



# Derek Attridge's Argument That Literature As Art Has An Ethical Dimension

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## ABSTRACT

*Derek Attridge is a Distinguished Visiting Professor at Rutgers University in the United States and an English professor at the University of York in the United Kingdom. He has published works on literary studies, beat prosody, sixteenth-century poetry, and twentieth-century fiction, as well as editing them. Attridge encapsulates many years of thinking on what happens when a writer produces an original piece or when a reader responds to it, whether at the time of creation or many years later. He explains the implications of seeing the work as an experience that the reader recreates each time they come across it, responding to its originality, inventiveness, and otherness. It involves suspending and reconstructing all of those painstakingly applied norms and practices, as if this attempt produced them while exposing their flaws. By advocating for a "responsible" reading style that honours these aspects of the work, Attridge theorises the place of literature in the ethical realm.*

## KEYWORDS

*Responsibility, openness, ethics, literature, singularity, sentimentality, morality*

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## I. INTRODUCTION

### Responsibility

The notion of "responsibility" is a moral one that implies an "ought." To serve the other as it develops (and so bring it into existence); to react responsibly to the otherness of a piece of literature would be to do it fairly; to consider literature as literature is to be welcoming and liberal: his whole explanation thus far has been shaded with ethical considerations. [Ethics, 72–7]. This confounds his perceptions of invention, output, and reaction if one is prepared to draw a boundary between the most fundamental ethical obligations that always involve uncertainties and risks and particular responsibilities governing particular situations in a particular social context, which need the maximum possible control over results.

When Attridge composes music, reacts to another person, or reads books, there is no fundamental connection between his responsible openness to the other and the moral obligations he has under social norms, religious institutions, his nation laws, and, most probably, his personal superego. That is not to say that all these two kinds of obligations are unrelated; on the other, a moral framework, law system, or political platform may be deemed ethical if it has been motivated by something similar to the obligation he has described, even if such a duty will always challenge and exceed it.

### OBJECTIVES OF THE STUDY

The purpose of this research is to elaborate on Derek Attridge's assertion that literature has an ethical dimension. The works of literature of Richards and Levinas have been used to assist Attridge's argument.

### SCOPE OF THE STUDY

Consequently, each act of literary signification has an ethical dimension and the most technically innovative work, the one that separates itself the most from a reader, imposes the most demanding (not to say deep) ethical demand. Derek Attridge's objections to two literary masterpieces, one by Levinas and the other by Richard, are the focus of this study. Other literary works may be employed to facilitate Derek Attridge's thesis and to get a deeper understanding of literature as an art form's ethical component.

## II. LITERATURE REVIEW

### **Ethics**

As a result, ethics is the fundamental connection between subjects and the topic and its numerous replicas, a relationship which is neither a connection nor a label as it's conceptually before connections, names, and even logic. We are already responsible for one another, and this fact shapes both the imaginative and ethical realms. When we state that innovation, originality, and otherness are occurrences, we imply that they happen.

Reacting responsibly to a piece of art requires trying to do justice to it as a unique other; it needs a judgment which is not simply ethical or aesthetic, and that does not seek to categorize or put the work on a value basis, but instead affirms the work's creativity. A judge's response in a court is comparable to that of a judge whose first job is to assess a particular case by placing all appropriate legal historical background and records to focus on it and scatter its distinctiveness by linking it to the wider legal field. To be regarded as acting justifiably, they must react with a decisiveness that no technology can equal, beyond any computation that can be made in the form of legal practice standards.

### **Singularity**

Only then is the action accountable, completely aware of the situation's uniqueness. Such singularity (which is also otherness because the singularity is always something that resists or exceeds existing frameworks) places a claim on the judge. Without acknowledging the uniqueness of the case and the individual on trial, no justice can be served (and only, it could be argued that fair or ethical social life can triumph in incomparable acts of affirmation throughout everyday life). Acting morally towards others and necessarily requires attempting to make every effort possible to understand them and their situations; nevertheless, the main claim of some other person upon one and the last measure of one's actions are both observed in one's reaction to, and acknowledgment of, the otherness that resists that understanding. Of course, this raises all of the typical issues in interpersonal and intercultural ethics; how, for instance, how could the right of another culture to utilise its own customs be balanced against the requirements of an ethical norm that is accepted and seen to have global reach?

Consideration for otherness does not exclude participation in other people's worries, but it does preclude any algorithmic answer to such problems. They can only be dealt with as one-of-a-kind circumstances. [Acts of Literature, 183–220]. To study a literary work properly, one should do this without trying to apply a matrix of possible applications to it, including such historical evidence, moral lesson, the path to truths, political influence, or individual motivation, and without making judgments on the work or its author (even though making such decisions may be necessary for other circumstances).

### **Openness**

It entails trusting the unpredictable nature of reading and being ready for the unknown. Of fact, a responsible instrumentality might arise from this view, although with different methods or goals. As well as, to the large extent that reading literary ideologically, philosophically, or historically is a part of the literary experience, the same is true: being prepared to be challenged by the work, conscious of its singular otherness, and careful to a way it works through cellphone and impactful kinds and also thematic depiction and theoretical reasoning will lead in a fuller, more responsible reading experience. Literary reading ethics is more like a mindset, a routine, or even a manner of being in the world of words than it is about putting out a certain level of effort with each reading (includes the difficulty of freeing oneself from the constraints of reading). In this respect, that there's no required connection between becoming a good reader and becoming a good person, just like there is no important connection between being a good artist and being a good person; nonetheless, both share most of the same values. According to this wide perspective, all innovative shaping of language (as well as other cultural components) generate ethical obligations. Reading a creative work has particular responsibilities: respecting its otherness, reacting to its distinctiveness, and resisting the temptation to reduce it to the known and practical while still attempting to comprehend it via these parallels. The clear ethical demand of the literary work is not to be recognized with its characters or storyline, with the human intercourse and decisions it portrays, with its representations of virtues and vices, and with the difficulties involved of dividing them; all of these are found in those other discourses, such as historical writing or journalistic reporting.

### **Literature**

It isn't a question of literature's capacity to impart moral lessons; it shares a trait with several other kinds of writing—[Love's Knowledge]. Instead, it is inherent in the fundamental aspects through which language impacts ourselves and the environment that identifies it as literature. A reading that recognizes the formal growth of these procedures, a reading in the meaning of a performance, a having to put or putting-in-play that includes both active participation and letting-go, a welcomed acceptance of the other, is required for the literary task. Because it entails evaluating the procedures of meaning, formal innovation (the kind that matters in

literature) is a kind of ethical experiment. Reacting to the demand for a piece of literature as though it were a one-of-a-kind happening, a task, or a commitment:

- Recognize how little one understands him.
- Interpret his intranslatability.
- Memorize him.
- To find the otherness that dwells in the heart [Checos'è la poesia].

It involves rejecting and reconstructing all of those painstakingly applied norms and conventions as if this effort produced them while exposing their flaws. Levinas contrasts the self-other connection to that of a prisoner to a captor, emphasizing the randomness with which Attridge feels summoned by the other, not because he is who he is, but because he is at a particular place and time [Ideology and Ideological State Apparatuses]. On the other hand, the other one is equally vulnerable and needs his care, or, to use Levinas' phrase, is destitute. Its faults are what give it power. Literature, no matter how strong, will achieve nothing unless responsible readers read it. (A work, or a way of reading work, may apply a force that serves to preserve and improve a reader's present patterns of thinking and experiencing; but, such text or style of reading does not fall under his minimal description of literature.) Accountability has no logical foundation, nor does it have any moral or practical validity. The ethical force that underlies the act of creation is baseless since it exists before any possible basis; here is where Levinas challenging logic helps a lot.

### **Morality**

According to Attridge, if there is no obligation for the other, there will be no other, no identity, no community, and morals. The obligation to others cannot be drawn from the existing world; the existing world, such as the methodologies whereby any assumptions regarding ethics or accountability might be created, is premised on an obligation to the other.

### **Sentimentality**

Other authors, notably Richards, have already described this type of writing and response using terms like "stock reaction" and "sentimentality.") To avoid sounding painful, Attridge reiterates his assertion that the unique true happiness of the literary response (in addition to the happiness attained from new knowledge, sensuous patterning, stirring of remembrance, moral exemplification, etc) is found in this apprehension of otherness and the requirements it creates.

## **III. CONCLUSION**

Derek Attridge introduces us to an interesting new paradigm for thinking about literature and the literary. Any act of literary meaning thus has an ethical dimension, as well as the most formally innovative work, the one that separates itself the most from the reader, makes the most sharply demanding (not to say profound) ethical demand. Since it includes evaluating the procedures of meaning, formal innovation (the kind that is important in literature) is an ethical experiment. The ethical responsibility that lies at the heart of creativity has been articulated many times in different forms and circumstances throughout the history of humanity, more or less fully and logically. The current debate is an attempt to explain why Attridge makes no statements about the relative significance of different manifestations of the ethical connection; obviously, political or moral judgment should emphasize humans over their products, and creativity must be expressed in terms of its advantages to humanity (or some other category). A non-moral ethics discourse, on the other hand, has the benefit of being able to provide insights into the fundamental conditions of the moral-political sphere, namely, the world of norms, programmes, and classifications, without being confined to them.

## **REFERENCES**

- [1]. Such an outcome would be likely to lead to the retrospective reinterpretation of the event as uninventive, since it would not give rise to further invention, but rather to a closing down of possibilities. The flourishing of Nazism may be a historical example: most of those to whom it appealed as an apparently inventive event could not have foreseen the Final Solution. Badiou interestingly cites Nazism as an example of a simulacrum of a truth, arising from an event that was formally indistinguishable from a genuine event in his sense (and thus deceiving Heidegger, among others) (*Ethics*, 72–7).
- [2]. One way of talking about the other is as *the law*, understood as an obligation which is never manifested as such, but only in specific, and alterable, laws, in stories about the law, etc. A powerful representation of the law as other is Kafka fable *Before the Law*; and see Derrida essay of the same name, which reprints the fable in its entirety (*Acts of Literature*, 183–220).
- [3]. There is a long and worthy tradition of literary analysis and evaluation in terms of its value as—to use the title of an essay by Kenneth Burke—equipment for living; the most distinguished member of this tradition today is Martha C. Nussbaum (see, for example, *Love Knowledge*). Many writers of literary works have possessed unusual wisdom about the choices that face individuals and societies (a wisdom that sometimes emerged only in their literary productions), and there is much to be gained from experiencing their works—as there is from experiencing the concrete human situations represented in the writings of essayists, moralists, historians, biographers, philosophers, and theologians. This value is not, however, a distinctive property of literature.

- [4]. Here I am echoing Derrida short essay, *Checosè la poesia?*
- [5]. This arbitrary hailing by the other can be contrasted with Louis Althusser motivated interpellation by an ideology—a scheme which might be a good model for a relation to a text that does *not* involve responsibility (see *Ideology and Ideological State Apparatuses*).