

**Comments on Kévin-Orly Irakóze's**  
***"On Art, Morality, and the Subject: Revisiting the Relation between Ethics and Aesthetics"***  
By Kayla Grueneich

In his paper, On Art, Morality, and the Subject: Revisiting the relation between ethics and aesthetics, the author discusses the role of and relationship between ethics and aesthetics. The author argues that the existing philosophical theories of Autonomism, Moralism, and Moderate Moralism inadequately explain how ethical judgments interact with aesthetics as they all fail to account for subjective interest. The author uses a Kantian framework of aesthetics in comparison to a critical analysis of Posner's *Against the Ethical Criticism* and Carroll's, *Moderate Moralism*. In my commentary, I will briefly summarize the author's position and, subsequently, I will offer my own thoughts on one aspect of the paper, the potentially conflicting assumption that ethics are subjective.

First, the author supports that the formation of ethical and aesthetical judgments both necessitate subjective interest. Because of this critical similarity, both are qualified to be used in art valuation. However, the author maintains that both vary in the degree in which subjectivity and objectivity can be separated from one another. Following an interpretation of Kant, while aesthetical valuation should avoid subjective interests and has a potential to be a completely objective experience, subjective interests can factor into aesthetics. On the other hand, ethics are very much rooted in subjective interest, at least in perception. From this argument, that aesthetics and ethics are related in kind yet vary in degree of the impact of subjective interest, the author believes that both Autonomism and Moralism can be rejected, leaving Moderate Moralism. The author argues against Posner's view on the place of ethics in aesthetical valuation citing that aesthetic appraisal cannot and should not be separated from personal morals, allowing for aesthetic devaluation to be based on moral views.

The aspect that I will comment on in this paper is the changing position on ethics and, as follows, the potentially conflicting assumptions made. The author uses a Kantian framework to base the aesthetical side of this paper on and, I assume, uses his own ideas for the ethical side. In arguing that aesthetics and ethics are related by subjective interest, the author notes that, "Ethical judgment is, likewise, based on the concept of subjective interest. When one ethically values a work of art, one departs from an objective stance" (1). While moral relativism may hold true, the entire paper is in limbo if one assumes the position of moral objectivism, that ethics are a mind-independent category. The author states that while the moral tenets which fuel certain actions are as "[Kantian-ly] objective as possible" and, later in the sentence, that they [moral tenets] are "essentially objective", albeit in the forms of beliefs. Additionally, the author states

that beliefs necessarily carry a subjective aspect and, from this, ethics are inherently subjective. This shows my confusion as I do not believe that this equation shows that ethics are subjective nor does it eliminate moral objectivism, or any other moral categorization for that matter. While our thoughts in our head may feel personal, this does not mean that moral judgments themselves are automatically subjective. Moreover, the conflicting emotional response to actions that violate our allegedly-subjective moral code, also does not decide relativism. While my resulting emotion of sadness from the action of killing a cow for meat, may violates my personal idea of what morality is, it remains possible that my supposed set of morals might actually be in conflict with some objective moral truth. This possibility that morals may not be, as assumed subjective severs the connection that the author made between aesthetics and ethics. While aesthetics is a subjective practice, moral valuation is only potentially subjective.

My aim is not to require the author to concretely prove whether morals are subjective or objective. It is, however, to ask for a more in-depth argument as to why moral relativism is a more applicable concept in relation to Kantian aesthetics. I enjoyed reading this paper and I hope that some of my comments can help bolster your paper and promote a further discussion. With a fuller support and definition of relativistic ethics, I believe, the author will have a more successful argument for the insufficiency of Autonomism, Moralism, and Moderate Moralism on aesthetical judgments.