

This project questions whether the moral aspects of a work of art will impact the aesthetic qualities of that same piece. It will take a comprehensive look at two theories in particular to answer this question. The first theory, moderate moralism, believes that moral qualities in a work do in fact play a part in determining the aesthetic value of the piece, with artworks promoting immorality ultimately failing aesthetically. The second theory, that of moderate autonomism, argues that the aesthetic dimension of an artwork is always autonomous and thus can be separated from its moral dimension. This project will look into these theories through specific works of art such as the Nazi propaganda piece "Triumph of the Will" by Leni Riefenstahl, American Psycho by Brett Easton Ellis, and various pieces by the post-impressionist painter Paul Gauguin.