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At the Intersection of Literature, Philosophy, and Ethics: *Axiology Through the Genre of Literary Fiction*

"All great literature is inherently philosophical." ~ Santayana

On The Danger of Subjugating Literature to Extraneous Pursuits

Philosophers approaching the subject of defining literature as philosophy must be aware of the legitimate concerns raised by those who study literature. We begin by turning to the work of Lowry Nelson, Jr. and Peter Lamarque, both of whom are rightfully skeptical of those who might hijack literature in the service of ends that are clearly beyond the scope of aesthetics. Nelson believes that literature is art, a production of the imagination, and "its works must be considered in their individual integrity" (37). For example, Nelson, as a proponent of Kantian aesthetics, believes that to force literature in the service of philosophy is to bastardize its aesthetic essence as purposive without a purpose, diverting it from its inherent goal of fulfilling its wholeness, form, or the "implications of its subject matter," and directing it to the inauthentic purposes of "practical or moral activity or in the proofs of logic, epistemology, and metaphysics" (37). Literature should not be relegated to the task of pursuing any secondary goals beyond fulfilling its own unique aesthetic nature, for as Nelson reasons,

Just as we would not turn over sculpture to the geologist, painting to the interior designer, or music to the acoustician, so we would not surrender literature to the ideologue, the psychologist, the preacher, the linguist, the rhetorician, the cultural historian, or the anti-metaphysical meta-metaphysician (43).

Lamarque shares this concern, and while he defines literature as "fine writing of an imaginative, creative kind imbued with *moral seriousness*," he nevertheless remains cautious and skeptical of the popular trend to utilize literature for purposes which it clearly was not intended. "There is a danger," writes Lamarque, "that by trying to assimilate literature into philosophy, the features that make literature distinct will become diluted" (449). Responding to these legitimate points of concern, the purpose of this essay is to argue for an understanding of literature as a form of philosophy that is, first and foremost, a work of art. Beyond merely suggesting the inclusion of literature in philosophy, viewing literature as the ally of philosophy in the pursuit of understanding the good, moral life, and thereby risking diluting its distinctive and defining characteristics, I show that literature *as art* is always already philosophical in its nature. With this line of thought, I intend to expand and broaden the scope of philosophy, most particularly with respect to the realm of moral philosophy, or the realm of ethical thinking (*axiology*). We find the most profound explication of this notion in the philosophy of Schopenhauer, who boldly argues that literature (*as art*) *is* philosophical. For as he reasons, both literature (art) and philosophy work toward the same ends, namely, both attempt to solve the ultimate issues of existence. There is a contemporary counterpart to this line of thinking in the philosophy of Martha Nussbaum, who traces the origins of such a notion to Aristotelian thought. Nussbaum states the following regarding the important interconnection between literature and philosophy and the potential for us to enhance our modes of ethical discourse by attending to their interrelatedness:

If we wish to develop a human ethical philosophy along Aristotelian lines, I suggest that we would do well to study narrative and emotional structures of novels, viewing them as forms of Aristotelian thinking (Nussbaum 1990 391).

Herein, I focus on three interrelated topics: (1) Literature as an art form that is in its essence philosophical; (2) Literature as an art form that reveals truth in the form of perceptual knowledge, or "cognitive emotionality, which is an autonomous form of knowledge; and (3) Literature as philosophically inspiring our effective and legitimate thinking on moral issues. I suggest that engaging literature as a philosophical endeavor proves more rewarding from the perspective of moral discourse than traditional methods of philosophical speculation found in formal, deductive, treatises on morals. These form of discourse, functioning in the form of abstract argumentative treatise, exclusively concerned with rules and abstract principles, tend to limit or exclude outright the creative, imaginative, and emotion aspects of our existence. Ethics must strive in the most effective manner to inspire authentic moments of moral comportment by closing the divide between theory and practice, which includes thoughtfully reconfiguring the traditional *theoria-praxis* model. Importantly, the novel, as a genre of literary fiction holds the unique potential to inspire authentic moral discourse on an expansive interpersonal level, because, as Nussbaum suggests, literature more effectively traverses the boundaries of time, race, culture, and gender than traditional philosophy or religious writings.

On Defining Literature as "Art" and Defending Art as "Philosophy"

To begin, a definition of literature as art will be attempted from the perspective of "cognitivism" while acknowledging the two problems that continue to haunt the philosophical discipline of aesthetics: (1) the extreme difficulty in overcoming Neo-Wittgenstenian considerations, and (2) the impossibility of providing a categorical definition of art in terms of necessary and sufficient conditions. Philosopher Eileen John states the following concerning cognitivism, "Many works of art, in order to be appreciated and enjoyed as art, call for understanding, as opposed to sheer awe and delight. This understanding often requires cognitively lively or

demanding activity, as we try out ideas, feelings and attitudes important to understanding the work.” After constructing a Brief, "working" definition of art under which to subsume literature, I explain why art is by nature philosophical, and in turn, include literature (as art) as fulfilling the criteria for "art as philosophy."

Definition: If X meets the following criteria, then X is a work of art:

- (1) It is an artefact that employs recognizable artistic means and methods for its construction.
- (2) It elicits an "aesthetic response" in the spectator and this "aesthetic response" is an experience that is both cognitive and emotional, which imparts a perceptual form of knowledge about the world and its inhabitants.
- (3) The cognitive activity is part and parcel of its function as a work of art, and as a result of this cognitive activity (transmitted via the aesthetic experience), we gain fresh knowledge, our beliefs are refined, and our understanding is deepened, and what we learn constitutes our pleasure and aesthetic appreciation of the work of art.

It is possible to locate Sophocles' paradigmatic tragedy (a genre of literature), *Oedipus Rex* under this definition, for attending to Aristotle's *Poetics* we learn that it is a creation (*poiesis*) by means of the author, it is a work that elicits an aesthetic experience in the spectator, producing fear and pity in the moment of the tragic reversal of fate, and, as a result of *kartharsis*, which is both horrifying and pleasurable, the spectator's understanding of the human condition is enhanced. Something must be said at this point about the aesthetic experience and the claim that art imparts a form of knowledge that is both cognitive and emotional in nature. Since we are moving toward understanding literature as a form of art that imparts knowledge of a special type, the most logical place to begin is with the aesthetic philosophy of Kant as presented in

The Critique of Judgment. It will benefit the reader to become familiar with Kant's notion of art, beauty, and the aesthetic experience before proceeding to an elucidation of *cognitivism*, which builds on Kantian foundations, but ultimately graduates beyond the understanding of art we find in Kant.

For Kant, when we judge something beautiful, we do so in the thralls of a mind-set that is "disinterested," a state of existence in which we do not desire to possess the object we are contemplating, nor do we have the power to cognize the object, to make sense of it in terms that are familiar to us from our everyday ways of understanding the world. The experience of art, according to Kant, is quite literally beyond our phenomenal understanding of time, space, and causality. Kant argues that this notion of the "disinterested" experience is at once universal, necessary, and works in such a way as to imbue the art object with a "purposiveness without purpose," i.e., the object has the illusion of manifesting a purpose or goal to its activity, when in fact it has none. This imagined notion of purpose gives us pleasure in the experience of the work, and, according to Kai Hammermeister, "The notion of aesthetic pleasure can be found in the constant attempt to move from imagination to understanding without ever arriving there" (H, 31). We attempt to conceptualize the work, but it is beyond all rational efforts to bring it to full understanding. Pleasure, for Kant, is formal in nature. Kant believes that the felicitous shapes, the harmony and compatibility of the lines and curves, the play of shadow and light, the ways in which all the elements are arranged and structured in the work of art produces the spectator's pleasing aesthetic experience. Kant is emphatic that the experience of art is inconsistent with *cognitivism*, and Hammermeister elucidates this below.

Kant makes it perfectly clear that the aesthetic judgment shares precious little common ground with rational judgment, and that art therefore has not capacity to teach us anything, beauty has relation to insight and cognition (28).

Schopenhauer's theory of aesthetics radicalizes Kant's philosophy, for Schopenhauer perceives the aesthetic experience as a perceptive moment of legitimate insight into the reality of the universal aspects of the world, or knowledge of the Platonic Ideas, as Schopenhauer refers to them. Whereas Kant focuses primarily on the work of art and the spectator's involvement, Schopenhauer adopts a tripartite approach, which focuses simultaneously on the artist (as creative genius), the work of art, and the aesthetic experience of the spectator as she is enraptured and enlightened in the pleasure of the aesthetic moment. The pleasure of the aesthetic experience, for Schopenhauer, relates to the cessation of the mechanical (causal) processes of "willing." As Christopher Janaway reasons, "When all the possibility of suffering is abolished, the state of pure objectivity of perception becomes one that makes us feel positively happy" (76). This involves a state of "will-less contemplation," which represents the most objective kind of knowledge we can have, art "uniquely displays things as they eternally are" (77). Schopenhauer is providing an early version of *cognitivism* in art, and, importantly, linking the concerns of art and the concerns of philosophy. As Julian Young argues, "Good art, is for Schopenhauer, a cognitively important enterprise. It communicates knowledge to us, knowledge moreover, of a universal import [. . .] art tells us about life and not just lives" (135).

As Schopenhauer states in *The World as Will and Representation*, "Not merely philosophy but also the fine arts work at bottom towards solving the problems of existence" (234). For Schopenhauer, both philosophy and art spring from the same primordial human drive to answer ultimate questions about the world and human life. Both philosophy and art graduate beyond the

realm of subjectivity characterizing the everyday modes of conscious thought. Schopenhauer relaxes the tension between art and philosophy that Plato establishes in the *Republic*, and in a radical move, makes the claim that with respect to "motivation" and "content," philosophy and art are one and the same endeavor. However, Schopenhauer is clear that "methodologically" they function in different ways: philosophy presents its answers conceptually and art offers its solutions perceptually. While this distinction is important in Schopenhauer's work, there is a way to understand it in terms that are quite consistent with the idea that, even from a methodological point of view, there is no good reason to retain the idea that art and philosophy are distinct.

Although Schopenhauer surmounts Plato by establishing the epistemological legitimacy of art, he encounters a problem when rectifying art with philosophy. According to Young, "If one seeks to refute Plato's denigration of the art by describing it in terms which he reserves for philosophy one runs the risk of obliterating the distinction between art and philosophy" (140). Schopenhauer is well aware of the risk and so retains the methodological distinction between art and philosophy. In the field of comparative literature, we encounter this distinction in the notion that literature is not philosophy and *vice versa*. Rather, with respect to philosophy and literature there seems to exist two distinct types of work: (1) literature that merely suggests a philosophical theme and (2) philosophical prose which elucidates one or another philosophical position. In the former instance, philosophy is diluted, in the latter instance, literature (as art) is sacrificed to the greater cause of philosophy proper. It is possible to grasp this distinction in terms of comparing Sartre's *Nausea* to Kafka's "Metamorphosis." Although both speculate on existential dread and the un-canny mood of alienation, only the former is considered an authentic work of philosophy as literature. Young believes that there is no good reason why the distinction needs to exist, why it cannot simply be erased or obliterated. Rather than endorsing the distinction between art and philosophy, it would be better to "simply *accept* the obliteration of the distinction, to deny that

there is any absolute distinction between art and philosophy. This, I think, in outline, is what a modern "Continental" philosopher would say" (151).

Young's statement requires unpacking, for we must be aware of the implications of uniting literature (art) with philosophy. When referring to the "Continental" philosopher, Young alludes to a way of doing philosophy that embraces many and varied forms of knowledge, and this includes, in particular, a form of "aesthetic" knowledge that is irreducible to propositional or calculable knowledge. For the purpose of this essay, we will concern ourselves with the special knowledge that art gives us, which is a form of "perceptual understanding," or *aisthesis*. According to the ancient Greeks, this form of truth, or mode of truth-revealing (*aletheieun*), provided knowledge of the aestheta, or sensory, perceptible objects. In the philosophy of Nussbaum, we relate this way of knowing to what she terms, "rational emotion," the type of emotional and perceptual insight which manifests the truth of literature, film, and the fine arts. In the philosophy of David Best, this understanding is described as "direct intuition," not in terms of a hunch, or gut feeling, that is opposed to reason or reasoning, but in terms of the immediate apprehension of some thing by means of perception and reason, which establishes a legitimate relationship between mind and some object. Philosopher Michael Gelvin talks of a similar form of knowledge that arises from authentic philosophical inquiry, which stands in contrast to the type of truth we acquire by means of a formal investigation. This poetic-philosophical knowledge, arising specifically from inquiry, is not limited to formal, calculable truth, for it stands "outside of the calculative enterprises of classificatory science and logical inference" (9). As will be shown, this form of knowledge, which is part and parcel of our experience of art, is a legitimate, autonomous form of knowledge that is not in any way at a remove from the processes of rational thought.

In line with Schopenhauer's philosophy, Classicist H. D. F. Kitto makes the argument that Sophoclean drama is philosophical in nature because Sophocles is, quite simply, doing philosophy imaginatively and creatively through the medium of drama. Sophoclean drama, according to Kitto, is both philosophical and artistic, because Sophocles engages in the process of inquiring into the nature of things, and by means of abstraction, is philosophically divining knowledge of universals from particulars and communicating this insight to the spectators of the drama. Below Kitto compares the tragedians, specifically with reference to Sophocles, with the Pre-Platonic philosophers.

[I]n general the Greek tragic poets persuade us of this; that they have contemplated the human scene with all the sympathetic [emotional-cognition] awareness of which the creative artist is capable; that as philosophical thinkers they have thought their way through this and have reached some underlying and unifying principle - much like Thales, Anaximander and the rest did with the physical universe; and that finally, as artists again, they have recreated this underlying [universal] truth entirely in terms of [particular] human action and suffering; so that the play becomes not a slice taken from life, but something more of a vertical section of life., so taken as to reveal something of its foundations (63-64).

Thus, we understand that the movement from philosophy to art and back again is not two separate activities, but a duplicitous expression of a single activity, which unifies philosophy with art. Sophocles' philosophical enquiry inspires knowledge which is communicated through the art of tragic poetry. When considering Plato's denigration of art in light of the markedly different and superior role philosophy should play in the life of the state, we must be aware that the segregation of philosophy from art arise out of Plato's academic understanding of philosophy as embodied in

his school, the *Academy*. However, if we attend to Kitto's comparison of the tragedians to the Pre-Platonic thinkers, we note the great similarity between philosophy and the tragedian's art, we see that their methods and philosophical foci are similar, e.g., the poetic, imaginative approaches to solving problems across a broad spectrum, and thinkers, or poetic philosophers, such as Empedocles immediately leap to mind.

Aristotle's famous words that begin the *Metaphysics*, "All humans desire to know," express our innate drive toward the condition of knowledge in the attempt to explain things that hold us in their sublime spell. Existential philosopher Karl Jaspers reiterates this understanding of the human in *Way to Wisdom* when making the claim that we are all philosophical as a general condition of our humanity. He describes philosophy in terms of its perennial nature, tracing its primordial origins to our predisposition to "wonder" at and about our existence. As Jaspers writes, "There is no escape from philosophy," nor is there escaping the fact that we all are, in varying degrees, philosophers. Jaspers makes the case for understanding this drive to do philosophy by examining the thoughts and musings of children: "It is not uncommon," he writes, "to hear from the mouths of children words which penetrate to the depths of philosophy" (J, 10). In Jasper's view, everyone is capable of philosophical judgment and can engage in the meditative process in his or her own way, and, importantly, according to Jaspers, with no formal or academic training. "Our own humanity," he writes, "our own destiny, our won experiences strike us as a sufficient basis for philosophical opinions" (J, 10)

Phenomenologist Max Scheler echoes Jasper's sentiments when claiming that philosophy is a spiritual endeavor, which should not be limited to professionals in the academic institutions, because it constitutes the very core of our humanity. In terms that are reminiscent of Sartre, Scheler claims that we are condemned to do philosophy, it is a way of life that is thrust upon us by virtue of our *Dasein*, our way of *being-in-the-world*, and, whether conscious of it or not, we are always

engaged in philosophically assessing our existence. We do not inherit philosophy from our forebears, it is not taught to us. Rather, philosophy represents our primordial inheritance that presupposes our being human in the first instance. The human confronting its world philosophically is the stuff of *existential* literature, a leitmotif in the fictional writings of Sartre, Camus, and Marcel, wherein we find the attempt to understand and communicate human reality as it manifests in concrete situations, which reveal the universal human predicament, wherein each particular situation is pregnant with possibilities that might be lived by any human being. What these writers communicate philosophically about the human situation in *praxis* might be said of all great literary minds. Through the stances that the characters adopt while confronting the difficult aspects of life that can neither be changed nor overcome, we learn of the ways that our world is formed through creative, poetic activity, which includes the encounter with meanings and values transcendent of our subjectivity that contributes to our development. As Everett W. Knight argues, in *Literature Considered as Philosophy*, there are many instances of literature that exist, which is not spoken of "in connection with existentialism, which, nevertheless, is existentialist in that it is *literature as philosophy*, " and its authors are philosophers in the same sense of the *existential* philosophers mentioned above, and such authors include for Knight, Gide, Malraux, and Antoine de Saint-Exupery (Knight 1966 15).

In addition to the aforementioned *existential* authors, it is possible to imagine authors and poets such as Homer, Ovid, Shakespeare, Austin, Proust, Dickens, Kafka, and Hesse doing philosophy in the manner herein described. In addition, we might also imagine the aforementioned artists having the traits and characteristics of "genius," which makes their work worthy of our continued attention and admiration, demonstrating the conscious perfection of their innate ability to engage us philosophically through their art. Genius consists not only in grasping understanding the human emotional and intellectual life in terms of the particular, the subjective, i.e., what this

man or woman suffered, what happened in this specific situation at this precise time, but genius also calls for the intuitive understanding of the universal aspects of life, and, as Robert Wicks claims, "apprehending the universal calls for the philosopher" (100). The artist as genius is beholden to the task of transferring and communicating philosophical insight through literature and poetry, and has the distinct ability to re-produce what is apprehended or experienced through philosophical inquiry by giving aesthetic form to the insights. According to Schopenhauer, the genius "retains the presence of mind which is necessary to enable him to repeat in a voluntary and intentional work what he has learned in this manner; and this repetition is the work of art" (118).

In light of what has been said regarding art as philosophy, we will now consider the role of the artist, or author of great literature by locating the origin of the work of art in the drive to philosophically inquire into the nature of the world and human being, which for Jaspers, represents the sources from which philosophy springs: "Wonderment," states Jaspers, "gives rise to question and insight; man's doubt in the knowledge he has attained gives rise to critical examination and clear certainty; his awe and sense of forsakenness lead him inquire into himself (J, 17). This sense of "wonderment" is the source, or origin, of philosophy, and we might also identify this as the source, or origin, of the work of art, if we are convinced by Schopenhauer's arguments. To reiterate, the notions of particular and universal in philosophical inquiry stand in direct relation to the existential truth which philosophy seeks to reveal. Jaspers argues that all philosophy presupposes that human existence is two-fold in nature, we all experience two types of "situations": (1) particular situations that change and present us with a multiplicity of scenarios and possibilities, i.e., particular contexts that are rooted in human subjectivity, and (2) universal situations

which remain essentially the same even if their momentary aspect changes and their shattering force is obscured: I must die, I must suffer, I must struggle, I am subject to chance, I involve myself in inexorable guilt. We call these fundamental situations of our existence ultimate situations (20)

These situations of which Jaspers speaks are inescapable realities that cannot be surmounted, only acknowledged. The great artist author captures both of these types of situations in thought and imagination, and, by means of artistic creation, communicates imaginatively this existential insight along to the readers of great novels. As Jaspers describes, between the great artist (author) and the spectator, in the moment of the aesthetic experience, the spectator assumes the role of participant in the philosophical discourse between artist and spectator. Great literature initiates the *noetic* discourse that is the "communication from understanding to understanding, from mind to mind, existence to existence," in a loving contest, "which profoundly unites self and self (26).

In light of the foregoing discussion, positive steps have been made toward making the following claim: All great literature is art by its nature; All art is philosophical by its nature; Therefore, all great literature is philosophical by its nature. It is possible to understand why Aristotle praised *Oedipus Rex* as the most tragic (and philosophical) of plays in terms of what has been said about art as philosophy, for the play re-produces, by dealing artistically and philosophically with themes that are now familiar from reading Locke and Hume's inquiries into self-understanding, or self-identity. The play centers on Oedipus' philosophical *inquiry* into self-identity, and despite what appears on the surface, the play is really not an *investigation* in terms of specifically asking the question: "Who and what is Oedipus?" with the purpose of producing objective knowledge, e.g., "through a mere *investigation* of objects" (80). Learning facts about the character, that he is the King of Thebes, prone to rash judgments, and tenacious to the point of obsessive, does not

translate into valuable philosophical insight. As previously addressed, there is an important philosophical distinction between *inquiry* and *investigation*, the latter is concerned with what a person *is*, the former is concerned, more correctly, with what it means to *be* a person. According to Gelvin, the advantages of conducting an *inquiry* into self-identity as opposed to an *investigation*, is that the former provides us "*with the ability to talk about modes of existence without [specific and restrictive] reference to a particular subject and without objectifying or substantizing what is talked about*" (81). Thus, the "self is neither a mere logical subject nor an object, and so holds the potential to provide a fundamental source of ontological, or universal, significance. The existential inquiry into self-knowledge that Oedipus undertakes, and we, the reader or spectator, undertake with him, is at once the understanding and acknowledgment of the uniqueness of his quest as the King of Thebes along with the understanding of the tragic implications that the quest of Oedipus has for our lives, for all lives. The inspiration or "tragic knowledge" we glean from *Oedipus Rex* is perhaps best summarized by Nietzsche, who acknowledges that self-knowledge often comes at the expense of self-annihilation. Oedipus suffers a general truth about human consciousness and the following warning serves all those who might, like Oedipus, dare to push philosophical self-inquiry beyond the bounds that might be termed "natural":

[W]oe to the fatal curiosity which might one day have the power to peer out and down through a crack in the chamber of consciousness and then suspect that man is sustained in the indifference of his ignorance by that which is pitiless, greedy, and murderous (80).

On Literature's Potential as Ethical Philosophy

Aristotle, in *Poetics* makes a powerful case for art *as* philosophical enquiry into the ethical. We might imagine tragic drama posing the following ethical question, "What is it to be a 'good'

human being?" According to Dennis Schmidt, Aristotle, in analyzing the monumental effect of tragedy demonstrates that the "task of thinking this experience could not be understood except as a task that belonged to the ethical life of the human being" (Schmidt, 47). However, this is not to indicate that tragedy is morally didactic in its approach and purpose. Rather, it is heuristic in nature, an art form that encourages discovery and understanding by means of living through the experience of the tragedy, which is a mimetic and philosophical re-presentation of the human condition, expressing all of its triumphs, follies, and, above all, its tragic moments of profuse and intense suffering. As Schmidt argues, "The play space of imitation is a realm in which possibilities are explored (just as a child might play at being a doctor or philosopher), and it is a realm in which our instinct to enlarge our world is unfolded" (50). Tragedy, as opposed to being an expression of truths that have already been worked out in advance by the artist, is a philosophical expression of those aspects of life that retain their question-worthy status. Tragedy is concerned with the realm of *praxis*, specifically with those aspects of being that can always be otherwise or indeterminate, those things beyond the complete control of autonomous rational choice, those things subject to chance and *tuche*, or luck. The "moral seriousness" of the tragic play hinges on the fact that chance and luck play pivotal roles in human affairs, affecting, in certain circumstances, a tragic set of consequences in the lives of the characters.

For Aristotle, the ethical life is always life-in-*praxis* (in activity), a life in transition, wherein the circumstances and situations within which we find ourselves as moral agents are always changing. There exists an indeterminacy with respect to legitimate ethical comportment that eludes all attempts at predictability. For this reason, Nussbaum makes the following point, "Moral theory cannot be a form of scientific knowledge that orders the 'matter of the practical' into an elegant antecedent (deductive) system" (Nussbaum 1990 141). For example, *Nicomachean Ethics* is at most a "sketch" or "outline" of the ethical life, "whose content must be given by

experience, and whose central claims can be clarified only by an appeal to life and works of literature" (141). Literature functions as an imitation of life in narrative form to engage, challenge, and affect change in the reader's ethical disposition (*hexis*), and it is crucial to our inquiry into the ethical because it

does not simply (as does history) recount that this or that event happened; it searches for pretense of possibility - of choice, of circumstance, and the interaction between choice and circumstance -that turn up in human lives with such a persistence that they must be regarded as *our* possibilities (171).

In Francis Fergusson's introduction to Aristotle's *Poetics*, it is stated that the artist imitates human actions (*in praxis*) by means of capturing the movement of the various manifestations of the human spirit. "Praxis" is motivated, goal-oriented, yet highly unpredictable action, which is the movement of the human being to its ends, whether successful or unsuccessful. Through verse and action (imitation), the play uses metaphor to re-produce the harmony and rhythm of the human life in an artistic form. In tragedy, *pathos* affects the soul (*psyche*), inspiring the characters' actions, their passions and actions are inextricably linked, just as they are in the real world of which tragedy is the imitation. We must be clear when employing the term "passion," or "emotion," and the latter will be the preferred term (more will be said on this subject below), for it is incorrect to link the emotions with blind, immediate sensations such as pain, hunger, or thirst. The emotions are never devoid of cognitive function, e.g., pity and fear both have objects and require a rational comprehension of what is involved in terms of each emotion. Actions motivated by fear and pity are actions that have purpose and are directed by our understanding of these emotions.

Fergusson makes this crucial point about the relationship between actions and the emotions in the following manner: "The two concepts [*praxis* and *pathos*], abstractly considered are opposites; but in our human experience action and passion are always combined, and in fact they are recognized in Aristotle's psychology" (11). What Aristotle is most concerned with is "pathetic motivation" in the form of "ethical motivation," which lies in close proximity to reason and the consciously controlled will," or the way in which the soul's moral faculties, honed through habituated activity, allow for the proper discharge of the passions or emotions in the right amount in the right context toward the right individual, and, this for Aristotle represents "virtuous" interpersonal activity. According to Aristotle, we learn to be moral through habituated training of the (moral) faculties through both practical and aesthetic activity (such as the experience of tragedy in the *kathartic* effect). *Katharsis*, depends for its actualization on the mimetic processes enacted in the narrative, and through the effect of mimesis there is an identification, but always at a distance, with those who undergo suffering. *Katharsis* is a highly charged emotional event in which intuitive knowledge concerning the foundations of life is revealed. As Schmidt reasons, in the moment of *Katharsis* a revelation occurs and

an insight is obtained about the aims of life. One learns to see without, like Oedipus, needing to go blind. The supreme *kathartic* moment comes when one sees oneself in the empty sockets where once Oedipus had eyes. When the void becomes the mirror wherein one sees one's own soul reflected, one experiences what Aristotle calls, "katharsis" (152).

Philosopher Nickolas Pappas points out that *katharsis* is usually thought to denote a medical purgation of the emotions to allow one to rid oneself of the poison, so to speak, "like a laxative or enema that cleaned out the digestive system" (17). Tragedy is usually thought to endorse the

flushing out of the passions, facilitating a return to a neutral and calmed state. However, as Pappas suggests, "Aristotle does not take emotions to come in quantities that either get released or remain suppressed. On his view, the expression of an emotion helps to strengthen that emotion thus people who regularly vent their anger become more irascible, not less" (18). In *Nicomachean Ethics* Aristotle does not endorse the purgation of emotions, but rather their consistent and well-regulated expression or discharge. Tragedy allows for the spectators to experience and endure an emotional encounter of a special type, and, "if their moral arousal leads to *Katharsis* (plus delight over the passions' excitement), and this arousal brings ethical habituation, then *Katharsis* just is training and habituation" (18). On this view, *Katharsis* is a clarification of the emotions and a calibration of the emotions to fit the everyday ways we encounter the world in practical (moral) activity. We gain insight from the tragedy (art) about how we should regulate and direct the manifestation of the emotions of fear and pity in moments of authentic moral comportment.

That understanding forms part of the groundwork for ethical behavior, since Aristotle's ethics connects ethical behavior to well-trained emotions. Thus the clarification view helps harmonize Aristotle's aesthetics with his ethics [. . .] Aristotle presumes us able to reason about our emotions, and make them more reasonable (18).

For the Greeks, artistic concerns were wedded with moral philosophy, and this, claims Nussbaum is what modern philosophy has, to its detriment, forgotten, or worse, consciously ignored. Against traditional forms of moral philosophy, e.g., deductive treatises which are always at a rational remove from our lived-experiences wherein we encounter the emotions, the type of moral philosophy we encounter in Kant (*The Foundations of the Metaphysics of Morals*), Nussbaum is suggesting a return to a Neo-Aristotelian form of ethical speculation, which includes, and in fact

necessitates, the melting of ethical concerns, aesthetics, and the return of the emotions from their maligned status as irrational drives into the rational processes of the philosophical enquiry into the "good" life. Traditional academic instruction in ethics includes the analysis of the ethical systems of the philosophers, as "ethical theory" in the form of moral analysis, a "systematic endeavor to understand moral concepts and justify moral principles and theories" (Pojman 2006 396). Ethical instruction also includes the incorporation of moral prompts, or "case studies," which are employed to inspire speculation and discourse, all of which work toward the end of gaining a proper understanding of the ethical life. Ironically, as Nussbaum points out, these traditional ways of studying ethics tend to incorporate a detached form of philosophical contemplation, and this is representative of the inauthentic drive to capture in pure thought, the so-called "objective state-of-affairs," moral or otherwise, while transcending human subjectivity. According to Nussbaum, this form of detached thinking, which is at a "godlike" remove from concrete realities of our emotional interpersonal relationships, detaches itself from the immediate lived-context of our life and from the sentient, visceral, and immediate nature of our practical affairs, thus precluding the understanding of the intimate, legitimate connection between authentic philosophical thought and the emotional life.

We encounter this detached attitude toward the emotions and the world of appearances in Plato, but it is important to note that even in Plato there is not a rejection of the emotions because they are devoid of cognitive content. Rather, Plato rejects the emotions because they inspire an inferior form of reasoning, a form of "perceptual" reasoning that is at odds with the functioning of *theoria*. *Theoria* does not simply refer to the speculative or contemplative life, it refers to a form of contemplation that seeks to detach itself from, and purge the philosopher of, worldly ties in order to ascend to the "pure" understanding of the Forms (*eidai*). In the *Phaedo*, this is the ideal form of contemplation that the philosopher must practice in preparation for death. According to

Plato, as expressed through Socrates, one who comes closest to absolute knowledge, does this most perfectly when approaching the object with thought alone,

without associating any sight with his thought, or dragging in any sense perception with his reasoning; but who, using pure thought alone, tries to track down each reality pure and by itself, freeing himself as far as possible from eyes and ears, and in a word, from the whole body, because the body confuses the soul and does not allow it to acquire truth and wisdom whenever it is associated with it (14).

This includes for Plato the way one acquires true knowledge of the intellectual and moral virtues. For Plato, the emotions are associated with the world of appearances, they are neither eternal nor trustworthy and are referred to by Plato as non-existence, or *me on* ("non-being"). Nussbaum argues that this detached form of philosophical thought (*theoria*), which Plato finds most effective for doing philosophy causes us to lose sight of the historical particulars of our existence within which we are firmly rooted, and this historical, temporal, particular, and practical existence is linked to the life of the emotions, and these emotions, as already stated, are not opposed to reason, but are the result of human understanding. For Nussbaum, literature is the most useful philosophical medium through which to trace out the richness and diversity of the emotional life of the human being, which represents the inquiry into the proper moral life. Her claim is that due to the complexity of the narrative structure and content of great novels, they are more productive for elucidating and initiating legitimate moral thinking than the schematic narratives or deductive reasoning common to traditional forms of ethical philosophy.

Nussbaum suggests that the novel's formal aspects, characterization, temporal movement, narrative structure, re-presentation through imitation, facilitate an intimate relationship between the reader and work. By enlisting the reader as a participant, and this occurs through the aesthetic

experience that will be detailed below. The novel is a far-reaching expression of human possibility and potential, and, as Nussbaum argues, through the characters' triumphs and failures we experience the fragility of human life, open as it is to chance, the anxiety that accompanies the human being as it moves through time, and the wide and varying emotional states that are part and parcel of the complete human life. In *Poetic Justice* Nussbaum locates the experience of emotional enlightenment, which broadens and deepens our ethical capacity, in the experiences we have when we read and thus participate in the great works of fiction.

Literature is in league with the emotions. Readers of novels, spectators of dramas, find themselves led by these works to fear, grief, to pity, to anger, to joy and delight, even to passionate love. Emotions are just not like responses to the content of many literary works; they are built into their very structure, as ways in which the literary form solicits attention [...] Forming bonds of both sympathy and identification, they cause the reader or spectator to experience pity and fear in the hero's plight, fear too for themselves, insofar as their own possibilities are seen as similar to those of the hero (Nussbaum 1996 53).

The "practical insight" we gain from literature promotes the cultivation of the reader's "emotional openness and responsiveness in approaching new situations. Frequently, it will be her passional response, rather than detached thinking, that will guide her to the appropriate (ethical-moral) recognitions." (53). Literature allows not only for the imagination of circumstances that are similar to our own, but also allows us to imagine how such circumstances, if different, might effect us or those we love. What is most important about literature is its focus on the human being as locus of the concern for the morally "good" existence. Great literature manifests trans-historical elements that speak across the generations, transcending the boundaries of cultural.

"Literature speaks to the reader as a human being," Nussbaum writes in *Love's Knowledge*, "not simply as a member of some local culture, and works of literature frequently cross cultural boundaries far more easily than works of religion or [traditional] philosophy" (Nussbaum 1990 391).

For example, it is possible to note that literature crosses cultural and historical boundaries by reading Sophocles' tragic drama, *Ajax* as a work of inspiring an analysis of the ethical notions of compassion and forgiveness. *Ajax* is probably one of the most misunderstood dramas by Sophocles, usually it is read as a study in *hubris* and *nemesis*, reckless arrogance in the face of the gods which is tempered with divine retribution. This reading skirts the most important scene in the play, namely, the dispute concerning the burial of *Ajax*. I have argued in the essay, "Reading *Ajax*: A Tutorial in Compassion and Forgiveness" that the burial dispute is the axis upon which the entire play rotates. Following the suicide of Ajax, the play centers on the plight of Teucer, the half-brother of Ajax, and it becomes imperative, even at the risk of death, that he be permitted to honor Ajax with a funeral and burial befitting a valiant and courageous warrior. To deny burial, to leave a body exposed for the birds and dogs would not only pollute and defile the corpse, it would also offend the Olympians who would deny the person safe passage to the underworld. Menelaus, the brother of Agamemnon, stands over the corpse of Ajax, unwaveringly opposing Teucer, because Ajax had sinned against the Greek rulers, showing utter contempt for the kings. Menelaus intends to deny burial and preclude Ajax's safe passage to Hades.

Instead of embroiling the situation between the kings and Teucer, as the chorus expects, Odysseus enters as the proverbial *deus ex machina*, in the form of the wise enlightened mediator bearing good judgment and temperance (*sophrosune*). It is in the particular adversity and misery of Ajax, driven mad by Athene and now denied burial by the Greek kings, that Odysseus envisions his own potential, his own possibilities, and beyond this, he experiences the potential

and possibilities of all humanity as they move through history. In the process of establishing an interpersonal solidarity with Ajax, Odysseus simultaneously affirms the trans-personal dimension of existence, "I too," he declares, contemplating his own inevitable death, suffering, and need for burial, "shall come to this need" (55). Odysseus, during the confrontation with the kings, validates the democratic objective of compromise, which comes in this instance by way of compassionate forgiveness. He steadfastly denounces hatred, violence, and the aristocratic and archaic *ethos* as reasonable solutions to this predicament. The universality of his thought strikes a dissonant, unmistakable chord with the reader: Morality resides at the heart of human anguish and two of our most cherished possessions are compassion and forgiveness. To provide comfort to the ailing, to act in some small way as a palliative against the inevitable conditions of pain and suffering is a necessity. Odysseus knows that to flout such an ethical truism is to risk disaster.

Refusing to allow the insanity of an isolated instance tarnish a lifetime of heroic accomplishments, Odysseus authenticates the quality to look beyond past transgressions and compassionately pleads the case of his once mortal foe Ajax. In doing so he sways the recalcitrant Agamemnon to allow burial. It is as if Odysseus validates the following understanding of things: "To err is human, but to forgive is humane." This is precisely what Odysseus means when mounting his monumental and eloquent defense (*apologia*) for the case of Ajax: "Listen then. For the love of the gods, do not take heart to cast this man forth unburied so ruthlessly. Never let violence prevail with you to hate so utterly that you should trample justice underfoot" (59).

On Cognitivism in Literature and The Rationality of Our Emotions

In line with what has been said about the aesthetic experience in Schopenhauer's philosophy, we are now prepared to explicate this experience, which is part and parcel of our cognitive-emotional

involvement with literature. It is a state of heightened awareness of a new and unique perception of our world. In *Languages of Art*, Nelson Goodman writes of the cognitive nature of art, which in addition to heightening our emotional sensitivity to the features of the work of art, grants us access to significant features of the world that it presents to us in new ways. According to Goodman, art enhances our understanding of both world and self and has a legitimate and unique epistemological function, as related to art's philosophical essence, artistic representations are "effective, illuminating, subtle, intriguing, to the extent that the artist or writer grasps fresh, significant relationships and devises means for making them manifest" (32). Author Terry Barrett expresses a kindred notion to that of Goodman in claiming that art opens us to experiences that would otherwise be inaccessible. According to Barrett, art presents alternate ways in which to understand the world and our place in it, ways of understanding that defy traditional modes of knowing. In Barrett's philosophy, art simultaneously serves an *epistemological* and *axiological* function, for art is concerned with knowledge as related to normative realm of value and value judgments. As Barrett claims, art's moral function holds the potential to

unite individuals to others, can make differences of belief more understandable than strange, and can perhaps help us to look at differences sympathetically rather than attempting to extinguish them as threatening (101).

What is called "practical insight" by Aristotle (a necessity for good moral deliberation), manifests the intersection of *aisthesis* and *nous*, or functioning of the mind, specifically as *nous pathetikos* (the aspect of mind that apprehends what is given in practical contexts through perception, emotion, and imagination). This relates to what has been said about knowledge as *aisthesis* (perceptual knowledge) in the experience of the work of art. As argued by philosopher Walter Brogen, the perceptions we receive through art are not simply fanciful, pleasurable

perceptions, but rather an aesthetic experience reveals a form of perception as knowledge. *Aisthesis*, as Brogen states, "is a way of revealing truth." (78). Louis Arnaud Reid also describes the aesthetic experience of art in terms of a knowledge experience. Reid, much like the ancient Greeks, refers to the knowledge of aesthetics (*aisthesis*) as a form of "direct intuition," or "direct knowledge through acquaintance and experience" (14). Reid claims that the artistic experience that facilitates our direct intuition of things includes the knowledge of intrinsic values, for art presents to the mind, senses, feeling and imagination, "a new fresh, untranslatable insight into value" (18). According to Reid, in and through the work of art, our experiential knowledge of values occurs in the form of "immediate insights," which are "conative and affective as well as cognitive" (18). Reid argues for an expanded concept of knowledge that includes many ways of understanding the world, in terms of an ensemble of various and sundry forms of knowledge, with the inclusion of *aisthesis* as a legitimate, autonomous form of knowledge. He is working against the modern predisposition and prejudice, wherein scientific knowledge is pitted against, and deemed superior to, all other ways of knowing, with the perceptual forms of knowledge losing sorely the epistemological battle for legitimacy.

To reiterate, art does not provide us with knowledge that is conceptual, nor does it provide us with knowledge that is objective and categorical in nature, providing definitive solutions to the problems that we encounter through the work. When a fact is known, it is over and done with, but the truth of art is different and unique, it is a "complex embodiment of value meaning, art is known in a holistic experience and has to be lived through" (18). Literature requires that the reader become an active participant in the "cognitive and emotional" process of enlightenment, demanding the reader's interpretive engagement, and if we return briefly to Schopenhauer, who elucidates the difference between "conceptual" and "perceptual" forms of knowledge, we understand the way that art functions when imparting its unique form of knowledge. Comparing

scientific and aesthetic knowledge, we find that the former is actual, explicit, definable, and conclusive (it comes to an end), while the latter opens us to a unique form of knowledge that is potential, implicit, undefinable, and inexhaustible. Art calls for the spectator's active involvement with and contribution to the knowledge process, drawing from her own cognitive and experiential reserves, while simultaneously allowing the work to communicate its own unique truth. It is also the type of *noetic* experience, due to its richness, diversity, and depth, that continually beckons our return to the work with our curiosity and concern renewed. We find, more often than not, if the work is truly great, and one thinks of Dostoevsky's *The Brothers Karamozov*, that much like the brand of philosophizing found in Heidegger, poses more questions than it can ever hope to answer. Thus, rather than solutions to the problems that spawn the inquiry the reader encounters additional problems of a compound nature, experiences partial solutions, in short, runs up against *aporias*, which inspire her continued attention and enquiry. It is possible to link this knowledge as described to the form of enquiry from out of which it arises, for as was stated earlier, the line of questioning that philosophy as art undertakes and embodies is linked to *inquiry* as opposed to what might be termed *investigation*, this point is clearly articulated by Gelvin in the following manner:

We distinguish, then, between an *investigation* in which a *question* is *terminated* by an answer, which results in "*knowing*;" and an *inquiry*, in which the *problem* is not terminated but enriched or deepened by a process called *understanding*. In terms of this distinction, an investigation seeks an answer which terminates an enterprise; an inquiry seeks to deepen the understanding of a problem and thereby furthers rather than terminates the enterprise (6).

We encounter this notion in Dostoevsky, wherein it is clear that the central problem of the novel is never resolved, that of the supreme ethical issue of reconciling God's theistic, all-moral nature with

the existence of profuse instances of human suffering, or the suffering of innocents (*theodicy*). The novel, through narrative and characterization, expresses to the engaged reader the problem raging at the heart of religious debate in a more powerful and vivid manner than we find in any non-narrative philosophical treatise on the subject of *theodicy*. Ivan, confronting his pious, Christian brother Alyosha, expresses what has become a universal concern, a seemingly unresolvable problem, along with a direct challenge to those embracing a Christian world-view when reiterating the instance of the ruthless murder of a little child by a merciless general, who sets loose his hounds to tear the boy to pieces before the boy's horrified mother. Ivan truly wants to understand the "eternal harmony," which would rectify God's nature as that of a supreme moral and omnipotent being, with the murder, torture, and the suffering of innocents, when he states, "I want to see with my own eyes the hind lie down with the lion and the victim rise up and embrace his murderer. I want to be there when everyone suddenly understands what it has all been for" (198). However, in the end, both brothers are left in a morose state of uncertainty, as the notion of divine, "eternal harmony" ultimately lies beyond human comprehension, manifesting the critical question of whether or not faith is a legitimate response to the issue. In this instance, the problem has not been resolved, it has been compounded, for a crisis of faith occurs, and this leads to the reader taking up this issue in a continued and sustained discourse that is at once grounded in the text, but importantly, holds the potential to transcend Dostoevsky, touching the real lives of the readers, inspiring philosophical and theological contemplation of a legitimately fecund nature.

Returning to the philosophy of Best, who clearly elucidates the revelatory experience of art, demonstrates that the knowledge art imparts by way of the emotions need not be a nebulous or abstract concept. Against those who would argue that the emotions are devoid of reason, or cognition, Best argues convincingly for a link between the emotions and reason, a process which emerges from our encounter with literature, which Best refers to as, "emotional rationality." Best

attacks the subjectivist view of the emotions, which is based on the assumption that the creation and appreciation of art, "is a matter of subjective feeling, in the sense of a 'direct' feeling, 'untainted' by cognition, understanding, rationality" (70). A subjectivist views the emotions as irrational, "blind forces that have nothing (or nothing much) to do with reasoning" (56). According to this position, art simply cannot be a "cognitive" endeavor, for it has no knowledge to impart or inspire; thus, art consists in "expressing and receiving experiences, rather than progressively developing understanding" (73-74). This view fails to acknowledge the logical connection between the emotions and their objects, insinuating that when we have emotional feelings, no cognition or understanding is necessary. Against this position, Best argues that our emotions are always object-directed, dependent on their object, arising only because we understand the object in certain ways.

For example, if one is afraid of X, there is a reason that involves the cognition and understanding of X, that one fears it. "There is a logical relation," writes Best, "between my feeling and my understanding or cognition of the object. I am likely to be afraid if I believe it to be a snake, but not if I believe it to be a rope" (75). Pain, hunger, thirst, and the like, are base sensations that do not involve or rely on cognition. However, emotions like fear, pity, love, and hate do rely on cognition, and in terms of these types of "higher emotions," they are determined by, dependent on, and inseparable from the processes of cognition. In literature, when our sympathies are engaged in the imaginative interaction with lives and situations different from our own, a two-way movement occurs at the heart of authentic *readership*: On the one hand, the characters' emotional responses hinge on their comprehension or understanding of the circumstances within which they are involved. On the other hand, the reader's emotional states are formed and change as the understanding of these fictional situations unfolds and develops. Best's point is that a change in our understanding is related to a change in our interpretation and evaluation of the person or situation and the corresponding emotions we experience. For example, consider the relationships of the

characters and situations in Jane Austin's *Pride and Prejudice*. Our emotional understanding, or "emotional rationality," determines our ethical stance toward Mr. Darcy, and it changes and develops in direct relation to the emotional understanding that emerges as we experience Lizzy's evolving relationships with such characters as the handsome and deceitful Mr. Wickham. Importantly, there is the potential in the experience of *readership* to reflect and reassess our initial judgments in light of the new experiential evidence. At the conclusion of the novel, we learn that along with Lizzy, our initial judgment and condemnation of Mr. Darcy were far too hasty. So, our initial moral sentiments were inspired by an unfair and inaccurate reading of his true moral character and ethical worth.

Also emerging from Best's critique of subjectivism is the tendency to oversimplify the conception of human reason, for subjectivism holds the limited view that "reasoning is limited to the kinds of deductive and inductive reasons which are commonly used in mathematics, symbol logic, and the sciences" (76). This view overlooks a form of reason termed "interpretive reasoning" by Best, which is a form of reasoning crucial to all forms of knowledge including mathematics, the sciences, philosophy, and art. When employing interpretive reasoning, "we are attempting to show a situation in a different light, and this may involve not only a different interpretation or conception, but also a different evaluation" (77). As Best argues, interpretive reasoning, as related to the aesthetic experience, which involves emotions and the imagination, holds the potential to manifest creative ways in which to approach our moral concepts, engaging art provides us a legitimate context within which we attempt to "support our conflicting opinions of social, moral, and political issues" (78). Just because this form of knowledge does not lead to categorical certainty or guarantee a consensus of opinion, it is not "ineffective," for as Best reasons, encountering views which differ from our own encourages a tolerance for difference or "otherness," and, as related to our moral interpersonal relations, it allows for "seeing a situation in a different perspective may lead

to change our opinions" (78). In terms reminiscent of best, philosopher Bertrand Russell describes the form of knowledge toward which authentic philosophical inquiry aims, which is really a form of understanding that changes and develops through a loving and charitable interaction between the philosopher and the objects of her contemplation. For Russell, the ideal mode of philosophical inquiry is always predicated on moral considerations, based on the sentiments inspiring a loving and just understanding of the world and its inhabitants. Philosophy, according to Russell, if it is authentic, can never procure definitive knowledge of the world, and we might protract this understanding to include the type of knowledge associated with value inquiry, or ethics (as *axiological* inquiry), for unlike the veracity that can be established for our analytic or synthetic claims, value judgments assume their validity only by means of careful and informed discourse, wherein we compare and contrast various theories for ethical behavior and judging whether or not they conform with our basic intuitions about what is right and what is wrong.

On The Legitimacy and Justification of Literature as Artistic Medium for Moral Discourse as Ethical Theory

We began by speculating on literature's role in inspiring legitimate ethical discourse through reader involvement with imaginative and emotionally relevant fictional characters and situations of the author's creation. It was stated that philosophy traditionally retains a distinction between literature (as art) and philosophy proper, which leads to the skeptical view of the effectiveness and legitimacy of bringing literature and the study of the emotions into the realm of ethical philosophy (*axiology*). Traditional moral philosophy is primarily concerned with speculating on general moral principles and the "logical" application thereof to "real" situations, and this belief that rational principles can be gleaned *a priori* and then applied with predictable results to the realm of practical comportment originates from a disingenuous understanding of the *theoria* and *praxis*

relationship based on the scientific and empirical model. Traditional moral philosophy is concerned with the success of a theory's ability to predict with accuracy the outcome of situations to which it is applied in practice. This approach, as stated, tends to favor an abstract, detached form of contemplation that downplays the critical role of the emotions and the "storytelling" imagination in matters of an ethical nature. For example, as Nussbaum argues, both Kantian ethics (*Moral Law Ethics*) and Mill's Utilitarian ethics (*Consequentialist Ethics*) have traditionally been suspicious of and hostile to the relationship between "imaginative literature" and the emotions in the realm of moral philosophy. Put succinctly, the traditional view is that rational moral choices cannot be made "under the influence of the emotions and the imagination" (Nussbaum 1990 75-76).

For Kant, it is the strict adherence to one's moral duty, which is grasped *a priori* by means of practical reason, which is at a remove from experience, from the particular, from the actual moment and context of actual moral comportment, that determines the "moral worth" of one's actions. As Nussbaum states, "For Kant, the passions are invariably selfish and aimed at one's own state of satisfaction." (76). The emotions come into play with respect to means-end driven activity, and hypothetical imperatives can never have intrinsic moral worth. The emotions interfere with our strict adherence to the moral law which is always beyond the experiential realm of our *phenomenal* interaction with the world. Utilitarianism, which begins in an *a posteriori* (empirical) manner, ultimately terminates in the establishment of the abstract principle of utility, and the "principle of utility," based on a quantitative notion of human "happiness" (a general sense of pleasure at the privation of pain), is considered rationally applicable in all circumstances for securing "good" moral ends, ignoring both the motive of the moral agent and the unique particulars of the immediate situation of action. According to Nussbaum, Utilitarianism, in addition to claiming that all values are commensurable (e.g., reducing a multiplicity of diverse and unique emotions to a single emotion, "pleasure"), also downplays the passions because they lead us to

"emphasize personal ties and to rank the nearer above the further, obstructing that fully impartial attitude toward the world that is the hallmark of Utilitarian rationality" (76). To ask, "What is my moral duty?" and "How should I maximize utility?" is not the equivalent of asking, "How should I live an authentically 'good' life?" Nussbaum views this latter question as inspiring an inquiry into the ethical that is simultaneously empirical and practical: empirical in that "it is based on and responsible to actual human behavior," and practical, in that "it is conducted by people who are themselves involved in acting and choosing and who see the inquiry as having a bearing on their own practical ends" (173). The crux of Nussbaum's argument, is that literature holds the potential to inspire a more rich, complex form of engagement and involvement in the ethical issues than traditional, deductive philosophical methods of enquiry, which search for objective universal principles in the abstract, incorporating sterile, moral prompts or "case studies" in hopes of inspiring moral discourse.

Schematic philosophers [ethical] examples almost always lack the particularity, the emotive appeal, the absorbing plottedness, the variety and indeterminacy of good fiction. They lack too, good fiction's way of making the reader a participant and friend (46).

According to L. C. Knight, because traditional philosophy does not allow the intense and visceral emotional responses common to the reader of great literature into the philosophical processes of moral reasoning, it sacrifices the crucial awareness art affords the reader as a participatory "moral agent." Literature opens the reader simultaneously to the realm of personal reflection, with the potential for "ethical" development, and, through the encounter with the self in relation to the Other, the potential to enhance her interpersonal dealings with others, which manifests the "emotionally toned awareness of the inward, individual experience of others, in its otherness and uniqueness" (Knight, 1998 63). Knight's philosophy of art stresses "the education of

feeling" in connection with learning from literature about values and morality through an extension of sympathy between the novel's characters and that the reader. For Knight, literature, as opposed to a "purposiveness without a purpose," which is to say, against Kantian aesthetics, literature is a dynamic, creative, and cognitive adventure inspiring an intuitively enhanced apprehension of things, which extends our sympathies beyond our own "subjectivity" to others and the world we inhabit. For example, Shakespeare's plays invite us to share the imaginary situations with a close relation to "real-life," and beyond this, "they invite us to try out different attitudes by entering into them, provisionally adopting them whilst still keeping a certain distance, and seeing what the result may be" (63). Undeniably, an ethical world emerges from our reading, a model of the individual and her relationship to society, to proper and improper ethical modes of interpersonal relationships, which can be lived through imaginatively and assessed as being either appropriate or inappropriate, moral or immoral, just or unjust. According to Knight, literature arouses a "warmth and intimacy" between works and readers wherein our powerful personal emotions work sympathetically in relation to others, and through experiences which are quite plainly not our own, these emotions hold the potential to become real and personally meaningful.

Philosopher Eileen John also embraces this position, and expresses it in the following manner when discussing great works by Jane Austin, Henry James, and Virginia Woolf:

Such works call upon us to take fictional characters seriously as moral agents, to enter imaginatively into the concrete circumstances of their lives, and to have the kind of complicated evaluative and felt responses to them that we can have as real people. We often also imagine things about ourselves in response to art (332).

What I am suggesting in the foregoing analysis is that literature holds the potential to philosophically inspire our authentic ethical soul-searching, providing a rich environment from out

of which questions and proposed solutions to our moral conundrums emerge. According to Nussbaum, as related to Knight and John, literature contributes to our authentic ethical practices in two ways: First, it inspires critical self-reflection, "promoting individual clarification and self-understanding," and, secondly, it inspires enlightened communal ethical discourse, "moving individuals toward communal attunement" (Nussbaum 1990 173). This calls for reader involvement, and this occurs, as I have suggested, through the "cognitive-emotional" moment of the aesthetic experience literature inspires, which engages the reader in a participatory role, in a moment of *noetic* enlightenment. As John argues, through the process of *readership*, we perceive morally relevant elements of the experience, we experience morally sensitive emotional responses to the work, and we adopt morally challenging perspectives through our imaginative involvement. Literature provides us with moral exemplars to analyze, criticize, or emulate, and we encounter through them morally pertinent situations within which we are called to participate in emotional and imaginative ways. This understanding is in line with what has been stated about Aristotle's understanding of tragedy, as a philosophical-artistic experience wherein the moral faculties of the soul are trained to deal virtuously with the emotions. John states that when we participate in works of great literature, "we learn in the sense of getting training or practice in *doing* things which are central to the responsible moral life" (335). Through feeling and imagination, the great works provide us with the type of perceptually rich experiences required to develop skills needed for responsible moral agency, which includes the ability to judge correctly on matters of an ethical nature.

The fact that we feel certain emotions in certain imagined circumstances helps us know the moral import of those circumstances (for example when Jane Austin's Emma makes a cruel remark, we know it is cruel largely because of how it makes us feel and how fervently wish

she had not said it). Hence our experience with a work of art can show us, it seems about moral import of pertinently similar events, real or imagined (336).

If it is the case that the potential exists for us to learn morally from our involvement with literature, the following questions must be posed: How is it possible to authentically verify or validate the experiential knowledge that art provides? How do we know that art's experiential knowledge is legitimately contributing to our authentic development as responsible moral human beings? We must examine the validity of the emotions we experience, both their connections to the characters' moral dispositions and the situations which either befall them or are freely chosen. The reasoning is obvious, if art leads us to acquire experiential beliefs by means of the emotions, then the possibility always exists that our beliefs about the emotions we experience might be mistaken. One such response to this concern is focused on the viable coherence between the emotional experiences that literature inspires and our actual ways of experiencing, interpreting, and understanding our lives and the world. In short, it is possible to determine if the emotional experience afforded by the work of art coheres with the real experiences of such emotions, and, we are therefore concerned with how these emotions relate to our past experience with an eye to the future, determining whether these experiences, if they are legitimate, relate to our futural concerns in authentic ways.

We draw on the emotional, experiential knowledge we have acquired to that point, both in the sense that we respond according to dispositions we already have, and in the sense that we interpret our experiences with art, and fiction, in particular, using rich knowledge of the generating circumstances, causes, effects, and 'feels' or various emotions and experiences (335)

As John suggests above, we can test our experiential responses for their validity by analyzing our own lived experiences, the experiences that we as readers bring to the imaginative work, and then, by rendering a judgment on what is given in the imagination, and either affirm or deny the response. With time, as John suggests, it is possible to acquire and hone the capability to judge whether or not we are being played by the author as an emotional pawn, whether or not the author is manipulating our feelings by merely pushing emotional buttons, or, whether the "experience has arisen out of a reasonably complex and relevant set of factors" (336). Clearly, it is possible to have an emotional reaction to the literature, which is not supported by the thematic elements. For example, when reading a certain story, I might feel an overwhelming sense of loss and sadness upon encountering a character who in figure and manner is reminiscent of a loved one who has recently passed away. These are undeniably "real" emotional responses, but with respect to the story, these emotions are misplaced and would not therefore represent legitimate emotional responses, for they fail to be authentically supported by the text. To continue in this direction, John explains what it is like to have a legitimate emotional response to literature. When reading Sylvia Plath's poem about her infant son, at the same time John had given birth to a boy, the poem elicited an emotional response that was significant and "powerfully evocative" of how it felt to be a mother. In this instance, as she writes, the "circumstances and recognitional experience made it reasonable for me to trust my sense that the poem was experientially revelatory" (335).

The notion of authenticating our emotions applies in a critical manner to morality as it is considered in this essay, for the understanding of the ethical life does not lie within the purview of human reason alone, rather, as expressed by Hume, morality is contingent on the ways in which we feel and perceive, on "sentiments" that inspire and motivate us to make legitimate moral pronouncements. Literature's ability to inspire intense emotional experiences is inseparable from its potential as moral philosophy, allowing us to perceive morally relevant elements of experience,

and, in imaginative, creative, and critical ways, allow for the emergence and development of morally appropriate responses. As stated, the moral analyses of novels is rooted in our imaginative access to stories in which we encounter fictional characters as moral exemplars, in situations which define them as free moral agents, all of which inspire critical speculation relevant to our moral knowledge and the development of our faculties of moral judgment. For example, Nussbaum, analyzing Dickens' *Hard Times* (in *Poetic Justice*), condemns specific aspects of the author's world view as representing less than adequate moral responses to the situations dealt within the novel, and, in *Love's Knowledge*, she affirms Homer's representation of Odysseus for displaying a moral exemplary attitude. With respect to *Hard Times*, Nussbaum claims that Dickens fails to adequately to address the harm bound up with the presentation of class hierarchy, and, in addition, Dickens also "fails to take note of harms caused to women by inequalities of autonomy that are endemic to marriage as it was lived in his time" (76). With respect to *The Odyssey*, Homer is praised for presenting Odysseus as embodying what it is like to live a life that is fully human, with all of its uncertainty, fragility, triumphs, and severe limitations. Odysseus opts to leave the island home of Calypso in the attempt to return to Ithaca, and, "to the readers of the poem from ancient to modern times, Odysseus' choice *does* seem intelligent and also admirable" (Nussbaum 1990 366). Homer's literary project is aimed directly at repudiating, "the choice for divine life, and invests itself in the choice to explore the various choices particular to the human life, the means of practical intelligence, love, and virtue that we can expect to find and realize within such a life" (390).

In light of the discussion thus far regarding the emotions, we must once again turn our attention to the importance of justification as it relates to the normative realm of values, to issues relating to ethical/moral speculation, for we require good reasons to believe that the heuristic moral exercise we are doing when reading is appropriate exercise, that the moral ideals we encounter and

the moral evaluations we render are trustworthy. This is linked to what has thus far been said about the cognitive value of art, its epistemic weight, for as Johns reasons, when we encounter the emotional aspects of literature that engender moral sentiments, we at once encounter literature's goal of "providing rich experiences directly relevant to how we learn from art" (336). With this understanding, we must concern ourselves with whether or not the work facilitates our learning, and inspires the type of participation that allows us to perceive things in a morally appropriate manner, whether or not the situations that inspire our emotions lead to the heightening of our sensitivity toward the world and others, and, after critical reflection, whether or not our emotions are inspired viable moral insight, which engenders practical choices leading to good ethical decision making in the "lived-world." Focused on the qualitative aspects of the moral sentiments that the work engenders, John responds to this issue by arguing that it is possible to trust the legitimacy of emotional and moral responses based on the "quality of the imaginative and emotional activity involved in generating putative moral knowledge" (336). The more rich, vivid, and gripping the imaginative circumstances are, the more likely they are to be morally relevant to our lived concern. As John reasons,

[t]he idea is that if we have a vivid, rich, gripping, imaginative response, that is evidence of a genuine, scrupulous engagement with the imagined circumstances, and evidence that the imagined circumstances are relevant to real human concerns. We cannot end up working imaginatively in a such a sustained, compelling way unless there is coherence and substance to our activity (336).

Admittedly, this so-called criterion for determining the viability of our moral sentiments derived from our engagement with literature looks to be quite consistent with Descartes' famous (rationalist) epistemological claim that the veracity of "clear and distinct perceptions" cannot be

denied, but interestingly enough, we find this selfsame notion in the philosophy of Hume, the skeptic and empiricist, who claims that the clarity, vivacity, and intensity of our "moral" sentiments (and our attraction or repulsion to said feelings), determines their reliability. Thus, it is possible to expand on John's claims by incorporating some thoughts from the moral philosophy of Hume. Interestingly, although staunch about the limited trustworthiness of all empirical knowledge, Hume was less skeptical in the case of morals, or normative statements (value judgments), arguing that it is indeed possible to understand and determine moral activity by understanding our reactions, or attitudes, to the emotions, which ultimately inspire the rendering of moral judgments. As opposed to reading Hume as an ethicist espousing a "non-cognitive" approach, it is possible to interpret Hume as arguing for the existence of a special type of understanding with respect to the emotions. While this is certainly not expressed by Hume in terms of the faculty of reason, it is nevertheless a form of understanding that accompanies, and indeed determines, the validity of our moral judgments, which comprises what Hume terms our "moral sense." According to Hume, human reason does not inspire action, but rather it is the interpretation and understanding of our emotions that motivate our practical comportment, and we can come to terms with what is moral or immoral by turning our attention to the emotions we experience. For example, with respect to vice, Hume states the following: "You can never find it till you turn your reflexion into your own breast, and find a sentiment of disapprobation, which arises in you, towards this action" (Hume 1978 468). The repulsion we experience toward viciousness and malevolence arises from the sentiment that we detest and are repulsed by the accompanying feelings we experience when we either witness or imagine inflicting unnecessary, cruel pain upon others, and we thus determine such behavior immoral. The same is true of virtue, for according to Hume, "To have a sense of virtue, is nothing but to feel a satisfaction of a particular kind from the contemplation of a character. The very feeling constitutes our praise or admiration" (471).

Although Hume disallows the incorporation of analogy into his religious and epistemological writings, it is ever-present to his moral philosophy. For Hume, it is sympathy that lies at the root of our personal and interpersonal understanding of morals, which for Hume is the capacity to internalize and recreate the passions of another in terms of an impression (and idea) of our own. Sympathy is undoubtedly the central notion of Hume's entire theory of morality as related to the passions. From the Greek *sympatheia*, which is literally, "together feeling,"

According to Hume, sympathy is the capacity to experience the emotions of others by having an idea of their emotions reproduced in us as impressions. The moral sentiments arise when we ruminate on the situation which produced our impressions. The idea of others' emotions might be reproduced in a variety of ways, not least of which is the encounter with literature's imaginary fictional worlds and characters. Hume claims that we have a natural propensity to "sympathize with others, and to receive by communication their inclinations and sentiments, however different from, or even contrary to our own." (Hume 489). This explains how qualities of certain feelings, the "calm passions" for Hume, that give pleasure to one person can inspire pleasure and approval in others. It is this intimate emotional connection with others that allows Hume to suggest that although an objective understanding of morality is impossible, at least on the inter-subjective level, through common feeling, discourse, and agreement it is possible to arrive at a consensus opinion that might allow us to avoid practical problems about conflicting moral judgments. The analysis of our sympathetic feelings allows us to move toward a generally shared perspective on the human's moral disposition, and in this way, Hume's ethical philosophy works to remove the concerns of morality from the limited, and dangerous, perspective of *subjectivism*, *relativism*, or *ethical solipsism*.

In addition to feeling with and for others, it is also possible to experience the feelings of approbation and disapprobation with respect to ourselves, which is to say, we have the capability

of rendering moral judgments about ourselves. There exists for Hume, a "sense of duty" to examine ourselves in relation to others, e.g., if we compare ourselves to those who are moral exemplars, such persons as Albert Schweitzer or Mother Theresa, we might find we are sorely lacking in possessing a virtuous, altruistic disposition, we develop unpleasant feelings or sentiments about ourselves and become motivated to change the disposition of our character. As stated, literature provides us with both morally exemplary characters and morally reprehensible characters in and through imaginative fiction. So, with respect to a moral, virtuous ideal, we might reflect on Homer's presentation in the *Iliad* of the final meeting between Hector, Andromache, and their infant son Astyanax, wherein Andromache pleads with Hector to refrain from returning to battle, reminding him that Achilles has slain her entire family, and that she depends on Hector to play the all-encompassing familial role of father, mother, brother, and husband. What is extremely touching and humane about this scene is that although Hector goes off to defend Troy through his commitment to social order and great sense of honor, for if Troy falls he knows the horrific fate that awaits her, she would become a slave to the Archaens. This demonstrates Hector's deep attachment to Andromache and his marriage, along with the understanding of what must be sacrificed in order to honor it. Ruminating on these characters in this situation engenders our concerned thinking on the intimate relationships we share with those we love.

Reid also addresses the issue of justifying our shared moral perspectives in terms that are now familiar, understood in and through the individual's "education of feeling," which grounds the potential for an inter-subjective form of ethical agreement regarding normative claims. According to Reid, when reasoning for moral principles, as opposed to proving them true in the manner of empirical propositions, the reasons we give are "more like devices for altering emotional attitudes, either in oneself or in others" (56). Reid suggests that we validate behaviors that we "ought" to adopt through reasoning, feeling, and conation, and, with the recognition that we ought

to behave in a certain manner arises the concomitant sense of "obligation and potential commitment" (58). The potential for a more "objective" view of morality is represented in the "progress from what is an already tentatively accepted *personal* point of view" (59) From this personal view, it is possible to graduate beyond one's own subjective perspective and the limitations thereof through communal discourse, wherein one's personal "commitment with a provisional content," becomes more "illuminated through communications with other people's points of view" (59). However, as Reid points out, despite this collective form of agreement, or justification, "my moral commitment has not become a wholly impersonal thing. I was committed at the start, and I am now recommitted, only I have opened my mind to opinion and wisdom larger than my own" (59). To engage in legitimate discourse concerning the justification of our moral claims requires a willingness on the part of everyone involved to be open to new experiences, a disposition that requires, "virtues of character, and education of feeling, as well as clearness of intellect" (70). When approaching moral issues, we must be prepared "experimentally to enlarge [our] experience, either actually or in our imagination" (71). Progress towards a greater objectivity in the realm of morality entails the type of experience that has been linked with the aesthetic encounter with great works of literature and art, works that in a unique manner call for

the use of reasoning of different kinds (and is in this sense 'rational,' though always short of 'proof) but also requires a revision of our commitments and involvements themselves; this requires qualities of feeling, will, character, as well as intellect (71).

Returning to Hume's philosophy, with respect to what has been said about our personal involvement with the emotions literature elicits, it must be noted that Hume is careful to point out that when experiencing the emotions of others in sympathetic states, we must be aware that there is always a distance present between us and those directly experiencing the emotions, and this

phenomenon of theatrical "distance" was first introduced in the discussion of tragedy when referencing the philosophy of Schmidt. Although we sympathize with others, we do not experience their emotions in such ways that they become our own, nor we do not relate them subjectively in terms of our direct personal needs, wants, and desires. Hume is clear that when experiencing our moral sentiments that inspire the rendering of moral judgments, we must set aside our private concerns, "only when a character is considered in general, without reference to our particular interest, that it causes such a feeling or sentiment, as denominates it morally good or evil" (Hume 1978 472). In line with this understanding, a good reader who is judicious will always refrain from allowing herself to be utterly consumed with the other's passions in such a manner that her judgment with respect to those passions becomes overwhelmed or severely distorted. We find this notion in Nussbaum's work as well, wherein she writes of the "judicious spectator," as it is adapted from the moral writings of Adam Smith (*Enquiry into Moral Sentiments*). In order to grasp the practical goal of ethical inquiry through literature, the remainder of the essay will be devoted to understanding the manner in which the reader's filtering mechanism unlocks the potential for her capacity to approach, engage, and interrogate the works of fiction in a critical manner. Elucidating the formal aspects of this practice is essential if we are to derive ethical insights from the great works of fiction, which are efficacious in fostering our enlightened and transfigured "self understanding and communal comportment" (Nussbaum 1990 192).

There is a critical and philosophical way of reading which at once promotes personal development and inspires legitimate moral debate and discourse, for ultimately we are concerned with appropriate decision making in concrete moments of moral comportment on a communal scale. Nussbaum details the type of engaged, critical readership we should employ (judicious readership), which manifests in the philosophical embodiment of the "judicious spectator." According to Nussbaum, if we are judicious readers, "we exercise critical judgment in our

selection of novels, and to continue the process of critical judgment as we read, in discourse with other readers" (Nussbaum 1996 76). Above, it was stated that when encountering the emotions and feelings that motivate our moral responses, we must be mindful whether or not our responses are morally trustworthy. In *Poetic Justice* Nussbaum examines this concern and suggests as informed critical readers we would do well to attend to the "filtering device" for the emotions that is always already built into works of fiction due to the formal aspects of literature as an imitative, mimetic art, that "gives us a kind of guidance that is indispensable to further inquiry - including a critical enquiry about the literature itself (76). Nussbaum states that this filtering device is related to the "distance" that the work sets up through the various creative and imaginative machinations employed by the author, which re-produces our world within the fictitious realm of the novel. Due to the very nature of literature, with respect to the sympathetic response between fictional character and reader, there is an emotional intimacy that always occurs at a remove, and this phenomenon is the hallmark of all great literature.

Schmidt's reading of tragedy, as a possessing a dual-aesthetic nature, wherein the emotional intimacy experienced by the spectator is marked by a distance, is directly relevant to the way author crafts (*poiesis*) the story through the use of "metaphor," i.e., the play is a re-presentation that works mimetically to transcend what is given on the surface, for, as Schmidt reasons, "Every 'imitation' is a repetition which involves the recognition of sameness in difference" (51). We feel for and with the characters and their plights, but this is never a complete identification in which we lose our self-identity completely. The emotions and passions of Oedipus are not ours - *we are not Oedipus*. As Schmidt argues, mimetic reproduction is unique in that it

escapes the logic of identity governing the operations of reflection. It is more like the self-discovery one finds in the eyes of a friend than it is like the self-identification one achieves

by looking in mirror. In mimetic re-presentation the resemblance, the "imitation," which is produced is simultaneously the communication of differences (55).

In short, as judicious spectators we are not full emotional participants. This is because our integrated into the fictional context of the novel lacks concrete knowledge of the situation and the one-to-one identification with the emotions of the characters. Although we feel sympathy with and for the characters, their emotions are not ours, and this is because we are not literally in the story, and, according to Nussbaum, it is crucial that we strive consciously to preserve this distance, and refrain from relating the emotions directly to our own personal interest, our subjective well-being. We must at once be "passionate for the well-being of others, but not inserting ourselves into the picture that we responsibly contemplate" (Nussbaum 1996 75). Ultimately, it is suggested by Nussbaum, that through a judicious form of *readership*, we come to feel for the (fictional) characters, which is thus an emotional understanding of them, in a more balanced manner than they are capable of doing.

Jean-Pierre Vernant, in *Myth and Tragedy in Ancient Greece* analyzes the spectator's role in ancient tragedy and the emerging phenomenon of the "consciousness of fiction." The effect of tragedy, according to Vernant, is based on the spectators involvement, which depends on the spectator's apprehension of fiction. Again, as in Schmidt, tragedy is understood in terms of distance and the creation of "two worlds." The poet, as imitator, is "the creator of a world of reflections, illusions, pretenses, and fables, all of which constitute the world of fiction," and, as a doubling of worlds, always stands "alongside the world of reality" (242). Attic tragedy deals with two worlds: (1) the world of archaic myth, the gods, and the heroes of the past, and (2) the world of the classical Greeks. The characters were at once present and absent, "portrayed at figures who cannot possibly be there since they belong to somewhere else, to an invisible beyond" (243).

However, the characters seem to be authentically present because tragedy "adopts the form of real existence in the immediacy of the performance" (243). For the drama to be successful (e.g., to elicit *katharsis*), the spectator's "consciousness of fiction" must be operative, which allows them to "enter into the game, understanding that what can be seen on the stage belongs not to the place of reality, but to what must be defined as the place of theatrical illusion. A consciousness of fiction is essential to the dramatic spectacle; it seems to its condition and its product" (244). Once again, in Vernant's analysis, we find a unique form of identification with the staged events being described in terms of distance, a temporal distance, and, just as in Nussbaum and Schmidt, it is due to the formal elements of the drama that the judicious spectator is able to at once experience and clarify the emotions. The spectator's well-developed consciousness of fiction allows her to maintain a position from which to better render an authentic assessment of the emotions (*pathe*) that arise from the events that both spectator and tragic protagonist experience in the course of the play.

Beyond what has been outlined above, the judicious reader is also engaging the text as a philosopher in the sense of understanding the importance of and need for the inclusion of ethical theory in the experience of readership, where ethical theory is directed to the assessment and systematic analysis of our emotional experiences with the novel. Ethical theory allows us to formalize through thought and discourse, "the search for images of life by which we might possibly live together, and ask what conceptions and images best match the full range of perceptual connections" (Nussbaum 1990 190). It is never the case that literature provides us with the moral building blocks from which to construct an "objective" edifice built upon immutable, eternal, and objective ethical principles for behavior (such as we find in Kant's Moral Law Ethics), but rather our engagement with fiction functions as the clearing of the ground for a potential ethics in terms of inter-subjective discourse that arises out of literature and is directed by rigorous systematic ethical speculation, which contributes,

to our understanding of a literary work by raising questions that this work may or may not explicitly ask itself concerning the relationship of its ethical views to other issues on which we have to make up our mind - issues about social structure, about economic distribution, and about the self and personal identity (191).

Ultimately, as Nussbaum envisages, the process of reading as engaging in philosophical activity, which culminates in the dialogue between readers from different backgrounds, with unique histories and outlooks. As stated, the understanding of the emotions we have in relation to literature, and the moral understanding we acquire regarding the pursuit of good life is never foolproof, known beyond question, and, like all judgments in the realm of axiology must be rigorously tested for coherence with other experiences and with our moral and practical theories. As Nussbaum concludes, this non-deductive process, as a "comparative type of practical reasoning," is always carried out in cooperation with others, and, in this process, "our intuitions about a literary work will be refined by the criticisms of ethical theory and of friendly advice, and this may greatly alter the emotional experience that we are able to have as readers" (Nussbaum 1996 76)

Moral philosophy as "ethical theory" is the systematic endeavor to analyze our critical justifications for moral theories, allowing us to explore the sources of moral obligation and the desire to strive toward the ultimate end of "happiness" (*eudaimonia*), which is embodied in a flourishing life that is good and virtuous. Ethical theory allows us to work toward establishing legitimate, reasoned positions based on the understanding of our moral sentiments, which hold the potential for establishing norms that might guide moral behaviors for individuals and communities. To remain free from prejudice and dogmatism, we must work to think clearly and confidently about moral problems and values as they legitimately relate to our shared existence, and Nussbaum insists that solid moral philosophy ensures that a legitimate understanding of the moral positions

with which we are dealing obtains. For example, throughout this paper I have focused on Nussbaum's philosophy as well as the philosophy of Aristotle, we have endorsed the ethical position of "virtue-based ethics," which stresses virtuous character development and the importance of habitual training of the moral faculties, which allow for the proper discharge of the emotions in concrete practical situations (*praxis*). The fact that the realm of practical activity is always changing, we must, through adjustment, continually seek and locate the moral mean between the two extremes of "virtue" and "vice" in each and every situation within which we find ourselves. Simultaneously, we must be motivated by the proper emotions, which, as stated, are discharged in a precise manner, in just the right amount, at just the right time, toward the appropriate individual. Although privilege has been given to this ethical position throughout the discussion of literature and the ethical life, it would be irresponsible as good philosophers, and this seems to be Nussbaum's attitude, if we were to simply dismiss out of hand other type of ethical systems without first giving them a fair and charitable reading by devoting careful attention to the analysis of their claims. For this reason, Nussbaum stresses that we must approach philosophers such as Kant by means of a thoroughgoing systematic analysis, and not, "by using them polemically, as straw men" (Nussbaum 1990:191).

It is important to be informed about the ethical position we are considering, especially when adducing our own position through critical ethical discourse and arguing for counter interpretations. For example, a detailed, accurate rendering of Kant's ethics, as a *deontological*, absolutist, "action-based ethical" system, actually functions to elucidate the position of "virtue-ethics," as has been presented, by revealing it in the antithetical light of Kant's philosophy. For as Nussbaum states, "We grasp by contrasting (through informed critique); we sense what something *is* by bounding it off against something different" (190). Because Kant relies on the primacy and efficacy of human reason, the autonomy of the will that is good in-and-of-itself

through gleaning *a priori* the supreme Moral Law (*The Categorical Imperative*), it is possible to argue that his system fails on three fronts: (1) it fails to inspire the motivation to be moral; (2) it fails to take into account the spontaneous, unpredictable dimensions of ethics; and, (3) it fails to address the moral development of the character, or development of the proper moral disposition (*hexis*). Stressing a blind sense of duty above the active pursuit of the good, the moral aspirations arising from the proper understanding of the appropriate emotions are ignored, i.e., the moving, sentient aspects of human existence are precluded from the discussion about morality. Kant, as with all action-based practitioners, ignores the many and varied circumstances that the moral agent encounters. In addition, Kant ignores the spontaneous character of the human's being as a spirit in transition, relegating the important of human potential for developing the soul morally through habituated activity to an inconsequential status. Virtue ethics, as opposed to adhering to eternal and objective principles of duty, fosters opportunities for us to develop moral sensibilities and abilities through taking on greater and greater moral responsibilities as legitimate, autonomous contributors to a deeply moral society. The development of our moral character is crucial to ensure that we habitually act in ways that are morally upstanding. For example, someone with the character trait of benevolence will be more apt to be a responsible friend, and this disposition frames and directs her entire life.

Concluding Remarks:

My paper did not present a detailed instructional module for structuring and implementing lesson plans for teaching ethics through the incorporation of literature; it did not attempt pedagogy. I did not outline philosophy's proposed solutions to ethical problems as expressed through fictional themes. Rather, I attempted to elucidate the experience of literature as philosophy, which ultimately, I believe, substantiates literature's potential for inspiring legitimate

philosophical discourse within the college classroom and beyond. In 1994, Nussbaum taught the class Law and Literature at the University of Chicago as a visiting professor. Teaching theorists, practitioners, law students, and future politicians, those in the public life, she first began to contemplate literature's part, as philosophy's ally, in helping to understand the role of the emotions in public judgment, and the importance of imaginative literature in the process of ethical thinking about compassion, mercy, and justice, where literature facilitates the imagining the situations of others which are different from our own. As she later writes in *Love's Knowledge*: "My aim is to establish that certain relevant texts are indispensable to a philosophical enquiry into the ethical sphere: not by any means of sufficient, but sources of insight without which the inquiry cannot be complete" (Nussbaum 1990, 23-24)

In this paper, I acknowledged the work of Everett W. Knight, whose study, *Literature Considered As Philosophy*, reasons for the same conclusion I have argued: literature is philosophy in its essence. From Baudelaire to Sartre, Knight analyzes the "engaged" literature of France, which expresses philosophically the commitment to stay the middle course between religious absolutism and philosophical-scientific absolutism, for in the age of existential anguish, forlornness, and despair there are "no longer any absolute ethical or historical positions." In light of the freedom which is thrust upon us, "*our* situation in the world becomes the 'point of view' in relation to which the universe orients itself" (16). Knight's work unfolds as hermeneutic interpretation, and he is unconcerned with the formal aspects of doing "poetics." In addition, Knight focuses exclusively on literature philosophizing French, existential themes. For these reasons, most of my attention was devoted to the work of Martha Nussbaum, who has perhaps done more at the intersection of literature and philosophy than any other contemporary thinker. Although it is true that Knight reads implicitly the *ethos* of existentialism, Nussbaum explicitly and directly engages ethics in a grand, all-encompassing manner. The fact that she includes to

her analyses many instances of great literature, drawing from a wide variety of historical sources, from the epic poems of classical Greece to the modern Anglo-American tradition in literature, makes it imperative that considerable attention is given to her philosophy. It was also imperative, considering my focus was on the explicating the potential for doing ethical philosophy through the engagement with literature, or art, to introduce the seminal work of the great educational philosophers such as David Best, Louis Arnaud Reid, and L. C. Knight. Ultimately, it was my intention to attempt to understand the most appropriate way to contemplate literature's legitimate potential in philosophy's classroom.

I have attempted to graduate beyond the foundational relationship that philosophers and classicists such as Martha Nussbaum, Eileen John, Dennis Schmidt, and H. D. F. Kitto have so successfully argued between philosophy and literature by adding to the discussion in several ways: First, rather than viewing literature and philosophy as companions, or allies, in the quest to divine the ultimate questions concerned with the moral life, I sought to explicitly formalize a notion that appears to be implicit in the work of other philosophers, namely, to formalize the argument for a conception of literature *as* art, which is always already philosophy in its essence, and for this I have turned to the monumental contributions of Schopenhauer regarding this issue. My purpose was twofold in that I attempted to offer a definition of art that included linking the pleasure of art with its innate ability to reveal knowledge of a unique kind, and, as a result of this claim to art's "cognitive" potential, graduate beyond the traditional notion of the aesthetic experience we find in the *formalism* of Kant. Secondly, by attending to what David Best, L. C. Knight, and Louis Arnaud had to say about the emotions and their crucial role in understanding "values" as given through the artistic experience with literature, I sought to explicate to the essence of the aesthetic experience as a legitimate *noetic* phenomenon by elucidating the form of knowledge art imparts,

which was linked to an intuitive, emotional understanding of things. Lastly, I have incorporated aspects of Hume's moral philosophy to supplement the claims of Nussbaum and Johns regarding the philosophical justification for our moral sentiments and beliefs, both at the personal and interpersonal level.

In closing, the methodology that I have adopted requires articulation, for teaching philosophy as art is not the same thing as the critical analysis of art. For example, from the perspective of *formalism*, we might very well work to reveal the creative and imaginative mechanisms structuring the overarching system of aesthetic processes that allow the work of art to "mean," but this is certainly not appropriate, or enough, shall we say, for the critical philosopher focused on moral issues in relation to art. We must also be concerned with meaning, which is to say, as philosophers engaging literature as art, we must be concerned with both the thematic and formal elements of literature. We find these aspects common to both the field of comparative literature and Nussbaum's philosophy, i.e., the dual concern with "how" the text means (poetics) and the concern with "what" the text means (hermeneutics). What is necessary, I believe, for the effective study of philosophy, moral or otherwise, by way of creative, imaginative medium of fiction, is a method that addresses both these aforementioned aspects of literary analysis: We should do "poetics," attempting to work out how our engagement with literature is made meaningful, how this meaning happens from a formal perspective. We should also engage the texts by means of hermeneutic interpretation, by attending to the formal aspects of literature and attempting to work out what they might really mean, and in the process, focus on arriving at better and more detailed interpretations, overall, striving for more informed readings of the great works.

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Addendum: Nussbaum and Contemporary Philosophy

Nussbaum argues against the form and content of the way most moral and political philosophy expresses itself: (1) The form of the abstract argumentative treatise; (2) and its content, the exclusive and general concern with rules and abstract principles.

She argues against Kant's Moral Law ethics and Mill's Utilitarianism, both are forms of essentialist ethics that engage in the reduction of the whole range of human values to a single value that is expressed in a general principle. Her work is clearly about the emotions, and, to draw a stark contrast between the type of philosophy that Nussbaum is advocating and the type of philosophy that is all too characteristic of much of modern philosophy (most particularly from the Analytic tradition), I present a passage from W. Newton-Smith's "A Conceptual Investigation of Love":

Having defined the field of investigation, we can now sketch the concepts analytically presupposed in our use of 'love.' An idea of these concepts can be gained by sketching a sequence of relations, the members of which we take as relevant in deciding whether or not some relationship exists between person A and B is one of love. These are not relative in the sense of being evidence for some further relation of love but as being, in part at least, the material of which love consists. The sequence would include at least the following:

(1) A knows B (or at least knows something of B)

(2) A cares (is concerned) about B

A likes B

(3) A respects B

A is attracted to B

A feels affection for B

(4) A is committed to B

A wishes to see B's welfare promoted.

The connection between these relations which we call "love comprising relations" or LCRs' is not, except for 'knowing about' and possibly "Feels attraction for,' as tight as strict entailment.

As quoted from John Horton's article, "Life, literature, and Ethical Theory: Martha Nussbaum and the Role of Literary Imagination in Ethical Thought," from *Literature and the Political Imagination* (London: Routledge, 1996), pp. 70-98.