



# INTERPRETATION OF THE ETHICAL TURN OF CONTEMPORARY WESTERN LITERARY THEORY FROM THE PERSPECTIVE OF “NEW ARISTOTELISM”

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ZHANG, Qiaozhu. Interpretation of the ethical turn of contemporary Western literary theory from the perspective of “New Aristotelism”. *Trans/Form/Ação*: Unesp journal of philosophy, Marília, v. 47, n. 4, “Eastern thought”, e02400122, 2024.

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**Keywords:** New Aristotelism. Literary Theory. Ethics.

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**Resumen:** En la década de 1980, la crítica ética del nuevo humanismo volvió gradualmente a la corriente principal de la academia occidental de teoría y crítica literarias, materializando el giro ético de la crítica de la teoría literaria. Con el trasfondo histórico de la contención del pensamiento entre varias escuelas, el Nuevo Aristotelismo y el Deconstruccionismo han formado dos grandes campos del giro ético en la crítica literaria. Entre ellos, el Nuevo Aristotelismo está representado por Wayne Booth y Martha Nussbaum, herederos de la teoría aristotélica de la ética de la virtud. Desde la perspectiva de la ética y la moral, se llevan a cabo la investigación y la crítica literarias, y se establece la estructura de la crítica ética del nuevo humanismo. La investigación, combinada con los antecedentes de la época, hace una interpretación histórica del giro ético de la teoría literaria occidental contemporánea, y analiza las razones y características básicas del giro ético de la crítica literaria. Basándose en las teorías de Wayne Booth y Martha Nussbaum, este trabajo explora el giro ético y el desarrollo de la crítica literaria en la perspectiva neoaristotélica.

**Palabras clave:** Nuevo Aristotelismo. Teoría Literaria; Ética. Wayne Booth. Martha Nussbaum.

Received: 23/07/2023 | Approved: 18/10/2023 | Published: 20/03/2024

 <https://doi.org/10.1590/0101-3173.2024.v47.n4.e02400122>



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## INTERPRETATION OF THE ETHICAL TURN OF CONTEMPORARY WESTERN LITERARY THEORY FROM THE PERSPECTIVE OF “NEW ARISTOTELISM”

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**Abstract:** In the 1980s, the new humanism ethical criticism gradually returned to the mainstream of Western literary theory and criticism academia, realizing the ethical turn of literary theory criticism. The New Aristotelian camp is represented by Wayne Booth and Martha Nussbaum, who inherit Aristotelian virtue ethics theory. From the perspective of ethics and morality, literary research and criticism are conducted, and the structure of new humanism ethical criticism is established. The research, combined with the background of the times, makes a historical interpretation of the ethical turn of contemporary Western literary theory and analyzes the reasons and basic characteristics of the ethical turn of literary criticism. Based on Wayne Booth's and Martha Nussbaum's theories, this paper explores the ethical turn and development of literary criticism from the New Aristotelian perspective. The New Aristotelian doctrine emphasizes the moral significance of literature, explores the ethical issues and promotes the more in-depth and systematic analysis and discussion of Western literary criticism on the ethical level. The research makes an in-depth analysis of the promoting role of the new Aristotelianism behind the ethical turn of contemporary Western literary theory and provides a new perspective for the interpretation of the ethical turn of contemporary Western literary theory.

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### INTRODUCTION

From the beginning of ancient Greek literature, Western literature essentially revolved around ethics. Literature is one of the artistic manifestations of ethics and morality. Therefore, since the discovery of literary theory criticism, literary moral evaluation has always been the basic method of literary criticism. Even the criticism of modern literary theory has not given up the examination of the moral value of literary works (Liang, 2020, p. 3). Moral criticism of literary works emphasizes the moral and political effects of literature. Examining the value of literary works from an ethical perspective, it attempts to use the power of literature to solve ethical issues. There is a dual relationship between literature and ethics from both aesthetic and narrative perspectives. Literature can reveal the connotation and philosophical ideas of real moral life in the form of text and narrow the distance between real life and ethical principles through literary examples. Ethics, on the other hand, can use

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the new environment created by literary works to verify the moral concepts under ethics. It uses the narrative space of literary works as a laboratory for testing ethical theories, simulating social and cultural contexts, and providing simulation scenarios for moral testing. The close connection between literature and ethics has always been an important topic in Western literary research. The understanding of the relationship between them is of great significance to the research and development of Western literary theory.

In the middle of the 20th century, meta-ethics was criticized more and more because it did not pay attention to practical issues, while normative ethics, represented by utilitarianism and deontology, was criticized because it only paid attention to the behavioral principles that abstract people should abide by. Western ethics took a major turn, that is, it set off a wave of revival of modern virtue ethics. According to the different ideological resources supported and absorbed in the classical period, there are many different schools and development trends in modern virtue ethics. The most striking one is New Aristotelian. Aristotelian ethics pays attention to the actor's quality cultivation and behavioral psychology, and the neo-Aristotelian virtue ethics, influenced by it, is very close to the actor's real life. So it has gained more understanding and support from the actor. The revival movement of virtue ethics led by New Aristotelian has not only aroused wide attention and great repercussions in every corner of Western society, but also in other civilizations with great differences in ideology and development level, and its development prospect and theoretical significance are immeasurable. There are many studies on neo-Aristotelian doctrine, but they are only a separate analysis of the school theory, and few studies focus on the ethical turn of Western literary theory under the neo-Aristotelian perspective (Jimenez, 2019, p. 363; Reid, 2020, p. 63; Lawrenz, 2021, p. 149). The research will innovatively interpret the ethical turn of contemporary Western literary theory under new Aristotle's perspective, in order to explore the ethical turn and development of literary criticism under new Aristotle's perspective.

The study first introduces the virtues of the new Aristotle ethics theory and practice theory of wisdom, about new Aristotle's basic viewpoint, and then analyzes the reasons and characteristics of the ethics of literary criticism. Finally, in the new Aristotle under the perspective of the new humanism ethics criticism, it expounds the waone bus and masa us baum, new Aristotle's representatives, to the influence of Western literary criticism ethics.

## 1 THE NEW ARISTOTELIAN THEORY

As the name suggests, neo-Aristotelian literary ethical criticism inherits Aristotle's ethical and poetic views, integrates ethics with poetics/rhetoric, and advocates ethical and moral education through the reading of literature. In the view of this school, since literature is created by human beings, read by human beings, and it is an art about human beings, there is an inextricable and inherent connection between literature and human life. On

this premise, critics in this camp have explored how readers' interaction with texts, in the process of reading, can enhance ethical consciousness, thereby promoting personal virtue and ultimately human flourishing. Neo-Aristotelian places human emotion and morality at the heart of literary analysis. It requires the works to show and explore human emotional experience, moral confusion and moral choices. It believes that excellent literary works should not only have aesthetic value, but also convey or trigger ethical thinking. This view enhances the importance of ethical criticism and enabled literary critics to pay more attention to the moral education and human exploration of their works. Neo-Aristotelian tends to look for universally applicable aesthetic and ethical values. This view pushes literary criticism towards the exploration and appreciation of works of universal significance and common value. This promotes a more in-depth and systematic analysis and discussion of Western literary criticism on the ethical level.

### **1.1 THE NEW ARISTOTELIAN THEORY OF VIRTUE ETHICS**

The new Aristotelian ethics is based on Aristotle's theory to carry out theoretical construction. It takes Aristotle's virtue ethics as the core concept, inherits and develops Aristotle's virtue ethics theory, and constructs an ethical theory under eudaemonism. New Aristotelian ethics is based on Aristotle's virtue ethics, absorbing the teleology of his eudaemonism, and regards happiness as the humanity's ultimate goal. New Aristotelism inherits and develops Aristotle's naturalistic teleology. Aristotle's eudaemonism teleology is improved from the perspective of ethical naturalism. New Aristotelian scholars, such as Ford Hesterhouse, have shown a concern for the prosperity of actors' lives under the theory of eudaemonism. They combined the concept of virtue ethics with the teleology of eudaemonism, pointing out that virtue can help actors achieve their own prosperity and development in life. New Aristotle's ethics is based on Aristotle's eudaemonism teleology, defining the relationship between happiness and virtue, clarifying the eudaemonism stance and core of virtue ethics, and pointing out that virtue is an important factor in achieving happiness. New Aristotelism innovated Aristotle's theory in the new social context, establishing a framework of eudaemonism teleology and a theoretical system of virtue ethics in the new social situation.

### **1.2 NEW ARISTOTELIAN THEORY OF PRACTICAL WISDOM**

The New Aristotelian virtue ethics emphasizes the importance of practical wisdom, believing that practical wisdom and moral wisdom have an inherent connection, and requiring actors to master the comprehensive grasp ability of virtue principles. Compared to Aristotle's position of "strong unity" in practical wisdom, new Aristotelism holds a "weak unity" position in the unity of beauty. New Aristotelian ethics emphasizes the role of practical wisdom in

achieving happiness goals. It believes that virtue is not only a behavioral tendency, but also a personal characteristic, and points out that practical wisdom is the correct reasoning ability of virtue towards practical things. New Aristotelian ethics believes that practical wisdom provides psychological mechanisms and executive guidance for the actors' correct actions and reasoning judgments. Practical wisdom and eudaemonism teleology generate communication and provide means of implementation. Aristotle's theory believes that practical wisdom and moral virtue have a high degree of unity in essence, emphasizing the unified relationship between the actor's virtue and morality. However, new Aristotelian ethics believes that the unity between moral virtue and practical wisdom is limited, and the two have weak unity. New Aristotelian ethics points out that when evaluating people's morality, practical wisdom should not be solely based on, but should be used to make flexible and objective judgments based on specific situations. New Aristotelism emphasizes the weak unity of practical wisdom and morality, pointing out that practical morality cannot be completely discrete and has no direct connection with the actors' moral virtues. New Aristotelism proposed the concept of "blind spots" in practical wisdom, believing that specific cultural and social backgrounds can affect the actors' growth, leading to inherent moral defects and the inability to possess true moral integrity. For example, influenced by social and cultural backgrounds, Germans with blind spots in the context of the slaughtering of Jews, regardless of their practical wisdom, have purposeful and conscious errors in moral virtue, and practical wisdom and moral virtue cannot be completely combined. New Aristotelism believes that an actor's practical morality is a matter of degree, rather than establishing an absolute connection with its moral evaluation. The actors' moral evaluation should be more flexible and objective, and practical wisdom should not be the sole criterion.

## 2 THE ETHICAL TURN OF LITERARY CRITICISM

Literary criticism is an important part of literary activities. Its literary works and its spread, consumption and acceptance constitute an indispensable important content of literary theory and literary activity, as a dynamic, guiding and constructive factors. Both ones promote literary creation, influence the development of literary thought and literary theory, and promote the spread of literature and acceptance. This is especially true when literary criticism has gradually matured. The criticism of literary ethics takes "ethical choice" as the theoretical basis and core category, and emphasizes explaining and evaluating the ways, processes and results of ethical choice of various characters from the perspective of ethics, so as to obtain the moral teachings and warnings given to us by ethical choice in history and reality.

## 2.1 REASONS FOR ETHICAL TURN

In the late 1960s, Western literary theory and critical academia began to deeply explore the relationship between the internal and external structural factors of literature. From the perspective of literary acceptance and politics, they studied the relationship between the internal structure and external factors of literature. Under this background, literary theory criticism appeared as the first rebuttal to post-formalism, which only paid attention to the literary language structure model. The literature turn in the 1980s was the second rebuttal of the linguistic turn. Literary criticism under the linguistic turn examined literary issues from a political perspective, which was a politically oriented corrective criticism that was too broad and not proactive enough. Therefore, Western literary criticism has begun to shift towards an ethical direction, separating the study of literary criticism from a political standpoint from an ethical and moral perspective, attempting to conduct a detailed discussion of literary texts from an ethical perspective (Sellars, 2020, p. 226; Jamal; Higham, 2021, p. 143). Under the background of the change in the position of literary criticism, the ethical philosophers' literary turn, such as Martha Nussbaum, further stimulated the ethical development of Western literary criticism. Martha Nussbaum explored the issue of literature and morality in Henry James' novels. And from the perspective of ethical philosophy, she conducted moral thinking and analysis of literary texts, hoping to obtain philosophical enlightenment of ethics and morality from literature. At the same time, Jacques Derrida and other post-deconstructionist theorists made literary evaluations from the perspective of deconstruction ethics, which further promoted the ethical turn of Western literary criticism. In literary research, literary scholars, such as Wayne Booth, viewed literary criticism from the perspective of ethics, always adhered to the concept of humanism historiography, and paid attention to the ethical value that literature brings to readers. As a new Aristotelian, Wayne Booth conducted in-depth research on the rhetoric of novel literature, emphasizing the ethical effects generated by rhetorical interactions between readers and authors in literary texts. Wayne Booth always insisted on thinking about literature and ethical issues, refuted and resisted linguistic literary criticism under formalism, and promoted the ethical turn of literary criticism (Grumett, 2019, p. 321).

The deconstruction movement in the late 1980s also promoted the ethical turn of literary criticism. The defense of the unreliable reading of ethical criticism in the deconstruction movement stimulated the ethical development of literary criticism. And the literary debate between Derrida and Levinas also played a promoting role in the ethical turn of literary criticism to a certain extent. In 1987, Paul de Man's incident made deconstructionists realize the ethical shortcomings of deconstruction theory and began to rethink the ethical responsibility of deconstruction, presenting the characteristics of ethical turn under deconstruction (Green, 2021, p. 209). Deconstructionists attempted to combine the ideology of literature with the study of literary texts, exploring the reading ethics of literature from the perspective of the

deconstructionist framework, and shifting the study of literary texts towards the ethical study of literature. Levinas' philosophical concept of the relationship between the self and the other and the ethical relationship provided a new research perspective for the literary ethical turn. Levinas criticized the ethical relationship between the self and the other from the perspective of the sexual experience of them. Influenced by Levinas, scholars, such as Adam Newton, also began to turn to the study of literary ethical criticism. Under the influence of various literary trends and theories, the literary criticism academic community has begun to explore the relationship between literature and ethics systematically on the existing academic foundation, and has embarked on the development path of pluralistic literary ethical criticism.

In short, the ethical turn of literary criticism is influenced by both internal and external factors. Externally, the deconstruction movement promotes the ethical turning process of literary theory and criticism, and turns the textual study of literature to the ethical study of literature. Internally, the ethical philosophers' literary turn, such as Wayne Booth and Hans-Georg Gadamer, further stimulated the ethical development of Western literary criticism.

## 2.2 CHARACTERISTICS OF ETHICAL TURN

In the 1980s, after more than 20 years of concealment, literary theory criticism again came to the attention of Western literary theory circles. With the addition of the special issue of literature and ethics in the *New History of Literature*, Western literary theory has paid more attention to the study of literature and ethics, and the relationship between them has become the focus of academic discussion.

Since then, the debate on this issue has grown rapidly and has resulted in a series of influential studies, such as J. Hillis Miller's *The Ethics of Reading*. Philosophers, writers and other scholars have re-examined the traditional notion of ethical criticism in literature and art, and have sought to uncover the necessary conditions for the emergence of ethical criticism.

Indeed, before the modern ethical turn took place, the term "turn" had already been clearly mentioned on various occasions, such as in Kurt Pincus's comments on the dramatic changes of the First World War and their subsequent impact, and in Richards', Leavis' and others' works, which refer to the ethical turn of criticism.

It is clear that this double turn is both within a discipline and as a result of interdisciplinary developments. The Emmanuel Levinas-Derrida debate, feminist criticism, postcolonialism, multicultural theory and queer criticism, among many others, have influenced the ethical turn in literary studies. In contrast, the philosophical turn to literature, especially what Rorty calls the turn from theory to narrative, can be seen as rejecting the

formalism in analyzing moral doctrines and advocating Aristotle's "human existence". This "human existence" can only be better explained by literature.

The intrinsic link between literature and ethics is not a new concept. It has existed since the ancient Greek period and has always been present in certain thinkers' critical paradigms. This ethical turn, however, is not just about opposing formalism. But, more importantly, about using literature as a way of knowing and a site for deeper moral inquiries about culture.

By combining the mimetic capacity of literary works with the intrinsic ethical function they serve, readers are provided with a model for moral imitation. That is to say, through narratives, literature can model people's behaviors and attitudes, instruct them on how to get out of various life dilemmas, and also make ethical judgments on various moral behaviors, thus having an impact on people's spirituality and temperament. In this way, the way of cognition provided by literature is inevitably associated with the narrative structure of human cognition. Therefore, we cannot analyze the main reason for the resurgence of ethical criticism in isolation, but have to take into account the development of the entire field of knowledge, which involves not only literature and philosophy, but also disciplines, such as psychology.

Hillis Miller, Wayne Booth and other literary theorists began to examine the internal relationship between literature and ethics from a new perspective of literary theory, and, gradually, formed a new pattern of ethics turn in literary theory. In essence, the ethical turn of Western literary theory is not only that of literature, but also the literary turn of philosophy.

### **2.3 USE ETHICAL CRITICISM TO CRITICIZE LITERATURE**

The ethical turn of Western literary criticism is not a return to dogmatic ethical interpretation, but rather a hope to use the interpretive paradigm of ethical criticism to conduct critical research on literary texts, which has obvious differences from traditional dogmatic criticism (Hirji, 2019, p. 671). The ethical turn of literary criticism is an ethical literary criticism centered on moral norms, which differs greatly from dogmatic moral preaching. Ethical literary criticism is carried out from an objective perspective, rather than distorting and exaggerating moral norms.

From the subject's perspective of the literary criticism, the ethical turn of Western literary criticism first lies in restoring the author's subjectivity status, while recognizing the social nature of the text, and exploring the environmental factors and intentions of literary ethical criticism from a social perspective. Ethical literary criticism starts from the author's ethical position, analyzes the literary text at different ethical levels, and criticizes literary theory from the height of ethics and morality. Secondly, ethical criticism in literary theory



emphasizes the importance of the reader's responsibility, linking the author's main position with the reader's responsibility, and exploring ethical issues from the perspective of the reading relationship between the author and the reader. It examines ethical issues in literature from the author's literary construction model, and explores the ethical relationship between literary texts and readers from the reader's perspective. Exploring the literary moral style and ethical relationships, from the structural forms of literary texts, is another important feature of the ethical turn in Western literary criticism. Ethical criticism of literary theory starts from the internal elements, such as discourse construction mode and subject structure of literary texts, and explores the moral and ethical essence of the text from the perspective of language and literature. Starting from the analysis of the form and genre of literary texts, ethical reflection is carried out. It studies the literary techniques and types adopted by different authors in literary texts, and analyzes the internal ethical characteristics and significance of the author's choice of literary techniques. From an ethical perspective, the ethical relationships and issues, in different forms of literary texts, are analyzed (Harðarson, 2019, p. 1518). Finally, although the ethical turn of literary criticism is a rebuttal to political nature's literary criticism, it is undeniable that political and social factors will inevitably have an impact on literary theory and criticism. Literary criticism, under the ethical turn, will also be inseparable from the role of politics. However, literary ethics critics have always insisted on conducting literary text research, from the perspective of interpersonal nature, and conducting ethical criticism of literary texts from the personal interpersonal nature's perspectives and of ethics.

### **3 THE TURN OF NEW HUMANISM ETHICAL CRITICISM FROM THE PERSPECTIVE OF “NEW ARISTOTELISM”**

#### **3.1 CO-GUIDANCE - WAYNE BUSS**

In the early 20th century, the “linguistic turn” of Western literary theory continued to develop, while the study of literary ethics gradually declined, leaving the mainstream vision of literary theory criticism. However, the ethical research of literary criticism has only temporarily declined and has not completely disappeared. In the 1980s, Western literary criticism shifted towards an ethical direction, carrying new connotations and missions, and promoting the ethical return of Western literary criticism. The new humanism and deconstruction, under the new Aristotelism, jointly constituted the two camps of the ethical turn of literary criticism. Among them, the ethical criticism, under the new Aristotelian school, represented by Wayne Booth and Martha Nussbaum, launched ethical criticism of literary texts from the perspective of new Aristotelism. Wayne Booth held an important position in the ethical revival of literary criticism and was a pioneer in the ethical turn movement of literary criticism. In the 1961 publication of *The Rhetoric of Fiction*, Wayne Booth conducted a specialized study on the narrative ethics of literary texts. And in his subsequent works, he

further explored the ethical and moral relationships of novel literature, forming a preliminary system of ethical literary criticism. As a new Aristotelian scholar of the Chicago school, Wayne Booth's literary ethics criticism took the new Aristotelism as the framework, and integrated Aristotelian theory and the Chicago school theory. Wayne Booth absorbed Aristotle's and Plato's theoretical viewpoints and emphasized the inseparable relationship between ethics and politics. It combined with political criticism to conduct literary ethical criticism and made value judgments on literary narrative works from the perspective of philosophical criticism, analyzing the ethical impact of literary works on readers (Asher; Wainwright, 2019, p. 25). Wayne Booth's ethical criticism broke the restriction of traditional dogmatic morality and made an in-depth study of ethical and moral issues in literary works from the perspective of new Aristotelism, opening the ethical criticism of literary theory.

In literary ethical criticism, Wayne Booth proposed the concept of "co-guidance" and conducted his own research on literary ethical criticism with this as the core. Wayne Booth pointed out that "co-guidance" is a combination of common and guidance. "Co-guidance" includes authors', readers' and oneself's all experiences and of the literary texts, with experience being the core of "co-guidance". When conducting literary criticism, "co-guidance" is to some extent passive, but it emphasizes that people compare and reference their own literary criticism results with others' ones to improve and further explore their own literary criticism (Detienne, 2021, p. 429). The concept of "co-guidance", proposed by Wayne Booth, provides a feasible form of reasoning for literary ethical criticism, combining specific principles and experiences, fully leveraging the interaction between one's own criticism and others' suggestions, and forming a more comprehensive literary ethical criticism judgment. Wayne Booth's concept of "co-guidance" ethical criticism in literary theory is somewhat inclusive and broad. He attempted to find a reasonable ethical research approach to guide literary criticism behavior and promote the improvement and revision of ethical criticism in literary texts.

Wayne Booth adhered to the concept of ethical pluralism, emphasizing the concept of "co-guidance" as the foundation, conducting literary ethical criticism from multiple perspectives, such as the author, readers, and literary texts, and obtaining more comprehensive ethical criticism judgments from multiple perspectives. From the author's perspective, Wayne Booth advocated the concept of the author being responsible to the reader. He demands ethical literary criticism from the perspective of the ethical relationship between the author and the reader, and opposed opposing ethical criticism views. Wayne Booth pointed out that authors should pay attention to their ethical responsibilities and obligations in creating literary texts, and prioritized the service nature of literary works. On the issue of the author's responsibility, Wayne Booth pointed out that the author should stand from the storyteller's perspective and shoulder the responsibility towards readers, society and truth. From the perspective of literary works, Wayne Booth studied the influence relationship between

literary texts, readers and authors, dividing the influence of literary works into two aspects: knowledge and morality (Mingucci, 2021, p. 210). Wayne Booth emphasized that literary works could stimulate readers' thirst for knowledge and might have an impact on their life values. Wayne Booth believed that the connotative relationship between people and literary works and their characters determined the ethical value of literary works, and put forward the implied author's importance in the creation of literary works. He believed that the implied author's existence could break the traditional cultural limitations and delivered ethical values and information to people from a height that traditional culture cannot reach.

Wayne Booth's literary ethical criticism is based on the new Aristotelian eudaemonism, and it develops the literary ethical criticism from the perspective of new humanism. The concept of "co-guidance" ethical criticism was proposed, emphasizing the comprehensive ethical criticism of literary texts from multiple aspects, such as the author, readers and society. Wayne Booth emphasized the metaphorical relationship of "text is a friend" in ethical criticism and advocated the development of diversified ethical criticism. He repositioned the moral obligation and ethical essence, from the perspective of literary criticism, and established his own framework for literary criticism. And Wayne Booth launched criticism practice on Mark Twain and other writers' works with the theory of new humanism literary criticism. And, in the practical application of the concept of ethical criticism, he emphasized the correct ethical criticism of literary works from the perspective of moral development, judged that the goal of moral development was the guide, and thought and weighed literary works.

Weynbus believes that both readers and literature have their own responsibilities. Readers should also avoid plagiarism and other improper behaviors, should also participate in the social discourse in a common way and share the reading experience with other potential readers in a noisy atmosphere. Booth's literary ethical criticism emphasizes a kind of "co-guiding" and emphasizes "guiding" the meaning and value of literature in the "sharing" with others. Different from the derivation based on logic, this co-guidance is essentially a kind of communication with others, a kind of communication mode between subjects, rather than the rational inquiry of subject loneliness.

### **3.2 PLURALISM - MARTHA NUSSBAUM**

Martha Nussbaum is another important figure in the literary ethical criticism under the new Aristotelism. Different from other literary critics' research on the value of ethical education and ethical thinking of literature, Martha Nussbaum, from the dual perspective of literature and ethics, has conducted a more in-depth study on the integration of literature and ethics. Martha Nussbaum studied the integration of literature and literary criticism from moral philosophy, and believed that literary criticism should start from the essential characteristics of literary text and launch literary ethical criticism based on moral philosophy

from the essential connotation of literary text (Koehn, 2020, p. 205). Martha Nussbaum emphasized the symbiotic relationship between literature and ethics, and believed that the internal relationship between them promoted ethical criticism of literary texts. Martha Nussbaum, standing in the perspective of new Aristotelism, examined the ethical issues of literary texts from the moral philosophers' perspective, echoed Wayne Booth's ethical criticism from the height of philosophy, and established the ethical pattern of criticism of Western literary theory under the new Aristotelism.

Martha Nussbaum launched ethical criticism of literary texts with the ethics of New Aristotelism as the core and combined with the moral views of the Stoic School. Martha Nussbaum pointed out that the New Aristotle's ethical position first lied in the pluralism of values. She believed that values should be compared and evaluated from multiple scales and perspectives. The pluralism of values should be emphasized and analyzed from the conflicts and differences between the essence of values. And Martha Nussbaum analyzed the relationship between emotional ethical values and event ethics in Aristotelism, emphasizing the moral life's contingency and unpredictability. Based on Aristotle's theory, Martha Nussbaum connected literature with moral philosophy. She pointed out that the descriptive ability of narrative literature could profoundly describe human values from the perspective of moral philosophy, and literary narrative was an important means to enhance the expression of moral philosophy. Martha Nussbaum also pointed out the role of literature as a platform in moral exploration and experience, and she believed that literary works provide a channel for readers' moral experience. Literary works were a platform for readers to launch moral thinking and reaction (Kearney, 2020, p. 300). Martha Nussbaum made an in-depth study of the narrative ability of literature and compared it with the characteristics of moral philosophy. From the perspective of literature and real-life experience, she pointed out the demand role of literary works in moral thinking and ethical exploration. Martha Nussbaum emphasized the reflection of novel literary works on moral reflection, and believed that novel literary works could help people to analyze the ignored moral reflection problems in daily life, especially novels, which could reflect on interpersonal emotion, life experience/and other life philosophy elements. Moreover, novel stories could evoke moral resonance among readers, helping them to engage in deep moral reflection in literary form and understand the life's meaning.

Pluralism and non-conventionality are the core of Martha Nussbaum's ethical criticism of literary theory. Traditional philosophy has the problem of difficult ethical choices in dealing with the diversity of morality. The evaluation and the grading of the value of moral products are an important issue in moral research, and the judgment criteria for ethical exploration directly affect the perception and evaluation of moral products. Martha Nussbaum absorbed Aristotle's viewpoint and pointed out that using quantitative standards to judge moral values has the tendency of traditional scientism. She believed that the pluralism of human values created the complexity of moral choices, and the value judgments

of moral products have the characteristics of complexity and pluralism. The ethical choices of moral products have their unique value foundation. Martha Nussbaum believed that the contribution of literature to the study of moral problems lied in its ability to describe the nature of the problem and provide examples for the investigation of moral and ethical choices. Martha Nussbaum emphasized the role of literary works in providing examples in the practice of moral philosophy, and believed that literary works could provide narrative examples for readers to help them improve their value perception of moral ethics (Ottuh; Idjakpo, 2021, p. 129). Martha Nussbaum, based on Aristotle's point of view, emphasized the influence of literature on readers' personal perception, and believed that literary works can speed up readers' perception of moral and ethical choices, which helped readers perceive ethics from the perspective of moral and emotional education. Martha Nussbaum, with her unique moral philosophy perspective, studied literary ethical criticism, put forward the foundation of literary ethical criticism with pluralism as the core, and established a literary ethical criticism system from the perspective of literary narrative emotion and moral perception, which promoted the development of new humanism in the ethical turn of Western literary criticism.

The dynamic interaction between literary theories and ethical theories is beneficial to both disciplines. She believes that ethical theory can provide intellectual reference and ideological rigor, as well as raise appropriate questions. In turn, literature and literary theory provide artistic concepts of "human ethical life" to properly deal with the life's complexities in a very proper aesthetic form. Nussbaum concluded that literary theory would face "a poor future" if it did not turn to "the ethical and social issues that make literature extremely important in our lives. "As a major supporter of neo-Aristotelianism, Nussbaum, as a philosopher, promoted the ethical criticism to promote the development of ethical criticism from the perspective of moral philosophy.

### 3.3 VALUABLE LITERATURE CRITICAL HORIZON

We can see the presence of Aristotelian pragmatism in the critique of literary ethics by Booth, Nussbaum and others, who presuppose "the reliability of language" and "the exact meaning of the text". This view was influenced by later literary criticism oriented towards structuralism. Booth and Nussbaum's ambiguous understanding of the real world and the world of words creates a direct imitative relationship between art and life. In both men's theories, the narrative approach ultimately becomes a concrete and thematic indoctrination into ethics, which enhances the reader's sensitivity and virtue.

The "co-guidance" advocated by Booth is not to give up self-consciousness and individual independent thinking, encouraging people to go with the tide and follow what others say. He only reminds people that "self" and "individual" are not synonymous with

"individual". The pursuit of self does not necessarily represent individual independence. A person with strong self-awareness often cannot accept the others' different opinions, while an individual with independent consciousness can respect the others' independent thinking. The contemporary self may not give up social interaction, but he or she will definitely give up conversation, retreat to a small community and survive in a public life of dissent and noise.

In *Poetic Justice: Literary Imagination and Public Life*, Martha Nussbaum expanded and extended the concept of the co-guidance of Booth literature. In her opinion, the essence of this literary co-guidance is a "public reason", which is a more objective and impartial empirical judgment: "an ethical stand that requires us to pay attention to ourselves and those who live completely different lives". The human nature, cultivated by the literary co-guidance ideal, is a "fair spectator" in Adam Smith's sense. How important this is to defending a healthy public life in a democratic society.

But their theories have different priorities. Booth's theory of ethical criticism originates from Aristotle and, later, from the humanism and the main point of humanism. The main point of the criticism theory is based from the author, text, readers and social aspects emphasized in the "book is friends" metaphor, from monism to pluralism theory and from moral obligation to ethical nature. The theory basis of ethical criticism of Aristotle's ethics, as the core and reference to the main ideas of Stoicism and the moral sentiment of the eighteenth century, is to advocate the values of diversity and conventions. It emphasizes the important role of emotion and perception in the ethical evaluation.

Both Booth's ethical pluralism and Martha Nussbaum's pluralistic ideas emphasize the importance of recognizing diversity and inclusion, and try to broaden our thinking on ethical and moral issues to understand and respond to complex ethical challenges in a more comprehensive and integrated way. But there are some differences between Booth's ethical pluralism and Martha Nussbaum's pluralistic ideas. The first is the focus of perspectives. Booth's ethical pluralism focuses on the dialogue and interrelationships between multiple moral viewpoints and value systems. He believes that different ethics can be complementary through dialogue and correction to achieve a more comprehensive and inclusive moral judgment. Nussbaum's pluralistic ideas focuses more on broadening our cognition and cultivating empathy and understanding through cultural diversity and individual differences. Then there are the different theoretical backgrounds. Booth's ethical pluralism, influenced by traditional ethical philosophers, such as Aristotle and Kant, explores the issue of diversity within the traditional moral framework. Nussbaum's multiple ideas are more inclined to apply the psychology and social science research of human development, focusing on the influence of cultural and social factors on individuals and how to promote the human beings' overall development. Finally, Booth's ethical pluralism plays a role in literature and ethical criticism, emphasizing the moral interaction and ethical education between works

and readers. Nussbaum's diverse ideas are more widely used in the fields of ethics, political philosophy and education, and she focuses on the importance of cultural diversity to human development and social justice.

Nussbaum emphasizes the importance of diversity and unconventional traditions in literary theory, reminding us to be open and inclusive when examining literary works. It challenges conventional ideas and expands the framework for our interpretation of literature. Diversity means that we should value and respect the existence of different cultures, experiences and voices. By focusing on unconventional literature and marginalized groups, we are able to broaden our horizons and enrich our understanding of human experience. This focus can promote reflective stereotypes and bias, as well as sensitivity to power structure and social inequalities.

Deconstructionist critics of literary ethics, on the other hand, point out that neo-Aristotelian critiques of literary ethics mistake literature for philosophy and underestimate the independence of the literary arts. They argue that literary works are not merely vehicles for moral themes, but that the very act of speaking and narrating is what makes literature unique. According to this view, morality is a predetermined standard of social behavior that can be obtained without the reader having to read the work. Literary ethics, on the other hand, is a contingent phenomenon that relies on the reader's real feelings about the ambiguity of literary language and the uncertainty of textual meaning, which are unpredictable before reading and can only be felt during the reading process. However, whether it is Booth or Nussbaum, they do not put moralizing in advance on the literary work itself, but only talk about the "moral" extension of the literary work. This kind of speech is a valuable perspective for literary criticism. The rich constructive approach to Aristotle's thought resources is innovative on the basis of inheritance, which makes New Aristotelian different from classical Aristotelian virtue ethics, and can be better adapted to the modern society's moral life. This makes New Aristotelian different from the classical Aristotelian virtue ethics, and can be better adapted to the modern society's moral life.

## CONCLUSION

In the 1980s, Western literary theory criticism moved towards a new pattern of ethical turn, launching literary theory criticism from the perspective of ethics, and forming two camps of new Aristotelism and deconstruction. Among them, the new Aristotelian ethical criticism is represented by Wayne Booth and Martha Nussbaum, and based on Aristotelian ethical theory, it puts forward a new ethical perspective of literary criticism from the perspective of moral philosophy. Wayne Booth combined the new Aristotelism and the Chicago school theory and put forward the concept of "co-guidance", which emphasized the development of literary ethical criticism from the author, reader, literary text and other

perspectives. It compared the results of literary criticism, obtained by oneself, with other people's ones to obtain a more perfect judgment of literary ethical criticism to provide a feasible form for literary ethical criticism. Martha Nussbaum, taking the ethics of new Aristotelism, as the core, and combining it with the moral views of the Stoic School, advocated carrying out diversified ethical criticism of literary theory from multiple scales and angles, and using literature to realize moral education. Wayne Booth and Martha Nussbaum, taking the new Aristotelian theory as the core, promoted the ethical turn of Western literary theory criticism and realized the development of new humanism of literary criticism. Booth's and Nussbaum's thoughts have an important influence on the ethical turn of literary theory, which jointly contribute to the literary theory centered on ethics and emotion, and enrich the exploration and understanding of the relationship between literary works and morality.

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