Morality and Art Lecture 1: Introducing the Problem
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(i) Can (and should) an artwork be assessed ethically in the first place?
(ii) Are the ethical features of an artwork ever aesthetically relevant?
(iii) If so, what’s the relation between a work’s aesthetic properties and ethical properties?

Plan
Lecture 1: Introduction The problem, overview of positions and the nature of the debate
Lecture 2: Autonomism Radical and Moderate
Lecture 3: Ethicism (a moderate form of moralism)
Lecture 4: Contextualism Immoral art, and the nature of imaginative resistance

1. The relation between art and morality

What do we mean by ‘aesthetic value’?
- The value of an artwork *qua* art - how good or bad a work is in itself as a work of art
- Intrinsic features ['conceptual core'] vs. extrinsic features (Lillehammer 2008)
- Narrow aesthetic value vs. Wide aesthetic value

What do we mean by ‘ethical features of a work’?
- (a) External Micro-consequences, Macro-consequences, Means of production
- (b) Internal Depiction, Ethical perspectives

2. History of the debate and positions

Humanism – Moralism
- Can (and should) an artwork be assessed ethically? YES
- Are ethical features of an artwork ever aesthetically relevant? YES Radical vs Moderate
- If ethical features of an artwork are ever aesthetically relevant, what is the relation between these ethical values and the artwork’s aesthetic value? Monotonic and symmetric: (the relation *always* goes: ethical flaw - aesthetic flaw, ethical merit-aesthetic merit)

Formalism – Autonomism
- Can (and should) an artwork be assessed ethically? Radical: NO, Moderate: YES
- Are ethical features of an artwork ever aesthetically relevant? NO
- If ethical features of an artwork are ever aesthetically relevant, what is the relation between these ethical values and the artwork’s aesthetic value? Radical autonomists: there is none. Moderate autonomists: at most there’s an ‘indirect relation’

Transgression – Immoralism
- Can (and should) an artwork be assessed ethically? YES
- Are ethical features of an artwork ever aesthetically relevant? YES
- If ethical features of an artwork are ever aesthetically relevant, what is the relation between these ethical values and the artwork’s aesthetic value? Radical Immoralists: monotonic and inverted (It is always ethical flaw-aesthetic merit, ethical merit-aesthetic flaw) Moderate Immoralists: polytonic, and both symmetric and inverted (It can sometimes be flaw-flaw, flaw-merit, merit-merit, or merit-flaw)
3. The (Re)positions

- **Ethicism** (Remaining weaker Moralist position)
- **Autonomism** (Radical and Moderate forms)
- **Contextualism** (Moderate Moralism and Moderate Immoralism)

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<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Can an artwork be assessed ethically?</th>
<th>Are the ethical features of an artwork always or sometimes aesthetically relevant?</th>
<th>When the ethical features of an artwork are aesthetically relevant, what is the ‘value-interaction’ between the ethical and aesthetic properties?</th>
<th>(Which means…)</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Radical Autonomism</strong></td>
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<td>(Bell, Fry)</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Moderate Autonomism</strong></td>
<td>✓</td>
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<td>(Anderson &amp; Dean)</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Radical Moralism</strong></td>
<td>✓</td>
<td>Always</td>
<td>Monotonic, symmetric</td>
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<td>(Tolstoy)</td>
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<td>It is always the case that: ethical flaw = aesthetic flaw, and ethical merit = aesthetic merit</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Ethicism</strong></td>
<td>✓</td>
<td>Sometimes</td>
<td>Monotonic, symmetric</td>
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<td><a href="Gaut">weaker form of Moralism</a></td>
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<td>It is always the case that, when aesthetically relevant, an ethical flaw = aesthetic flaw, and ethical merit = aesthetic merit</td>
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<td><strong>Contextualism</strong></td>
<td>✓</td>
<td>Sometimes</td>
<td>Polytonic, symmetric or inverted</td>
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<td>[encompassing Moderate Immoralism and Moderate Moralism](Carroll, Kieran, Eaton)</td>
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<td>Sometimes, and when aesthetically relevant, an ethical flaw = aesthetic flaw and an ethical flaw = aesthetic merit, and an ethical merit = aesthetic merit</td>
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**Reading list**

Gaut, B., (2007) Art, Emotion and Ethics (OUP) [Chapters 1, 2, 3]

**Further reading**

Bell, C., (1913) Art (Dodo Press)
Tolstoy, L., (1897) What is Art? (Bristol Classical Press, 1994)