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## **SANAT VE SANSÜR: SANAT ZARAR VEREBİLİR Mİ?**

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### **ÖZET**

Bu makale sanat ve zarar kavramlarına odaklanmakta ve iki ana soruyu yanıtlamaya çalışmaktadır: Sanat zararlı olabilir mi, zararlıysa nasıl sansürlenebilir? Bu soruları cevaplamak için, bu makale esas olarak şunu iddia edecektir: Sanatın ne zararlarını ne de yararlarını tamamen göz ardı etmek mümkün değildir. Bu nedenle olası zararları ortadan kaldırmak için sansürlemek şart. Ancak bu sansür; zarar, sanat ve özgürlük olgularının zaman ve mekandaki farklılık ve değişimlerinin bilgisi temelinde yapılmalıdır. Sansür doğru yapılmazsa hem sanatçıların hem de izleyicilerin özgürlüğünü ihlal ederek daha fazla zarara yol açar. Sansürün doğru uygulanmasıyla, sanatın verebileceği zararlar sınırlanacak ve hatta ortadan kaldırılabilir. Üstelik, doğru sansürle sanat fiilen özgürleşecektir. Bu argümanların savunulması için ilk olarak, bu makale zararın tanımını ve sınırlarını iki farklı görüşten sunacaktır: Faydacılık ve Deontolojik Etik. İkinci olarak, sanatın tanımı üç farklı görüş temelinde verilecektir: temsil olarak sanat, ifade olarak ve biçim olarak sanat. Üçüncü olarak, sanatın zararlı olup olmadığı sorusuna cevap vermek için sanat ve zarar arasındaki bağlantı analiz edilecektir. Daha sonra şu sorular tartışılacaktır; sansüre kim karar verir, bir şeyin ahlaki olarak kabul edilebilir olup olmadığına kim karar verebilir?

**Anahtar Kelimeler:** Sanat, Zarar, Sansür, İfade özgürlüğü.

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## ART & CENSORSHIP: CAN ART BE HARMFUL?

### ABSTRACT

This paper focuses on the concepts of harm and art, and tries to answer two main questions: can art be harmful, how can it be censored? To answer these questions, this paper will mainly claim that: it is not possible to completely ignore neither harms nor benefits of the art. Therefore, it is a must to censor it to eliminate the possible harms; but this must be made based on the knowledge of harm, art, freedom, and differences and changes of these in time and place. If censorship is not made right, then it would even cause more harm by violating the freedom of both artists and viewers. By doing censorship right, the harms would be limited and even vanished. Moreover, with the right censorship, art would be actually liberated. To claim so; first, this paper will introduce the definition and limits of the harm from two different views: Utilitarianism and Deontological Ethics. Second, the definition of art will be given based on three different views: art as representation, as expression, and as form. Third, the link between art and harm will be analysed to answer the question of whether art is harmful or not. Then mainly and lastly, the questions of, who decides on censorship, who can decide whether something is morally acceptable for a society or not will be answered.

**Keywords:** Art, Harm, Censorship, Freedom of Expression.

### INTRODUCTION

Harm, as one of the most controversial concepts in philosophy, being debated from the perspectives of different views throughout the history. It might be seen only as bodily and psychologically injury, but actually there is more to that. It is something that people are always trying to avoid, always try to limit or stop it. How can you avoid or stop something that you do not really know what it is or its extend? Philosopher have tried to come up with a definition and limitation for it, but no one could come up with something that is accepted by all without any opposition, critique. Different philosopher approached the issue from different sides and finally said different things. This paper will try to analyse two of them: Mill's utilitarianism and Kant's deontological ethics.

Utilitarianism looks at the consequences of an action to evaluate the goodness or badness of it. The main aim for the consequence is the maximum possible happiness for maximum number of people. Therefore, harm can be seen as something that in consequence decreases the happiness. Here, there is a harm principle, that

allows people to be free as they wish as long as they do not harm others (Mill, 1859/2001). In deontological ethics, consequences are irrelevant, rather the intrinsic nature of an action determines the goodness or badness of an action. Here, there is a categorical imperative, Kant's test for good and bad (1788/1999). The harmful thing is fails to past this test. Therefore, whatever arbitrary and whatever treats people as means are harmful. Here, one may ask the question of what if a harmful action leads to greater good and happiness? Principle of permissible harm tries to answer this by using the trolley problem: you would choose to do lesser evil to produce greater good (Kamm, 1996).

Just like harm, art is also a contested concept. Its definition is not also accepted by all and even, whether its definition is needed philosophically or not is even not yet decided. But the questions about it have always been asked and still being asked by philosophy, such as what is the secret of art's power and charm; is art there because only for us to enjoy and savour, with the lines and colours, tones, words and so on, or is it there to say something; is art powerful enough to influence moral character of people and society?

This paper again will discuss different views on definition of art: art as representation, art as expression, and art as form. In the first view, Plato in Republic claims that art is mimicry, it is a copy of a copy of the form. And only form contains knowledge, art on the other hand only engages the lower part of the soul. In the second, art as expression; Hegel (1975) for example, claims that art is a supreme expression of culture, it is not inferior to all other spheres such as religion or philosophy. And in third, Kant (1790/1911) sees art as a product of the genius, it is something to be evaluated based on its formal qualities, otherwise the aesthetic value is missed.

Considering all these, the question of; can art be harmful or not, rises. Again, in Republic, Plato claims that art is harmful because it perverts and corrupts. Since it is only an imitation, it makes us attached to things that are copy of the copy of eternal forms. Therefore, in ideal city, there should be no art. He is not the only one who believes that art would bring harm to society. But there is also other side of the debate. For example, in Poetics, Aristotle also believed art is imitation, but not an object, rather imitation of nature. To him, art can help us understand and learn by representing uncommon circumstances and emotions. It is a way for moral and emotional growth. But the discussion is not simple as answering the question of is it harmful or not, there are other questions to be brought up, such as; what about the art that is disturbing because it contains some immoral content,

what about seemingly harmful art leading a good thing, what if an art only harms so minimum number of people but benefits all others, what if bad or ignorant person creates a beneficial art, what about freedom of expression?

This paper will try to discuss them all and claims that it is not possible to say that art is completely harmful or completely beneficial, so it cannot fully be banished from society or fully be allowed. Then another question arises: can it be legitimate to prohibit people from creating, publishing, or viewing, reading art? If so, then in what conditions, who will decide what should be censored and how? This paper answers this question by mainly claiming that: whoever is authority of censorship must have knowledge on what they are doing. They must know what harm is, and must know what art is, they must also know the freedom of expression, and historical and cultural differences in moral codes. Only by knowing all these, censorship might be made right and may stop the harm. Otherwise, censorship itself would become harmful for both art and freedom. If it is right made, then censorship would become a protection of people and society, and would actually liberate art.

In claiming these, this paper will first introduce the term harm and discusses its definition and limitation from different views. Second, the term art will be defined with considering different views again. Then in the third section, the main questions of; can art be harmful, and how can it be censored will be asked and answered. Then there will be a conclusion.

### **What is harm?**

Harm is such a contested concept. Its definition might seem simple in dictionaries, such as in dictionary of philosophy: “bodily injury and injury to one’s central and legitimate interests” (Blakburn, 2008, p. 160), but it is actually very hard to define harm; its scope, roots, reasons, effects in long and short term are not easy to identify and understand.

Harm might be done by an individual, or group of people, or by an institution. Punching, words, forcing someone to do something, shaming, or neglect can hurt someone; meaning that harming can take different forms, such as physical, psychological, sexual, social, legal, or sometimes financial (Bellaby, 2012). It also includes self-harming and self-neglect issues, in which there is bodily injury or psychological, or other forms of injuries again. It can take place in anywhere, anytime (Nahra, 2014).

Determining the limits of the harm is also very difficult. Something might be harmful for one and not for others, some may seem not harmful but actually cause harm in the long term, or the opposite may also occur (Christie, Groarke, & Sweet, 2008). For example, doing a sport may seem harmful to a body because muscles would become sore and would ache; but in long term, it is actually quite beneficial to a person's health and body.

The definition and limits of harm would differ from different ethical perspectives. This paper will mainly focus on two: John Stuart Mill's consequentialist/utilitarian view and Immanuel Kant's deontological view.

John Stuart Mill, who was a 19th century British philosopher, is recognized as one of the key proponents of Utilitarianism, and an important figure in the development of liberalism (Arnold, 2006). To him, and as utilitarianism suggests: "actions are right in the proportion as they tend to promote happiness, wrong as they tend to produce the reverse of happiness. By happiness is intended pleasure, and the absence of pain; by unhappiness, pain, and the privation of pleasure." (1863/2001, p. 10). From here, it can be understood that, in his theory rightness or wrongness of an action is dependent upon the consequences of it, and the main goal consequently is happiness for all.

In *On Liberty* (1859/2001), Mill argues that since each individual have different natures, and "human nature is not a machine to be built up after a model" (p. 55); they should all be given a free space to develop their own character, personality and way of living. This is best for both individuals and society. His ideal society is where everybody is happy and free of pain. In his book *Utilitarianism* (1863/2001), he claims that "happiness is the sole end of human action" (p. 39); not only an individual's happiness, but happiness for all. So, anything that would violate this happiness is needed to be intervened and limited. To him, the only justifiable limitation to one's liberty is when that person's actions harm others (p. 13). So, a person is free to act however he wishes unless he harms somebody else. This is called as the harm principle. Mill's principle allows a people to harm themselves, he sees this as an individual liberty; for example, drinking too much alcohol. But if being drunk would lead a person to harm, neglect or violate others' liberty, then Mill would allow state to take action and intervene, (Christie, Groarke, & Sweet, 2008). That is to say: if a person's actions lead to a harmful consequences for the society, meaning that if an actions leads to the decrease in the happiness for all, then state can legitimately intervene that person's liberty.

On the other side, Immanuel Kant, who was an 18th century German philosopher, and whose theory is best described as deontological ethics, considered ethics as an essential part of human life. According to his theory, rightness or wrongness of an action depends on the intrinsic nature of the action, rather than the consequences of it. After all people should not be blamed for the consequences of their actions because they cannot fully control or foresee them, intentions, and actions themselves are more important (Wilde, 1894). That is to say for Kant, the primary concern of ethics is to do the right thing simply because it is the right thing to do, not because for self-interest of a person, or because it would produce good consequences, or for any instrumental reason (Christie, Groarke, & Sweet, 2008).

As Kant claims, the actions would have a moral worth only if they are motivated by a sense of duty, which Kant calls as: categorical imperative, a test of right or wrong (MacKinnon & Fiala, 2015). The first test is maxim, the principle of action and the principle that can be universalized without any contradiction (Kant, 1788/1999). Kant gives the example of lying to discuss this universalizable principle. Imagine a situation that an individual needs to borrow money, and he knows that others would only lend him money if he lies that he is able to repay it. Should he lie to get the money? Let's suppose that he does that and lying to get money is a universal law, a maxim, meaning that everyone does that. Would then people achieve anything by lying? There would be no trust, everyone would become suspicious of another, and as a result no one would lend money to one another. Promising would make no sense, therefore no one would get what they desire. Moreover, this also violates another test: the test of treating the others as ends (Christie, Groarke, & Sweet, 2008). Lying someone to get something is treating that person as a mean, being disrespectful to that person's autonomy, which is defined as self-government (MacKinnon & Fiala, 2015). So, considering both tests, if an action is not universalizable and if it is about treating others as ends, then that action cannot be a duty; therefore cannot be a morally worth action.

Rather than looking at the consequents to define the harm, deontological view looks at the action itself and considers the intentions and motivations. So, the concept harm can be considered as the actions that cannot pass the test of categorical imperative; that are not universalizable, that are arbitrary, and that does not treat people as ends are harmful. Also from this perspective, one might ask: would banning a harmful action, word, or institution can past the test of Kant's categorical imperative?

Considering both views, another question can also be raised: what about a harm that leads to a greater good and happiness? Frances Kamm tries to answer this question with introducing a new term: principle of permissible harm. She begins her discussion with asking the question: when it is morally permissible to kill some people to save others, and she goes to the idea of “it is permissible for greater good to produce lesser evil” (Kamm, 1996, p. 172).

Kamm uses trolley problem, which is a classic clash between utilitarianism and deontological ethics, to discuss her theory: imagine a situation where there is a runaway trolley going down the railway tracks, on which there are five people unable to move. You are next to a lever, which would change the way and lead the trolley to the track on which there is only one person. You may do nothing and let 5 people to die, or you can pull the lever and save those five, but only allow one to die (Foot, 1967). What would you do, would you let five people to die instead of one or would you pull the lever to save more?

Kamm argues that people would believe it is not morally permissible to kill one innocent and healthy person to harvest his organs to save many more, but it seems morally permissible to pull the lever to save five (1996). So, her theory provides a deontological prescription for the situations in which people are allowed to act in a harmful way.

In brief, utilitarian John Stuart Mill says that maximum possible happiness for maximum number of people is the ultimate goal as consequences of actions, and whatever harms the society should be avoided, consequently one’s liberty can only be intervened if he harms others. On the other hand, Immanuel Kant, whose theory is best described as deontological ethic, believes that consequences are irrelevant to the moral worth of an action. Rather, we should look the intentions and motivations, and evaluate an action based on the action itself. And to do so, we should test an action based on categorical imperative to see if it is good or bad. An in between, there is a discussion of permissible harm: being allowed to do some harm to get a greater good.

What about art and harm: is art harmful, is it acceptable to limit the liberty of the artist, what if artist’s intention is good but only the consequence is harmful, to what extent does an artworks’ and artist’s harm permissible?

## What is art?

Art is such a concept that both its definition and whether it should be defined or not is controversial. One side believes it is not philosophically useful to define it, the others have been trying to define it for centuries.

Defining something is about determining differences of something from other things. Therefore, the definition of art is a need to understand the properties of art. For example, without a definition, it is not possible to distinguish an artwork that is shaped as a table, from an ordinary table. Yet, art lacks a satisfactory definition because its meaning does change through time, and art has strong ties with other contested concepts. For example: trying to come up with a definition, brings such discussions to a light: should art have a purpose, should it be displayed to the others, does it have a value and how can we determine it, what about art's relation with beauty, aesthetic, politics, history, emotion, language, natural sciences, creativity, and reason?

The term art comes from the Latin word "ars" and refers to the art, skill, or craft (Marder, 2019). In dictionary, it is simply defined as: "The expression or application of human creative skill and imagination, typically in a visual form such as painting or sculpture, producing works to be appreciated primarily for their beauty or emotional power" (Oxford Dictionary, 2020). In philosophy, there are different views on the definition of art, such as: art as representation, as expression, or as form.

Plato developed the idea of art as a representation, or as mimesis, which means imitation or copying of reality (Gebauer & Wulf, 1995). In Republic, he says that art is mimetic by its nature. It is dependent on the imitations of ordinary objects and events of ordinary life, and ordinary objects are dependent on the non-physical unchanging forms. That is to say: a picture must be a picture of something, and that something is a physical representation of a form. While art is inferior to ordinary objects, ordinary objects are inferior to forms. Since art only mimics the ordinary appearance of forms, it cannot contain knowledge, and since art is a copy of a copy of a form; it can only engage with the lower part of soul.

In time, art is beginning to be seen also as an expression, and audience response became important; it is beginning to be expected from art to evoke some response. More response, better art. (Marder, 2019). For example, Hegel's view of art. In his view, Hegel discusses art and beauty together, and he defines beauty as an expression of absolute truth. On this account, artistic beauty is superior to the natural beauty. It is a medium for expressing deepest values of culture. It is a

supreme mode of cultural expression, followed by religion and philosophy (Hegel, 1975). So, in Hegel's view, art is not seen as inferior to other spheres, rather it only fulfils its supreme task when it is placed in the same sphere as religion and philosophy, and when it is simply "one way of bringing to our minds and expressing the Divine, the deepest interests of mankind" (p. 7).

Another view of art is Kant's. He defines art as "a mode of representation which is intrinsically final, and which, although devoid of an end, has the effect of advancing the culture of the mental powers in the interests of social communication" (Kant, 1790/1911, p. 306). He sees art as a creative activity of the artistic genius, that is "the talent (natural endowment) which gives the rule to art (...), and is a talent for producing that for which no definite rule can be given, and not an aptitude in the way of cleverness for what can be learned according to some rule; and that consequently originality must be its primary property" (p. 307-308). The definition of art is only a small part of his aesthetic theory because his main focus is not art, but when looking at the definition formalist and expressivist elements can be seen (Adajian, 2018). In his view, art is not seen something that has a concept, because content is not of an aesthetic interest. Rather art is something that should be judged based on the formal qualities. Most people who say that they enjoy paintings just because they are representations of daily life or situations, or feelings misses the aesthetic joy. This view especially became more important in the 20th century, when art became more abstract (Marder, 2019).

One view, which makes art as an inferior, believes art is a representation of a representation of the form. Another view, which puts art into a superior sphere, believes it is a supreme expression of a culture. And in another art should be seen as a form and should be judged based on the formal qualities. The controversy on the definition of art is still an on-going debate. Another controversial issue about art is whether it has a moral value or not, can it be bad or good, can it be harmful?

### **Can art be harmful, should it be censored?**

Throughout the history the topic of the role of art has been discussed. From Plato to today, philosophers worried about the influential power of the art on behaviour, thought and character even, and its potential to corrupt people. Some said art cannot be harmful, whether because it does not have a significant role in society, or because it does not contain any moral value; but some warned people about the dangers of art on either moral education, or power of corruption, or power of lead people into doing bad.

In his work *Republic* (ca. 375 B.C./1941), Plato, who is regarded as one of the greatest figures in Western philosophy, insisted that art is harmful for the society. He believed that; whoever creates things, a table, or a poem, must be knowledgeable and be masters of what they are doing. Only with the things that are created based on the knowledge can do good. Since an artist does not actually know the form, but only mimics the physical objects, then what he is creating is inferior and harmful.

In his *Allegory of the Cave* (*Republic*, 514a-520a); there are people who lives in a cave, in chains, facing a blank wall with no other side to look for their whole life. They can only watch the shadows, that are reflected by the fire behind them, that are of the objects passing right outside the cave entrance. Since they are not able to turn around and see the outside, the shadows become their own reality. A true philosopher can free himself from the cave and then see that shadows are only the reflections, but not reality. That would be painful at first, to look at the light, even it would not be possible for him to see the truth at first sight. Yet eventually he would realise the situation. But the others would not want to leave the cave and see the truth, since this life in the cave is the only life that they know. Here Plato sees art as the shadows on the wall of the cave, so art is kind of a distorted reality, a copy of a copy. The form is made by God, therefore contains the knowledge; physical things are made by humans, and art is made by imitator. Which means that even a carpenter who makes a table is far better than an artist in the good society. At least a carpenter has a true opinion about what he is doing, but artists does not have neither knowledge, nor truth. Therefore, art does not contain any knowledge, and harms the soul and fortifies the worst part of the soul (602c-603b). As Plato would say: art is harmful. Therefore, should be strictly censored, and should be banned from the good city. From here it can be understood that Plato did not gave so much credit to the freedom. To him, a limitless freedom would end up in no good because in such society people would be open to deception, manipulation and even slavery. There might need for the free exchange of ideas, but still art only operates by the representation of a representation of the form; so, art might actually cloud the truth and knowledge, rather than clarifying them. Artists assume that they have the knowledge, but they do not so they are presenting a deceived knowledge, they are just imitators, so they are harmful for the society because they can easily corrupt people (375 B.C./1941).

Plato is not the only one who believes that mimetic art is harmful and should be banished from the ideal society. Throughout history, art is seen harmful for various reasons; its power to corrupt, nudity, violence, discriminatory content, insult to certain groups, and so on. But there is another side of the debate; what about art's benefits and freedom of expression?

For example, Aristotle, even though he was student and colleague of Plato at the Academy in Athens, his philosophy eventually changed and took a different way than Plato's. He discussed the areas of philosophy that Plato did not consider. While Plato was abstract and utopian, Aristotle was empirical and practical (Duingnan, 2020). Yet, it would be wrong to say that their philosophies are fully opposite to one another.

As Plato, Aristotle also believed that all art is imitation, but not imitation of object, rather imitation of nature and human action. He moreover focused more on the mimesis as representation, which means the representation not of anything actual but of the things that might be actual. In his theory, mimesis is not artificial as Plato described. For Aristotle mimesis is a natural thing: when we imitate thing, it actually helps us to learn (335 B.C/2008). For example, talking about a monkey would not be enough for a person, who has not seen it before, to grasp the knowledge or idea of it; but when we draw a picture and show it to that person, he would easily understand it. So, Aristotle believed that art aims to imitate the life, and people imitate what they want to learn. Therefore, it might be said that art is the act of learning with experience. It is what people always do; people learn fear or courage with stories of heroes, they tend to act like a hero and be good for example. For Plato, emotions were dangerous and should always be controlled by reason, but for Aristotle there should be balance between the two. He even praises artist for their ability to understand and represent deep features of human character. To him, mimesis is a distinguishing quality of an artist. Artists are distinguished from all other people because they have an ability to produce imitation. In *Poetics*, Aristotle also discusses the tragedy as a key concept, he describes it as an imitation of action, and as a form of education that provides moral insights and emotional growth. Tragedy teaches us about ourselves. A successful and good tragedy produces *katharsis*, which is a purification and cleansing through pity and fear. It treats unbearable passions that people hold in their minds. He moreover claims that education of art is a must for the young. He believed that the music we listen, the painting we see would make a sentimental alteration on us. Art can

resemble anger, gentleness, courage, moderateness, and so on. These may be emotions that we would not normally feel, but through art we feel and learn them. We can also get knowledge about some uncommon circumstances, that normally we would not come across, but art can easily present. So, for Aristotle; all art is mimetic but all people learn through imitation. So, art is not harmful, on the contrary it helps people learn and provokes emotional growth through imitating the circumstances, human characters, and emotions. Even, it is a must for education of the young.

Plato's view of art might be too pessimistic, while Aristotle have missed much of the discussion about the harms of it. Nothing can be fully beneficial or harmful, nothing deserves to be fully banished from the society and also fully be involved into every area of our lives with its all influence. There is more to discuss: what if someone who is ignorant, as in Plato's terminology, composes a brilliant music that would benefit the society? He might not have a knowledge or idea of what he is doing, but still, he can do something beneficial, something that make people pursuit the good character, the virtuous, or knowledge itself?

What if you see some art that is disturbing because it contains some immoral content such as violence on children? Would you think that you should do it too, or would your disgust and opposition to the violence get stronger? Would you believe such art is harmful to your values, or it actually helps raising awareness? Some believe that violence in art, for example in movies or pornography, might lead more violence in actual life. But actually, as studies show; there is only indirect relation between violence in art and violence in actual life (Vandette, 2019; Wicclair, 1987). So, it is not really possible to say that immorality in art would make people vice. Or is it? Still, we cannot deny that both violence in art and violence in actual life rises together. The relation between them might be indirect still, but we cannot ignore the discussion about their effects on each other.

What if a harmful looking art would lead to a good thing? For example, Mikhail Bakhtin's famous concept of Carnivalesque (1984); he mostly was interested in great carnivals of Medieval Europe, and suggested that in such times as carnivals, a new mode of one's relation to one is elaborated. Unmasking, and "disclosing of the unvarnished truth under the veil of false claims and arbitrary ranks" (p. x) are essential aspects of this relation. He saw carnivals as anarchic and liberating period in which the political, legal, and ideological authority of both church and state were inverted. Not just authority but all concepts, relations, taboos become upside down in carnivals; what is disgusting becomes something honorary, what is wrong

becomes the right. One might say this is very harmful since it would corrupt people and lead them to live their daily lives as they live in carnivals. But on the contrary, Bakhtin claims that; even for a short period of time, carnivals are liberating, therefore, it clears the ground for new ideas to enter the public discourse. He even goes further and claims that carnivals encourage the spirit of free thinking, and that's why the revolutions are made possible by the carnivals, even European Renaissance itself. He names literary form of carnivals as carnivalesque, in which there might be violence, bad language, exaggeration, satire, and so on. In this way, for Bakhtin, carnivalesque opens a way for imagination and never-ending emancipation. So then, as it can be understood from here; a good thing might come from something seemingly harmful. Then can we simply let people harm one another just because something good might come from it, and world would become a better place at the end. It is a must to think all this through to see what would lead something good and what would make everything worse. It is not possible to deny that something seemingly harmful may lead to good. Seeing a movie about inequalities between races would raise your awareness and make you think about possible solutions to this, or just make you try to become less racist. But at the same time, we should also not deny that waiting that good would come out of bad eventually is not a proper way to deal with the harm.

Another case is the trolley case example, that was discussed in the previous section, what if you let one painting to be put into a museum, you harm one, but millions of others would benefit from it? Wouldn't this something to be allowed? Permissible harm principle would say yes to this. But is it really possible to evaluate the possible harms of a painting, just like counting people on the two sides of the railroad, and choosing on the basis of the numbers? There is also a problem about using this principle in an unfair way and for certain people's or groups' benefit. Thus, this paper does not claim that we should not let any kind of harm in art, because again; we cannot simply ignore such claims as Bakhtin's. But there must be some sort of censorships to control and limit the harm. This would lead to the discussion of: how to use the censorship, who would decide on it and how? One cannot simply say that art is harmful and should be fully banned, but we cannot also simply ignore the possible harms that it might cause and say that art is fully good and beneficial. It is a must to think of the long-term consequences, the consequences on minorities, the consequences on the death people, religious people and the future generations, the possibility of good and benefits coming out of harm the danger of using permissible harm principle unfairly, the problem of

insult, and so much other discussions. That is to say, there must be a way in between; both harms and benefits must be seen correctly, and censorship must be used accordingly.

Censorship goes way back to the first-time human being begin to create, or even talk; certain groups, power holders have always tried to control or restrict what people are saying, writing, drawing, composing and also their access to speeches, books, movies, music and so on. The term censorship comes from the Latin word *censere*; “to give as one’s opinion, to assess” (Zimmermann, 2015, p. 87). In dictionary it is defined as: “the practice of officially examining books, movies, etc., and removing things that are considered to be offensive, immoral, harmful to society, etc” (Frank, 2015). Many sees censorship as having a bad connotation; as suppression of ideas and information, violation of freedom, pressure on public, tool of a certain interest of the government and a way of government imposing its views of what is appropriate and offensive, or one’s own prohibition on his or her own work because of fear or concerns of being accepted, liked or sold (see: Culture Shock, 2020; Merriam-Webster, 2020; Hilgers, 1908; Academic American Encyclopedia, 1996).

The debate between censorship and freedom of expression leads attention to this question: does and should the government have the authority to tell people what to create, write or tell; what to watch, listen or read? There must be some kind of censorship to limit the harm and protect society from it. But there is also a chance of government to violate the freedom, while trying to protect peace and order in society. So, the question here is not whether censorship to be used or not, rather the question should be: who decides on the censorship and how.

Plato’s censorship for art might be too severe. But he has a wonderful point: one must have the knowledge about what they are doing. Whoever decides on censorship are moral guardians. So, the task is no easy. They must know what is appropriate for the moral codes of the society.

Throughout the paper, the definitions of both harm and art were given but still there is no finalized decision on what they really are, and no definition that is accepted by all. To become an authority of censorship, one must know all the debates about the harm, one cannot simply say that nudity is harmful, or violence is harmful, therefore they all should be banned from all the artworks. It is a must to consider the long-term and short-term harmful consequences, the consequences on the death and future generations. A thing might be seen not harmful at the time

but might actually be quite harmful in 20 years for example. It is also a must to treat equal to all and be aware of the harms on both majorities and minorities.

What is harmful may change from society to society, culture to culture. For example, some cultures may accept to nudity to a degree, but some other culture may feel highly offended with it. Some cultures might be okay to see a religious figure in an artwork; in some cultures, it might be fully unaccepted. Harm also changes in time. Something might be highly harmful for about a time because of a special occasion, and when that occasion is gone; then that something might be morally quite acceptable. Therefore, one must be aware of all this changes and differences to become an authority of censorship.

Whoever is making the censorships must also know what art is and must know its value and its ties with freedom of expression, which refers to the “ability of an individual or group of individuals to express their beliefs, thoughts, ideas, and emotions about different issues free from government censorship” (Freedom Forum Institute, 2020). Being able to freely express one’s thoughts, views or beliefs is part of what it is to be autonomous, since autonomy is intrinsically valuable, then freedom of expression too (Scanlon, 1982). Yet this does not mean that everyone has limited freedom on what they want to say, write, sing, or create. Think of harm principle: one is free as long as he or she does not harm the others. So harmful expressions should be prohibited. Such as the ones that would bring physical damage or injury, or the ones that places another person in “apprehension of imminent bodily harm” (p. 210), or the ones that would make people an object of public ridicule, or the ones that may “radically increase the capacity of most citizens to inflict harm on each other” (p. 211). The person who will prohibit such expressions must know and fore see all possible harms such as these. One simply cannot assume that an artwork would be harmful therefore should be prohibited. It is a must to be sure, otherwise whoever will implement the prohibition might cause even more harm by violating the freedom of expression.

The authorities of censorship must also be virtuous themselves. The codes that they are following to decide on censorship must also be their own moral codes for living. Their choices on what to limit, what to allow must be consistent with their own actions in their lives.

One can say all this is not possible or necessary to know all these to decide on what is morally acceptable for the society, what is harmful or not. Yes, it might not be fully possible but, one still must pursue the knowledge on both harm, art, freedom of expression, historical and cultural differences, and so on. We do not

simply kill or steal just because we know that we are not perfectly moral or good. We may make mistakes and we may sometimes make morally deficient action like lying for example, but we do not give up on all morality or goodness. Furthermore, it is ignorant to say that knowledge on what we are doing is unnecessary. Especially on this issue because whoever is deciding on what to limit and what to allow is trying to do the right, but how one can do so without knowing what is right? Going back to the simplest example from Plato: how a carpenter would make a table without knowing what table is and how to do it? Without having the knowledge, censorship is doomed to be seen as bad, as a violation of freedom. It is also doomed to be used by bad, used based on certain benefits, and doomed to cause even more harm.

In brief, we cannot ignore both the harms and benefits of art. Meaning that neither seeing only the good, nor seeing only the bad is right. It is a must to be aware of both sides, and a must to act accordingly. Censorship is not a bad or harmful thing; on the contrary if used right, it can banish the harm and it can be a protective and useful tool to secure the peace in society. But again, if only it is used right: and to do so, whoever decides on what to censor, how to censor and how much to censor must know what they are doing. Moreover, if the censorship is implemented based on the knowledge of harm, art, freedom of expression, the historical and cultural differences; then no one needs to worry about the violation for freedom or human rights. On the contrary, censorship would strengthen the freedom because it would get rid of the threats to it.

## **CONCLUSION**

To define harm, to understand whether it exist or not, and to understand its extend is very hard. Doing these with considering its relation with art is even harder, since the concept of art is also contested. Harm is simply defined as bodily or psychological injury or injury to interests of person. But there is more to that. It is made by individuals, groups, or institutions; it can be in form of punching or words, or financial, or social and so on. Its extend and limitation is also hard to determine. Throughout time, lots of different discussions emerged attempting to do so. This paper analysed two of them: Mill's and Kant's.

In utilitarian view, in which Mill is the key proponent, harm is defined on the basis of the consequences. Whatever treats the possible maximum happiness of maximum number of people is harmful. Here, there is the harm principle define: people are free to do whatever they want as long as they do not harm others.

In deontological view, that best describes Kant's ethics, the action itself is important, not the consequences. So, the goodness or badness of an action is determined by looking at the action itself. There is categorical imperative here: a test of good or bad. And in it there is the principle of universalizability and autonomy. According to this principle, harm can be defined as something that cannot pass the test of categorical imperative and that are arbitrary.

Just like harm, art is defined differently in different views. This paper discussed three views: art as representation, art as expression, and art as form. Plato was the one who believed that art only represents, it mimics the physical objects and objects mimics the forms, the ideas. So, art is only a copy of a copy of the form. On the other view, Hegel claimed that art is the medium of expressing deepest values of culture. He sees art in a more optimistic way as a supreme mode of cultural expression. Kant, on the other hand, defines art as a creative activity of genius and believed that art should be valued on its formal qualities.

From here, this paper asks the main question of; can art be harmful? And tried to answer with Plato's and Aristotle's views. The first believed that art is harmful because it is mimicry, therefore it should be banned from the ideal society. The latter also believed that all art is imitation, but this is natural, and art helps people to grasp the idea of something and it provides moral insights and emotional growth. Considering these, it can be said that it is not possible to completely ignore harm or benefits. Art may lead both. Therefore, the question should be how to control the harms and benefits, how to limit the harms and how to use the censorship?

Whoever want to become an authority of censorship must have knowledge on what he or she is doing; must know what the harm is, must know what the art is. They must know what the value of art is, what is the limits and value of freedom, and must be aware of the historical and cultural differences. Only by knowing these, censorship can be made right and may stop the harm and protect its citizens. If censorship is rightly made, then it would become a system of protection of people and society, rather than becoming a harm itself.

Having such knowledge may seem hard, indeed it is. But it is not something we should give up on. Without proper censorship, it is not possible to limit the harms of the art. Even worse; the harms would become more because censorship would turn into a harm itself and it would violate the freedom, this would create counter actions and problems. Therefore, proper censorship within the community, is a must for art to be actually liberated. Because whoever has a power of limiting the

art would know what to limit and what to allow exactly. As a result, trust would raise to both authorities of censorship and art; meaning that people would now be sure that what they are seeing is moral and right. They would not be afraid to face with something immoral, or highly disturbing, or harmful while watching a movie or going to a theatre for example. And they would be fully sure that they also get the content that artists would want to give.

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