

# Art for Heart's Sake: Ethics and Aesthetics in the Poetry of John Keats

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**ABSTRACT:** *Western philosophy and literary criticism have remained divided over the relevance and primacy of the ethical and the aesthetic approaches to art. The debate was started by Plato who in his various dialogues, particularly in The Republic, found poetry aesthetically pleasing but morally questionable. However, Kant's philosophy is the more direct source of contemporary debates about ethical and aesthetic approaches to art and literature. Kant's three critiques arguably divided human knowledge and experience into the threefold division of the true, the good, and the beautiful, thereby creating a separate sphere for art but also isolating it from questions of truth and morality. Philosophers and literary critics have tried to close the gap opened up by Kant's critiques between the three spheres of human knowledge and experience but no convincing response has been given, though there have been some very illuminating discussions of this problematic division. Participating in the debates concerning the ethical and aesthetic approaches to literature and without claiming to provide a solution to the problem, this paper nevertheless identifies in the poetry and letters of John Keats, particularly his concept of Negative Capability, a possibility of finding an answer to this question. Beginning with the philosophical and critical background to the contemporary approaches to art and literature, the paper first takes note of the 'ethical turn' and a 'return of aesthetics' in contemporary art and literary criticism. Discussing the conflict between ethics and aesthetics in Keats's poetry, it then refers to the work of Derek Attridge and his concept of the 'singularity' of literature to discuss Keats's concept of 'Negative Capability' and makes the claim that this concept, when approached through deconstructive literary theory as elaborated by Derek Attridge, suggests a way out of this age old conflict.*

**Key words:** aesthetics; ethics; deconstruction; materialism; negative capability; singularity

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‘What the imagination seizes as Beauty must be truth ...’ – Keats, letter to Baily, 22 November 1817

This paper discusses the conflict of ethics and aesthetics in the poetry and prose of John Keats. Despite his insistence on the ethical nature and function of poetry in his letters and poems, Keats was for a long time criticized for lack of moral seriousness, maturity, and self control. As Helen Vendler states, “The story of Keats criticism is a complicated one, intertwined with the history of moral opinion of Keats” (Vendler 7). It was only after the critics focused on the ethical bent of his later poetry that Keats secured a respectable place in the canon of English poetry. According to Ayumi Mizukoshi:

It is generally accepted that Keats's struggle towards the end of his life to produce poetry of high moral seriousness secured him a place in the literary canon. Indeed, the history of twentieth-century Keats criticism may be seen as the history of how modern critics overcame a feeling of unease to transform Keats the sensualist into Keats the poet moralist. (Mizukoshi 1)

What this story of the canonization of Keats illustrates is the predominance of ethical and political questions in literary criticism and theory today. Literary works are evaluated and rated serious or lax in relation to their engagement with moral and political questions. Relevance of ethical and political questions to literature and art are of no recent origin, though. Ever since the time of Plato, art, and literature in particular, has been approached and reproached on moral grounds. According to Berys Gaut, “For the question of the ethical import of art has roots deep within the corpus of the Western literary and philosophical tradition. Indeed, the controversy reaches right back to Plato, whose warnings about the ethical dangers of poetry set the framework of the subsequent debate” (Gaut 2). Gaut probably has in mind the famous passage from the Republic in which Plato claims that there is an “ancient quarrel between philosophy and poetry” and throws the challenge to the defenders of poetry to “show not only that she [poetry] is pleasant but also useful to states and to human life ...” (Plato, in Adams 37). As Gaut describes, “Plato’s challenge to the value of art was fundamentally and ineradicably to condition the subsequent Western philosophical and literary debate” (Gaut 3).

However, this long tradition of ethical criticism of literature which includes such names as Samuel Johnson, Matthew Arnold, and FR Leavis, is supposed to have been interrupted (or even ended) by the anti-humanist turn in literary criticism during the 1970s until the 1990s. According to Garber, Hanssen and Walkowitz, "To critics working in the domains of feminism, deconstruction, psychoanalysis, semiotics, and Marxism, this [ethical] discourse became a target of critique: the critique of humanism was the exposé of ethics" (Garber, Hanssen and Walkowitz, viii). Yet, as Todd Davis and Kenneth Womack point out, "to pretend that the ethical or moral dimensions of the human condition were abandoned or obliterated in the shift to postmodernity certainly seems naïve" (Davis ix). "What *has* changed," they describe, "over the course of the twentieth century in our discussion of ethics and literature is the simplistic, uncomplicated prescription of external ethical forces regarding so many different literatures and cultures" (Davis x; italics original). David S. Parker, after acknowledging that "most avant-garde Anglo-American literary theory in recent years has been either more or less silent about ethics or deeply suspicious of it" states that poststructuralist and political criticism during this time period has remained "implicitly ethical" (Parker 2, 3). However, he disagrees with the conflation of ethics and politics, particularly by Wayne C. Booth in his book *The Company We Keep*, and stresses the need for "explicit ethical criticism ... that foregrounds the organising questions of ethics, a need for an ethical vocabulary in which to articulate the humanly destructive impulses that can lurk precisely in the thirst for righteousness, including political righteousness" (Parker 7).

Thus, since the 1990s there has been a return of ethical criticism of art in general and literature in particular. As Garber, Hanssen and Walkowitz state:

Things have changed. Ethics is back in literary studies, as it is in philosophy and political theory, and indeed the very critiques of universal man and the autonomous human subject that had initially produced a resistance to ethics have no generated a crossover among these various disciplines that sees and does ethics "otherwise." The decentering of the subject has brought about a recentering of the ethical. (viii – ix)

This ethical criticism has not only produced ethical readings of literary works but also attempted to establish the intrinsicity of the ethical

dimension in the writing and study of literature. On the other hand, there has also been a revival of the aesthetic and aestheticism in recent years with claims of autonomy and specificity reiterated by such writers as Andrew Bowie, Simon Malpas, Jay Bernstein, and Murray Krieger. This revival is taking place after a long period of predominance of moral and political issues in the study of art. As Forest Pyle states, “In fact, if there is one thing in the fractured field of what used to be called literary studies that a conservative humanist, a critical Marxist, a rhetorically oriented deconstructive critic, and a practitioner of cultural studies can actually agree on, it is likely to be a rejection of aestheticism” (Pyle, “Radical Aestheticism” 428). Agreeing with Pyle, Joughin and Malpas state, “The very notion of the ‘aesthetic’ could be said to have fallen victim to the success of recent developments within literary theory ... The rise of critical theory in disciplines across the humanities during the 1980s and 1990s has all but swept aesthetics from the map – and, some would argue, rightly so” (Joughin and Malpas 1). However, Joughin and Malpas also point out that

What has frequently been lost in this process, however, is the sense of art’s specificity as an object of analysis – or, more accurately, its specificity as an aesthetic phenomenon. In the rush to diagnose art’s contamination by politics and culture, theoretical analysis has tended always to posit a prior order that grounds or determines a work’s aesthetic impact, whether this is history, ideology or theories of subjectivity. The aesthetic is thus explicated in other terms, with other criteria, and its singularity is effaced. (Joughin and Malpas 1)

Arguing for the specificity of art as opposed to its inclusion and imbrications in other moral and political contexts and theories, they assert:

Aesthetic specificity is not, however, entirely explicable, or graspable, in terms of another conceptual scheme or genre of discourse. The singularity of the work’s ‘art-ness’ escapes and all that often remains is the critical discourse itself, reassured of its methodological approach and able to reassert its foundational principles. In other words, perhaps the most basic tenet that we are trying to argue for is the equiprimordiality of the aesthetic – that, although it is without doubt tied up with the political, historical, ideological, etc., thinking it as other than determined

by them, and therefore reducible to them, opens a space for an artistic or literary specificity that can radically transform its critical potential and position with regard to contemporary culture. (Joughin and Malpas, 3)

“In the light of this,” continue Joughin and Malpas, “we want to put the case that it might be time for a new aestheticism” (Joughin 3). This, however, is not to be taken as a moment of return to the good old aesthetics of beauty and the sublime but, according to the Joughin and Malpas, a moment of an aesthetics “that is fully engaged with the contemporary brutalities of modern society” (Joughin 4).

The above discussion shows that arguments for (and against) the ethics and aesthetics of art are at the forefront of literary, ethical, and aesthetic theory today and attempts are being made to establish common grounds between the two approaches to art and literature, while at the same time the practitioners of the two approaches are engaged in finding and establishing grounds for legitimacy for their own specific approach to art. The literary period which is most frequently invoked in the debate on the ethics and aesthetics of art is the Romantic period in literature, as the idea of the aesthetic as an independent sphere of creative activity and critical evaluation found its most enthusiastic supporters and the most assertive champions in the Romantic era in Europe. Studies of modern aesthetics usually begin with Kant, though Paul Guyer has shown that much work in aesthetic theory had been done, among others, by Baumgarten, Francis Hutcheson, and Joseph Addison before Kant (Guyer 15-16). However, it is Kant’s third critique, “The Critique of Judgement”, that is often referred to as the first extensive formulation of modern aesthetics. Yet, where Kant presented the aesthetic sphere as an autonomous one in his third critique, independent from the other two spheres of reason, and morality, he also established a (permanent) division between the three spheres of human life, namely, knowledge, goodness, and beauty.

This threefold division that Kant created through his three critiques has remained unchanged but not unchallenged since his time. According to Bernstein, for German Idealism and Romanticism, “there was also a natural temptation to regard the provision of a new aesthetic, a post-aesthetic philosophy of art, as the political means through which modernity was to be reconstituted. For them the highest act of reason

was to be an aesthetic act, and their goal was to provide a new mythology of reason that would unite mankind” (6).

Thus, the Romantics took upon themselves the task of recovering art from what Bernstein has termed as “aesthetic alienation” – the separation of art from questions of truth and goodness. In its alienated state, art does not seem to be any more than a “silent beast”, since “What can we make of a domain in which questions of truth, goodness, efficacy, even pleasure (since our interest in art is 'disinterested') are eliminated at the outset? What sort of beast might beauty be if in considering it we are not considering how the world is (truth), how we do or should comport ourselves in the world (morality), or what might be useful or pleasureable to us?” (Bernstein 3). “The experience of art *as aesthetical*,” continues Bernstein, “is the experience of art as having lost or been deprived of its power to speak the truth – whatever truth will mean when no longer defined in exclusive ways” (Bernstein 4). Yet, because of its very separation from truth and goodness, art becomes a space from where a critique of the twin pillars of modernity, science and moral consciousness can be launched and conducted. As Bernstein states,

Because only art 'suffers' its alienation, because art discovers its autonomous vocation to be unstable and incapable of being sustained, because art must continually conceive of its autonomy as a burden it must both embrace and escape from, in all this art comes to speak the truth ... about the fate of truth and art in modernity. To consider art as alienated from truth, and not just separated from it in a happy language game of its own, is necessarily to conceive of it as acting in excess of its excluded status'. (Bernstein 5)

No other poet felt the burden of art's separation from truth and yet it's commitment to being true and to being ethically uplifting than John Keats. While the other major Romantics were at times able to resolve this conflict with some level of confidence – Wordsworth in the sympathetic imagination, Coleridge in the unifying power of imagination, and Shelley in the role of the poet as the unacknowledged legislator of the world – Keats remained skeptical of the ability of poetry to bring truth, beauty, and goodness together in a state of unity. From his earliest poems to his latest, conflict between truth and beauty remains alive, even if for a moment in the ‘Ode on a Grecian Urn’ he

was able to assert with confidence the unity of truth and beauty, though even here it is the Urn that speaks and not the poet. In his commitment to truth, which could be ugly, and his commitment to beauty, which could be untrue, Keats discerned an ethical dilemma which he sought to (arguably unsuccessfully) resolve in his letters and poems. The consoling function of poetry required it to be true and beautiful at the same time, and where truth lay a restraining hand upon the flight of imagination in the creation of beauty, beauty demanded the freedom to roam in the world of creative imagination. In his insightful study of the conflict between 'constructive' and 'destructive' poetry in John Keats, Forest Pyle has made the point that the reason why Keats is unable to establish once and for all the truth-beauty unity is that poetic language cannot be tied to poetry's ethical ends. The material dimension of poetry offers a resistance to the ideological dimension and refuses to submit to the ethical longings of the poet. As a result, "the urgent ethical declarations in Keats's poetry and letters are now legible as both symptoms of and responses to what de Man characterized as the pervasive non-coincidence between a human domain and the material, non-human operations of language, a non-coincidence disclosed in the poetry itself" (Pyle, "Keats's Materialism", 68). In a more recent article, Pyle elaborates the same idea through the use of the term "radical aestheticism". He states,

At certain decisive moments throughout the brief poetic careers of Shelley as well as Keats we encounter a radical aestheticism, one that undoes the claims made in the name of the aesthetic – as redemptive, restorative, liberating, compensatory, humanizing, healing – claims which are not only an irreducible aspect of the legacy of romanticism but are often spelled out in their most compelling forms by the poets themselves. Indeed, each of these poets resists the radical aestheticism he encounters in and through his poetry, Shelley by recourse to the twin projects of political liberation and Utopian poetics, Keats by way of a tortured commitment to a humanizing, ethical dimension of poetry. (Pyle, "Radical Aestheticism in Keats and Shelley", 432)

According to Forest Pyle, *The Fall of Hyperion* is "perhaps Keats's most sustained late reflection on the aesthetic and its relation to poetry" (Pyle, "Radical Aestheticism", 449). In this poem the conflict between aesthetics and ethics is depicted in its most intense form. In one section,

the poet wants the goddess Moneta to affirm his own view of poetry and poets:

So answer'd I, continuing, 'If it please,  
Majestic shadow, tell me: sure not all  
Those melodies sung into the world's ear  
Are useless: sure a poet is a sage;  
A humanist, physician to all men. (*The Fall of Hyperion* 186 – 190)

This is a question that all of Keats poetry is concerned with and, according to Pyle, “The Hyperion poems demonstrate that the topic of poetry’s relationship to ethics retains its force and its significance throughout Keats’s brief career; and they serve as the occasion for two of the strongest poems in the Romantic tradition” (Pyle, *Art’s Undoing*, 72). However, in Pyle’s view, “... Keats never presumes that an aesthetic orientation leads to an ethical conclusion. Many of his best poems begin with aesthetics and ethics in a disjunctive relationship, a “fierce dispute” that must be overcome; and the poems are compelled to revisit this disjunction over and over again” (Pyle, *Art’s Undoing*, 68). Here, Moneta differentiates between two kinds of people, the poet and the dreamer, and declares the poem’s speaker to be a dreamer and not a poet:

Art thou not of the dreamer tribe?  
The poet and the dreamer are distinct,  
Diverse, sheer opposite, antipodes.  
The one pours out a balm upon the world,  
The other vexes it. (*The Fall of Hyperion* 198 – 202)

It seems here that, according to the goddess, the poet is able to perform an ethical deed through his poetry and, in this way, the conflict of aesthetics and ethics stands resolved. Yet, this is not the final insight of the poem, nor is it meant to be. Otherwise, it would have occupied a more emphatic position in the poem. This is why Forest Pyle states that Keats’s poetry itself “resists answering in the affirmative” the question concerning the ethical nature of poetry, a question that is central to Keats’s theory and practice of poetry.

However, the ethical nature of poetry in Keats’s case cannot be determined solely by a clear affirmative answer. Such clear cut answers never had any great importance for Keats as is evident from his letters. As Susan Wolfson states, “Keats was not after secure answers so much as the energy of thinking, testing and intensifying ideas” (Wolfson 15). On the contrary, Keats’s approach to poetry was based on what he



defined as the 'Negative Capability', the ability to remain in "uncertainties, Mysteries, doubts without any irritable reaching after fact and reason" (Keats, Selected Letters, 87). Didactic poetry was not something he aspired to compose. In fact, he was against this sort of poetry as he once wrote in a letter to JH Reynolds, "We hate poetry that has a palpable design upon us – and if we do not agree, seems to put its hands in its breeches pocket" (Keats, Selected Letters, 87).

When the conflict of ethics and aesthetics is seen in the light of Keats's concept of Negative Capability, some interesting conclusions can be drawn, as done by Forest Pyle in the section on Keats, in his book *Art's Undoing: In the Wake of a Radical Aestheticism*. Pyle considers the conflict of ethics and aesthetics in Keats's poetry in terms of a conflict between strength and weakness: "The opposition between strength and weakness has from the beginning framed our understanding and evaluation of Keats; and it is an opposition that has governed every effort to fashion a narrative of the poet's career" (Pyle, *Arts Undoing*, 72). Interestingly, Pyle sees in Keats a preference for weakness rather than strength, or the recognition that strength can be achieved in poetry only by way of weakness, and relates it to the concept of Negative Capability. While discussing Keats's desire "To die a death/Of luxury" in *Sleep and Poetry*, an early poem by Keats, Pyle comments: "It is a moment that we may want to ascribe to 'negative capability,' but only if we understand that Keats is imagining that to get strong he must first get completely weak" (Pyle, *Arts Undoing*, 73).

While the concept of 'Negative Capability' may be the key to understanding much else in Keats, it is definitely a key to understanding his approach to the conflict of ethics and aesthetics. The question that needs to be asked is whether 'Negative Capability' is exclusively an aesthetic attitude, as Pyle appears to interpret it, or does it also designate a kind of ethics. If 'Negative Capability' is a concept of artistic creativity, does it have an ethical dimension as well? Some of Keats's ideas about the identity of the poet and his own creative experience may be helpful in responding to these questions. These ideas will then be related to certain ideas about creativity found in the writings of the school of criticism known as 'deconstruction', particularly in the work of Derek Attridge.

In his 27 October 1818 letter to Richard Woodhouse, Keats had written:

1st As to the poetical Character itself ... it is not itself—it has no self—it is everything and nothing—It has no character ... A Poet is the most unpoetical of anything in existence because he has no Identity; he is continually in for and filling some other Body. It is a wretched thing to confess but is a very fact that not one word I ever utter can be taken for granted as an opinion growing out of my identical nature. How can it, when I have no nature? When I am in a room with People, if I ever am free from speculating on creations of my own brain, then not myself goes home to myself, but the identity of everyone in the room begins to press upon me that I am in a very little time annihilated. Not only among Men; it would be the same in a Nursery of children. (194-195)

What Keats is claiming in this letter is that poetic creativity is an experience of losing one's self, of listening to the other, or even of becoming the other. While the concept of the 'other' is also present in many social sciences disciplines and discourses, it is in the theoretical school of deconstruction that it occupies a more prominent place than in other discourses. Particularly, in the conceptualization of creativity that is attributed to philosophers and critics like Jacques Derrida, it is considered to be 'central'. In his book *The Singularity of Literature*, Derek Attridge, a self confessed member of the deconstructionist school, defines it as the key element in the creative process. "How, then, can we describe verbal creation?" asks Attridge (19). His answer is: "it is a handling of language whereby something we might call "otherness," or "alterity," or "the other," is made, or allowed, to impact upon the existing configurations of an individual's mental world—which is to say, upon a particular cultural field as it is embodied in a single subjectivity" (19). For Attridge, "Otherness is that which is, at a given moment, outside the horizon provided by the culture for thinking, understanding, imagining, feeling, perceiving" (19). However, Attridge is quick to point out that 'otherness' is not something that the "would-be creator can simply take hold of ..." but, instead,

The creative mind ... has to operate without being sure of where it is going, probing the limits of the culture's givens, taking advantage of their contradictions and tensions, seeking hints of the exclusions on which they depend for their existence, exploring the effects upon them of encounters with the products and practices of other cultures. (20)

Attridge goes on to describe the creative process as “the creation of the other” (22). According to Attridge, this understanding of creativity implies two things. In one sense, creation is a matter of “creating the other”, an interpretation that “emphasizes agency and activity: to be truly creative is to wrest from the realm of the familiar the hitherto unthought, to bring into existence by skillful and imaginative intellectual labor an entity that is irreducibly different from what is already in being” (22). However, acknowledging that this interpretation does not do justice to the creative experience, his own and that of others, Attridge offers another interpretation of the phrase “the creation of the other” in which both the artistic self and the artistic text are “created *by the other*” (23; italics in the original). Elaborating this interpretation, Attridge writes: “The coming into being of the wholly new requires some relinquishment of intellectual control, and ‘the other’ is one possible name for that to which control is ceded, whether it is conceived of as ‘outside’ or ‘inside’ the subject” (24).

In these terms, creativity becomes not just an aesthetic practice but an ethical attitude. Attridge takes up the question of ethics and responsibility explicitly in another section entitled “Responsibility and Ethics” in his book *The Singularity of Literature*. According to Attridge, the creative act requires a specific kind of “effort” which may even be an “effort of resisting effortful behavior” and what directs that effort is not the desire to be inventive but a “hard-to-explain commitment to the other, to the new, to that which is coming into being” (123). For Attridge this commitment can be interpreted as a kind of responsibility which he again interprets in two ways: responsibility *to* the other and responsibility *for* the other. Here it is that the ethical dimension of creativity becomes explicit. The responsibility to the other makes a person accountable for his or her behavior towards the other, but the responsibility for the other “involves assuming the other’s needs (if only the need to exist), affirming it, sustaining it, being prepared to give up my own wants and satisfactions for the sake of the other” (124). In Attridge’s view, “responsibility” in one way of understanding the “strange compulsion involved in creative behavior,” a compulsion “that leads to risk, a crucial concept in any consideration of creativity” (124). Creativity involves risk “since there can be no certainty in opening oneself to the other – certainty being by definition excluded – every such opening is a gamble” (124). This understanding of responsibility leads Attridge on to say:

Responsibility for the other is a form of hospitality and generosity. Furthermore, in responsibility I respond with much more than my cognitive faculties: my emotional and sometimes my physical self are also at stake. Hence the risk involved, the risk implicit in any act of hospitality—I am obliged to affirm something with all that I am before I know what it is, before, in fact, it is. (126)

The relevance of this concept of creativity and responsibility to the study of the conflict of ethics and aesthetics in Keats and to his concept of ‘Negative Capability’ is not hard to discern. As the letter of Keats cited above establishes, Keats’s describes his own creative experience as one of self erasure and a complete absorption of/into the other. And he defines ‘Negative Capability’ as the ability to be content with uncertainties and doubts without any “irritable reaching after fact or reason”. It suggests that ‘Negative Capability’ is not simply an aesthetic concept but is also an ethical concept at the same time. As Keats’s own characterization of Wordsworth as the “egotistical sublime” suggests that this is not the only concept of creativity. The two concepts or approaches to creativity may be defined as the active and the passive approaches to creativity. Though Wordsworth also claimed to exercise a kind of ‘wise passiveness’ in his poetry and life, his own understanding of poetry in the ‘Preface’ to the Lyrical Ballads suggests that he had a very clear idea of what he wanted to do through his poetry. Wordsworth’s poetry, in other words, was consciously ideological though it may at times work against the kind of ideology he was trying to articulate. Where Wordsworth preferred to ‘wander lonely as a cloud’, Keats preferred to be “the flower than the Bee”:

Now it is more noble to sit like Jove than to fly like Mercury.  
Let us not therefore go hurrying about and collecting honey-bee like, buzzing here and there impatiently from a knowledge of what is to be arrived at; but let us open our leaves like a flower and be passive and receptive, budding patiently under the eye of Apollo and taking hints from every noble insect that favors us with a visit. (Letters, 93)

According to Forest Pyle, the key words in Keats’s conceptualization of poetic creativity are ‘idleness’, ‘passivity’, ‘indolence’. These words have been interpreted as indicating a decadent aesthetic attitude in

Keats, an attitude of avoidance of the hard moral questions that poetry and other arts are supposed to raise and respond to. However, the deconstructive approach to creativity as explained by Derek Attridge in his book *The Singularity of Literature* regards this attitude of passivity as an attitude which is at once ethical and aesthetic. Thus, it is incorrect to seek in Keats's poetry assertive statements of ethical principles. Ethics is everywhere in Keats and thus cannot be isolated anywhere for demonstration. This is so to the extent that even when Keats himself tries to assert this ethics consciously, the result is a failure and disappointment. Forest Pyle has summed up this fusion of ethics and aesthetics in Keats in the following statement:

Keats's poetry of luxuriating indolence and blank amazement – Keats's weakness – makes no ethical claims and yet offers a kind of ethos that Barthes would call a "morality." But when that fault-line is breached, when Keats makes his "ethical turn," the results are not the accommodation of the ethical with the aesthetic or the superseding of the latter by the former. Rather this is the place we encounter Keats's radicalized aestheticism, the gift of an all-consuming poetry. (Pyle, *Art's Undoing*, 101-102).

In the light of this discussion it can be concluded that the conflict of ethics and aesthetics is a major theme in Western philosophy, literature and literary criticism, and that it is a conflict which cannot be resolved exclusively in the favour of any one of these approaches. Poets, philosophers and literary critics have searched for metaphors, concepts and approaches which can unite their ethical and the aesthetic concerns. John Keats's concept of 'negative capability' is one concept which combines the ethical and the aesthetic approaches to poetry. It is, therefore, not necessary to keep Keats the aesthete separate and distinct from Keats the moralist but rather to find ethical concerns and aesthetic pleasures coexisting in his poetry and letters.

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