

Moral Upbringing through the Arts and Literature

Moral Upbringing through the Arts and Literature

Edited by

Paweł Kaźmierczak and Jolanta Rzegocka

Cambridge
Scholars
Publishing



Moral Upbringing through the Arts and Literature

Edited by Paweł Kaźmierczak and Jolanta Rzegocka

This book first published 2018

Cambridge Scholars Publishing

This volume was published with the support of the M.B. Grabowski Fund,
London and Faculty of Education, The Jesuit University Ignatianum in
Kraków.

Lady Stephenson Library, Newcastle upon Tyne, NE6 2PA, UK

British Library Cataloguing in Publication Data

A catalogue record for this book is available from the British Library

Copyright © 2018 by Paweł Kaźmierczak, Jolanta Rzegocka
and contributors

All rights for this book reserved. No part of this book may be reproduced,
stored in a retrieval system, or transmitted, in any form or by any means,
electronic, mechanical, photocopying, recording or otherwise, without
the prior permission of the copyright owner.

ISBN (10): 1-5275-0810-2

ISBN (13): 978-1-5275-0810-1

CONTENTS

Preface	viii
---------------	------

Introduction	1
--------------------	---

Educating Moral Virtue and Character through Art and Literature
David Carr

Part One. Art in Moral Education

Chapter One.....	18
------------------	----

Moral Perception through Painting
Margarita Mauri

Chapter Two	27
-------------------	----

Moral Upbringing through Art
Aleksandra Batog

Chapter Three	36
---------------------	----

The Educational Context of the Internal Arrangement
of the Corpus Christi Church in Szczecin
Paula Wiażewicz-Wójtowicz

Chapter Four	49
--------------------	----

Aegean Wall Painting in the Late Bronze Age: The Construction
of an Educated Ethnic Identity through Public and Private Art
Pantelis Komninos

Part Two. The Moral Impact of Speech and Literature

Chapter Five	64
--------------------	----

Sacred Speech: Saying the Word
Gerard Kilroy

Chapter Six	74
“Gods are Just.” Literature and the Question of Hope	
Tadeusz Ślawek	
Chapter Seven.....	87
The Morality of Words in the Writing of Erri De Luca	
Annalisa Saccà	
Chapter Eight.....	95
Ethics in Literary Criticism Studied in Connection	
with the Work of Jane Austen	
Inger Enkvist	
Chapter Nine.....	111
Moral Dilemmas in Biblical Literature as an	
Example of Educational Discourse	
Renata Jasnos	
Chapter Ten	127
Judgement But No Justification:	
Henry James’s Criticism of Family and Education	
Sylwia Wojciechowska	
Part Three. The Philosophy of Moral Education	
Chapter Eleven	142
Masters and Disciples: A Philosophical Analysis	
Walter Van Herck	
Chapter Twelve	152
Aquinas and Dante as Macintyre's Masters of Moral Education	
Paweł Kaźmierczak	
Chapter Thirteen.....	163
The Humanist and Christian Pedagogical Ideal of Ioannis Ludovicus Vives	
Jaime Vilarroig Martín, Juan Manuel, and Monfort Prades	
Chapter Fourteen	174
The Aesthetic in Moral Education: Schiller, Kant, Plato, and Read	
Kyla Bruff	

Part Four. Jesuits as Artistic and Moral Educators

Chapter Fifteen	192
Jesuit School Theatre in the Sixteenth to Eighteenth Centuries as a Common European Attempt at the Mental and Moral Formation of the Younger Generation through Art Jan Okoń	
Chapter Sixteen	210
Moral Education in Jesuit Music Seminaries in the Polish-Lithuanian Commonwealth Jerzy Kochanowicz	
Chapter Seventeen	219
The Jesuit Accommodation of Chinese Culture as Portrayed in Jesuit School Plays of the Polish-Lithuanian Commonwealth Clarinda E. Calma	

Part Five. The Role of Women in Art and Literature

Chapter Eighteen	234
A “Poetics of Unity” Between Art and the Person: The Role of Arts and Literature in the Artist’s Personal Formation Helena Ospina	
Chapter Nineteen	245
Women and True Human Development María Hernández-Sampelayo Matos, and Juana María Anguita Acero	
Chapter Twenty	261
Ethics and Aesthetics: Moral Warnings by Different Female Artists Silvia Carrascal Domínguez Marta Carrasco Ferrer	
Chapter Twenty-One	272
Disjunctures in the Postmodern: Conceptualization of Women in Javier Marias’s <i>Thus Bad Begins</i> Carmen F. Klohe	

PREFACE

Alasdair MacIntyre and many other neo-Aristotelian ethicists famously recognized the importance of literary role models in moral education and the public sphere. This book seeks to explore moral education and the arts from various ethical perspectives by placing an emphasis on literature's potential to shape a character through virtues, provide a framework of overarching values, or stress one's freedoms, duties, and obligations. This book discusses the relationship between education and the arts from an interdisciplinary perspective, featuring contributions by educational experts, philosophers, literary theorists, and historians, as well as poets, writers, and artists from over a dozen countries. All the contributors, being avid readers themselves, have looked into the ways literature and the arts engage with the lived experience, involving imagination, feelings, and the senses. While the articles in the first part of the volume tackle some fundamental questions about the sources of morality, our culturally conditioned moral choices, and the way we acquire values, the essays in the second part consider the ways in which the arts, and literature in particular, make us think about human dignity and our common humanity. We consider these questions to be of the utmost importance and are delighted that so many distinguished contributors have joined us in this intellectual endeavour.

The introductory essay, "Educating Moral Virtue through Arts and Literature" by David Carr, Britain's leading philosopher of education, sets the tone for the book as it discusses the various sources of the sceptical attitudes towards the moral value of arts and literature. Drawing on Iris Murdoch, Carr asserts "the generally profound moral significance and moral educational potential of much serious past and present-day imaginative literature and arts."

The first part of the book, entitled "Art in Moral Education," focuses on the formative aspect of visual arts and music. It begins with an essay by the Spanish philosopher Margarita Mauri, who examines the relationship between the painter, the painting, reality, and the viewer. Against this backdrop, she looks at the possibility of acquiring moral knowledge and moral education by means of a viewer's encounter with a painting. The second chapter, "Moral Upbringing through Art" by Aleksandra Batog, a practising musician and art educator from Poland, focuses on beauty as the

essential value of culture and explores the transformative power of the artistic, especially in terms of literary masterpieces. Paula Wiażewicz-Wójtowicz deals with the educational context of the interior arrangement of the Corpus Christi Church in Szczecin and Pantelis Komninos, a Greek historian of art as well as an archaeologist, discusses the construction of an educated ethnic identity through Aegean wall painting in the Late Bronze Age, pointing out that Aegean landscapes have a strong connection with the world of values of Aegean civilization.

Part two of the book focuses on the moral aspect of the spoken and written word and explores the moral standing of oral culture and imaginative literature. Professor Gerard Kilroy emphasizes the importance of the spoken word derived from the Logos, the Word that was the beginning and “is uttered in all creation.” He critically looks at the verbal deprivation in today’s world of electronic devices and urges educators to recover their trust in the power of words. In an essay entitled “‘Gods are Just’: Literature and the Question of Hope,” Tadeusz Sławek, professor of comparative literature and an artist himself, defends hope in spite of the tragic circumstances in which many people find themselves due to wars and injustice. He shows how the immortal works of Shakespeare, such as *The Taming of the Shrew* and *King Lear*, can enlighten our moral choices and awaken our existential anxiety. Chapter seven, entitled “The Morality of Words in the Writing of Erri De Luca,” is the contribution of Annalisa Saccà, professor of Italian at St John’s University, New York. Drawing on De Luca, she argues that words count and make things happen. The ultimate source of the power of words for Erri De Luca, and for Annalisa Saccà, is the Bible, the Word of God, and the Word which “was made flesh and dwelt among us.” In chapter eight, Inger Enkvist, professor of Spanish literature and an educator, deals with the ethics in literary criticism referring to the work of Jane Austen. She cites John Gardner and Iris Murdoch in order to argue that literature conveys a moral message, and analyses Jane Austin’s six major novels as perfect and elegant examples of the connection between ethics and literature. Renata Jasnos, a Polish biblical scholar, seeks to apply biblical narrative to the contemporary moral education. She reads the Book of Jonah as an ancient discourse involving a moral dilemma—the confrontation of God’s justice with human justice, and the tension between the good of an in-group and an outgroup. She concludes by juxtaposing Jonah’s predicament with today’s moral and political dilemmas connected with the European immigration crisis and with the fears it engenders in the inhabitants of Europe. The last chapter in this part, written by Sylwia Wojciechowska, an English and Latin scholar from Poland, discusses the moral and

educational tensions in the late Victorian upper-class family as expressed in Henry James's novels.

The third part of the book is devoted to the philosophy of moral education. Walter Van Herck, a Belgian philosopher of religion, discusses the nature of the educational relationship between masters and disciples. He examines both the anthropological and epistemological dimensions of this relationship and argues for its importance, drawing on Wittgenstein and Polanyi. In chapter twelve, Paweł Kaźmierczak, a philosopher from Poland, follows Alasdair MacIntyre in looking to Thomas Aquinas and Dante for the models of moral education—theoretical and practical, respectively—and traces the correspondence between the moral universe of the *Summa Theologiae* and *The Divine Comedy*. Two Spanish philosophers and theologians, Jaime Villaroig Martin and Juan Manuel Monfort Prades, present the humanist and Christian pedagogical ideal of Ioannis Ludovicus Vives in chapter thirteen. Finally, in chapter fourteen the Canadian philosopher Kyla Bruff discusses the role of the aesthetic condition in moral education as conceived by Friedrich Schiller, Immanuel Kant, Plato, and Herbert Read.

The last two parts of the book focus on the Jesuits and the contribution of women to moral and artistic education, respectively. All essays in part four examine various aspects of the rich Jesuit legacy in terms of artistic education combined with a great appreciation for civic values and virtues. Jan Okoń, a Polish historian of literature and theatre, discusses Jesuit theatre playbills as sources of role models and education in virtue. Yet another aspect of the Jesuit educational endeavour is taken up by Jerzy Kochanowicz, a professor of education, who addresses the question of moral education in the Jesuit music seminaries in the Polish-Lithuanian Commonwealth in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries. This part of the book concludes with a chapter entitled “The Jesuit Accommodation of Chinese Culture as Portrayed in Jesuit School Plays of the Polish-Lithuanian Commonwealth” by Dr Clarinda Calma, a philologist and historian who lives in Poland but comes from the Philippines.

The fifth part, on “The Role of Women in Art and Literature,” opens with an autobiographical essay on the poetics of unity by Helena Ospina, professor of literature, poet and founder of a publishing house in Costa Rica. The role of the arts and literature in the artist's personal formation is further discussed in a chapter entitled “Women and True Human Development,” a joint work by Maria Hernández-Sampelayo Matos, a historian, and Juana Maria Anguita Acero, an education expert, both from Spain. Against the background of some general considerations concerning true human development, they present the cultural contribution of two

distinguished women: Spanish poet Ernestina de Champourcin and the American philosopher Martha Craven Nussbaum. The next chapter focuses on the role of women artists in history and is also by two Spanish authors: Silvia Carrascal Dominguez, who holds a PhD in fine arts, and Marta Carrasco Ferrer, an art historian. The final chapter refers to the conceptualization of women in postmodern prose fiction, and more precisely in Javier Marias's *Thus Bad Begins*. This final contribution comes from Carmen Fernandez Klohe, a specialist in Spanish literature from the United States.

This volume is published with the help and generous support of The Mateusz Grabowski Fund, London and Faculty of Education of the Jesuit University Ignatianum in Krakow, Poland. We especially thank Father Stefan Wylężek, Rector of the Polish Catholic Mission in England and Wales and Father Krzysztof Biel SJ, Dean of the Faculty of Education at the Jesuit University Ignatianum in Krakow whose generosity and enormous support enabled us to complete the book. We also wish to thank Aeddán Shaw and Graham Clarke for their dedicated work in steering this volume so expertly from a collection of conference papers to publication. Finally, we thank professor Witold Nowak who patiently read through the whole book and wisely contributed with his corrections and comments.

Paweł Kaźmierczak
Jolanta Rzegocka

EDUCATING MORAL VIRTUE AND CHARACTER THROUGH ART AND LITERATURE

DAVID CARR

Sources of Scepticism Regarding the Moral Value of the Arts

It has been commonly held that the arts—more particularly, the creative and imaginative literatures of poetry, drama, and fiction—may contribute to the moral education or edification of spectators, audiences or readers (MacIntyre 1981). Indeed, on the face of it, it would seem to be the main aim or point of many plays and novels—but also of paintings, sculptures, and operas—to tell *stories* in which a morally virtuous or good character is celebrated and vice or bad character deplored or denounced. All the same, firstly, this common view of the purpose of much art and literature has been far from uncontested—on diverse grounds—from ancient times to the present. Secondly, however, the precise nature of the relationship of artistic or “aesthetic” expression to ethical and/or moral insight is undoubtedly more complex and less straightforward than commonly supposed, and almost certainly prone to much confusion. It is the aim of this essay to diagnose and expose some sources of this confusion to the end of a more plausible interpretation and defence of this relationship and function.

To begin with, perhaps the first ever serious reservations about the moral value of the arts are to be found in the work of Plato (1961). Most of Plato’s great Socratic dialogues are concerned with the question of what constitutes a worthwhile human life, and his general view is that the good life is one of *virtue* (excellence), construed more or less in moral terms. For the most part, however, Plato (probably following Socrates) locates the source of such virtue in the rational part of the soul, identified more particularly with *knowledge*. Precisely, the main route to virtue lies in freedom from the ignorance, delusion, and vanity that have their source in the less rational—appetitive and affective—parts of the soul. It is therefore

the natural human feelings, passions, and appetites that cloud moral reason and cause agents to act badly or viciously. From this viewpoint, however, the sound education of virtue should be a matter of objective or “disinterested” enquiry into the *truth* of things, unswayed, so far as possible, by feeling or passion. But insofar as it is to the feelings and passions that much art and literature appeals—precisely, they set out to affect and/or *move* us—they can have little or no moral educational value. Indeed, insofar as poets and artists invariably tell fictitious or deceitful and morally dubious stories, Plato mostly regards poetry and other arts (though some exception is made for the moral value of *some* kinds of music) as potentially misleading and corruptive, and comes close in his *Republic* (1961) to banning artists from a truly just and well-ordered polity. Still, Plato’s case against the moral value of arts, though arguably extreme, is nevertheless a significant one, and we shall return to it in due course.

If there is a philosopher of more modern times who might be considered an intellectual match for Plato, it would probably be the eighteenth-century German metaphysician Immanuel Kant. Unfortunately, Kant’s account of art and/or aesthetics is hardly more encouraging for any view of the moral educational value of artworks than Plato’s, though for different reasons. While it is not easy to give any brief or clear account of Kant’s not notably pellucid *Critique of Judgement* (1987), it is usually regarded as the source of a highly influential modern view that what distinguishes artistic or aesthetic appreciation from other modes of human perception or understanding is its “disinterested” nature. Roughly, this is to say (or has been so interpreted) that the only proper way to appreciate a candidate artwork is to regard it for the sake of its own artistically *intrinsic features or properties*, irrespective of any extrinsic value or instrumental benefits it might also have. This has been the dominant theme of modern so-called “formalist” theories of art and aesthetics (Bell 1958) that have often drawn an apparently corresponding distinction between the *form* of a work of art—its mode of artistic presentation—and its *content*, or what it is “about.” In this view, there can be genuine artistic or aesthetic appreciation of artworks only insofar as attention is given to *form* rather than content: for example, there can be genuine artistic or aesthetic appreciation of a Charles Dickens novel only if one focuses purely upon its literary qualities, not if one reads it to learn about the social evils of Victorian London.

It would seem (and has so been taken) to follow from this perspective—certainly foreshadowed by Kant’s sharp distinction of the concerns of morality in his *second Critique* (1967) from the concerns of art and/or aesthetic judgement in his *third Critique* (1987)—that art and

aesthetic appreciation simply have no business with moral issues or moral education whatsoever. It would also be difficult to exaggerate the influence that this view—reinforced by various modern philosophical and social trends—has had on the development not only of modern critical theorizing about the nature of art and aesthetic appreciation (Bell 1958), but also upon the development of various arts themselves. For one example, modern visual arts from the nineteenth century onwards, no doubt partly influenced by the development of such modern technologies of representation as photography, move increasingly towards styles of painting (impressionism and some forms of expressionism) in which “contentful” (for example, narrative) representation or depiction is not the main concern, or in which representation is not a concern at all (Cubism and other abstract painting). But, likewise—in the wake of Western secularism and a new intellectual climate of rationalist scepticism about the “objectivity” of moral or other human values—many twentieth-century “modernist” novels (from at least James Joyce onwards) and other literature also move away from explicitly morally-focused content, of the kind for which we might seek in William Shakespeare, Jane Austen, or Charles Dickens, and towards a more morally detached “phenomenological” exploration of the vagaries of the human condition.

At all events, there cannot be much doubt that philosophical formalism combined with artistic movements of a more formalist bent has had an enormous influence on modern academic critical reflection and theorizing about the nature and purposes of literature and other forms of human artistic creation, and to a large extent has deflected attention from the possible or potential moral purpose of artworks. This has also been no doubt reinforced by a modern epistemic mindset of “scientism” that generally treats “objective” empirical research as the gold standard of knowledge acquisition and—reminiscent of Plato—is suspicious of more affective engagement with any potential objects of serious academic study. In consequence, students of art or literature in the modern academy are encouraged to adopt a scientifically “objective” or detached attitude to “texts” or other artworks, to focus on artistic or literary technique, genre, and/or style, and to “bracket” (in the phenomenological sense of this term) any and all concern with authorial/artistic intent, social significance, or the moral purpose of artistic productions. It might also be added that, at the more popular level of readership, the prevailing modern epistemic culture of scientism has probably served to erode an older regard for novels, poems, and plays as serious sources of moral wisdom or insight in favour of regarding these as less-serious sources of pleasure or entertainment.

Sources of Formalist Confusion

While some of these doubts about the moral significance and purposes of creative literature and other arts are not entirely without substance, they also seem to be based on various dubious claims and assumptions that call for a more careful and sober analysis. For one thing, they make somewhat sweeping “all or nothing” claims about the purpose of art to the effect that *no* art can *ever* be a source of sound moral insight (Plato), or that it is *never* the proper business of art to serve moral educational ends (Kantian or other modern formalism). However, perhaps the first lesson one might draw from the ever-shifting history of theoretical perspectives on the purposes of literature and other arts—from Aristotle’s reduction of all art to *mimesis* or representation (1941) to interminable modern disputes between formalists and expressionists—is that the rich heritage of human artistic achievement from ancient times to the present day is *not* readily reducible to one single aim or concern. As perhaps the foremost contemporary philosopher of art and aesthetics Noel Carroll (1999) has argued, it is nowadays only sensible to be *pluralists* about the human value of art: precisely, to recognize that art and literature do contribute in various ways to the richness and fulfilment of human life and experience. Thus, while we should recognize that much significant art is representational and/or narrative-based, we can no longer (if we ever could) agree with Aristotle that all art serves this simple function. Likewise, while we can agree with such romantic poets as Wordsworth that poetry may express emotion, or recognize some such function in expressionist paintings by van Gogh or Edvard Munch, we may also appreciate that other poetry, painting, or music is concerned more with exploring the aesthetic effects of words, images, or sounds on our perceptual or sensory (visual, auditory, tactile) faculties or capacities.

Indeed, such considerations point to a deep modern formalist confusion or conflation of the rather different notions of the *aesthetic* and the *artistic*, which has been explored by several latter-day writers on the philosophy of art and aesthetics (Hepburn 1984; Carroll 1986; Best 1982; 1992; Carr 1999; McFee 2005; Stecker 2005). Traditionally (perhaps from Plato onwards), art has been often taken to be concerned primarily with *beauty* or with the creation of things that might be considered beautiful or pleasing to human sensory capacities or sensibilities. Hence, in the modern period, wherein the term “aesthetics” came to refer to the study of art, it likewise came to mean the investigation of the production of beautiful or pleasing things. But, in the first place, since much that may be considered or described as beautiful—a woman or the sunset of aesthetic cliché—is of

no artistic concern (except as a potential object of artistic celebration), the term “aesthetic” has a clearly broader scope than that of the artistic. In short, it is not *necessary* for an object to be an artwork in order to be described as, or fall under the concept of, (the) aesthetic. However, more strongly, it has been argued that it is not even necessary for the products of artists to be *aesthetic* (i.e. beautiful or possessed of pleasing form) in order to be considered artworks—and, indeed, there may be purely “conceptual” works of art, such as the famous “musical work” of complete silence by the modern composer John Cage, of no appreciable (aesthetic or other) “form” at all. In that case, so the more radical argument goes, notions of the artistic and the aesthetic, far from being identical or mutually reducible, are completely *independent*, and one may have artistic experiences that are not aesthetic or vice-versa.

Still, while making a valid enough point that concepts of the artistic and aesthetic are not identical, this argument also probably goes too far and depends on a now rather outworn conditional account of conceptual relations, long since exposed by the modern philosopher Ludwig Wittgenstein (1953). To take a rather telling analogous case, it may be true that there can be human intentions without actions, or some forms of human action that are not exactly intended; but it would still seem that we can hardly *understand* the notion of an intention other than as a mental state *generally* concerned with producing action, or actions as *generally* the product of intentions. Likewise, while there may be aesthetic objects that are not artistic and/or vice versa, it seems fairly safe to say that the general human understanding of art is of the adoption of aesthetic resources, devices, or effects—those largely apt for significant impact upon human senses or sensibilities—for a wide range of artistic purposes (Carr 1999). To be sure, some of the artistic purposes to which aesthetic means are turned may well be themselves purely *aesthetic*: so, it may well be the single-minded goal of a portrait painter to produce a portrait that strikes us as beautiful—though, of course, many portrait painters may seek to go beyond this in the direction of striving to express the character of the portrayed. At all events, it would seem to have been the main aim of much modern painting—from the impressionists onwards to various forms of abstract art—to explore beautiful or otherwise pleasing visual effects for their own sake: largely, that is, irrespective of concern for the human or other “objects” with which such painting might seem to be concerned.

In this light, while the great impressionist painters—or such more modern abstract painters as Piet Mondrian, Jackson Pollock, or Mark Rothko—are widely considered great artists, we would surely be barking up the wrong tree to approach such paintings with a view to learning much

of moral significance about the human condition. Of course, someone might query this in terms of these very examples. After all, did not the impressionists offer us striking pictures of Parisian and other French social life, and did not Pollock's abstract expressionism explicitly relate to earlier European expressionist and surrealist traditions of the likes of Paul Klee and Max Ernst, who sought to tap into the unconscious affective sources of human creativity and imagination? However, it is not just that we may still ask in the case of impressionists whether it was their avowed purpose to depict scenes of French social life, but whether there is reason to suppose any explicit moral aim or content to such depiction: that, precisely, even if impressionist painting could be said to have social content, such content need not thereby have any great *moral* significance.

Likewise, in the case of Jackson Pollock's expressionist abstracts, we may readily concede some connection between his work and that of earlier European expressionists—even that, as in the case of earlier expressionists, his work intends to or actually does express or arouse conscious or unconscious feelings or emotions—without considering his work to be of much or any moral significance. To be sure, even in the case of an explicitly figurative, representational, or narrative-based expressionist painting such as Edvard Munch's *The Scream*, while this has clear intent to depict or represent the human emotion of fear or anxiety, it is a further stretch (in the present view, too far) to give any very specific *moral* interpretation to this particular work, or to regard it as thereby clearly significant for moral educational purposes.

All the same, in the light of Carroll's point that we should properly be pluralists about the aims, purposes, and human value of works of creative literature and art, we should recognize that arts can and do contribute in widely diverse ways to our understanding of the world or the formation of human sensibilities. Thus, apart from contributing significantly to the general cultural formation and awareness of spectators, much past painting can indeed serve to assist or reinforce the historical understanding of human social life at different times and in different places; but it may also serve to enhance aesthetic or other perceptions of the world, or to affect or help us understand human emotions. Still, we have also suggested that such doubtlessly valuable functions may yet fall short—even if emotions may *sometimes* have a role to play in moral life—of any significant contribution to our understanding of moral life. Thus far, it is still not yet clear what contribution an impressionist or even emotionally charged expressionist painting might make to any significant understanding of this kind. That said, there seems to be no great shortage of past and more modern paintings that do appear to have significant moral content. For one

past example, one might mention some of the “Black” paintings of Goya inspired by the Spanish peninsula war; for a more modern work, one might cite Picasso’s similarly war-inspired great masterpiece *Guernica*. Indeed, it would seem virtually impossible to appreciate these paintings without some understanding of the human moral issues to which they are clearly addressed.

But may we not now anticipate some revival of the formalist objection mentioned earlier (conspicuous in recent modern educational philosophy) that to appreciate or value past or present paintings for their moral content or significance—or for the historical lessons we might learn from them about past human or social conditions—can only be to value them for their extrinsic or *instrumental* rather than intrinsic worth, and not for their own sake as works of art? We may easily respond to this, however, by admitting that while this may be true of any or all historical or social learning from artworks, the point is simply confused with regards to moral learning from the aforementioned works of Goya or Picasso. To be sure, if one approaches a Dutch renaissance or French impressionist painting *solely* with a view to learning something about Dutch or French life of the period, one may well fail to appreciate what the painters were trying to achieve in other artistic or aesthetic respects: in that case, such paintings have certainly been valued for other than their artistic qualities – though we may still rightly claim that any learning so achieved is of genuine *educational* value. All the same, any claim that to appreciate the moral purposes of Goya’s “Black” paintings or Picasso’s *Guernica* is to regard them as of *only* instrumental worth—rather than as of intrinsic value as *artworks*—is evidently confused and rests entirely upon the dubious assimilation of the artistic with the aesthetic previously questioned. Indeed, it could hardly be clearer here that while one might well learn the facts of French social history from an impressionist painting without appreciating it as an artwork, one could hardly appreciate the Goyas or the Picasso as works of art *unless* one also appreciated the moral purposes of such works.

In short, the formalist or aestheticist mistake is to fail to see that because *some* artworks have largely or exclusively aesthetic goals—to produce effects that are pleasing to the human senses or sensibilities—others cannot have more expressive or thematic purposes. These may include (and have included): the portrayal or expression of human conscious or unconscious feelings or sentiments (as in romantic poetry, symbolist, and surrealist painting); detailed exploration of the vagaries of human association (as, for example, in much novel from at least James Joyce onwards), satirical comment on the human condition (Horace, Pope,

Swift, Mark Twain, and many others), and/or (which may be different again) moral evaluation of or comment on human affairs (as in much literature and painting). In this regard, it would miss the point lamentably not to appreciate that such moral appraisal is not just an extrinsic or accidental but *integral* feature of a wealth of human art and literature. Precisely, from the ancient Greek tragic poets to the Renaissance masterpieces of Shakespeare and Marlowe, and from the modern romantic poets and novelists to those of the present day, such moral comment on the human condition has been clearly part and parcel of the *artistic* point, purpose, and *meaning* of such literature. But the same claim can clearly also be made for much other non-literary art, such as Picasso's *Guernica*, Goya's "Black" paintings, Bizet's opera *Carmen*, and Rodin's sculpture *The Burghers of Calais*.

Imaginative Literature and Other Arts as Means to Moral Education

In light of what has been said to date, however, there would appear to be *two* pressing questions for any reflection on the uses of literature and other arts for moral insight or education. The first of these would be that of *which* works of literature and other art are suitable for this purpose, since, as we have seen, the aims and goals of arts are diverse and by no means all artworks are directed to any very obvious moral purposes: as already said, it would be futile to look for such content in a Jackson Pollock abstract as we might look for it in Picasso's *Guernica*. But perhaps the second and more challenging task—particularly for those who seek to enlist arts to moral educational ends—is to be clearer about the *means* whereby various art forms appear particularly effective for the expression or communication of issues of moral significance. Thus, for example, it might seem reasonable enough to focus upon *Dulce et Decorum Est* by the twentieth century British poet Wilfred Owen (1994) as a poem of some moral content and significance, insofar as it is clearly intended to make a strong point about the horror and futility of war. But we might still ask whether there is anything about this poem—or poetry *as such*—that lends itself *especially* to the expression or communication of moral ideas or insights. To put this another way, why should we be drawn to Owen's poem for such understanding or insight into the human tragedy of war rather than to a contemporary news report or some historical description, either of which, indeed, might be regarded as more accurate from a *factual* or informational perspective?

The most obvious response to this last question is that the point of the poem is *different* from a historical or newspaper account. Whereas one may reasonably take the latter to be concerned with relating or recording the *facts* of the case—for though, while such accounts may sometimes engage in propaganda, we should also be warranted in regarding any factual distortions as *bad* history or journalism—the poem (or at least this one) evidently sets out to connect us more personally with the brute realities with which it deals. The Owen poem in particular aims not just to *inform* us about what modern combat is like, but to give us some idea of what it might have been like to be there, precisely by engaging our feelings and emotions or *moving* us. From the very first lines, “Bent double, like old beggars under sacks/Knock-kneed, coughing like hags ...,” the language of the poem, while not undescriptive, is clearly not *merely* descriptive in its deliberate use of figurative idioms of simile, analogy, and metaphor. Another way of putting this would be to say that, in the manner of the art form that is almost popularly synonymous with the word “art,” the poem attempts to create an image or imaginative *picture* of the events or experiences it is concerned to evoke. Once again, however, the picture in question is no mere visual copy of reality—of the kind that the technology of photography might afford (though this is not to deny that there can be photographic art)—but an *expressive* picture that is clearly artistically closer to the *Guernica* of Picasso. Indeed, as in the case of Picasso’s painting, Owen employs figurative or metaphorical distortions of a strictly “objective” reality or appearance that seems still affectively or emotionally more faithful or *truer* to the fear, pain, and misery of war.

In this connection, perhaps one of the most striking and compelling attempts to account for the distinctive role of or contribution to human life and experience of poetry—if not the arts in general—was that of the English romantic poets of the nineteenth century. William Wordsworth, in particular, virtually defined poetry in terms of emotion, describing it as the “spontaneous overflow of powerful feelings” and/or “emotion recollected in tranquillity” (Wordsworth and Coleridge 2005). The key concern of romantics such as Wordsworth, Samuel Taylor Coleridge, and William Blake was that the technologically driven social and economic developments of early modern industrialization had given rise to widespread instrumental, utilitarian, and literalist sensibilities, whereby objects of human experience—particularly the world of nature—were no longer appreciated in and of themselves, but only as means to human comfort or material benefit. Indeed, such instrumental sensibilities are quite savagely satirized and criticized in Charles Dickens’s (also post-romantic) portrait of the Victorian schoolmaster Thomas Gragind in his

novel *Hard Times*, whose idea of education extends no further than the teaching or inculcation of literal “facts.”

However, Wordsworth’s point, paradoxical as it may seem at first glance, is that the surest route to a clear or true view or appreciation of reality is not via the “objective,” literal, or factual language of science and technology, but through the figurative, metaphorical, and imaginative language of poetry (perhaps more broadly construed as creative or fictional literature). For in the course of “objectifying” the world—as a prelude, no doubt, to despoiling and exploiting it—science and technology had depersonalized it, separated it from human sentiment, feeling, and real attachment, and/or (much the same thing) “disenchanted” it. Hence, for Wordsworth, in order to regain a true appreciation of the world—particularly of nature—as something of intrinsic worth or value in its own right, it is vital to reclaim its significance as a natural object or focus of human feeling, emotion, and attachment. Indeed, this direct, vital, and sacred connection between humanity and nature is something that Wordsworth held to be present in the essentially poetic nature myths of the ancient pagan Greeks, and he conceived it as the main task of (romantic) poetry to achieve its modern reconnection. In short, he conceives it as the main task of poetry to help us *feel* and relate to the world again in an authentic and engaged way, and, clearly, much of Wordsworth’s own great poetry is faithful to this purpose.

Still, as noted, while this seems to be a defensible enough view of *one* of the purposes of poetry—or, more broadly, poetic language or literature—we should perhaps beware of saying that this is the *only* purpose of poetry: to be sure, there would seem to be many other forms of ancient and modern poetry with quite other (narrative, comic, satirical, eulogistic) aims than the expression of emotion. That said, this dimension of emotional expression is clearly of significance for the main concern of this essay with the potential of literature and other arts for the appreciation of issues of human moral life and significance. For insofar as the expression, cultivation, refinement, control of, or other engagement with affect, feeling, or emotion is a significant concern of most if not all major philosophical accounts of the nature of human moral life and conduct, one might therefore reasonably expect those forms of literature or art that explicitly aim to engage feeling or explore human affective responses to also have some moral significance or implications. As already said, while we can learn in many and diverse ways from artworks of widely different hues—poems, drama, novels, paintings, sculptures, music, dance, film, and so on—we often expect to be *moved* by them in morally or other affective ways.

Again, however, we should also beware of assuming that poetic or artistic concern with the expression of human feeling or emotion is *ipso facto* or inherently morally significant. While, as already noted, a poem by Wordsworth that seeks human emotional reconnection with the world of nature may also have educationally significant moral implications—particularly in a world of advanced global industrialization in which the excesses of such developments threaten serious ecological disaster—it is not obvious that all emotionally expressive works have any such actual or potential moral content. Thus, as again previously noted, there is a powerful tradition of visual art (though there are analogous movements of poetry and other literature)—running perhaps from nineteenth-century symbolist and post-impressionist painting through to twentieth-century expressionism and surrealism—which are often strangely and powerfully affecting, but from which we need not, or perhaps should not, draw any significant moral conclusions. Thus, while a painting by Arnold Böcklin, Edvard Munch, or Max Ernst may well move us deeply, it does not follow that we have much to learn morally from such works.

Conclusion: Artistic Means to Genuine Moral Ends

All the same, while it is an important message of the present essay that we cannot reasonably expect *all* artworks to have moral significance or implications, there is clearly no shortage of art and literature in which moral—and moral educational—goals would seem to be part and parcel of their significance and *meaning* as artworks. Examples from literature—drama, novels, and poetry—clearly abound: from the great Greek tragedians to such great Renaissance literary figures as Shakespeare, Cervantes, and Marlowe; from romantic poets such as Blake and Wordsworth to such nineteenth-century (also broadly romantic) novelists as Jane Austen, Charlotte Brontë, Charles Dickens, and Thomas Hardy; from such early modern dramatists and novelists as Henrik Ibsen, D. H. Lawrence, and Thomas Mann to such postmodern (and postcolonial) writers as Richard Wright, Isabel Allende, and Toni Morrison. Clearly, much past painting and sculpture from ancient to modern times has also been concerned with a variety of human moral issues of love, war, freedom, justice, and betrayal, through perhaps especially the expressive representations of classical and biblical themes by premodern artists; and a considerable body of music and opera—though the relationship of music to any thematic content that it might aspire to express is clearly a problematic issue (Kivy 1990)—may also be credited with moral concerns.

On this note, however, it is the more pressing point of the present paper that the key issue for understanding the relationship of arts or literature to moral life and education is that of appreciating what it is about such forms of expression that especially commend them as effective vehicles for the communication of moral concepts and ideas. In this respect, we have argued that it is a mistake—in the manner of aesthetic formalists—to identify works of art (or what is artistic about them) with their *formal* properties or features as distinct from their content. That Jane Austen's *Emma* concerns the moral development of the character Emma Woodhouse is no less a part of its identity as a work of art than the words or language through which such development is articulated or expressed: precisely, such moral content and concern is part and parcel of the artistic *meaning* of the work. That said, we have also argued that what it means for such a work to *be* a work of art is no less clearly that the themes or ideas with which it deals are presented through forms of language, images, or sounds of a particular expressive kind or power. Jane Austen's *Emma*, Charles Dickens's *Hard Times*, or Leo Tolstoy's *Anna Karenina*—and, no less, Goya's *Saturn Devouring His Son* or Puccini's *Madame Butterfly*—are not detached newspaper reports or psychological case studies of objective events, but works that aim to *move* readers and audiences to something like personal engagement or concern with the themes with which they deal via the employment of specific artistic and expressive means and devices. The key task for students of the relationship of art to morality—or those who would aim to utilize the arts to promote the moral understanding of aspects of human moral life through arts—is therefore to arrive at the best possible appreciation of the means by which literature and other arts are (in their various ways) able to do this.

However, there is one ancient and outstanding question for all who would aspire to use the arts to promote moral understanding that we have not so far directly addressed in this paper, and that is Plato's already noted devastating critique and consequent blanket dismissal of the moral worth of arts in his great work *Republic*. There, Plato insists that no good purpose may be served by imaginative literature and arts precisely insofar as the appeal to feelings and emotions that literary and other artists invariably make—and, by the same token, the emotive or rhetorical language that poets employ—is seriously at odds with the rational detachment and impartiality that he requires of any genuine moral knowledge or understanding of the world. For Plato, the artist is an entertainer or crowd pleaser at best, and a corrupter of morals (especially of the youth) at worst. And, indeed, apart from the fact that there is certainly much popular writing and art that we should nowadays

reasonably want to dismiss as trashy, shallow, and morally worthless, is it not true that even some of the greatest past and present-day writers and artists have been products of the cultures of their time, and have shared the dubious (say, sexist, racist, and imperialist) prejudices of those cultures? Plato therefore sees no useful moral role for the artist except as a possible propagandist for the rationally grounded principles and policies of the “wise” ruling elite of his ideal state. From this viewpoint, ironically, Plato seems to have advocated a conception of the function of artists in the service of state ideology of precisely the sort endorsed by modern (especially twentieth-century) totalitarian political regimes (and has been commonly seen as the originator of this sort of view—see Popper [1966]).

That said, this very view of the writer or artist as a mere puppet of or mouthpiece for this or that political ideology should lead us to suspect that something has gone badly wrong with Plato’s analysis. For, on the contrary, great writers and artists—from Aeschylus, Shakespeare, and Christopher Marlowe to George Orwell and Alexander Solzhenitsyn—seem to have more often conceived their role as harsh critics than mouthpieces of totalitarian despotism. However, the general problem with Plato’s view is surely that it is wildly overstated or exaggerated. Thus, to regard Euripides’s *Medea* or Shakespeare’s *Macbeth* as potentially morally corruptive because the first shows a woman murdering her own children and the second depicts a nobleman murdering his king and friend—actions that we should not condone or encourage anyone to imitate—is, of course, rather far-fetched and preposterous. Indeed, a reader would have to be either very young or very stupid (or both) to draw the conclusion that such conduct is to be imitated from works in which the moral point—despite their detailed exploration of the psychological contexts of such actions—is fairly evidently contrary to this.

Of course, it is true that some great writers and artists have sometimes—even in the course of exploring no doubt morally significant issues—betrayed more local moral prejudices that we would nowadays want to question (though, again, it is striking how such really great writers as Euripides and Shakespeare are almost entirely free from this defect). But this is only to caution that the best teaching of the moral significance of arts is that which is vigilant about and sensitive to past or present-day artistic shortcomings of this kind. To reject an entire human literary and artistic heritage—much of which is clearly devoted to the deep exploration and illumination of a range of human concerns with moral good and ill, and the ways in which human character, virtue, and vice are implicated in such good and ill—is clearly to throw out the baby with the bathwater. Indeed, we may well conclude by noting that the most striking respect in

which the otherwise notably Platonic modern British philosopher and novelist Iris Murdoch (1970; 1993) *departs* from Plato (undoubtedly her main philosophical influence) is in her defence of great literature and the arts as the most powerful source of insight into human moral life and character. Precisely, Murdoch appears to “turn Plato on his head” by arguing that it is great or good literature and art—far more than ethics or moral philosophy—that has the greatest potential for insight into the human moral condition. On this note, while heeding Plato’s caution for reasonable pedagogical and moral vigilance in the teaching of arts (or anything else), we should not doubt the generally profound moral significance and moral educational potential of much serious past and present-day imaginative literature and arts.

References

- Aristotle. 1941. *Poetics*. In *The Basic Works of Aristotle*, edited by R. McKeon. New York: Random House.
- Bell, Clive. 1958. *Art*. New York: Capricorn.
- Best, D. 1992. *The Rationality of Feeling*. London: Falmer Press.
- . 1982. “The Aesthetic and the Artistic.” *Philosophy* 57 (2210): 357–72.
- Carr, David. 1999. “Art, Practical Knowledge and Aesthetic Objectivity.” *Ratio* 12 (3): 240–56.
- Carroll, Noel. 1999. *Philosophy of Art: A Contemporary Introduction*. London: Routledge.
- . 1986. “Art and Interaction.” *Journal of Aesthetics and Art Criticism* 45 (1): 57–68.
- Hepburn, R. 1984. “Contemporary Aesthetics and the Neglect of Natural Beauty.” In *Wonder and Other Essays: Eight Studies in Aesthetics and Neighbouring Fields*. Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press.
- Kant, Immanuel. 1967. *The Critique of Practical Reasoning and Other Works on the Theory of Ethics*. Translated by T. K. Abbott. London: Longmans.
- Kant, Immanuel. 1987. *Critique of Judgment*. Translated by Werner S. Pluhar. Cambridge, ID: Hackett Publishing Press.
- Kivy, P. 1990. *Music Alone: Reflections on the Purely Musical Experience*. Ithaca: Cornell University Press.
- MacIntyre, Alasdair C. 1981. *After Virtue*. Notre Dame: Notre Dame Press.
- McFee, G. 2005. “The Artistic and the Aesthetic.” *British Journal of Aesthetics* 45 (4): 368–87.
- Murdoch, Iris. 1993 *Metaphysics as a Guide to Morals*. Harmondsworth:

- Penguin.
- . 1970. *The Sovereignty of the Good*. London: Routledge and Kegan Paul.
- Owen, Wilfred. 1994. *The War Poems of Wilfred Owen*. Edited by John Stallworthy. London: Chatto and Windus.
- Plato. 1961. *Republic*. In *Plato: The Collected Dialogues*, edited by E. Hamilton and H. Cairns. Princeton: Princeton University Press.
- Popper, Karl R. 1966. *The Open Society and its Enemies*. London: Routledge and Kegan Paul.
- Stecker, R. 2005. "The Interaction of Ethical and Aesthetic Value." *British Journal of Aesthetics* 45 (2): 138–50.
- Wittgenstein, Ludwig. 1953. *Philosophical Investigations*. Oxford: Blackwell.
- Wordsworth, William, and Samuel T. Coleridge. 2005. *Lyrical Ballads*. London: Routledge.

PART ONE

ART IN MORAL EDUCATION

CHAPTER ONE

MORAL PERCEPTION THROUGH PAINTING

MARGARITA MAURI

Dora stopped at last in front of Gainsborough's picture of his two daughters. These children step through a wood hand in hand, their garments shimmering, their eye serious and dark, their two pale heads, round full bud, like yet unlike ... the pictures were something real outside herself, which spoke to her kindly and yet in sovereign tones, something superior and good whose presence destroyed the dreary trance-like solipsism of her earlier mood ... She looked at the radiant, sombre, tender, powerful canvas of Gainsborough and felt a sudden desire to go down on her knees before it, embracing it, shedding tears. (Murdoch 2009, ch. 14)

At one moment in Iris Murdoch's *The Bell* the writer narrates a particular change that the main character Dora Greenfield undergoes when she gazes at Thomas Gainsborough's *The Painter's Daughters*. A regular at the National Gallery, Dora has seen the work on other occasions, but this time the painting has a transformative effect on her because she decides to change her life from this moment on.

Can a painting morally move the viewer? Can a painting be employed as a tool of moral education? This paper will argue that it can.

There are clearly two central characters in the extract from *The Bell*: Dora and the piece by Gainsborough. However, two further elements not directly present but highlighting the condition of a relationship between the viewer and the painting must be added to that rapport: the painter and reality. We can therefore speak of four essential features—the painter, the painting, reality, and the viewer—and we can also add a fifth, which consists of the interaction between the painting and viewer.

Reality

Reality is difficult to define. We could say that everything that is, is reality. Capturing reality is a complex business, because whatever exists has distinctions, nuances, degrees, relationships, and so on. Plato argues