

A Defense of Radical Moralism

Abstract

I defend the ethical fittingness theory (EFT), a moralist view according to which, whenever a representational artwork can be ethically evaluated for the perspective it embodies, such an ethical evaluation legitimately bears, systematically, on the artistic evaluation of the work. The argument for EFT is based on the conditions that make this type of ethical evaluation—i.e., that of a work for its embodied perspective—legitimate: an artwork can be ethically evaluated for its embodied perspective only if the artwork is committed to the perspective and to its being “fitting” with respect to what it applies to, according to extrafictional ethical criteria.

A Defense of Radical Moralism

[Endnotes will not be read at the conference]

1. Introduction

In this paper, I defend the view that a certain ethical evaluation of artworks bears on their value as art, hence that the ethical criticism of art—at least when conducted with respect to this type of ethical evaluation—is a legitimate art-critical practice. I name my view the *ethical fittingness theory*, EFT for short, for it concentrates on one type of ethical evaluation—the one targeting the point of view or perspective a work embodies—and points out that such an evaluation really amounts to assessing the correspondence, or fittingness, between the work’s perspective and what the perspective is about.

The view I defend, then, is a form of *moralism*: it maintains that, with respect to the selected type of ethical judgment, there is a systematic relationship between ethical and artistic value: an artwork’s being ethically praise- or blame-worthy counts, respectively, as an artistically good making or bad making feature of the work. Indeed, EFT holds that such a systematic relationship obtains for artworks of all kinds; hence, the theory should be categorized as a form of *radical moralism*.¹

Opposed to moralism is autonomism in its various forms. In brief, autonomists, in some way or other, hold that the artistic value of artworks is fundamentally independent of their ethical value (or, for that matter, of any other, “ulterior” value).²

William Gass illustrates the autonomist’s position paradigmatically:

the artistic value of a book is different from its economic value, and is differently determined, as its weight in pounds, its utility as doorstep, its elevating or edifying or life-enhancing properties, its gallery of truths.³

As apparent from this quote, autonomists for the most part do not deny that artworks can be *ethically* judged: they only claim that such an ethical judgment has no bearing or no systematic bearing on the work’s artistic value. The debate between autonomism and moralism, however, has so far failed to acknowledge the importance of

this bit of common ground between these two otherwise radically different approaches. In contrast, I will base my argument in favor of a moralist thesis precisely on the shared assumption, between most moralists and autonomists, that a work of art can be ethically evaluated for the point of view it expresses or, as I will prefer to say, for its ethical perspective.⁴

2. The Ethical Fittingness Theory.

I limit my thesis to representational artworks. These are routinely assessed, ethically, for the ethical perspective they embody. Wagner's operas may be blamed for being anti-Semitic, Goya's *The Third of May 1808* be praised for its condemnation of the brutality of war and violence, and Mark Twain's *Huckleberry Finn* be endlessly discussed for perhaps adequately, perhaps insufficiently, chastising racist attitudes.

EFT can so be defined:

(EFT) For representational works of any kind, whenever an artwork is subject to ethical evaluation in virtue of the ethical perspective it embodies, the artwork's ethical status contributes, in a systematic way, to the artwork's artistic value, in the sense that whenever the perspective is ethically praiseworthy in its succeeding to fit what it applies to, the artwork is better, artistically, because of that; and whenever the perspective is ethically blameworthy in its failing to fit what it applies to, the artwork is worse, artistically, because of that.

To contrast autonomism, an argument for moralism must show that a given kind of ethical success or failure matters artistically, and that it does so systematically. One way of doing this is by showing that: (i) achieving such an ethical success is legitimately considered an artistic goal of the work, one embedded in the work's set of artistic aims; (ii) such an artistic goal depends on the sort of work the work is, hence is a goal the work shares with works of the same kind. The argument for EFT follows this strategy.

The argument exploits the implications of ethically evaluating a work of art for its ethical perspective.⁵ For admitting as legitimate such an ethical evaluation quite naturally leads to admitting as legitimate an artistic evaluation of the work, too, and one that depends on the work's ethical success or failure.

In a nutshell, I claim that evaluating a work for its ethical perspective amounts to: 1) assessing that perspective's fittingness with respect to what the perspective applies to; 2) attributing such a perspective to the work, hence attributing the work a commitment to embodying the perspective; and 3) attributing the work a commitment to the fittingness of the perspective. Hence, an ethical assessment of a work for its embodied perspective is legitimate only if, besides being justified in ethically assessing the perspective for what it applies to (as per 1), it is also justified in attributing the perspective and a fittingness commitment to the work (2) and 3).

As a conditional thesis, such that *when* an ethical evaluation of an artwork is legitimate, such an evaluation is artistically relevant, EFT need not investigate the conditions under which 1) obtains. If a work's perspective cannot be ethically assessed for its fittingness or unfittingness with respect to what it applies to, then the ethical judgment in question is illegitimate from the get-go; hence, there is no question about the judgment's art-critical relevance.⁶ Nonetheless, below, I will advance the suggestion that, whenever a perspective can be ethically evaluated for what it applies to, the perspective must encompass what, for short we could call "the real world," i.e., the world of real, nonfictional people and actions and character traits, actual or possible that they may be. Yet, the argument for EFT will not depend on that claim, nor, of course, does EFT refer to it. More simply, the argument will require that a work's perspective be ethically judged in terms of what extrafictionally is the case. That is, I shall argue, an ethical judgment of a work's perspective must be in terms of nonfictional criteria.

As for 2), consider that, for an ethical evaluation of an artwork to be legitimate,

i.e., legitimately targeting the work, the work must be taken to be committed to embodying the perspective. Otherwise, the ethical judgment would be targeting just the work's ethical perspective, not the work itself. Finally, regarding 3), just consider that, for a perspective to be attributed to a work, the work must be taken as, metaphorically speaking, "holding" that perspective to be right, or—in my terms—fitting. Indeed, this can be seen as descending from the very nature of ethical perspectives: points of view—even better worldviews—that, when they are held, they are held to be correct. And any other attitude with respect to the perspective—say, mentioning it or presenting it for consideration—would in fact point to *another, different* perspective, one amounting roughly to claiming that the former perspective is worthy of being mentioned or of being considered.

Hence, artworks that embody ethically praiseworthy, or rather blameworthy, perspectives succeed, or fail, in a goal they are committed to. Yet, succeeding or failing in a goal that is part of a work's commitments is for a work to succeed or fail "on its own terms."⁷ That is, the work succeeds or fails, by embodying an ethically praise- or blameworthy perspective, with respect to an aim internal to the work, indeed internal to the set of commitments of the work. Hence, embodying a fitting or unfitting ethical perspective is of artistic relevance, and ethically praiseworthy works are better works of art because of that; ethically blameworthy works are worse works because of that. Moreover, this must be true of all those works that can be the legitimate object of an ethical evaluation of this kind—hence all works that, in this sense, have fittingness commitments. Hence, EFT is true.

The reasoning in support of EFT can also be expressed in terms of genre: all works that are legitimately judged, ethically, for their ethical perspectives thereby belong to something like a genre—the genre of works with fittingness commitments, of works that in a sense aim at providing a fitting representation. Yet, an artwork is partly judged,

artistically, for how it fulfills the aims of its genre. Hence, the judgment of an artwork's success or failure to fit what its perspective applies to is artistically relevant.

Notice that, since the above argument is all based on the implications—conceptual implications—of ethically judging a work for its perspective, it can support formulating EFT as a universal claim. Hence, EFT is a form of what is best called *radical* moralism: for every kind of representational artwork, if the work can be ethically judged for its embodied perspective, such a judgment systematically bears on the artistic assessment of the work.⁸ Nonetheless, in a sense, the scope of the theory, i.e., for how many works the ethical judgment in question is indeed legitimate, will have to be determined through actual art criticism. It is the art critic who, for each artistic case, must determine whether the work is indeed committed to an ethical perspective, hence to its purported fittingness.

3. EFT Illustrated.

One of EFT's central claims is that the legitimacy of an ethical judgment targeting a work's perspective implies that the ethical judgment must target the perspective in relation to what it applies to. Consider a paradigmatic example for negative ethical criticism: the Marquis De Sade's *Justine*, in which, amongst other things, the sufferings of the protagonist, Thérèse—subjugated and humiliated in various ways—are discounted as laughable, and her defenses of a virtuous life are presented as ill-grounded and foolish. Let us suppose, then, that *Justine's* perspective is partly made of the view that Thérèse's sufferings are laughable and her attempts at a virtuous life foolish, *and* that the book is ethically criticized for endorsing such a view. What does such a criticism imply? I suspect that the alleged ethical evaluation could not even be called *ethical* if it were targeting just fictional characters and events. If the work's perspective were to be judged just for its considering Thérèse's sufferings, i.e., the sufferings of the fictional character, as

laughable, the perspective would be criticized for considering such sufferings as laughable-in-the-fiction (or, to use Gregory Currie’s terminology, as laughable within “the scope of the fiction”). Likewise for the claim that a virtuous life is foolish. Of course, it is possible that the book fails in these respect—fails, e.g., to make the protagonist’s sufferings laughable in the scope of the fiction. And the work’s failure in that sense might very well depend partly on whether the kinds of events instantiated in the fiction are, in reality, laughable or not. Yet, whether the fictional events are, in the scope of the fiction, laughable or not is at most a matter of what is ethically praise- or blameworthy in the scope of the fiction, or praise- or blameworthy-in-the-fiction. And it is not at all clear that judgments of this kind should be considered ethical judgments.⁹ Even if they are, however, and even if the work succeeds in making, in the scope of the fiction, Thérèse’s sufferings laughable and her attempts at virtue foolish, EFT does not look at *that* type of judgment. EFT is a theory referring to that sort of ethical judgment that, regarding *Justine* for example, would consider its perspective an ethical failure because in fact—extrafictionally that is—human suffering is not laughable and the pursuit of virtue is not foolish.

Undoubtedly, there is a type of ethical evaluation—the one that, I would argue, is behind the widespread ethical judgment of artworks—that depends on what extrafictionally is the case: *Justine*’s ethical perspective is criticized for endorsing the view that the suffering of innocent people is laughable, that attempts at a virtuous life are foolish, while innocent people’s suffering is not laughable, nor is the pursuit of virtue foolish.

Notice how attempts to defend a work against this sort of ethical criticism would paradigmatically try to restrict the work’s perspective to the scope of fiction, claiming, for instance, that only Thérèse’s sufferings and attempts at virtue are discounted. Yet, that further proves my point, for if indeed a work’s perspective were restricted to its fictional

reality—such that Thérèse’s sufferings, but not real, innocent people’s sufferings, are laughable—would cease to have a perspective that would call for the sort of ethical evaluation that is of interest here (if indeed an ethical evaluation of such perspective is possible). Indeed, restricting an ethical perspective to the scope of the fiction is tantamount to switching to a different perspective. An ethical perspective having fictional (sorts of) characters and events as its target is a different perspective from one having real (sorts of) people and events as its target. In other words, if an ethical perspective were to be really restricted to the scope of the fiction, it would be like one of the many perspectives a work may include by means of representation, in the same way that, say, Stephen Spielberg’s *Schindler’s List* includes the perspective of the Nazi commander of the concentration camp as well as Oskar Schindler’s perspective. The work’s perspective, however, is neither the commander’s nor Schindler’s, but rather is the perspective arising, amongst other things, from the representation of such characters’ perspectives.

Likewise, if a work’s perspective were to be claimed to be such that its evaluation must depend on fictional moral criteria, then, I would argue, the work would *not* be ethically evaluated (or in any event it would be subject to an evaluation that is not what EFT concentrates upon, and which in fact pervades the ethical criticism of art).

4. EFT Further Explained.

The theory receives further support from explaining some of its constitutive elements and implications.

1. The notion of ethical perspective should be understood very broadly, and not reduced, for instance, to the “message” of the work or “the moral of the story.”

Accordingly, EFT can retain the largest possible generality: a work’s ethical perspective may comprise not just propositions but also (prescribed or invited) affective responses,

categorizations, conceptualizations, the advancing of hypotheses, the raising of questions, the manifesting of concerns, etc. Ultimately, an ethical perspective is a way to experience reality as construed in a certain manner, as calling for certain affective responses, as instantiating certain principles, characterizations, and conceptualizations, as well as allowing for certain hypotheses, questions, and concerns.

2. Given the complex nature of ethical perspectives, EFT appropriately refers to them, not as true or false, but rather as fitting or unfitting the reality they refer to.

Depending on which aspect of the perspective is being evaluated, other, more specific notions will become relevant: the right, the good, the admirable for example. Nor should the judgment of fittingness be construed simplistically. An artwork that with subtlety investigates the possibilities of an incorrect view may be deemed more fitting than an artwork that uncritically endorses the right view.¹⁰

3. EFT is neutral with respect to ethical and metaethical disagreements. Most often, the judgment of fittingness regarding a work's perspective can be uttered without solving metaethical problems—on whether, say, fittingness ought to be cashed out objectivistically or subjectivistically—and without addressing disagreements on the correct normative theory. However, were it otherwise, then the metaethical or ethical disagreements would bear on the judgment of fittingness, hence according to EFT they would also bear on the artistic assessment of the work.

4. According to EFT, it is crucial that an artwork be correctly interpreted, since otherwise the very ethical judgment of the work would be mis-targeted. Yet, quite naturally EFT is neutral with respect to a number of issues regarding art interpretation. EFT is a thesis on the relationship between one type of ethical judgment and the artistic assessment of works of art. Naturally, the ethical judgment must be grounded in a correct interpretation of the work, but what determines when an interpretation is correct belongs to a separate philosophical debate. For EFT, it suffices to say that *whatever*

determines the correct interpretation of a work also determines the correct perspective attribution. Likewise, EFT is neutral with respect to the question of interpretative pluralism.¹¹ Quite simply, if several interpretations of the same work are admissible, then with some works more than one perspective attribution is possible. Finally, EFT enjoys the same neutrality, and for the same reason, with respect to the question of whether for some works the perspective may emerge only from multiple interpretations. When that is so, then the artistic assessment of the work, like its ethical assessment, will have to take the relevant interpretations into account.

5. The argument for EFT is well explained in terms of genre, but reference to genre is not essential to the argument or the theory. For the argument only claims that an artwork succeeds or fails on its own terms when succeeding or failing to embody a fitting perspective, as it would succeed or fail *if* it belonged to a genre dictating such fittingness as an artistic goal. Such a genre, in light of the claim that the ethical evaluation of a work's perspective must be in terms of extrafictional criteria—i.e., of what ethically is the case—could be referred to as a *realistic* genre. Such a notion is best understood as a transmedium supergenre embracing artworks that in fact belong to very different genres. Yet, as a notion of realism, it is also selective, in that it applies only to those dimensions along which the work is committed to a fitting representation. In fact, it could be considered a thin notion of realism, embracing a variety of artworks that ordinarily would not be classified as realistic: caricatures, surrealist works, sci-fi novels, etc. In any event, as said, the argument does not depend on insisting that artworks embodying an ethical perspective that aims at world fittingness belong to something that can be called a “genre” and that can be called “realistic.”

5. Three Objections Answered.

1. *The theory incorrectly predicts that, say, adding moral platitudes to a novel would improve its artistic*

*value.*¹²

In response, first, consider that by claiming that a work's fittingness is a dimension of artistic assessment, EFT only claims that fittingness, or the lack thereof, *as such* contributes or detracts from artistic value. That is compatible with the possibility, in a given work and context of artistic presentation, for the various dimensions of artistic merit to relate to one another in no simple fashion, so that the presence of ethical fittingness, in itself positive, may have a negative bearing on other dimensions. That is no different, however, from what happens with features that are less controversially accepted as artistically relevant: originality in subject matter may detract from a work's being emotionally engaging while remaining, as such, a positive feature. Second, a moral platitude—or, for that matter, a non-moral one—will likely not to be considered as fitting to reality in my sense, for responding to a situation with a platitude may lack ethical virtue and even be positively blameworthy. Third, and finally, the contribution that a fitting perspective embodied in a work gives, as such, to the artistic worth of the work depends on the level of the work's commitment to the relevant aspects of the perspective. Hence, the alleged counterexamples the objection advances risk missing the point from the start: merely adding, for instance, a true proposition to a novel does not guarantee that such a proposition becomes a component of the work's perspective. Nor does it say anything, even if the proposition is part of the perspective, of the place it occupies within it. Narratives, for instance, are filled with aspects that only peripherally belong to their perspectives. As the ethical judgment of such aspects must take these facts into account, so, according to EFT, must the artistic judgment of the work.

2. *EFT succumbs to the counterexamples of works that succeed artistically thanks to their immoral perspectives.*¹³

Lawrence Hyman, for instance, refers to Shakespeare's *King Lear* as achieving dramatic effect precisely by means of arousing our moral disapproval.¹⁴ Matthew Kieran

claims that Martin Scorsese's *GoodFellas* is aesthetically rewarding partly thanks to "the defectiveness of its moral perspective."¹⁵ Yet, my view can account for all such cases, accepting whatever contribution the evil perspective appears to make and yet insisting, in a non-*ad hoc* manner, that in those artworks, too, the fact that their perspective is immoral detracts from their artistic value. My account of what an ethical perspective is allows to show how often immoral views, *presented* within a work, may be instrumental to the emergence of a different overall ethical perspective, which is the one the work really *embodies*. Furthermore, EFT is compatible with considering any ethical perspective, even evil ones, as indirect objects of appreciation when appreciating the way they are presented or advocated, yet without giving up the thesis that the perspective itself, by being evil—hence failing to be fitting to what it applies to—detracts from the work's artistic value. In general, EFT is compatible with admitting that an ethical perspective may serve several, not just one, artistic functions within a work. Indeed, finally, EFT does not deny that an ethical perspective may be attractive, for various reasons, independently of issues of fittingness. In sum, EFT only claims that a certain ethical evaluation of an artwork is relevant to its artistic value, without denying that the same ethical perspective may be amongst the elements relevant to other dimensions of artistic evaluation.

3. *Like other moralist views, EFT is committed to the false counterfactual that an immoral work would always be a better work, artistically, if it were not immoral.*¹⁶

The moralist is committed to such a counterfactual, Daniel Jacobson claims, for otherwise claiming that the work's moral defect is a flaw, a blemish, in the work as art would be an empty claim.¹⁷ Yet sometimes the counterfactual is false, Jacobson continues, because there are works of art that cannot be ethically "sanitized" without a loss in what is artistically crucial in them, works that are in this sense "incorrigible."¹⁸

Fortunately, once it is properly construed, the moralist position can accept much

of what Jacobson claims, and reject the rest as false. Specifically, EFT only entails that a work that embodies an unfitting perspective would be a better work if its perspective were a fitting one *other things being equal*. A moralist can then easily accept that there may be works for which the removal of their ethically questionable elements would affect central good-making features of them. After all, this is true of the evaluation of all sorts of items. When I claim that my car’s lack of good traction is a defect in it, I am indeed committed to saying that it would be a better car if it had better traction, other things being equal. That remains true even if it happens that improving the car’s traction can be done only at the cost of some other quality, say, how noise-producing it is, and hence even if, all things considered, the modified car would *not* be better.¹⁹

Jacobson’s objection looks at works for which the change in ethical status would be “impossible, even in principle”—instances where one could not even “conceive of” a work with a different perspective from the one it embodies.²⁰ What drives the objection is a notion of inseparability: “the immorality of some art—like the offensiveness of some jokes—is [...] inseparable from its aesthetic value.”²¹ Those are the instances in which the very notion of correcting the work does not quite make sense, Jacobson insists, for the correction would dissolve the very identity of the work. He recalls Kieran’s claim that Riefensthal’s *The Triumph of the Will* “would have been better, *qua* art, if it had vilified just as well that which it seeks to glorify,”²² as a conjecture that is “either meaningless or false”: “for whatever such a work would be, it would not be *Triumph of the Will*.”²³ Fortunately, we can grant that Kieran’s conjecture is empty and simply deny that the moralist is committed to it.

The truth is that Jacobson’s objection is grounded in equivocation: between considering as constitutive of the identity of an artwork, and necessary to some central artistic accomplishment, the work’s *ethical perspective*, and considering as so constitutive and necessary the perspective’s *immoral status*. Moralism need not be committed to the

claim that an immoral work would be improved artistically, other things being equal, “by its alteration,” specifically by an alteration in the work’s perspective.²⁴ EFT, for instance, only entails the rather different claim that the work would be better artistically, other things being equal, if its perspective’s ethical status were different, that is, if the perspective were not immoral.

This is not an empty claim, for the ethical status of a work’s perspective *can* be conceived of as different than what it is in fact without making any changes to the perspective itself. It is enough to conceive of the ethical criteria that determine the lack of fittingness of the perspective to be different from what they are. If what *The Triumph of the Will* glorifies were worthy of being glorified, then—EFT maintains—the film would be a better film, artistically, than what it is in fact.²⁵ Such a way of arguing, besides being commonsensical, should not be surprising if, as I have here been urging, a central and artistically relevant sense in which artworks can be deemed moral or immoral has to do with the ethical status of their perspectives, assessed by reference to criteria that are independent of the works themselves.

¹ Here and below, I adopt the definitions of “moralism” and “autonomism,” “moderate” and “radical” that I have offered in [omitted].

² Cf., e.g., Arnold Isenberg, “Ethical and Aesthetic Criticism” (in *Aesthetics and the Theory of Criticism: Selected Essays of Arnold Isenberg*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1973).

³ William Gass, “Goodness Knows Nothing of Beauty. On the Distance Between Morality and Art” (*Harper’s Magazine*, April 1987, pp. 37-44).

⁴ Of course, works of art may be the legitimate targets of ethical evaluations of other kinds: for instance, they can be evaluated for the way they were produced, or for the consequences on their perceivers. Cf. [omitted].

⁵ That artworks can be ethically judged for the point of view or perspective they embody is accepted by virtually all contemporary autonomists, most notably, by Daniel Jacobson (“In Praise of Immoral Art,” *Philosophical Topics*, vol. 25 (1997), pp. 155-199, and “Ethical Criticism and the Vice of Moderation,” in Matthew Kieran, ed., *Contemporary Debates in Aesthetics and the Philosophy of Art*. Oxford: Blackwell, 2006, pp. 342-355), Matthew Kieran (“Forbidden Knowledge: The Challenge of Immoralism,” in J. L. Bermúdez and

S. Gardner, eds., *Art and Morality*. London: Routledge, 2003, pp. 56-73; and “Art, Morality, and Ethics: On the (Im)Moral Character of Art Works and Inter-Relations to Artistic Value,” *Philosophy Compass*, vol. 1/2 (2006), pp. 129-143), and James Anderson and Jeffrey Dean (“Moderate Autonomism,” *British Journal of Aesthetics*, vol. 38 (1998), pp. 150-166). For why these authors should be considered autonomists, including Kieran and Jacobson who reject this label, see my [omitted].

⁶ One could also claim that a work that embodies such a perspective fails nonetheless to embody an *ethical* perspective, if the latter can reasonably be defined as a perspective that is subject to ethical evaluation.

⁷ A notion that can be found, e.g., in Noël Carroll (“Moderate Moralism,” *British Journal of Aesthetics*, vol. 36 (1996), pp. 223-238).

⁸ See [omitted]

⁹ Of course, one may have other ethical concerns with respect to, e.g., the fictional representation of a character’s sufferings as laughable. For instance, one may be concerned about the consequences on the fiction’s perceivers to engage in imaginings of this sort. Or one might even want to claim that there is something intrinsically blameworthy in having certain imaginings – hence something morally wrong with a fiction that prompts them.

¹⁰ This may capture some of the intuitions of those who, like Kieran, see value in the immorality of some works, provided that that contributes to enhance understanding, or of those who, like Robert Stecker, think that the correctness or incorrectness of a work’s point of view does not matter much, but rather the work’s view being a live option for us today (see “The Interaction of Ethical and Aesthetic Value” *British Journal of Aesthetics*, vol. 45 (2005), pp. 138-150).

¹¹ Interpretative pluralism is defended, for instance, by Stecker in “Art Interpretation” (*Journal of Aesthetics and Art Criticism*, vol. 52 (1994), pp. 193-206).

¹² Robert Stecker, in conversation. See also “The Interaction of Ethical and Aesthetic Value,” pp. 141-142.

¹³ See, e.g., Lawrence Hyman, “Morality and Literature—The Necessary Conflict” (*British Journal of Aesthetics*, vol. 24 (1984), pp. 149-155), Jacobson, “In Praise of Immoral Art,” and Kieran, “Forbidden Knowledge.”

¹⁴ Hyman, “Morality and Literature,” p. 150.

¹⁵ “Forbidden Knowledge,” p. 60.

¹⁶ “In Praise of Immoral Art,” and “Ethical Criticism and the Vice of Moderation.”

¹⁷ “In Praise of Immoral Art,” p. 183.

¹⁸ *Ibid.*, pp. 183-184.

¹⁹ Incidentally, as seen with regard to the previous objection, EFT can easily accept that an immoral perspective be valued for positive artistic contributions, besides the negative contribution of its immorality. Hence, when Jacobson claims that a metaphor central to a poem may have much of its value thanks to “how perfectly expresses the poem’s ethical perspective [...] regardless of whether this moral content is deemed virtuous or vicious” (*ibid.*, pp. 183-4), that claim is fully compatible with EFT.

²⁰ *Ibid.*, p. 183; see also Jacobson, “Ethical Criticism and the Vice of Moderation,” p. 352.

²¹ Jacobson, “In Praise of Immoral Art,” p. 182; see also pp. 192-193.

²² Kieran, “Art, Imagination, and the Cultivation of Morals” (*Journal of Aesthetics and Art Criticism*, vol. 54 (1996), pp. 337-351), p. 348.

²³ Jacobson, “In Praise of Immoral Art,” p. 193. Likewise, with reference to a poem by Emily Dickinson, the perspective of which Jacobson assumes for the sake of argument to be morally flawed, he maintains that “one cannot conceive of *this* poem expressing” a different view from the one it embodies (ibid., p. 183).

²⁴ Ibid., p. 183.

²⁵ Incidentally, notice how the same applies to the previously mentioned claim about my car. When deeming lack of good traction a defect of the car, my claim can also be taken to entail that *this* car, unchanged, would be a better car in a world where less traction were needed.