and the Anti-Theoretical View," *British Journal of Aesthetics*, 2008.
- Craig Owens, "The Discourse of Others: Feminists and Postmodernism", *Feminists and Postmodernism*, 1983.
- Michael Hatt & Charlotte Klonk, *ART HISTORY-A Critical Introduction to its Methods*, Manchester University Press, 2006.
- Bohdan Dziemidok, "'On the Need to Distinguish Between Aesthetic and Artistic Evaluations of Art", *Institutions of Art: Reconsiderations of George Dickie's Philosophy*, 1994.
- Moran, R., "The expression of Feeling in Imagination", *Philosophical Review*, 1994, 75-106.
- Matthew Kieran, *Revealing Art*, 2005.
- "Art, Morality and Ethics: On the (Im)moral Character of Art Works and Inter-Relations to Artistic Value", *Philosophy Compass*, 2006.
- Noël Carroll, "Moderate Moralism", *British Journal of Aesthetics*, July 1996.
- "Art and Ethical Criticism: An Overview of Recent Directions of Research", *Ethics*, January 2000.
- Peg brand, "Feminist Art Epistemologies: Understanding Feminist Art", *Hypatia*, 2006.