Kant on the Role of Beauty in Moral Motivation

SCOTT R. STROUD

Determining what role the experience of the beautiful plays in Kant's system of morality is difficult. While some suggest it holds an instrumental role in moving us to uphold the dictates of morality in specific situations, this seems objectionable due to the internalism of motivation in Kant's reading of moral worth. I argue that the best reading of the use of the beautiful in moral matters seems to be as a symbolic impetus to motivate agents to cultivate themselves into the "ruler" of their inclinations by showing them proof of the possibility of successfully pursuing the dictates of virtue. On such a reading, the experience of the beautiful holds less of a constitutive role in moral motivation in given situations (such as the role an inclination to love others would hold in an interpersonal situation), and more of a general motivational push toward cultivating one's ability to will from the moral law through disinterested, rational activity.

I. Introduction

Kant famously argued in the *Critique of the Power of Judgment* (1790, *CJ*)[1] that the beautiful is a symbol of the morally good (§59) and that it is particularly valuable in moral motivation because it prepares one to love something without interest (§29, General Remark). In other words, the beautiful is important for morality because it assists with the *comprehension* of and *motivation* toward an agent's duty. This appears problematic, however, as Kant strictly forbids heteronomous motivations (inclinations) from calculations of moral worth in doing one's duty, as well as the use of examples in determining moral rules, in the *Groundwork of the Metaphysics of Morals* (1785, *GMM*). Some scholars, such as Allen Wood, have argued that this "anti-inclination" reading is not an accurate portrayal of Section I of the *GMM*,[2] whereas others (notably Paul Guyer) have argued that Kant's later work does allow for the cultivation of sentiment as an instrument in the doing of one's duty.[3] The question remains, however, how much and what type of an instrumental role can the experience of beauty have in the demands of morality?

The relationship between the beautiful and moral motivation is a contested, but important, topic in Kantian exegesis. In what follows, I will explore this relationship, focusing on the role of the beautiful in relation to the upholding of one's duty. In Kant's *Metaphysics of Morals* (1797, *MM*),[4] the relationship between feeling and rational action is complex—Kant wants the agent to willingly do what duty commands but he does not want the agent to rely heavily on static inclinations, as these inclinations only offer inflexible drives that are located outside of the rational part of the human constitution. The real use of the beautiful seems to be as a symbolic spur to motivate agents to *cultivate* themselves into the master or ruler of their inclinations, not as a counter inclination to any given inclination in a moment of decision. Thus, it appears to hold less of a constitutive role in moral motivation in given situations (such as the role an inclination to love others would hold in an interpersonal situation), and more of a general motivational push toward cultivating one's ability to will from the moral law (through disinterested, rational activity). In order to explore such a reading of the beautiful qua symbol of the morally good, I will first examine what concerns could lead Kant to look for such an "instantiation" of freedom. Kant has deep doubts about the possibility of certainty concerning one's own disposition, and the beautiful as a symbol of morality can be seen as a response to this doubt. The beautiful as symbolic of the morally good will be discussed, focusing on how it provides a sensible instantiation/presentation of the morally good, albeit analogically. Many will argue that this simply allows for *comprehension* of one's moral duty; I will argue in the final section of this paper that this comprehension is also linked to *motivation*, although in a qualified manner with reason at the helm. The beautiful shows us that moral behavior/willing is possible in the world of sense, and as such, provides the concept of the moral law with its own motivating force on the willing agent.

II. Is there any true Virtue in the World?

To truly provide a reading of how the experience of the beautiful aids in the project of morality, we must understand the nature of Kant's moral theory. In the *GMM*, Kant provides a stringent reading of moral worth in terms of an agent's actions. Section I of that work details the source of moral worth in human actions and maxims. What is morally good must be absolutely good for Kant, and he points out that all "virtues" and characteristics, such as strength and coolness, can be used for vicious purposes, rendering their value only conditionally good—dependent upon certain purposes, situations, etc. Considerations of certain outcomes are also conditional, as these results can be thwarted by unfortunate luck, natural circumstances, or put to a harmful use. Thus, the ultimate conclusion of Section I is that the good will is the highest,

unconditioned good (*GMM* 4:396). The notion of good will is integrally connected to the notion of duty, which "contains that of a good will though under certain subjective limitations and hindrances, which . . . bring it [the good will] out by contrast and make it shine forth all the more brightly" (*GMM* 4:397). A human being can possess this good will, but such a will requires a constitution that includes alternate temptations, such as the inclinations. These factors result in the human being not being subjectively necessitated by the moral law; instead, duty is a command upon the agent. The individual agent is *objectively* determined by this notion of duty, which stems from the imperative of the moral law; *subjective* determination, on the other hand, appears to be the domain of control of the individual agent with his or her reason and inclinations. What is crucial to this conception of duty is that an action should be done *from* duty, not merely in accord with duty; only the former has moral worth, whereas the latter could be done for less-than-worthy reasons (self-love, greed, etc.).

The individual agent is subjectively determined by his or her maxim, a principle of volition within the subject. A practical law, on the other hand, is an objective principle of volition that all should have (*GMM* 4:401). Individuals are objectively necessitated by the moral law, but are not subjectively necessitated by it (otherwise they would be "holy wills," constrained to will from duty in every instance). The individual agent can have moral worth if and only if he or she acts from duty. This, however, leads to the question—what is duty? To this question, Kant provides his analysis of the moral law in Section II of the *GMM*.

Duty, for Kant, is integrally connected to the source of determination of an individual rational agent.[5] In Section II, he analyzes the concept of the moral law and its relation to rational beings in general in order to discern the possibility of such an imperative. Kant operates on the assumption that everything in the world that we can experience (including our own actions) must operate according to some sort of law (*GMM* 4:412). The unique feature of a rational being is that he or she can represent his or her possible actions in accordance with a representation of laws (principles). This capacity to formulate principles or maxims upon which the subject acts is constitutive of an agent's will (*Wille*). The particular maxim stemming from one's will is subjectively contingent, since reason does not always determine it (*GMM* 4:412). All rational beings are subject to objective principles of action, which Kant labels as "imperatives." Some of these are hypothetical, commanding a certain action upon certain conditions. What Kant wants for the foundation of morality is a moral law (imperative) that commands categorically and in an unconditioned manner.

The various formulations of the categorical imperative need not be examined at this point; the important aspect of the *GMM*'s description of moral

worth through the activity of willing is in its demand that the moral law itself be both the *motive* and the *rule* for action. As motive, the moral law shows pure reason in its practical function, separate from all traces of sensibility or inclination—an action is performed from the knowledge of its status as upholding duty.[6] This demand on the motivation behind one's actions seems to many quite a strict demand. Kant even questions whether such virtue (moral worth) even exists, stating, "One need not be an enemy of virtue but only a cool observer . . .to become doubtful at certain moments . . . whether any true virtue is to be found in the world" (*GMM* 4:407). The difficulty of truly possessing a good will lies in two concerns: the constant temptation offered by human nature and the epistemic limitations of the agent in knowing his or her disposition/character.

The first concern addresses the constant striving that is involving in the moral activity of human agents. In both the *GMM* of 1785 and the *MM* of 1797, Kant's story remains quite consistent—the human agent must make fundamental choices concerning his or her self-conception and maxims that are open to the impulses of nature.[7] These impulses come in to the deliberative process through the sensuous inclinations. Indeed, Kant writes of the will as placed between the a priori principle of the moral law and the a posteriori incentives of the inclinations, with duty stemming from the former (*GMM* 4:400). Inclinations as needs are not objects of respect, but can simply be approved of or liked given their efficacy toward given ends. Instead, the will that determines itself *from* the form of universal willing itself is the only "object" that can truly merit respect in Kant's sense. Inclination as habitual desire often functions as an obstacle that the human agent must overcome in doing his or her duty—virtue stands as the ability to overcome such obstacles and to act from the moral law (*MM* 6:380). Temptation is a constant companion through the presence of inclination in the human constitution, and as such, true virtue is always in jeopardy.

The more serious doubt about the existence of virtue comes from the very locus of moral worth. Kant always holds serious epistemological reservations about the scrutability of one's maxims that lie behind one's actions. In *The End of All Things* (1794, *EAT*),[8] Kant argues against absolute judgment of others and even of one's own motivations, questioning, "For what human being knows himself or others through and through" (*EAT* 8:329)? In the *MM*, Kant echoes this concern, arguing, "For a human being cannot see into the depths of his own heart so as to be quite certain, in even a *single* action, of the purity of his moral intention and the sincerity of his disposition, even when he has no doubt about the legality of the action" (*MM* 6:392). Human beings have trouble seeing into their own intentions, to which they have privileged access compared to the external perspective occupied by other agents. Epistemically, one can never be certain that others are acting *from* the moral law, or even that

one's own will does not flow from a deep self-conceit initiated by "the dear self" that Kant indicts as a possible hidden motive behind all actions conforming to duty (*GMM* 4:407). In the *MM*, Kant reasons that

> The depths of the human heart are unfathomable. Who knows himself well enough to say, when he feels the incentive to fulfill his duty, whether it proceeds entirely from the representation of the law or whether there are not many other sensible impulses contributing to it that look to one's advantage (or to avoiding what is detrimental), and that, in other circumstances, could just as well serve vice (*MM* 6:447)?

Even though reason commands what one is supposed to do as his or her duty, Kant is acknowledging that one can never be absolutely certain that he or she is actually acting from such a respect for reason's commands. Thus, a true exigency is raised concerning the ability of agents to actualize what the moral law commands of them in will and action due to the powerful sources of temptation within human nature and the ultimate epistemic opacity of the maxims of an agent. The third critique, through its analysis of the beautiful and of the sublime, allows for a sensible presentation of the possibility of moral action in the world of nature, providing the agent with not only a comprehension of the demands of morality, but also with a motivation toward its realization.

III. The Beautiful as the Symbol of Morality

In the judgment of taste concerning the beautiful, Kant finds that the pleasure evoked is of an extremely unique kind. The object, through its form, spurs a harmonious play of the faculties of the imagination and understanding. This "free play" (*Freies Spiel*) of these two faculties in the observer is inherently pleasurable, due to its enlivening of the natural faculties of the human mind. This pleasure is not directed toward an interest or a determinate concept, or it would stem from the agreeable or the good. Instead, it is a "disinterested pleasure," and it merely refers to the "fit" between the object's form and the subject's faculties. It is in this fit that the subject senses a "purpose without purpose," which Kant concludes is the "*mere form* of purposiveness" (*CJ* 5:221). It seems to the subject as if nature had designed the beautiful object being observed with an eye toward such a freedom of the imagination; instead of the understanding dictating (theoretical) legislation onto the imagination and its data, the aesthetic experience of the beautiful involves an equal free play among the subject's faculties.[9] This experience of nature[10] is important in that it is an experience of freedom for the agent—not actual proof of such a transcendental vocation (such would violate the Third Antinomy from the first critique), but as a presentation of such a quality.

In §59 of the *CJ*, Kant describes the role that the beautiful can play in indirectly representing such an important aspect of our capacities as a rational

agent. Giving an alternate account from §29's analysis of the intellectual interest in the beautiful, Kant argues in §59 for another important function the beautiful can play in relation to a subject's awareness of moral value.[11] In addition to all of the other effects of the judgment of taste on the individual, this section argues that it serves as a symbol of the beautiful, and as such, aids in the subject's awareness of the possibility of moral action in the world. Kant begins this section by highlighting the only way our concepts can be shown to be "real"—through the provision of some sort of intuition of them. In regard to empirical concepts, such intuitions are "examples;" whereas if they are pure concepts of the understanding, they are "schemata" (*CJ* 5:351). Importantly, the ideas of reason can never be given adequate intuitions. They can be *presented*, however, in what Kant labels a "hypotyposis" (*CJ* 5:351)—a presentation of a concept as sensible through means other than the giving of a corresponding empirical intuition. In the case of schematic presentation, a corresponding intuition of a concept of the understanding is given a priori. The other option for such presentation that rises above mere empirical instantiation in intuition is presentation through the symbolic—in which case the power of judgment provides a rule concerning the form of the reflection between object and concept similar to that of schematization, albeit eschewing the intuition itself as a representative token of the concept (*CJ* 5:351). Thus, a concept of reason can be presented via intuition, but not directly in intuition; one does not "see" freedom or one's moral vocation, but one can experience something analogous to it from his or her phenomenological perspective.

Such symbols use analogy to exhibit a concept that has no corresponding intuition. The power of judgment first applies a concept to the physical object at hand, and then applies a rule of reflection concerning that object to the conceptual object that lacks representation. Thus, the monarchial state is represented in Kant's famous handmill analogy, which draws upon the rule of similar causality. While Kant is not explicit about the content of this analogy, Kirk Pillow finds that he is drawing attention to how both the handmill and the despot mangle anything that is fed to them—in the former, substance, and in the latter, the freedom of human subjects.[12] The actual concept is not contained within the presentation, but merely the rule or symbol for reflection of the subject; the handmill acts as a symbol for the causality of the despotic state, facilitating reflection concerning the similar operation of each in their domain. The symbol becomes a presentation of the concept that has no direct representation, thereby allowing the individual subject to grasp the "reality" of the concept in question.

The beautiful is the symbol of the morally good due to its presentation of several key features of the moral experience. It is not *identical* to the moral experience, but is similar in its form and operation (its "rule of causality") that Kant finds it to be a valuable symbol of the former experience (which seems to

lack a phenomenal representation). Kant even labels the experience of beauty as a type of duty we expect of everyone else, a claim that may cause some misinterpretations unless tempered by his moral philosophy. Kant surely cannot be talking about a duty to experience the beautiful, as he clearly leaves any such duty out of his moral writings (such as the *GMM* and the *MM*). Instead, he posits in the latter work that respect for natural and animal beauty is an indirect duty to one's self. The important aspect to this discussion is that Kant, unlike Schiller, is not claiming that taste is a necessary and sufficient condition for moral worth; instead, as I will argue in the following section, Kant sees the symbolic presentation of beauty as an instrument for the development of rational control over one's inclinations and the attainment of moral worth (virtue). Kant's strong language in §59 stems from the fact that the symbol of morality, the beautiful, is experientially open to all humans because their faculties are all similar in arrangement and can be naturally "activated" in free play by a myriad number of beautiful objects. What is demanded of everyone is the claim inherent within a judgment of taste—it demands the assent of all rational subjects sharing the same mental faculties (*CJ* 5:353).

It is in this judgment of taste (i.e. of the beautiful) that each subject gains a symbolic presentation of his or her moral vocation qua free being. Kant points out that in such an experience, "the mind is at the same time aware of a certain ennoblement and elevation above the mere receptivity for a pleasure from sensible impressions, and also esteems the value of others in accordance with a similar maxim of their power of judgment" (*CJ* 5:353). The very experience of the beautiful highlights the capacity of the agent to be separate from mere sensibility in terms of pleasure, which will be linked by Kant to his or her ability to be causally moved by non-sensuous reasons (the moral law). The power of judgment, through such judgments of taste, sees itself as giving law to itself; this is contrasted by Kant to the "heteronomy of the laws of experience" in terms of empirical judging (*CJ* 5:353). In the latter instance, the power of judgment has laws foisted upon it by the understanding; in the former case (judgments of taste), the power of judgment is the source of its own reflective laws.

As stated previously, this giving of laws to one's self involves the power of judgment in both the inner realm of mental faculties of the subject as well as with general (formal) qualities of external objects. Thus, the intersubjective validity of judgments of taste comes from the power of judgment's connection to the ground of inner freedom of the subject qua moral agent—this is the supersensible that connects theoretical with the practical faculty to form a unity. As intimated in the previous two critiques, Kant is always concerned with how the two varieties of reason serve each other or combine together; he posits in §59 that the very ground that allows for claims of taste to be universally valid also relates to an *experience* (albeit symbolic) of such a substratum of freedom.

Whereas the previous portions of the "Critique of the Aesthetic Power of Judgment" deal with reasons why judgments of taste claim intersubjective validity, Kant argues in §59 that the beautiful can provide a particular subject an experience of his or her moral freedom (through symbolic presentation). This portion of the paper will not detail the reasons for the intersubjective validity of such judgments of tastes, but will instead turn to how the beautiful operates as a symbolic presentation of the morally good.

Kant points out four main similarities between the experience of the beautiful and the operation of the morally good (*CJ* 5:354). Initially, he notes that judgments about the beautiful please immediately through the act of reflection (not through concepts, as the good does). The immediacy of feeling *after* the beautiful or the good is an important common element in this symbolization of the latter in the former. The second aspect concerns the nature of this pleasure; both the beautiful and the morally good lack a connection to antecedent desires. Instead, interests arise *after* the experience of either the beautiful or the morally good (moral feeling, empirical/intellectual interest in the beautiful, etc.). The pleasure that is produced by both stems from the fact that human nature involves elements that transcend sensible determination—in the case of the morally good, the moral law is the non-sensuous source of our autonomy; in the case of the beautiful, our mental faculties and their interaction with nature highlights a source of pleasure that is "outside" of the sensuous. The third important similarity is that the freedom of the imagination in judging the beautiful object is "in accord with the lawfulness of the understanding" (*CJ* 5:354). In morality, the freedom of the will agrees with itself qua reason through its own rational lawgiving; in beauty, it is as if the imagination was giving law in accord with the lawful dictates of the understanding, leaving them outside of their normal hierarchical relationship. Fourth, "the subjective principle for judging of the beautiful is represented as **universal**, i.e., valid for everyone, but not as knowable by any universal concept" (*CJ* 5:354). The concepts involved in morality are also universally valid, but they are determinate, resulting in a strict demand for validity and adherence from subjects. The beautiful involves such a universal validity, but the lack of determinate conceptual content leads one away from *demanding* of others that they recognize a given object as beautiful. While the beautiful and the morally good differ in important ways, Kant finds that there are enough similarities in how they are experienced to label the former as a symbolic presentation of the latter in an agent's interaction with the physical world.

As the symbol of the morally good, the beautiful shows that the worlds of nature and freedom can converge quite closely. While judgments of taste fall short of being an *actual* phenomenal experience of freedom,[13] they do point to the realm of the moral *through* the world of nature. This linking of the two realms through the sensible experience of the beautiful qua beautiful object is

Kant's answer in the *CJ* to doubts about the possibility of realizing the strict demands of morality in the physical world. Duty involves the idea of a will that includes subjective hindrances (inclinations), and as such, mires the challenge to duty in the physical world; if one's will is to be virtuous, it must surmount the physical forces (inclinations) in the individual *in the physical world*. The symbolic presentation of the morally good through the beautiful supports the possibility of such inclinations being overcome in a human agent by respect for the moral law. Beyond the "ought implies can" mantra of earlier works, Kant postulates more concrete evidence for the "reality" of the demands of morality—the only difference is that the presentation of the beautiful in terms of existent objects provides for the possibility of future realizations of moral worth in a given agent's will. While radical doubt can still be held in terms of the ultimate epistemic uncertainty of one's true moral worth, Kant finds solace in two prongs of his critical philosophy—the straightforward command of the moral law and the possibility of the physical world being amenable to our moral vocation qua autonomous agent.

In addition to being a mere symbol of the morally good (aiding in comprehending moral experience/duty), Kant finds that such a presentation can have definite effects in moral development. Humans typically associate words of beauty with implications of moral quality (*CJ* 5:354), but the actual experience of the symbolic presentation of the morally good can have a greater effect on an agent. Discussing this value of beauty as a symbol of the morally good and its associated judgment of taste, Kant states

> Taste as it were makes possible the transition from sensible charm to the habitual moral interest without too violent of a leap by representing the imagination even in its freedom as purposively determinable for the understanding and teaching us to find a free satisfaction in the objects of the senses even without any sensible charm (*CJ* 5:354).

Several crucial claims are housed in this statement. First, one sees that Kant is explicitly linking the judgment of beauty with moral development, albeit not in a causally necessary manner. Second, the way taste operates involves the transcending of mere sensible charm to a purposeless purposiveness that transcends the agendas of physical creatures. Taste is important because it is a means to self-cultivation from mere animality to the type of autonomous agent moved not by sensibility but by practical reason.[14] Thus, the imagination (and its interaction with other mental faculties) is experienced as free from the constraints of nature in terms of purposive determination, and also in its assisting the individual in locating pleasure free of sensuous interests.

Here at the conclusion of §59, Kant makes the important claim that receptivity to the commands of the moral law is heightened by and through the exercise of taste, leading one to suspect that beauty qua symbol holds more

potential than merely clarifying the nature of duty. Instead, the beautiful can function in moral motivation. Even if the beautiful as a symbol of the morally good shows one that moral worth may be possible in the world of nature, the question of how this realization can serve as a motivational force remains. The next section will explore this issue, and argue that the symbol of the morally good (the beautiful) not only assists in the comprehension of duty, but also serves in a motivational capacity as well. This crucial convergence of the two factors in moral duty (awareness and motivation) highlights the value of taste in moral development for Kant, a value that is not prized as the only way to moral development, but as a powerful tool to reach such ends.

IV. The Role of the Beautiful in Moral Motivation

How does the beautiful as a symbol of the morally good *actually* function in leading one from "sensible charm" (interest) to "habitual moral interest?" Paul Guyer provides a detailed examination of the role of beauty in moral development, drawing particularly upon the analysis of indirect duties and duties of self-perfection in the *MM*.[15] The basic issue explored in his analysis was how to reconcile the effects of aesthetic experience (as "moral sentiments") with the strictly reason-based concept of duty enunciated by Kant. Guyer relies heavily on the "Doctrine of Virtue" in the *MM*, especially the analysis of self-cultivation through the *instrument* of aesthetic experience.[16] This section, while agreeing with Guyer's general strategy, wishes to pursue a complementary way that the beautiful qua symbol functions as an instrument to moral development. The value of the beautiful will be evidenced not only by showing that duty's demands are possible, but also by showing its role in the motivating of moral willing on the part of the agent.

The beautiful is valued as a symbol of the morally good because it involves the important qualities of immediate pleasure, no antecedent desires, necessity of judgment, and universality of scope. All of these aspects experienced in the beautiful point toward the possibility of actual moral behavior as demanded by the moral law. How exactly can the beautiful, through such qualities, act as an instrument to *motivate* an agent to act from duty? It cannot simply do this through cultivating inclinations (such as sympathy) that will be sufficient to accomplish the demands of duty; Kant is clear in Section I of the *GMM* that morally worthy actions must be done *from* duty. Indeed, as Henry Allison points out in his analysis of overdetermination in Kantian maxims, inclination does not seem to facilitate truly overdetermined maxims. If both the want to act from duty and the want to act from inclination are needed to determine the will, then the action is not really from duty and cannot be a candidate for moral worth. If duty by itself was a sufficient motive, then the presence of sufficient inclinations do not harm that maxim's association with moral worth—as Allison states, it is simply "*with* but not *from* inclination."[17]

The conclusion of Section I of the *GMM* is reaffirmed in light of possibly motivating inclinations in that the sufficient influence of duty as a motive (if present) will *always* check contrary inclinations and motivate agents regardless of similar inclination-based motives. Thus, as a motivating factor, the beautiful cannot create the inclination-based conditions that move an agent to moral action. Instead, I would argue that two explanations emerge concerning how the beautiful qua symbol can assist in moral motivation: it may create "beneficial" inclinations as counterweights to "tempting" inclinations, and it may function as purely rational support (as symbol of its possibility) to duty.[18]

Inclinations as Instruments in Moral Willing

Guyer explores the first path in his work on Kant's aesthetic theory.[19] In such an account, emotions/inclinations are cultivated and purified so as to develop a disposition toward morally good action. Indeed, Kant discusses the value of sympathy and other such emotions in terms of moral sensitivity to the plight and happiness of others (*MM* 6:456). Nancy Sherman gives a similar reading of the value of the emotions in her work, also emphasizing their epistemic, attitudinal, and motivational uses.[20] In addition to the epistemic value of the emotions in the recognition of moral situations and needs, Sherman argues that Kant values agent attitudes as duty-based responses and as supporting action from duty. Both of these analyses are interesting in terms of the positive motivational weight they give to inclinations, but the danger remains that inclination could usurp duty as the sufficient motivation for a given action. The problem Kant has with inclinations as either the rule or motive of moral action is that they are inherently inflexible and contingent—eventually, a situation will be broached that a given inclination cannot handle in terms of our intuitions of what moral worth demands. "Beneficial" inclinations such as sympathy are no exception, hence Kant's extreme (and often misread) example of the depressed (but formerly sympathetic) agent in the *GMM*. While inclinations such as sympathy (and pathological love) may be able to move us to help others, they cannot be counted on to always move us in the right way since they are static components of nature. Kant even claims that while they may be helpful or conducive to morality, inclinations cannot possess unconditional worth because there are situations in which they would fail to have value *unless* we presuppose a "good will" behind their implementation in specific actions (*GMM* 4:393).

Emotions can be cultivated to serve not only as positive pushes toward acting in accord with moral duty, but also as instruments to *decrease* the temptation offered by "harmful" inclinations (those contrary to duty). This use of certain inclinations to decrease the "pull" of other inclinations can be seen as facilitating the moral action of an agent, with the key component of willing *from* duty intact. Keeping in mind Allison's Incorporation Thesis, one must

acknowledge that the rational agent has the final say as to exactly what is incorporated in the maxim they adopt.[21] Kant in the *MM*, however, is quite clear that inclinations exhibit some type of force for the agent to incorporate them into his or her maxim. They are not neutral elements to be incorporated solely at will, but they are instead forces that *incline* the agent to incorporate them. Thus, virtue in Kant's later work on morality is conceptualized as "the capacity and considered resolve" to withstand "what opposes the moral disposition within us" (*MM* 6:380). Inclinations are classed as "impulses of nature" that "involve obstacles within the human being's mind to his fulfillment of duty and (sometimes powerful) forces opposing it" (*MM* 6:380). One must note that inclinations by their very nature involve obstacles to willing actions *from* duty because they are motivations that are extraneous to duty. They may sometimes support dutiful actions, but they still provide a temptation (motivation) to act in accord with duty but *from* a separate (non-duty based) reason. In many cases, inclinations as impulses of nature involve an active impediment to the fulfilling of duty—for instance, when fear or self-love prevents one from risking harm to one's self in the protection of others. What appears more in line with the Kantian analysis is not that the experience of beauty cultivates emotions/inclinations that will be constituitive of the maxim to act in accord with duty, but that the experience of beauty can cultivate emotions (such as those developed by disinterested love and pleasure) that decrease the power of any given inclination.

This sort of account is not without precedent in the western tradition. For instance, René Descartes provides a similar account in his 1649 work, *The Passions of the Soul*, where he deals with instrumental ways to counter harmful emotional reactions to stimuli. Desiring the ability of reason to be its own master, but knowing the ideality of this goal, Descartes concludes this book by offering two remedies to controlling "renegade" or harmful passions (emotions) by using the mechanism/instrument of the passions. Initially, he prescribes "forethought and skill by which we can correct our constitutional deficiencies, in applying ourselves to separate within us the movements of the blood and spirits from the thoughts to which they are usually joined."[22] In such a remedy, one is using long-term preparation to associate a certain stimuli with another passion—habituating ourselves to respond in a different manner (such as with courage, instead of fear, at the sight of poisonous snakes, through constant exposure to non-harmful snakes). This approach would pit us against similar stimuli and attempt to habituate a different response to them; thus, after such "practice," the passions will prepare an action via bodily changes that is more in line with what the power of volition should (or wants to) will. The second remedy involves "thinking" about other thoughts, not the one that the passion normally inclines us toward.[23] Thus, one is countering the habituated response that is in place by activating other habituations that in turn can mitigate the

original passion or cancel it out. For example, when one is afraid of an on-coming army, they should think about how standing and fighting will be looked on as brave; the animal spirits (the physiological cause of the passion) that the fearful object invokes can be countered by the animal spirits summoned by thoughts of bravery. The point of such a tactic is to make it easier for the will to act in line with courage (in this example); while the will apparently has the power to act contrary to such a passion, Descartes finds it much more probable and felicitous to prepare the situation such that the act of willing will not be so difficult (directed in opposition to strong physiological states, i.e., passions).

Like Descartes, Kant (especially in his later writings on morality) looks for ways to strengthen the human disposition to morality against inclinations *by* employing inclinations. The main difference, however, is that Kant always insists that the desired moral disposition is that of willing an action *from* duty, not merely from habituated responses to natural stimuli (*MM* 6:383-4, 387). Thus, cultivating the disinterested love or respect from the experience of beauty qua symbol of morality assists in willing from duty precisely because it *decreases* the pull of contrary sensible inclinations in terms of what the agent incorporates in his or her maxim. If the temptation of any given inclination to be the sufficient reason for an action can be reduced by other (contrary) cultivated feelings, then the task of acting from duty will be comparatively easier for the agent. This is perhaps what Kant is after in the *Anthropology from a Pragmatic Point of View* (1800, *APV*)[24] where he argues for the regulation of the mind via certain emotions. Commenting specifically on the "principle of apathy," he warns about the "blindness" caused by emotions. A natural counter to this is apathy—"the wisdom of Nature has planted in us a disposition for apathy in order to hold the reins provisionally, before reason attains the necessary control" (*APV* 7:253). In some cases, Kant seems to advise that the emotions can be used in such a way as I have been arguing by claiming that nature has given us (in addition to moral motives) "those motives of pathological (sensuous) inducement as a temporary surrogate of reason" (*APV* 7:253). One could see how such an apathetic emotion could be what Kant is referring to as "disinterested love" in regard to the experience of the beautiful—it serves as a counterweight against the immediate pull of the inclinations, and allows for the ascendancy (eventually) of reason (viz., action motivated in accord with the moral law).

Notice that one cannot eliminate all obstacles to willing—virtue in the *MM* and duty in the *GMM* insist on the key element of subjective hindrances to following the dictates of the moral law. What one can do is to develop a disposition that is less clouded by powerful inclinations and more controlled by reason, in this case through the disinterested love and pleasure of the judgment of taste. What may be worrisome here is a growing reliance upon such emotions or inclination as a vital adjunct to moral activity. Kant notes in the *APV* that

"emotion taken by itself is always imprudent; it makes itself incapable of pursuing its own purpose, and it is therefore unwise to allow it to arise intentionally" (7:253). Inclination grows in strength, and there is no guarantee that what is now in line with virtue will be helpful in fulfilling its demands tomorrow (or in different situations). Kant points out the problem with this reliance on inclination in his *Religion within the Boundaries of mere Reason* (1793, *RBR*),[25] where he includes "impurity" of the human heart and its need for other incentives in addition to that of the moral law as part of the propensity to evil (6:30). To avoid an over reliance on inclinations stemming from the experience of the beautiful as impure "means" or "instruments" to moral willing, it is best that I turn to another promising explanation of the power of the beautiful qua symbol of morality.

Moral Comprehension as Moral Motivation

In addition to adding inclinations that counterbalance harmful inclinations, I want to argue that the experience of beauty is useful as an instrument for morality because it assists in the internal motivation of the moral law. Kant seems to desire such an internalism of the moral law, insisting even in the Doctrine of Virtue that "*inner* freedom" is "the capacity for self-constraint not by means of other inclinations but by pure practical reason (which scorns such intermediaries)" (*MM* 6:396). The notion of virtue through inner freedom for Kant must not involve the Cartesian playing of inclinations against themselves in an end game for acting in accord with morality, but must instead always reduce to an agent incorporating respect for duty into his or her maxim that determines a particular action. It is the will (*Wille*) as pure practical reason that must determine one's use of inner choice (*Willkür*), and not any stimuli from the world of nature. What is at issue here is the hidden premise that Guyer identifies—reason is the active part of human nature and any determining influences from the natural world on the human result in that agent being passive and not worthy of moral merit/value.[26] How can the "passive" effects of the experience of beauty then assist the agent in being an active adopter of morally worthy maxims?

The experience of the beautiful does help with the transition from pleasure based in sensibility to "habitual moral interest" through the inculcation of disinterestedness, but also through the cognitive effect of experiencing a physical presentation of moral freedom (albeit symbolic). Such a motivational "force" is really not a constitutive force; instead, it assists in the agents themselves being the active cause of their actions.[27] A useful place to build an account of such moral motivation that relies on the internalism of the moral law is the "Doctrine of the Methods of Ethics" at the end of the *MM*. In this section dedicated largely to how ethics is to be taught and practiced, one can see a role for the experience of the beautiful. Section I of this part of the *MM*

details the teaching of virtue to students in an attempt to motivate them to *use their own reason*, whereas Section II discusses the state of mind they should have when practicing virtue. Earlier in the *MM*, Kant pointed out that the moral incentive must be increased by doing two things—by contemplating the dignity of the law in its purity and by practicing virtue in one's actions (*MM* 6:397). What Kant insists on is that the contemplation of the law itself should (ideally) be the motivation for the doing of duty (the practicing of virtue). If this is not the case, then the moral law itself would not be the incentive, and there is no need to insist on duty being done from duty (contrary to the purity of one's disposition demanded at *MM* 6:446). Thus, moral education is less indoctrination and more a facilitation of knowledge of the law that possesses a strong motivational force of its own.

Given this reading, §59 can be seen as a putatively effective instrument not only in teaching morality, but also in aiding the general comprehension of and motivation for moral action. The experience of the beautiful *is* an experience of what is required in moral activity; the key features to moral willing (disinterestedness, necessity/universality in judgment, etc.) are all present and experienced by the aesthetic subject, leading one to value the experience as one indicative of the freedom involved in moral activity. While one's autonomy cannot be observed in the physical world, objects inspiring such judgments of taste can be observed, and thus can be symbolic presentations qua natural objects that the world is amenable to our moral vocation. In the "Doctrine of the Methods of Ethics," Kant analyzes the value of examples in moral pedagogy—examples are not constituitive of morality, since "a maxim of virtue consists precisely in the subjective autonomy of each human being's practical reason and so *implies* that the law itself, not the conduct of other human beings, must serve as our incentive" (*MM* 6:480, emphasis added). Examples do not give us the rule or motive of virtue, as these come from subjective autonomy, which is derived (not experienced) from the subject's own practical reason.[28] What examples give, through a sensible representation of dutiful action, is "proof that it is really possible to act in conformity with duty" (*MM* 6:480). The nature of this "proof" is interesting, though, as examples of actual agents acting in certain ways cannot escape the epistemological doubts about the veracity of an agent's dutiful maxims broached in the *MM* (6:392, 447) and the *GMM* (4:407).

From another angle, Ted Cohen points out that a good will is complete in itself (it determines itself from duty), not in reference to external ends of nature; however, whenever we see examples of people acting "from duty," what we actually see is a will that appears to be "realizing external ends."[29] Both the possibility of doubt about motives and the inscrutability of maxims must leave such examples powerless to prove the possibility of moral action. We can never be certain that our own actions really stem from duty, so any example of another person supposedly acting from duty surely cannot serve as

"proof" that an agent can actually act from non-sensuous motives in the world of nature. What comes closer to providing proof is the experience of freedom implicit in the judgment of taste. The imagination is experienced as being free from the legislation of the understanding, and both are seen as being involved in a free play that is pleasurable as if designed with the harmony of humanity (and its mental faculties) with the world of nature in mind. The use of examples in the teaching of ethics is important not so much because it *elucidates* the details of the moral law, but because it *motivates* compliance with the law through the experiential demonstration of its possibility. Thus, the experience of the beautiful can motivate agents to moral action not because it instills forceful inclinations, but instead merely by showing the possibility of moral action. The incentive, for Kant, always remains the law itself; showing the possibility of this incentive in action is the role of examples, or in line with the argument of this paper, the special benefit to aesthetic experience of the beautiful.

Kant, however, also sternly rejects the use of habit and habituation in any pedagogy or explanation of moral action. Habits are merely "lasting inclination[s] apart from any maxim, through frequently repeated gratifications of that inclination; it is a mechanism of sense rather than a principle of thought" (*MM* 6:479).[30] If the goal of human moral action is to become a being that actively determines itself from duty, how can Kant recommend the experience of beauty qua symbol of the morally good if it results in "*habitual* moral interest" (*CJ* 5:354, emphasis added)? Much more attention is needed than available in the remainder of this paper to completely explore this intriguing issue, but one promising answer will be suggested. Perhaps it is not the motivation for moral action that is habitual, but instead the agent's frame of mind of that displays consistent responses that *seem* like habituated reactions. Part of the solution to this puzzle comes from Kant's analysis of the moral ascetic Epicurus—he eventually applauds such a man, "For who should have more reason for being a cheerful spirit, and not even finding it a duty to put himself in a cheerful frame of mind and make it habitual, than one who is aware of no intentional transgression in himself and is secured against falling into any" (*MM* 6:485)? What Kant is claiming is that the stoic (the model of virtue in Section II on "Ethical Ascetics") does not make it a duty to become *habitually* cheerful, but aims at being cheerful through the *realization* of the sacrifices necessary for one to be virtuous in the world. Thus, the comprehension of virtue serves as a motivating force for certain emotional responses on behalf of the agent (his or her cheerful and valiant reaction).

If the comprehension is strong enough, the "ever-cheerful heart" of Epicurus will also be evident in the comprehending agent. The disposition of the agent that wills from the idea of the moral law is cheerful (to observers) due to the comprehension of the demands of morality and the nature of the external world. Indeed, this comprehension leads to this attitude (the "stoic motto") as a "kind of regimen for keeping a human being healthy" in the face of the hardships often demanded by virtue in light of the world's structure (*MM* 6:484-

485). Thus, this "outer" disposition of cheerfulness is not a habit that needs to be formed as if commanded by duty, but is instead a healthy offshoot of the comprehension of the nature of virtue. This account of the "habitual" element that can result from aesthetic experience seems to dovetail nicely with Kant's reply to Schiller in his *RBR*. In a lengthy footnote, Kant responds to Schiller's close causal linking of the aesthetic to the moral by pointing out that "a heart joyous in the *compliance* with its duty (not just complacency in the *recognition* of it) is the sign of genuineness in virtuous disposition" (*RBR* 6:24n). The constant demand on the agent to improve his or her conduct and maxims "effects a joyous frame of mind, without which one is never certain of having *gained* also *a love* for the good, i.e. of having incorporated the good into one's maxim" (*RBR* 6:24n). The act of knowing and trying to will the good results in such a disposition, but is not caused by such a disposition (therefore, one has no duty to habituate such a response/frame of mind). What appears habitual about the moral interest resulting from the experience of the beautiful may be the same cheerfulness and joyousness that results from the comprehension of virtue and its demands; this comprehension (in this case experienced through the beautiful qua symbolic presentation) consequently results in motivational dividends for the agent in terms of his or her trying to perfect his or her disposition to one that wills from the purity of the moral law (*MM* 6:387).

The experience of the beautiful is powerful in showing us the nature of the morally good in this world, which results not only in motives to will action from duty itself, but also to display the outer trappings of such an agent committed to continual moral improvement. The beautiful *experientially* instantiates key aspects of the moral disposition, and as such, serves as a motivational force for an agent to continue in the sort of activity required by morality. Kant, contra Schiller, sees the aesthetic experience of the beautiful as a *useful* means to moral comprehension and action, but not as a *necessary* method in attaining such goals. What links the comprehension provided by the experience of the beautiful qua symbol and the motivation to will from duty is not habit, but the certainty of knowledge concerning human value. In Section I of the "Doctrine of the Methods of Ethics," Kant discusses the issue of an "original disposition" of human nature through the pedagogical device of getting an agent to consider the inability of natural pains, hardships, and suffering to deprive him or her of what makes one as a rational agent superior to the value of nature. What is in the human being that can be trusted with maintaining this superiority and dominance, asks Kant? The answer is said to lie beyond the grasp of speculative reason, but this "very incomprehensibility in this cognition of himself [the agent] must produce an exaltation in his soul which only inspires it the more to hold its duty sacred, the more it is assailed" (*MM* 6:483). The beautiful, as symbol of the morally good, does not directly answer this question via speculative insight, but instead gives an experiential "hint" that such a trumping power exists not only within the human agent, but also within the human agent qua being situated in the natural world. The theoretical

incomprehensibility is maintained such that exaltation continues, but the comprehension of the possibility of such a source of moral value within the agent (i.e., freedom) serves as impetus to the continued willing of action from the moral law. Such a comprehension of the possibility of our being virtuous in a world that often evinces a clear division between self-interested motives and those respecting the moral law can serve as a powerful motivational force for an agent to engage in the project of moral cultivation.

Notes and References

Paul Guyer and David O'Connor are to be thanked for their comments on this manuscript.

1 Parenthetical references to Kant's work will be made using the volume and page numbers of the *Kants gesammelte Schriften* (Berlin, Walter de Gruyter). The translation of Kant's *Kritik der Urteilskraft* to be used is *Critique of the Power of Judgment* (Trans. Paul Guyer & Eric Matthews, Cambridge University Press, Cambridge, 2001). It will hereafter be referred to in the text as "*CJ*."

2 Allen Wood, "The Good Will," paper presented at the 2001 University of California, Berkeley Philosophy Colloquium, September 20, 2001.

3 Paul Guyer, *Kant and the Experience of Freedom* (Cambridge University Press, New York, 1996), Chapter 10.

4 The translation of *Die Metaphysic der Sitten* to be used is found in *Practical Philosophy* (Trans. Mary J. Gregor, Cambridge University Press, Cambridge, 1996). Referred to in the text as "*MM*."

5 For a full reading of the formulations of the categorical imperative and their relation to duty, consult Paul Guyer 's treatment in Chapter 5 of his *Kant on Freedom, Law, and Happiness* (Cambridge University Press, Cambridge, 2000).

6 It is important to note the various valences possible in the "upholding" of such duties —they can be merely negative ("do not do action *x* "), or they can be positive (such as in the wide duties as beneficence and cultivation of talents). What is common to both is that moral worth accrues to the agent when he or she refrains from an action or undertakes an action *from* the idea of duty.

7 Of course, Kant 's conception of moral worth and action changes over the course of his critical writings. This point, however, seems fairly consistent.

8 *Der Ende das alle Dinge*, translated in *Religion and Rational Theology* (Trans. Allen W. Wood & George Di Giovanni, Cambridge University Press, Cambridge, 2001).

9 For more detailed accounts of this interaction, consult Paul Guyer, *Kant and the Claims of Taste* (2nd Edition, Cambridge University Press, New York, 1997),

Chapter 3, and John R. Goodreau, *The Role of the Sublime in Kant 's Moral Metaphysics* (The Council for Research in Values and Philosophy, Washington, D.C., 1998), 100-108.

10 Kant of course finds various problems with the fine arts and their relationship to beauty, and believes that the paradigm case of beauty must come from natural objects and scenes. For alternative thoughts on this matter, consult Salim Kemal, *Kant and Fine Art* (Oxford University Press, New York, 1986).

11 Paul Guyer, *Kant and the Experience of Freedom*, 315.

12 This reading of the analogy is given by Kirk Pillow, "Jupiter's Eagle and the Despot's Hand Mill: Two Views on Metaphor in Kant," *The Journal of Aesthetics and Art Criticism* 59 (2001), 195.

13 Goodreau, *The Role of the Sublime in Kant's Moral Metaphysics*, argues that the sublime is an actual experience of our noumenal nature. This is a very strong claim that does not seem supported by the textual evidence; what can be reasonably claimed of the sublime and the beautiful is that they involve both the realms of freedom and nature, and use an experience in nature to *imply* certain conclusions about our supersensible nature. For an additional approach to moral value of the sublime, see Scott R. Stroud, "Living Large: Kant and the Sublimity of Technology," *Teaching Ethics*, 4 (1), 2003, 47-67.

14 This is the type of agent that is discussed through the formulations of the categorical imperative in Section II of the *GMM*, especially in regard to the "Formula of Autonomy."

15 Paul Guyer, *Kant and the Experience of Freedom*, Chapters 9 & 10.

16 For instance, Guyer argues that if our response to beauty can be seen as an instrument toward moral development, it may be included in a "general duty to cultivate *all* means toward the development of a morally good disposition" (*Kant and the Experience of Freedom*, 317). The specific nature of this instrument and how it functions in moral motivation, however, are the focus of the final section of this paper.

17 Henry E. Allison, *Kant's Theory of Freedom* (Cambridge University Press, New York, 1990), 118. Further discussion of overdetermination in light of the Incorporation Thesis is available in Henry E. Allison, *Ethics, Evil, and Anthropology in Kant: Remarks on Allen Wood's* Kant's Ethical Thought, *Ethics* 111 (2001), 598-599.

18 I will leave aside the issue of mere "legality" brought up in the *Critique of Practical Reason* (*Kritik der praktischen Vernunft*, translated in *Practical Philosophy*, Trans. Mary J. Gregor, Cambridge University Press, Cambridge, 1996). At 5:71-72 in the second critique, Kant points out that dutiful action done from feeling/inclination contains *legality*, but not *morality* (moral worth). These are both presumably preferable to failing to act in accord with duty or to intentionally transgressing duty. A similar discussion of merit is had at 6:227-228 of the *MM*. What I explore in this paper is the use of the beautiful as an

instrument in enabling agents to act in such a way that they are morally worthy, not for achieving mere legality.

19 Paul Guyer, *Kant and the Experience of Freedom*, Chapters 9 & 10.

20 Nancy Sherman, *Making a Necessity of Virtue: Aristotle and Kant on Virtue* (Cambridge University Press, New York, 1997), 145-151.

21 Henry E. Allison, *Kant's Theory of Freedom*, 97, and Henry E. Allison, *Idealism and Freedom: Essays on Kant's Theoretical and Practical Philosophy* (Cambridge University Press, New York, 1996), 118-123.

22 René Descartes, *The Passions of the Soul*, (Trans. Stephen H. Voss, Hackett Publishing Company, Indianapolis, 1989), Article 211.

23 Ibid., Article 211.

24 The translation of *Anthropologie in pragmatischer Hinsicht* to be used is *Anthropology from a Pragmatic Point of View* (Trans. Victor Lyle Dowdell, Carbondale, Southern Illinois Press, 1978).

25 The translation of *Die Religion innerhalb der Grenzen der bloâen Vernunft* to be consulted is located in *Religion and Rational Theology* (Trans. Allen W. Wood & George Di Giovanni, Cambridge University Press,Cambridge, 2001).

26 Paul Guyer, *Kant and the Experience of Freedom*, 344-345.

27 For further discussion of what I call "the problem of force" in Kant's moral theory, see Scott R. Stroud, Rhetoric and Moral Progress in Kant's Ethical Community," *Philosophy and Rhetoric*, 38 (4), 2005, 328-354.

28 For a further explication of examples in Kant's thought and a comparison to modern theory concerning examples, see Onora O'Neill, *Constructions of Reason: Explorations of Kant's Practical Philosophy* (Cambridge University Press, New York, 1989), 165-186.

29 Ted Cohen, "Why Beauty is a Symbol of Morality," *Essays in Kant's Aesthetics* (Edited by Ted Cohen & Paul Guyer, University of Chicago Press, Chicago, 1985), 230.

30 Kant also disparages habits as moral tools/instruments at *MM* 6:383-384, 6:407, and 6:409.

Department of History and Philosophy
University of Texas-Pan American, Communication, Arts, & Sciences Building, Room 342, 1201 W. University Drive, Edinburg, TX 78539-2999, USA, stroudsr@utpa.edu.

Perfectionism between Pragmatism and Confucianism[1]

PENG FENG

Perfectionism, as defined by Thomas Hurka, "is a moral theory according to which certain states or activities of human beijings, such as knowledge, achievement and artistic creation, are good apart from any pleasure or happiness they bring, and what is morally right is what most promotes these human 'excellences' or 'perfections'."[2] Since perfectionism affirms "affirm both self-regarding duties to seek the excellences in one's own life and other-regarding duties to promote them in other people," it usually be criticized that "the latter duties, when applied to political questions, are hostible to liberty and equality".[3] But some neo-pragmatists, such as Richard Rorty, Hilary Putnam, Stanley Cavell, and so on, argue that perfectionism can soften contradictories between self-realization and democracy and endorse both liberty and equality. In this paper I propose to articulate an alternative ideal of perfectionism based on Confucianism, which differs significantly from prominent pragmatist versions but can also overcome the contradictories between private and public perfection.

I begin with my redescription of pragmatist perfectionism based on Richard Shusterman's narrative in *Practicing Philosophy*.[4]

I For Richard Rorty, the contradiction between self-realization and democracy which perfectionism aims to overcome is between private and public affairs. Rorty insists that self-realization is an essentially private affair, and public democracy can do nothing but give a chance for individuals in the very beginning of their self-creation, i.e. "to equalize opportunities for self-creation and then leave people alone to use, or neglect, their opportunities".[5] The concerns of self-creation must be entirely segregated from the realm of public democracy, and vice versa. Thus Rorty's strategy to reconcile the two ideals of self-realization and democracy is simply to make a rigorous distinction between them and keep them totally separate. Self-realization can only be reached through the unlimited private pursuit of new selves, and in contrast, democracy is merely a necessary social condition with social tasks that do not fulfill the ends of self-creation. In order to keep self-creation pure, Rorty limits it to the realm of language. So Rorty's models of self-realization are the strong poet and the ironist who constantly redescribe themselves with maximum or totally novel vocabularies. The processes of self-perfection amount to constantly renewing one's self-portraits according to such vocabularies.

Journal of Comparative Literature and Aesthetics, Vol. XXXI : Nos. : 1-2 : 2008

This vision of perfectionism is criticized as negative private liberalism by Shusterman. According to Shusterman's reading, it contradicts, in many aspects, its original vision conceived by John Dewey and others.[6] For example, Dewey never limited himself in the realm of language. He was active engaged in many public affairs. One of Deweyan ideals is democracy. "He sought the sort of social structure that enables individuals to flourish, not just for the sake of the individuals but for the group as well."[7]

Hilary Putnam shows another way to reconcile self-realization and democracy. Very briefly, Putnam's argument is deployed in this way: We indeed have no knowledge what human happiness is as a fixed end, and thus our choice of how to live is not predetermined by any known essence of human nature, function, or happiness; every individual's distinctive thinking with respect to the question of how to live could supply knowledge for enriching human choices and lives. As Putnam writes, "there can be no final answer to the question of how we should live, and therefore we should always leave it open to further discussion and experimentation."[8] According to Putnam, if one's discussion or experimentation is uniquely personal, can it benefit the question of How to Live. In Putnam's project, the individual's freedom to think about such matters does not hurt the common affairs of human beings, but rather contributes to the mutually shared questions of life. Perhaps this is, in Putnam's mind, the very quintessence of democracy.

However, as Shusterman rightly criticizes, "The value of thinking for oneself does not entail the value of thinking primarily about one's distinctive self. Dewey's worry remains: preoccupation with distinctive selfhood not only impoverishes the self but also deprives others of care and weakens the social bonds of democracy."[9] Moreover, knowledge about all possibilities of how to live is not as important to individual humans as Putnam conceives. Only one who takes responsibility for human affairs as a whole, such as the God or the United Nations, would be interested in this kind of knowledge.

I suggest that compared to Rorty and Putnam, Stanley Cavell offers more ingenious arguments for the reconciliation of self-cultivation and democracy, which may be narrated based on Shusterman's summary. First, the self is dynamic and not yet perfect, and is directed at self-improvement and (through this) at the improvement of society. Constantly in the making, the self should always strive towards a higher "unattained yet attainable self": "To recognize the unattainable self is … a step in attaining it," but the process of striving is never completed: not because we never reach the next or higher self, but because in reaching it, we should always see yet a further, still higher self to reach for. [10] Second, others that may be quite different from the self provide inspiring models for the further self, and so elicit deep respect. As Cavell writes, perfectionism means being:

Open to the further self, in oneself and in the other, which means holding oneself in knowledge of the need for change; which means, being one who lives in promise, as

a sign, or representative human, which in turn means expecting oneself to be, making oneself, intelligible as an inhabitant now also of a further realm …, call this the realm of the human – and to show oneself prepared to recognize others as belonging there.[11]

Shusterman's response to this idea is positive and he comments that, "Cavell's reconciliation of self-cultivation and democracy is very ingenious: self-absorbed perfectionism entails respect for others because they are implied in the self's unattained but attainable further self."[12]

But this innovative project is not exempt from challenge. Shusterman epecially criticizes Cavell's limitation of the tool of democratic self-perfection to the transformative activities of writing and reading. As Shusterman says,

Though Cavell's ethics of democracy is not reducible to a mere textual aestheticism, it leaves itself too vulnerable to such an interpretation through its extreme emphasis on writing and neglect of other important dimensions of democratic philosophical life. For isn't there more to knowing how to live than knowing how to write and read, even in the special, more demanding, perfectionist sense that Cavell gives these textual terms? If the philosophical life is really taken seriously – that is, with the full-blooded, more-than-verbal concreteness that life entails – we need to go not only beyond a fictive textual persona, but also beyond the ideal "city of words" and idealistic dimension of self-transformation that Cavell emphasizes. [13]

Furthermore, in my view, there is another point worth questioning: the ambition to expand the self into unlimited further selves. This pragmatist heroism or optimism is quite suspect. After all, based on the same insatiable will, Schopenhauer educes his pessimism which seems to be very contrary to the pragmatist heroism. I do not mean to suggest a preference for Schopenhauer's pessimism over pragmatist optimism. Instead, I propose to rescue pragmatist perfectionism with Confucianism.

While the above narrative may be brief, it suggests a starting point from which to contrast pragmatist and Confucian perfectionism. Despite the many differences among Rorty, Putnam, and Cavell, they share three common points in their visions of perfectionism: private or personal perfection, linguistic or textual work as the essential means or focus of perfection, and unlimited self-creation.

II

Before I investigate the possibilities of a convergence between pragmatism and Confucianism with regard to perfectionism, it should be acknowledged that other philosophers, such as Roger Ames and Richard Shusterman, have done excellent jobs bringing these two traditions into dialogue.[14] Shusterman confesses that when he is challenged by his Western philosophical colleagues for paying so much attention to the body, popular art, and practical value of art, he usually turns to find support from Asian philosophy, especially Confucianism. Like Asian Confucianism, American pragmatism originated outside of Europe, and Shusterman suggests that this contributes in part to their philosophical convergence.[15]

Indeed, the great pragmatist John Dewey highly appreciated Confucianism. The first dialogue between pragmatism and Confucianism can perhaps be traced to the early 20th century, when John Dewey initially mixed his pragmatism with Confucianism. Dewey's profound experience of living in China between 1919-1921 was confirmed by his daughter Jane, who said this experience "was so great as to act as a rebirth of [Dewey's] intellectual enthusiasms," and he henceforth held China as "the country nearest his heart after his own."[16] A.N. Whitehead also said in reference to his half-brother John Dewey: "If you want to understand Confucius, read John Dewey. And if you want to understand John Dewey, read Confucius."[17]

Beyond the particular historical instance of Dewey, we can see a number of similarities between pragmatism and Confucianism. In particular, both have the obvious philosophical inclination towards perfectionism. This tendency in Confucianism can be illustrated in a number of examples. Confucius frankly said of himself several times in the *Analects* that he was not a "Sage which meant his present state was not yet perfect. In addition, he admitted he was tireless in learning and in teaching other people, [18] which is to say that he constantly perfected not only his own but also other individual personalities. This self-perfection practiced by Confucius is almost the very example of Cavell's claim of democratic self-perfection. For Confucius, the process of self-perfecting did not reach its end in his lifetime. He said: "At fifteen my heart was set on learning; at thirty I stood firm; at forty I had no more doubts; at fifty I knew the mandate of heaven; at sixty my ear was obedient; at seventy I could follow my heart's desire without transgressing the norm." [19] Given that Confucius lived to be seventy-two years old, the state of "follow one's heart's desire without transgressing the norm" was the final in his process of self-perfection One can reasonably conceive that Confucius might have transformed again if he had lived to be eighty. It is worth emphasizing here that Confucian last perfecting state, that is, "follow the heart's desire without transgressing the norm", also seems to be the ideal of pragmatist perfectionism as it obviously softens the tension between private freedom and the social norm.

We can also find this description of different states of personality in *Mengzi* :

Haosheng Buhai asked, "What sort of man is Master Yue Zheng ?" Mengzi replied, "He is a good man, a real man." Haosheng Buhai asked, "What do you mean by 'A good man,' 'A real man?'" The reply was, "A man who commands our liking is what is called a good man. He whose goodness is part of himself is what is called real man. He whose goodness has been filled up is what is called beautiful man. He whose completed goodness is brightly displayed is what is called a great man. When this great man exercises a transforming influence, he is what is called a sage. When the sage is beyond our knowledge, he is what is called a spirit-man. Master Yue Zheng is between the two first characters, and below the four last." [20]

One's personality can be constantly developed without a certain, fixed end, which is an idea common to both Confucian and pragmatist perfectionism. Even Xunzi , a classical Confucian scholar who is very different from Mengzi in many aspects, shared

this concept. Although their ideas of human nature differ from each other, Mengzi and Xunzi similarly advocated perfectionism.

Mengzi is famous for his insistence on the goodness of human nature. But by saying that human nature is good, Mengzi merely means that all men possess the very beginnings (*duan*) of goodness, not that men's natures are already entirely good. The fulfillment of goodness comes from constant development and cultivation of the infantile good beginnings. If the nascent goodness is not developed fully, they will not lead to future goodness. .As Mengzi said:

The five kinds of grains are considered good plants, but if the grains are not ripe, they are worse than cockles. It is the same with regard to *ren* , which must grow into maturity. [21]

In its (human nature's) reality (*qing*), it is possible to be good. This is what I mean by saying that it is good. If men do what is not good, it is not the fault of their natural materials (*cai*). The feeling of commiseration belongs to all men; so does that of shame and dislike; that of reverence and respect; and that of right and wrong. The feeling of commiseration is human-heartedness; that of shame and dislike is righteousness; that of reverence and respect is propriety; and that of right and wrong is wisdom. They are not fused into us from without. We originally are possessed of them. They do not come from our reflection. Hence I say, "seek and you will find them; neglect and you will lose them. [22]

In short, what Mengzi sought to express in his doctrine that human nature is originally good is (1) everyone has the equal beginnings of goodness and is potentially capable of becoming Sages;[23] (2) everyone should develop her good beginnings to reach her entire and perfect goodness. [24]

Xunzi's doctrine of human nature is diametrically opposed to that of Mengzi. According to Xunzi, human nature is nothing but evil. Xunzi said: "The nature (*xing*) of man is evilÿhis goodness is only acquired training (*wei*)."[25] But although human nature is evil, it is possible for every man to become good. To the question "Can the man in the street become a *Yu* (a famous sage)?", Xunzi's response is:

What give *Yu* the qualities of *Yu* is that he put into practice human-heartedness (*ren*), righteousnessÿ*yi*, obedience to law (*fa*) , and uprightness (*zheng*). So then there is a possibility for knowing and practicing human-heartedness, righteousness, obedience to law and uprightness. This being so, every man on the street has the capacity for knowing human-heartedness, righteousness, obedience to law and uprightness, and the means to carry out these principles. Thus it is evident that he can become a *Yu*…. Suppose this man on the street directs his capacities to learning, concentrating his mind on one object, thinking and studying and investigating thoroughly, adding daily to his knowledge and long retaining it. If he accumulates goodness and does not stop, he will reach spiritual clairvoyance, and will form a trinity with Heaven and Earth. Thus the Sage is a man who has attained that state by cumulative effort.[26]

In short, the basic motive for Xunzi's insistence that "human nature is originally evil" is to maintain human striving against evilness and encourage transformation into goodness. Xunzi's argument against Mengzi's doctrine of "human nature is originally good" is: if one's nature has already been good, why would one continue to perfect oneself? But this is an obvious misreading of Mengzi. As just mentioned above, what Mengzi actually expresses in his doctrine of "human nature is good" is that all people posses the very beginnings (*duan*) of goodness, not that their natures are already entirely good. The achievement of goodness comes from constant development and cultivation of the infantile good beginnings. For Mengzi, if there are no such beginnings to goodness, then a philosophy such as Xunzi's must answer the question of where or how the goodness emerges. Nonetheless, while their presuppositions of human nature are contradictory, Mengzi and Xunzi's motives for cultivating oneself to pursue the goodness are almost the same.In fact, for Confucianism, the presupposition of human nature is not as important as the consequence derived from the presupposition. As Du Wei-ming writes,

the idea of human perfectibility does not specify whether environmental intervention or native endowment plays the key role in the perfecting process. Mencius (Mengzi) and Hsün Tzu (Xunzi), a sophisticated critic of the Mencian thesis, share this idea, but their reason for advocating it are significantly different. For Hsün Tzu, the perfecting process involves a complex interaction between the cognitive functions of the mind and social constraints….for Mencius, there is something in each human being that, in the ultimate sense, can never be subject to external control. This something is neither learned nor acquired; it is a given reality, endowed by Heaven as the defining characteristic of being human." [27]

However, for the purpose of this paper, their different motivations for advocating perfectionism is not as crucial as the fact that both Mengzi and Xunzi(the different schools of Confucianism) actually advocate perfectionism.

Confucian perfectionism is appropriately expressed in the Confucian perception of adulthood. According to Confucianism, adulthood or maturity is not only a particular state of human life but also an ideal which can never be achieved. As Du Wei-ming says,

The Confucian term for adulthood is *ch'eng-jen* (*chengren*), which literally means one who has *become* a person. Since the word *ch'eng* (*cheng*), like many other Chinese characters, is both a noun and a verb, the former signifying a state of completion and the latter a process of development, it is not far-fetched to understand the *ch'eng-jen* basically as one who has *gone far* towards a fully developed humanity. The notion of *ch'eng-jen* thus denotes not merely a stage of life but a many-sided manifestation of man's creative adaptation to the inevitable process of aging, a proven ability to mature further, as well as an obvious sign of maturity itself."[28] This constantly maturing further is quite similar to Cavell's constantly making a higher "unattained yet attainable self.

III

Continual self-perfection seems to be the common feature between Confucianism and pragmatism. But, in many aspects, these two perfectionisms are quite different.

First of all, Confucianism admits the finiteness of human individuals, and thus maintains that self-perfection should be based on the limits of finiteness. Given this humility, Confucianism advocates using rituals (*li* ®y) to restrict the unlimited ambition of individuals so that they can realize their real and illusionless self-perfection.[29] In the framework of *li*, everything can be called by its right name (*ming*

T), and individual self-perfection should be practiced under accordingly.

But in the pragmatist vision of perfectionism that we just outlined above, we cannot see any restrictions to the self's ambition. The self is totally free to open itself to an unlimited future. This unlimited freedom makes it impossible to practice self-perfection in the social community, and is perhaps the reason why some neo-pragmatists relegate the practices of self-perfection to the realm of language.

Pragmatists might object to Confucius' idea of *li* because it seems to rudely intervene in private freedom. But Confucianism would reasonably argue that human beings have actually grown up in the framework of *li*, as an already fundamental part of their lives, so perhaps only in the framework of *li* can they live comfortably, instead of feeling uneasy and controlled. Furthermore, since human beings cannot really live only in the realm of language, they must accept certain limitations so as to enjoy a real and embodied life in the community. As a case in point, in the highest state of Confucius' life — that is, following one's heart's desire without transgressing the norm — we indeed find that he enjoyed a great deal of freedom.

Furthermore, *li* cannot be conceived of as a fixed, or even dead system of rules and regulations. For Confucius, *li* is flexible and changeable,[30] and "varies according to the principle of 'timeliness'. The situational dimension is so crucial to the structure of *li* that a fundamentalistic adherence to its forms is at best a demonstration of what was called 'the small fidelity of common men and common women.'" [31]

For Confucius, *li* is not only changeable with situations, but also should be incarnated in human feelings and behaviors. In other words, *li* should be conceived as an externalization of authoritative conduct (*ren* ÁN). As Confucius said, "What has a person who is not authoritative (*ren* ÁN) got to do with observing ritual propriety (*li* ®y)? What has a person who is not authoritative got to do with the playing of music (*yue* j)?"[32] "In referring time and again to observing ritual propriety (*li* ®y), how could I just be talking about gifts of jade and silk? And in referring time and again to making music (*yue* j), how could I just be talking about bells and drums?"[33] For Confucius, *li* is not a fixed, empty form of human behaviors, but an embodiment of inner feelings. In this sense, perhaps we can interpret *li* as the art of dance. [34]

Second, Confucianism not only respects but also appreciates others. Although we can also find a respectful attitude towards others in the pragmatist vision of

perfectionism, especially in the case of Cavell, this respect is somehow a kind of conquest, —a stance quite different from the Confucian respect of appreciation. Allow me to make a comparison between the two.

In the vision of Cavell's perfectionism, respect to others derives from the fact that others are examples of the further self. In other words, others would be the targets of the self's conquest in the next step of self-perfection – that is, the self will transform herself into one of the others. The experiments of lifestyle supported by others merely manifest the possibilities for the self's further perfection. A perfect self seems to experience all of the possibilities of lifestyle manifested by all others. A perfect self should constantly give up the old self and acquire a new one. The other would be put away as soon as it has been experienced by the self. In this sense, the respect to others conceived by Cavell is not a real respect but a conquest or consumption. This critique, it seems, is also applicable to the Putnam's philosophy of perfectionism.

The vision of Confucian respect to others is quite different. Confucian *li* always implies the existence of an "other." As Du Wei-ming says, "To dwell in *li*, therefore, is not to remain isolated. On the contrary, it necessarily involves a relationship or a process by which a relationship comes into being. Thus, to relate oneself to an other is the underlying structure of *li*."[35] This respect to the others in the structure of *li* is not a conquest, because the self would not like to transform into others but "to harmonize his relationships with others."[36] The dichotomy of self and others, according to Du Wei-ming's interpretation, can be dissolved in the "dynamic process" of *li*:

> If we seriously take the notion of *li* as movement, the dichotomy of self and society has to be understood in a new perspective. The self must be extended beyond its physical existence to attain its authenticity, for society is a constituent aspect of the authentic self. However, society is not conceived of as something out there that is being imposed on the individual. It is in essence an extended self. The internalization of social values, which is frequently criticized as the submission of the individual to a well-established authority, can therefore be interpreted as a creative step taken by the self to enter into human-relatedness for the sake of none other than its own realization.[37]

Du Wei-ming indeed articulates the deep relation between self and society in Confucianism. But in what sense society transforms into an extended self, or self transforms into an internalized society is still not very clear. In the case of Cavell, we also find this deep relation between self and society or others, but in a very different sense than Confucianism. For Confucianism, the self should not only "understand" how to respect others, but also "love" and even "enjoy" respecting others.[38] Thus Confucian respect to others can justifiably be called respect through appreciation, which is very different from Cavell's respect in conquest.

To articulate this in further detail, Confucianism surely admits that the self has many future possibilities. But the self also recognizes she can realize only one of these possibilities in a certain moment. What about the other possibilities? For Confucianism, if the self chooses one of her possibilities, the others will lose their chances to be

realized by the self at the same time. The other possibilities would then be the desired but unattainable further self. This desired but unattainable further self has lost its chance to be manifested by the self in this moment, but are there other chances for them to be realized? Of course they can be realized in the self's imagination, and in the self's life of reading and writing. However, the only way for them to be realized in the social community is by others. That is to say others may be regarded as the very realization of the self's desired but unattainable further selves, and in this there is a deep affinity between the self and others. Based on the recognition of their deep connections, others would not be potential materials for the further self, but rather the realization of the self's expectations or dreams; thus they become worthy of appreciating as a necessary complement of the self and raise a deep feeling of oneness with others. This is the Confucian vision of respect to others. As the *Analects* recorded:

Confucius said: "Shen! My teaching contains one all pervading principle." "Yes," replied Zengzi. When Confucius had left the room the disciples asked: "What did he mean?" Zengzi replied: "Our Master's teaching is conscientiousness (*zhong*) and altruism (*shu* U`), and nothing else.[39]

Feng Youlan takes two maxims of Confucius to interpret the meaning of *zhong* and *shu*: "In the maxim, 'Desiring to maintain oneself, one sustains others; desiring to develop oneself, one develops others,' there is the Confucian virtue of 'conscientiousness to others' or *zhong* . And in the maxim, 'Do not do to others what you do not like yourself,' there is the Confucian virtue of *shu* or altruism. Genuinely to practise these virtues of *zhong* and *shu* is genuinely to practise *ren*."[40] The virtues of *zhong* and *shu* form the basic attitude towards others for Confucius. The core of practicing *ren* or of practicing self-perfection is how to treat others. The Confucian strategy for realizing these central virtues is to limit the self and to keep space for others to perfect their own selves. Others can be appreciated as the real realization of the self's desirable and unattainable further possibilities.

Finally, one can still reasonably question this Confucian vision of perfectionism because there seems to remain few spaces for the processes of self-perfection. But according to Confucianism, there is actually space within society large enough for the self to perfect herself. We find some support to this point in the Confucian theory of the relation between name (*ming*T) and actuality (*shi*). The *Analects* says:

Zilu said, "If the Lord of left the government of Wei in your hands, what would you attend to first?" Confucius said, "It would have to be the correction of names *zhengming*

T ÿI should think." Zilu said, "Are you really so out of touch with things? Why would you correct names?" Confucius said, "How boorish you are, You In matters that he knows nothing about one would expect the gentleman to show some reserve. If names are not correct then speech loses its accord; if speech loses its accord the affairs are not brought to fruition; if affairs are not brought to fruition then ritual and music will not prosper; if ritual and music do not prosper then punishments and penalties

will be inappropriate; if punishments and penalties are inappropriate then the people will not know where to put hand and foot." [41]

When Duke Jing of Qi (JŸoflQ) inquired of Confucius the principles of government, Confucius answered, saying, "Let the ruler be ruler, the minister minister; let the father be father, and the son son." "Excellent!" said the Duke, "For truly if the ruler be not ruler, the minister not minister; if the father be not father, and the son not son, though grain exist, shall I be allowed to eat it?"[42]

What Confucius called the correction of names is to make the name accord with its actuality. As Feng Youlan interprets,

Every name possesses its own definition, which designates that which makes the thing to which the name is applied be that thing and no other. In other words, the name is that thing's essence or concept. What is pointed out by the definition of the name 'ruler,' for example, is that essence which makes a ruler a ruler. In the phrase: 'Let the ruler be ruler,' etc., the first word, 'ruler,' refers to ruler as a material actuality, while the second 'ruler' is the name and concept of the ideal ruler. Likewise for the other terms: minister, father and son. For if it is brought about that ruler, minister, father and son all act in real life in accordance with the definitions or concepts of these words, so that all carry out to the full their allotted duties, there will be no more disorder in the world.[43]

Feng Youlan's interpretation of the correction of names sounds clearly committed to essentialism, in that a name denotes a fixed essence of e.g. ruler, father, son, etc.[44]

But Confucius cannot be condemned as essentialist. First, according to Confucius, a name is not only defined by its essence, but also defined by its relation with other names. The meaning of the name of father is defined in its relation with the name of son. Second, although Confucius seems to admit a name has its fixed essence, he does not assume that an individual can have only one fixed name forever. Since one's actuality is changing along with the changing of her age and situation, her name should shift so as to accord with her different actuality. One can do her best to acquire new names, but on the other hand, one can also do her best to make her actuality accord with her name. There are two spaces for a person to perfect herself. One is to acquire as many names as possible, and the other is to make actuality accord with the name as fit as possible. Though the best way, according to Confucius, seems to make actuality accord with the name first, and to acquire a new name second.

To make a name accord with its actuality may appear easy, but is actually difficult for one to practice it in social life. Individuals should constantly cultivate and limit themselves in order to keep the accordance between name and actuality. When an individual reaches accordance with her name, it may be called small harmony. Every member then has his or her right name and is responsible for keeping this name in accord with actuality, which may be called the great harmony. In these harmonies, the self reaches her small and great perfections.

IV

I venture a claim that the accordance between name and actuality can be considered in terms of the accordance —borrowing the terminology from structuralist semiotics — of signifier and signified, or significance and presence.[45] Confucian perfectionism makes an effort to transform the signifier into signified, or to make significance into presence. In contrast, pragmatist perfectionism conceived by Rorty, Putnam, and Cavell strives to create signifier or significance as novel as possible, or to embrace signifier or significance as much as possible. This is an acute difference between Confucianism and pragmatism.

As discussed previously, in Rorty's vision of self-realization the search for "self-enlargement," "self-enrichment," and "self-creation," occur by the way of redescribing the self in new vocabularies. "The desire to enlarge oneself," says Rorty, "is the desire to embrace more and more possibilities, of constantly learning, of giving oneself over entirely to curiosity, to end by having envisaged all the possibilities of the past and of the future."[46] But again, this pursuit is limited to the realm of language. For Rorty, the self is nothing but a complex web of vocabularies and narratives. Rorty explicitly says: "human beings are simply incarnated vocabularies"; it is simply "words which…made us what we are."[47] This vision of aesthetic-ethical life which submits itself to the narrative of language bears the typical bias toward signifier or significance.

On the contrary, Confucius clearly prefers signified to signifier, or presence to significance. We find that Confucius usually criticized clever words (ç]Š) in the *Analects*.[48] We also find a case about Confucius recorded in the *Shiji* (òS'Š) by Sima QianÿøS¬™w• ÿwhich demonstrates the Confucian preference of presence to significance:

Confucius was once learning to play on ch'in (a string instrument) from the music master Hsiangtse, and did not seem to make much progress for ten days. The music master said to him, "You may well learn something else now," and Confucius replied, "I have already learned the melody, but have not learned the beat and rhythm yet." After some time, the music master said, "You have now learned the beat and rhythm, you must take the next step." "I have not yet learned the expression," said Confucius. After a while, the music master again said, "Now you have learned the expression, you must take the next step." And Confucius replied, "I have not yet got an image in my mind of the personality of the composer." After some time the music master said, "There's a man behind this music, who is occupied in deep reflection and who sometimes happily lifts up his head and looks far away, fixing his mind upon the eternal." "I've got it now," said Confucius. "He is a tall, dark man and his mind seems to be that of an empire builder. Can it be any other person than King Wen himself (the founder of the Chou Dynasty)?" The music master rose from his seat and bowed twice to Confucius and said, "It is the composition of King Wen." [49]

Confucius's search for self-perfection is thoroughly different from Rorty's pragmatist self-perfection as "self-enlargement," "self-enrichment," and "self-creation". The former can be called minimalism, and the later, in contrary, maximalism. Confucius

does not occupy as many as possible vocabularies or signs so as to create a novel self by redescribing it in the new language, in contrary, he occupies as few as possible vocabularies or signs so as to create a novel self by translating the significance into presence, or signifier into signified.

V

Richard Shusterman has articulated the differences between Rorty's pragmatism and Dewey's, and criticized the speciousness of an unlimited (and consequently shallow) quest for constantly new vocabularies.[50] In Shusterman's neo-pragmatism (or perhaps new generation of neopragmatism)[51] we find a philosophy that is both different from Rorty's and much closer to Dewey's ideas about pragmatism and Confucianism.

First, Shusterman does not limit his "art of life" to the realm of language, but offers a very strong recognition of presence in his support of both immediate experience as an experience of presence, and non-linguistic experience as an experience of presence without signs, signifiers, or representations. Shusterman suggests that there is non-linguistic understanding and experience beneath interpretation which is presumed to be linguistic:

Even if we grant that linguistic understanding is always and necessarily interpretation, it still would not follow that all understanding is interpretive. For that requires the further premise that all understanding and meaningful experience is indeed linguistic. And such a premise, though it be the deepest dogma of the linguistic turn in both analytic and continental philosophy, is neither self-evident nor immune to challenge. Certainly there seem to be forms of bodily awareness or understanding that are not linguistic in nature and that in fact defy adequate linguistic characterization, though they can be somehow referred to through language. As dancers, we understand the sense and rightness of a movement or posture proprioceptively, by feeling it in our spine and muscles, without translating it into conceptual linguistic terms. We can neither learn nor properly understand the movement simply by being talked through it.[52]

We can also find that Confucius approved of non-linguistic experience in the *Analects*. For example, in this dialogue between Confucius and his disciple Zigong, Confucius' expresses his general attitude to language:

Confucius said: "I wish I could avoid talking."

Zigong said, "Master, if you didn't speak, what would we disciples have to pass on?"

Confucius said, "Does Heaven speak? Yet the four seasons continue to change, and all things are born. Does Heaven speak?" [53]

Just as Wittgenstein did not want to be imitated by the "philosophical journalists," but rather sought to effect "a change in the way people live which would make all these questions superfluous," [54] Confucius does not like his disciples to record and circulate his words but to instead follow his life style so as to become exemplary people by themselves.

Second though Shusterman recognizes the value of the perfectionist strive for enrichment, he also advocates the beauty and value of the minimalist life as an existence that is both good and aesthetic. Shusterman criticizes Rorty's self-perfection as, "essentially romantic picaresque in genre, a tireless, insatiable, Faustian quest for enriching titillation through curiosity and novelty, a quest that is as wide-ranging as it is unstructured through the lack of center it so celebrates."[55] According to Shusterman's version of pragmatism, a "kind of slimmed-down, centered, limit-respecting life of unity" which is labeled by Rorty "the ascetic life" should be also a legitimate "aesthetic life".[56] He argues:

It is simply wrong to assume that a life emphasizing strong unity and thus adopting the limits this requires cannot be an aesthetic life, that it cannot be enjoyed and praised as aesthetically satisfying or even recommended for its aesthetic appeal. One could well choose the life of an earth-rooted, family-bound farmer over a jet-hopping, spouse-swapping academic simply in terms of its aesthetic joys of order, coherence, and harmony, which stem from a centrally structured and limited project of development, whose unity is both enhanced and largely constituted by cyclical and developmental variations on its central theme or narrative. As Foucault realized in his study of Greek ethics, one can pursue still greater simplicity and purity of life in order to stylize oneself as an extraordinary individual through a style of minimalist distinction where less becomes more since it is beyond the taste of the masses, but also because of the positive pleasures of self-limiting self-mastery. [57]

Third, Shusterman takes the finiteness of the self very seriously. In the last chapter of *Practicing Philosophy*, which may be read as his autobiography, Shusterman clearly demonstrates how the selves he has been and can possibly ever be are limited by his ethnic situation. Even if he leaves the Jewish community, he will always be in some way Jewish and thus certain "other selves" (an Irish Catholic, a Japanese Buddhist, etc.) are not genuine options for him [58] Shusterman also makes similar points about finitude in his account of genius in *Performing Live*. Genius should be developed according to one's already existing and limited self. Shusterman writes,

To bring one's light to catch the spark of style and make it blaze into genius, each person must reckon with her own color and thickness of lens, her own object and range of focus, her own title of terrain, her own azimuth toward the sun. Here is a task for both careful industry and dangerous abandon, for intently pushing on to the limit, and going still further by then letting go. But everyone must find – through trail, courage, honesty – her own proper, changing balance of these elements. And so we close with one last paradox: as with other alleged sublimities, the final formula for genius and style lies in the unformulable details of actual practice.[59]

Even when he advocates the use of the other to learn about the self, Shusterman emphasizes that there are limits to how much one can absorb of the other. He warns,

Self-expanding, self-testing encounters with the other are enriching but can be dangerously destabilizing. What seems easy and limitless in theory is often painfully stressful and incapacitating in practice, as we can learn from refugees who are forced

to settle in alien cultures. My conclusion is not to reject cultural travel but simply to recognize its risks and limits, so as to make it more fruitful…. We should seek cultural variety for enriching and defining the self but only to the extent that such variety can be held in a satisfying unity.[60]

In a recent paper Shusterman responds to Kathleen Higgins, who criticized the idea that there are limits to how much of the other we can absorb into the self. Shusterman writes,

There are practical limits as to how much such a subject can extend of herself in experience, even in the experience of reading. I say this to respond, in conclusion, to Higgins's worry that I emphasize the limits of expansiveness in urging multicultural exploration. In the abstract, of course, we can open ourselves to everything, and much academic gesturing to multiculturalism seems to be of this abstract, all-encompassing style that I find rather empty and naive, even when it is sincere. In practice, we cannot open ourselves to understand fully all others who see the world very differently than we do. This is not simply because we risk losing an effectively coherent web of beliefs that would cause us to lose rather than gain in effective identity. It is also because, practically speaking, we do not have enough time to launch ourselves in limitless transcultural exploration, without hindering the development of the cultural self that one is and without harming the people and communities that rely on us and make us what we are."[61]

Finally, Shusterman not only respects others to "help constitute our identity",[62] but also respects others for their own sake. Shusterman elaborates an aesthetic justification of democracy based on Dewey's pragmatism, and gives three arguments for the aesthetic justification of democracy. One of these arguments includes an appreciation of difference which is quite similar to the Confucian respect through appreciation introduced previously. One can develop "the aesthetic idea of personal experiential enrichment," Shusterman argues, "through democracy's respect for difference and the right of every individual to have and develop her distinctive perspective on life. Democracy's advocacy of the free and equal (though not always identical) participation of all different types of people in the direction of community life greatly enriches the experience of each. It not only provides the spice of variety, but gives the individual a heightened sense of her own distinct perspective and identity."[63]

The above-mentioned points should suffice to suggest the differences between Rorty's neo-pragmatism and Shusterman's new generation of neo-pragmatism. It seems clear that Shusterman tries to make neo-pragmatism much closer to classic pragmatism as elaborated by Dewey, and thus, whether intended or unintended, brings his version of pragmatism somehow close to Confucianism. Through Shusterman's pragmatist perspective, it may be possible to revive some old yet important Confucian ideas and make them appropriate for our time. From the Confucian perspective, it is easy to distinguish Shusterman's neo-neopragmatism from Rorty's neo-pragmatism which remains bound to the so-called linguistic turn of modern philosophy. In this new millennium and global era, a new convergence of American pragmatism and Asian Confucianism may be well worth considering.

Notes & Reference

[1] I am greatly indebted to Richard Shusterman, Roger Ames, and Mei-Lin Chinn for helpful comments and suggestions.

[2] Thamas Hurka, “Perfectionism,“ in *Routledge Encyclopedia of Philosophy*, E.Craig ed. (London and New York: Routledge, 1998), Vol. 7, p.299.

[3] *Ibid*., p. 300.

[4] Richard Shusterman, *Practicing Philosophy: Pragmatism and the Philosophical Life* (New York and London: Routledge, 1997), especially chapter 2 and 3. The Chinese version translated by my students and I was published by Peking University Press (Beijing, 2002).

[5] Richard Rorty, *Contingency, Irony, and Solidarity* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1989), p. xiv, 85.

[6] See Richard Shusterman, *Practicing Philosophy*, pp. 67-87. Also see his *Pragmatist Aesthetics: Living Beauty, Rethinking Art*, Second Edition (Lanham and Oxford: Rowman & Littlefield Publishers, 2000), pp. 246-261. The Chinese version of *Pragmatist Aesthetics* was published by The Commercial Press (Beijing, 2002), translated by myself.

[7] Michael Eldridge, “John Dewey,“ in *The Dictionary of Modern American Philosophers*, John R. Shook ed. (Bristol: Thoemmes, 2005), Vol. 2, p. 634.

[8] Hilary Putnam, *Renewing Philosophy* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1992), p.189. Quoted by Richard Shusterman, *Practicing Philosophy*, p. 92.

[9] See Richard Shusterman, *Practicing Philosophy*, p. 99.

[10] See Stanly Cavell, *Conditions Handsome and Unhandsome: The Constitution of Emerson Perfectionism* (Chicago: Chicago University Press, 1990), p. 12. Also see Richard Shusterman, *Practicing Philosophy*, p. 101. Obviously, Cavell’s version of perfectionism is explicitly based largely on Emerson more than on Dewey.

[11] Stanly Cavell, *Conditions Handsome and Unhandsome: The Constitution of Emerson Perfectionism*, p. 125. Quated by Richard Shusterman, *Practicing Philosophy*, p. 103.

[12] Richard Shusterman, *Practicing Philosophy*, p. 105.

[13] *Ibid*., p. 108.

[14] See Roger Ames, “Confucianism and Deweyan Pragmatism: A Dialogue”, *Beida Journal of Philosophy*, Vol. 5, April 2004, pp. 234-260. Richard Shusterman, “Pragmatist Aesthetics and East-Asian Thought,“ in *The Range of Pragmatism, Richard Shusterman* ed. (Oxford: Blackwell, 2004), pp. 13-42.

[15] See Richard Shusterman, “Pragmatist Aesthetics and East-Asian Thought,“ p. 15.

[16] Quoted by Richard Shusterman, “Pragmatist Aesthetics and East-Asian Thought,“ p.16.

[17] Quoted by Roger Ames, “Confucianism and Deweyan Pragmatism: A Dialogue,“ p. 235.

[18] For example, Confucius said: “I dare not claim to be a sage or a man of *ren* (ÁN). But I strive for these without being disappointed, and I teach without becoming weary. This is what can be said of me” (*Analects*,7:33).

[19] *Analects*, 2:4.

[20] *Mengzi*, 7B:28.

[21] *Mengzi*, 6A: 19.

[22] *Mengzi*, 6A: 6.

[23] Cao Jiao asked Mengzi, “It is said, ‘All men may be Yaos and Shuns’ — is it so?” Mengzi replied, “It is” (*Ibid.*, 6B:2). Feng Youlan (¯QËSpQ) thinks that Mengzi especially stressed the liberty of the individual. He writes: “Mencius, … lays comparatively greater emphasis on individual liberty, for maintaining, as he did, that man is by nature good, he believed that human-heartedness, righteousness, propriety and wisdom are not ‘fused into us from without. We originally are possessed of them.’ Therefore it is inevitable that he should have strong respect for the moral decisions made by the individual.” See Fung Yu-Lan, *A History of Chinese Philosophy*, vol. 1, second edition, trans. Berk Bodde (London: George Allen & Unwin, 1952), p. 127.

[24] Feng Youlan (¯QËSpQ) makes an argument for this claim. He writes: “Yet why should man develop these beginnings of goodness? This is another question. Utilitarians would say that man should develop them because their development is beneficial to society, whereas their suppression is harmful. This is the reasoning used by Mo Tzu in his advocacy of universal love. Mencius, however, says that they should be developed because it is through them that man is human: ‘That whereby man differs from the birds and beasts is but slight. The mass of people cast it away, whereas the Superior Man preserves it.’” See Fung Yu-Lan, *A History of Chinese Philosophy*, vol. 1, p. 122.

[25] *Xunzi*, chapter 23.

[26] *Ibid*., chapter 23.

[27] Du Wei-ming, *Humanity and Self-Cultivation: Essays in Confucian Thought* (Berkeley: Asian Humanities Press, 1979), pp. 58-59.

[28] *Ibid*., p. 40.

[29] Speaking about the origin of *li*, Xunzi said, “Whence do *li* arise? The answer is that man is born with desires. When these desires are not satisfied, he cannot remain without seeking their satisfaction. When this seeking for satisfaction is without measure or limit, there can only be contention. When there is contention, there will be disorder. When there is disorder, everything will be finished. The early kings hated this disorder, and so they established *li* and *yi* (righteousness, ©n), to set an end to this confusion.”*Xunzi*, ch. 19.[30] Confucius said, “The use of a hemp cap is prescribed in the observance of ritual propriety (*li*®y). Nowadays, that a silk cap is used instead is a matter of frugality. I would follow accepted practice on this. A subject kowtowing on entering the hall is prescribed in the observance of ritual propriety (*li*®y). Nowadays that one kowtows only after ascending the hall is a matter of hubris. Although it goes contrary to accepted practice, I still kowtow on entering the hall.”*Analects*, 9:3, see Roger T. Ames and Henry Rosemontm Jr., *The Analects of Confucius: A Philosophical Translation* (New York: Ballantine, 1998), p. 126. Confucius’ attitude towards *li* is changeable with the change of situation.

[31] Du Wei-ming, *Humanity and Self-Cultivation: Essays in Confucian Thought*, p.30.

[32] *Analects*, 3:3, see *The Analects of Confucius: A Philosophical Translation*, p.82.

[33] *Analects*, 17:9, see *The Analects of Confucius: A Philosophical Translation*, p. 206.

[34] According to Feng Youlan’s interpretation, the Confucian *li* are transformed into poetry. Feng Youlan says: “There is a difference between what we know and what we hope. Knowledge is important, but we cannot live with knowledge only. We need emotional satisfaction as well. In determining our attitude towards the dead, we have to take both aspects into consideration. As interpreted by the Confucianists, the mourning and sacrificial rites did precisely this…these rites were originally not without superstition and mythology. But with the interpretations of the Confucianists, these aspects were purged. The religious elements in them were transformed into poetry, so that they were no longer religious, but simply peotic.” See Fung Yu-lan (Feng Youlan), *A Short History of Chinese Philosophy*, edited by Derk Bodde (New York: The Free Press, 1966), p. 148.

35 Du Wei-ming, *Humanity and Self-Cultivation: Essays in Confucian Thought*, p.30.
36 *Ibid*., p. 20.
37 *Ibid*., p. 25.
38 Confucius said, “To truly love it is better than just to understand it, and to enjoy it is better than simply to love it.”*Analects*, 6.20.
39 *Analects*, 4: 15.
40 Fung Yu-Lan, *A History of Chinese Philosophy*, vol. 1, p. 71.
41 *Analects*, 13:3.
42 *Ibid*., 12:11.
43 Fung Yu-Lan, *A History of Chinese Philosophy*, vol. 1, p. 60. For another interpretation of the correction of names in detail, see John Makeham, *Name and Actuality in Early Chinese Thought* (Albany: State University of New York Press, 1994), pp. 35-50.
44 Thank Richard Shusterman for noting Feng Youlan’s essentialist inclination in his interpretation of the Confucian correction of names.
45 For an initial “structure-biased” research of Chinese philosophy, see Hans-Goreg M öller, “Before and After Representation,” *Semiotica*, Vol. 143 (2003). Also see his Chinese paper, “Feng Youlan’s New Lixue and the location of New Confucianism,” *Research of Philosophy*, vol. 2, 1999.
46 Richard Rorty, “Freud and Moral Reflection,” in J. H. Smith and W. Kerrigan (eds), *Pragmatism’s Freud: The Moral Disposition of Psychoanalysis* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1986), p. 11.[47] Richard Rorty, *Contingency, Irony, and Solidarity*, pp. 88, 117.
48 Confucius said: “Someone who is a clever speaker and maintains a ‘too-smiley’ face is seldom considered a person of *jen*“(*Analects* 1:3); Confucius said: “Clever words, a pretentious face and too-perfect courtesy: Zuo Qiu-Ming was ashamed of them. I am also ashamed of them. Concealing one’s resentments and acting friendly to people: Zuo Qiu-Ming was ashamed to act this way and so am I”(*Ibid*., 5:24); “Clever words disrupt virtue”(*Ibid*., 15:26). In contrary, Confucius warned his disciplines that they should be “cautionary in speaking” (*Ibid*., 13:27); diligent in their work and careful in speech”(*Ibid*., 1:14); and “hesitant in speech”(*Ibid*., 4:24).
49 Quoted from *Wisdom of Confucius*, Edited and translated with notes by Lin Yutang (New York: Random House, 1938), pp. 74-75.
50 See Richard Shusterman, *Pragmatist Aesthetics*, ch. 9; *Practicing Philosophy*, ch. 2.
51 As Casey Haskins calls Shusterman “perhaps post-postmodern”, we can call him perhaps new generation of neopragmatist, in order to show the difference between Shusterman’s version of pragmatism and Rorty’s. See Casey Haskins, “Enlivened Bodies, Authenticity, and Romanticism”, in “Symposium: On Richard Shusterman’s *Performing Live*“, *Journal of Aesthetic Education*, Vol. 36, No. 4, Winter 2002, p.93.
52 See Richard Shusterman, *Pragmatist Aesthetics*, p. 127.
53 *Analects*, 17:18.
54 Ludwig Wittgenstein, *Culture and Value* (Oxford: Blackwell, 1980), p. 61.
55 Richard Shusterman, *Pragmatist Aesthetics*, p. 248.
56 *Ibid*., p. 252.
57 *Ibid*., p. 252.
58 Richard Shusterman, *Practicing Philosophy: Pragmatism and the Philosophical Life*, pp.179-196.
59 Richard Shusterman, *Performing Live: Aesthetic Alternatives for the Ends of Art* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2000), p. 217. Shusterman writes, “One must build on one’s already existing self – its talents, potential, most promising inclinations, but one must not rest content with them. One can only get to one’s higher self through the starting point of one’s present self. If one has no real talent for music but only for mathematics, one should seek one’s higher self not as a musician but as a mathematician.”*Ibid*., p. 214.
60 *Ibid*., p. 196.
61 Richard Shusterman, “Home Alone? Self and Other in Somaesthetics and *Performing Live*,” in “Symposium: On Richard Shusterman’s *Performing Live*“, *Journal of Aesthetic Education*, Vol. 36, No. 4, Winter 2002, p.113.
62 Shusterman writes, “Authenti city’s ‘goals of self-fulfillment and self-realization’ require more than the individual’s own resources. For the self is essentially social and dialogical in character, constructed from our interaction with other selves, who give us a sense of our own qualities, roles, limits, and worth. Even the meaning of our most private thoughts derives from a language that depends on, and is acquired through, dialogue with others. So if we fail to gain the recognition of others for what we are, our own sense of self is somehow diminished and impaired. These others who help constitute our identity and whose recognition is crucial for our own self-affirmation include not only those intimates whom we care most about, those ‘significant others’ (in George Herbert Mead’s phrase) who introduce us to our values and set our models, expectations, and horizons for self-realization.” Richard Shusterman, *Performing Live*, pp. 187-188.
63 Richard Shusterman, *Practicing Philosophy*, p. 97.

Department of Philosophy
Peking University
Republic of China