

2014

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ART AS PERSON: CORRELATIVE PERSONHOOD IN AESTHETIC REPRESENTATION

by

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A thesis submitted to the Honors Program
in partial fulfillment of the requirements for
Honors in the Major – Philosophy

UNIVERSITY OF NORTH FLORIDA

HONORS PROGRAM

April, 2014

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To

My family, who has always supported me no matter what,

and

Xiaowa, my kind and caring secret friend.

Acknowledgements

I would like to thank my mentor, Dr. Sarah Mattice, not only for her help with this thesis but for her guidance throughout my undergraduate studies. Without her direction, I probably never would have discovered my passion for Chinese culture and comparative philosophy. I am grateful for the opportunities she has opened up for me and will always keep her teachings close to heart as I move forward with my education.

I would also like to thank Dr. Bryan Bannon and Dr. Paul Carelli for their help with my thesis and their willingness to participate as members of the committee for my thesis defense.

I am especially grateful for Dr. Hans-Herbert Kögler's contributions to the University of North Florida's Philosophy Department as the current chair, for he has fostered within the department an environment of critical reflection and philosophical diversity.

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Abstract

In this paper, I argue that the metaphor of *art as person* should be implemented as a way to understand artistic interaction, such that the relationship between artworks and spectators should be understood as one between persons. I begin this argument by first juxtaposing Hans-Georg Gadamer's notion of aesthetic representation with the values that constitute correlative person in Confucianism. This juxtaposition draws similarities between artworks and persons that make the metaphor of art as person a plausible means for understanding artistic interaction. I then appeal to Michel Foucault for two significant reasons: his subjectification of the self solidifies the comparisons made between Gadamer and Confucianism, and his aesthetics of existence builds upon the metaphor of art as person by allowing artworks to be understood as ethical subjects. Once the metaphor has been thoroughly explicated, I address its moral implications, making it clear that current discussions in Western aesthetics and ethics should be reevaluated. Instead, one should adopt a perspective of self-cultivation, such as is discussed in Foucault and Confucianism, when one is interacting with artworks. With this stated, the prescriptive notions put forth by Foucault are expounded upon through Chinese aesthetic practices more generally and then through the Confucian ethical values discussed before in order to provide an alternative set of guidelines by which to interact with art.

Introduction

We are surrounded by art. Whether we travel to other countries, visit museums, attend concerts, read books or just watch television, nearly every day of each of our lives consists of some form of aesthetic engagement. Many thinkers and philosophers have pondered upon the nature of art, wondering what it is that constitutes aesthetic value and questioning whether it corrupts or enhances our lives. In the West especially, artists and philosophers alike have speculated upon the constitution of the aesthetic, wondering what the defining essence is that lies at the core of art qua art. Are artworks merely forms of *mimesis* as the Greeks claimed, imitations of reality that replicate the beautiful nature of being while also distancing themselves from it? If so, are they potential sources of misguidance that can lead people away from truth and the good if people do not "imitate from childhood what is appropriate for them" and what will lead to the good life?¹ Or are artworks the source of aesthetic value, such that beauty in the world follows the artist's interpretation of nature as a source of inspiration? Does such an aesthetic perspective as this give life its value, transforming people into creatures of creativity and ingenuity that are able to impart beauty and meaning unto an otherwise empty world? Maybe artworks reside somewhere in between these two extremes, both shaping and being shaped by the world around them, cultivating people's dispositions both positively and negatively with respect to the aspects of the

¹ Plato, *Republic III*, 395c; found in *Plato: Complete Works*, ed. John M. Cooper and D.S. Hutchinson, trans. G.M.A. Grube, rev. C.D.C. Reeve, 971-1223, (Indianapolis: Hackett Publishing Company, 1997), 1033.

artworks themselves, the perspective of the viewers and the entire context of these artistic interactions more generally.

This latter understanding of artworks is what I appeal to in this paper by introducing the notion of *art as person*. What this notion entails is that the interactions between spectators and artworks should be understood as if they were interactions between persons. However, this is not meant to be an Aristotelian ontological claim, for such a claim would require delving into deep metaphysical speculations concerned with the nature of 'art' and 'personhood' as definite philosophical categories. Instead, I approach artworks and persons from a perspective of contextuality, focusing on philosophical notions that do not abstract these categories from their context but integrate them entirely into the world. Within this contextual framework, 'art' and 'personhood' would not represent any definite or concrete essence, but would instead each give a name to relatable aspects of a contextual totality so as to provide a foundation for discussion and understanding. Thus any ontological claims that I could make for the integration of 'art' into the realm of 'personhood' are not necessary because these realms, within the notions of contextuality appealed to in this paper, would have no concrete presence in the world. It may be possible to fully integrate 'art' into 'personhood' within the relational ontologies appealed to in this paper, for both are malleable categories that may be altered and adapted, but the claims that I make for art as person do not require such a leap. Instead, one may understand art as person as a heuristic metaphor for artistic interaction, which utilizes similarities between the provisional categories of 'art' and 'personhood' in order to make claims concerning the relationship between artworks and spectators.

In making these claims, I address the thoughts and notions of numerous thinkers within different philosophical traditions. The foundations for the metaphor of art as person are

constructed through a juxtaposition of *aesthetic representation* as it is discussed in the works of Hans-Georg Gadamer with *correlative personhood* within the Confucian tradition. These two notions allow artworks and persons to resonate with each other significantly enough for my claims in support of art as person to be made. Once the details of art as person are presented, the second chapter introduces the thoughts of Michel Foucault concerning the subjectification of the self so that I may use them to solidify the connections made between Gadamer's artwork and Confucianism's person. This solidification is followed by the introduction of Foucault's *aesthetics of existence*, which I dissect and reappropriate so that its claims may be applied inversely to art as person. Just as Foucault claims that persons should be understood as works of art, I argue that artworks to be understood as ethical subjects in their interactions with spectators. The last chapter of this paper is spent explicating current trends in the ethical criticism of art and contrasting them with the concerns of art as person. These concerns are then formulated through various Chinese aesthetic practices, such as calligraphy and painting. The ethical aspects of those Confucian values introduced at the beginning of this paper are then appealed to in order to provide the metaphor of art as person with a framework for interacting with artworks as ethical subjects.

I

Juxtaposing Gadamer and Confucianism

As its heading suggests, this first chapter focuses on the juxtaposition of Gadamer's claims for the aesthetic with Confucianism's understanding of the correlative person. I spend much of this chapter explicating the essential aspects of each as concerns the claims made in this paper—such as the origination and location of the aesthetic as representation in a complex conglomeration of contextual historicity, or the subordination of individuality to roles and relationships for the correlative person—so that, in being placed side-by-side, similarities between them may begin to arise on their own. After they have been sufficiently represented, however, I use the final section of this chapter to conduct a thorough comparison of them, and argue that Gadamer's artwork and Confucianism's person resonate in such a way that personhood may be adopted as a metaphor for understanding the depth of aesthetic representation. Thus, in the Gadamarian style, the metaphor of art as person is developed, which provides an alternative hermeneutic approach to art and aesthetic interaction.

Play and Conversation in Gadamer's Aesthetic

According to Gadamer, thinkers during the Enlightenment began to perceive the aesthetic in opposition to rationality, causing art to be disregarded as something capable of displaying truth. Following the Enlightenment, thinkers during the Romantic period utilized this rational abandonment of art by abstracting the aesthetic as something autonomous and intrinsically

valuable. Beauty thus became disconnected from the world in what may be called the "pure work of art."¹ In opposition to this rational abandonment and romantic idealization of the aesthetic, Gadamer proclaims that art *is* capable of displaying truth, "truth which is certainly different from that of science but just as certainly is not inferior to it."² Rather than being autonomous, as Romantics would like to believe it to be, this understanding of art is instead dependent upon the entirety of its context—historical, cultural, social—and its truth is concerned with contextual development and experience. As he further expands upon these claims, Gadamer introduces numerous metaphorical notions that, in their nature as metaphors, seem to say something about the aesthetic that could not be properly said, if it could be said at all, through a completely rational and structural linguistic medium (which itself seems to aid Gadamer's claim for aesthetic truth). These notions, as well as their metaphorical composition, construct a hermeneutical approach to the aesthetic that begins the breakdown of its status as a distanced ideal and its integration into the world.

To begin, Gadamer first discusses the notion of *play*. Play, for Gadamer, is a back-and-forth relationship between players, with no definite goal beyond that which develops amongst these players as they play. It is an *interactivity* that is essential everywhere, for all things play, adapting and progressing through this "to and fro of constantly repeated movement."³ Now what is called art or aesthetic comes into being when the players are dissolved and become merely aspects of play. What this means is that play itself moves to the fore and subordinates the players, such that the game becomes prioritized over those playing it. In this dissolution, play is

¹ Hans-Georg Gadamer, *Truth and Method*, trans. Joel Weinsheimer and Donald G. Marshall, 2nd ed., (New York: Continuum, 1975), 74.

² *Ibid.*, 84.

³ Hans-Georg Gadamer, *The Relevance of the Beautiful and Other Essays*, ed. Robert Bernasconi, trans. Nicholas Walker, (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1986), 22.

transformed into *a play*; this distinction becomes clearer when one understands the wordplay occurring between the verb ‘play’ as interaction and the noun ‘play’ as theatrical literature and performance. Thus the playful interactive relationship between players becomes unified as play itself, shifting the relationship from one between players to one between a play and a spectator—and just as the back-and-forth of players constitutes the essence of play, that between a play and a spectator constitutes the essence of art and the aesthetic. In other words, for an artwork to be fully conceived of as aesthetic it must be presented to a spectator, which consists of anything from stage performances for an audience to public displays of statues or paintings to the private reading of literature; it could be argued that anything presented to a spectator as such possesses aesthetic being. This *representation* of a play to a spectator—as opposed to play's initial self-presentation in being constituted as such through the interaction of players—is what allows it to achieve its status as aesthetic.⁴ As a result of this, the spectator, as the one to whom the play is presented, becomes necessarily present as an aspect of the aesthetic, just as players are dissolved into play.

Understanding that the essence of the aesthetic lies within the play of artworks and spectators, one must develop an approach to art different from that of the Enlightenment and Romantic periods as they are described by Gadamer. One may no longer appeal to the transcendent standards of a pure aesthetic but must instead interact with artworks that are contextually located and in constant motion. One may make this shift by implementing the metaphorical notion of the *hermeneutical conversation*.⁵ For Gadamer, understanding is achieved through language. What this implies is that in order for understanding to occur there

⁴ Gadamer, *Truth and Method*, 108-9.

⁵ *Ibid.*, 389.

must be a genuine conversation between partners, what may appropriately be called play with words, that seeks to perpetuate further understanding through the back-and-forth of sincere dialogue. Through this, play may be understood in communicative terms—players as speakers and listeners, play as conversation. Though this understanding of communication is quite literal within the play of persons, its nature as metaphor becomes significant for play within the aesthetic dimension, at which point the conversation becomes one between artworks and spectators. This has many implications for Gadamer, one being that artworks separate themselves from their creators, such that “someone who has produced a work of art stands before the creation of his hands in just the same way that anyone else does.”⁶ Instead, artworks must be understood as a result of the entirety of their context, an idea Gadamer discusses through the notion of *decoration*. Every artwork “is not really removed from the decorative context, but serves to heighten representationally a context of life with which it is decoratively consonant.”⁷ So as contexts change artworks become consonant with different people, different places and different ideals. However, being so entirely contextualized does not mean that the artwork is not itself meaningful in anyway, such that the spectator's interpretation is entirely subjective. Actually, it may be argued that this vast complexity of contextual influences invests the artwork with a unique presence that not only provides it with complex meaning but allows it to “heighten” or increase the quality of its context in return. In this, the notion of play itself is exemplified; as a result of the to and fro of an immeasurable number of influences, the artwork can only be fully understood in itself, for no one influence can capture the entirety of its complex contextual composition. So once the various aspects of a particular artwork’s context have

⁶ Gadamer, *Relevance of the Beautiful*, 33.

⁷ Gadamer, *Truth and Method*, 150.

dissolved into it, as players do into play, the spectator is able to enter into a conversation with it and begin the mutual arousal of understanding through communicative interaction.

Before moving on to the next section, I should make some final remarks concerning the various art forms, for the applicability of play and conversation may be easier to find in some more than others. Concerning the performance arts, Gadamer's hermeneutic approach seems quite compatible; their contextuality can be seen quite boldly in their presentation, for each performance is altered and restructured by the players involved. In opposition to the fluid arts of the stage, however, there is what Gadamer calls the *picture*, art that is detached from "the particular conditions of our approach to it." ⁸ The picturesque arts—paintings, sculptures, photographs, films—remain the same, in a sense, each time they are presented. It may initially be thought that they lack the capacity for play because of their stillness in presentation. However, this perception of the picture arises out of a pure, autonomous aesthetic. If the picture is instead understood as being embedded within its context, its nature as representation shows itself. Gadamer clarifies this in his analysis of the portrait. As artworks that seem to merely copy some original for some political or social purpose, portraits do not seem to possess any contextual being of their own, instead merely directing one's attention toward their original source. However, this is not the case, for "the original acquires an image only in being imaged," meaning that in picturing someone the portrait puts forth a representation of that someone, changing the way one is perceived as "original."⁹ The result is similar for the other picturesque art forms as well, for they introduce something new into the world through the representation of some original. This process not only grants being to the picture but alters and augments how the

⁸ Ibid., 131.

⁹ Ibid., 137.

original is perceived, leading to an “*increase of being*” in the world.¹⁰

Alongside this is Gadamer’s notion of *literature*, which distinguishes itself as the art form composed of words and thus that most capable of ‘speaking’ for itself. This brings up a potential problem for the other art forms, for they may now seem to be subject entirely to interpretation and relative as hermeneutic objects. However, the other art forms ‘speak’ for themselves as well. Just as play may be understood in communicative terms, language may be understood in terms of play, meaning that such a hermeneutic conversation as occurs between artworks and spectators need not be linguistic. Artworks communicate their meanings and ideas in whatever ways are applicable to them, through “the language of form and content,” which spectators must come to understand “so that communication really occurs.”¹¹ Thus the metaphors of play and communication seem to possess the capacity to reside within all art forms, static or fluid, linguistic or picturesque.

Confucian Correlative Persons

In contemporary comparative discussions on classical Chinese philosophy, emphasis has been placed on analyzing the Chinese tradition more carefully. One must attempt to understand this tradition as it presents itself while also recognizing that one’s Western biases are always present (surely an approach that shares with Gadamer elements of hermeneutic sensitivity). As a result of such analyses, the Chinese tradition has come to be understood as one grounded upon a correlative cosmology, one in which the predominant metaphysical aspects of Western philosophy—such as transcendent principles, unchanging essences or strict dichotomous

¹⁰ Ibid., 135.

¹¹ Gadamer, *Relevance of the Beautiful*, 52.

categories—are not present. Instead, the empirical world of change is the most real, which results in an understanding of the world that differs in many significant ways from Western traditions: instead of categorizations there are adaptable heuristic metaphors; instead of isolated essences there are collaborations between microcosmic particulars within their macrocosmic context; and instead of moral principles there are constant adaptations and appropriations of action within an always-changing context, which are made in reference to images of particular moral exemplars. It is well-accepted amongst many comparative scholars that the foundational elements of such a cosmology can be found within the *Yijing*, or the *Book of Changes*, an ancient divination manual that became an influential text for the Chinese philosophical tradition after the addition of ten interpretive commentaries. Of the *Yijing*, Karyn Lai states the following:

[W]hat is interesting about this text are its initial assumptions about the world, the connections between its different parts, the relationships between entities, the complexity of causes and effects, the place of humanity in a constantly transforming world, and the importance of individual actions and responses.¹²

Thus the foundations of Chinese thought emphasize the development of personhood as central, for persons must be capable of appropriating themselves within their context, and defining themselves through their relationships with their world and with each other. Being particularly person-centered, Confucianism also utilizes many of the declarations of persons discussed in the *Yijing*, implementing an intricate system of values for understanding and defining the correlative person.

One may argue that the foundational value of correlative personhood in Confucianism is *ren* (仁). Many scholars of Chinese philosophy believe the etymology of this term to be significant to its meaning. The character for *ren* is composed of two parts, *ren* (人) and *er* (二),

¹² Karyn L. Lai, *An Introduction to Chinese Philosophy*, (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2008), 11.

the former meaning 'person' and the latter meaning 'two.' Interpretations of this etymology claim that it is meant to clarify the nature of persons, such that persons are defined in relation to one another and cannot exist on their own.¹³ More recent archeological discoveries have also found *ren* to be composed of the character for an impregnated body, *shen* (身), and the character *xin* (心), which may be translated as 'heart-mind.' Though the meaning behind these characters and their connectivity is complex, some have the opinion that it is meant to depict "the kind of concern one might extend to a pregnant women," portraying the intimacy required of relationally constituted persons.¹⁴

There have been many translations of *ren*, such as 'benevolence' or 'humaneness,' but these translations are loaded with Western connotations that make the uniquely Chinese aspects of this value difficult to uncover. 'Authoritative conduct' and 'consummate person' seem to capture better what it entails. First, the nature of authoritativeness is two-fold, implying not only *authority* but *authorship* as well. The aspect of authority makes clear the emphasis within *ren* on the cultivation of influence, such that the authoritative person is like the North Star, which "dwells in its place, and the multitude of stars pay tribute to it."¹⁵ In cultivating authority, one is able to inspire action and evoke change in one's roles and relationships, meaning that one may now alter and adapt them appropriately, thus becoming an author of one's context and of one's own personhood.¹⁶ Secondly, consummate conduct requires "irreducible relationality" and togetherness, denoted through the prefix 'con-', and portrays a sense of completion that is not

¹³ For examples of such an etymological analysis, see Lai, *Introduction to Chinese Philosophy*, 21; Roger T. Ames and Henry Rosemont, Jr., trans., *The Analects of Confucius: A Philosophical Translation*, (New York: Ballantine Books, 1998), 48; David B. Wong, "Relational and Autonomous Selves," *Journal of Chinese Philosophy* 31:4 (2004): 421.

¹⁴ Roger T. Ames, *Confucian Role Ethics: A Vocabulary* (Honolulu: University of Hawai'i Press, 2011), 177.

¹⁵ Ames, *Analects*, 76 - Passage 2.1.

¹⁶ For more on 'authoritative conduct,' see Ames, *Analects*, 48-51.

goal-oriented but focused on personal accomplishment and maturation, denoted through the Greek root *summa*, both of which are pinnacle to understanding what *ren* entails.¹⁷ It is through *ren* that the individuality of the person is formed, for out of the complexity of relationships arises an entity capable of improving the world, whose uniqueness resides in being the only one constituted by his or her particular set of roles and relationships. This idea is explained further by Ames, who claims that “it is an adaptive correlation of the demands and the rewards of these roles, even when conflicted and in tension, that gives me an increasingly focused and persistent identity as a person.”¹⁸ In other words, each of our roles and relationships makes us unique, and our identity as individuals becomes more complex with each relationship we have. If one cultivates an awareness of one’s placement within a particular context, one may focus what may initially be perceived as a collection of roles into a unique role-possessing entity capable of introducing new perspectives into the world.

Similar to how persons are constituted and understood correlatively, Confucianism’s central values also cannot exist in isolation but must appeal to each other if they are to be understood in their entirety. So if one is to cultivate oneself consummately as an authority of one’s context, one must come to understand *li* (禮), or what may be translated as “ritual propriety.”¹⁹ Though ritual in the West may have particular connotations as something constricting, rituals as they are practiced within the Confucian tradition are not understood as such. Instead, they must abide by their context, adapting as is appropriate for the well-being of people and for the cultivation of *ren*. Passage 9.3 of the *Analects* displays such an understanding of ritual:

¹⁷ For more on 'consummate person,' see Ames, *Confucian Role Ethics*, 179.

¹⁸ Ames, *Confucian Role Ethics*, 175-6.

¹⁹ Ames, *Analects*, 51-2.

The Master said, "The use of a hemp cap is prescribed in observance of ritual propriety (*li* 禮). 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* 禮). 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."²⁰

In this passage there are two instances that exemplify the two key aspects of ritual propriety.

First, there is a contextually appropriate adaptation of a particular ritualistic practice—replacing hemp caps with silk caps because they are cheaper. Second, there is a contextually inappropriate adaptation—kowtowing after ascending the hall, as opposed to before, out of hubris. Such rituals are not immutable principles that are applicable in all situations but are instead meant to be appropriated as their context changes, for it may be the case that what was at one time beneficial is at another damaging. Thus it is the job of persons to cultivate within themselves the capacity to read their context and know what actions are appropriate in each situation they find themselves in.

The Confucian canon is composed of numerous other values, which if analyzed thoroughly could compose the entirety of this paper. However, *he* (和) should be discussed, for it is significant when concerned with the correlative nature of things. This value has been translated in the past as ‘harmony.’ Even though this may be the most accurate English translation possible, the depth of the value in the Confucian and Chinese tradition needs to be addressed. As it is typically understood, harmony is concerned with the resolution of dissonance. However, as Ames states, “*he* 和 is not simply the mutual accommodation of difference that attenuates discord, but more importantly, the creative and productive outcome when such

²⁰ Ibid., 76 - Passage 9.3.

differences are coordinated with optimum effect.”²¹ What this means is that *he* not only resolves discord within relationships but also arouses creativity amongst them. For the Confucians, music and food are the two analogies that most accurately represent what *he* entails. In the creation of music, various notes are played together to create chords, which arouse a sensation within the listener that no one note could. Similarly, when making soup, one mixes various spices and food-stuff together in a pot of hot water, which results in a delicious meal if the ingredients are proportioned properly. This is what is meant by correlativity. One must both cultivate oneself through *ren* and appropriate one’s actions through *li* to cultivate others if one is to properly become a person. However, it is only through the harmony of these relationships themselves that one may even begin to cultivate them in the first place.

Art as Person

The notions of Gadamer and values of Confucianism discussed above differ from one another in many ways, for they reside within different traditions with different philosophical and cultural backgrounds. While Gadamer attempts to present a contextually based understanding of being as an alternative to the autonomy of Cartesian and Kantian traditions, Confucianism finds itself within a tradition that initially assumed perpetual contextuality to be the most real, so it can be assumed that the concerns of each differ in many respects. However, though they are distant from one another in their traditional foundations, they also seem to resonate with each other in some interesting ways, such that they may be able to produce something innovative together. To use the language of Gadamer, these two traditions may be able to arouse understanding in

²¹ Ames, *Confucian Role Ethics*, 169.

conversation as opposed to being relatively confined to their particular origins, but must first be appreciated in themselves if this is to happen. So in its essence, the argument for art as person appeals to the correlative nature of both Gadamer's artwork and Confucianism's person, such that the composition of a person in Confucianism and the aspects that define one as such may apply also to artworks as aesthetic representation.

Before this is pursued further, however, the disclaimer from the introduction should be reiterated. It is *not* this paper's intention to make any ontological claims for the nature of the aesthetic as a categorical aspect of personhood. Whether artworks could literally be redefined as persons or not would require a deep analysis of the ontological status of art and of personhood that this paper will not and does not wish to make. What this paper does intend to do is introduce a heuristic metaphor through which one may understand what occurs between artworks and spectators. Looking toward the nature of Gadamer's metaphorical notions may clarify what this means. Upon introducing the hermeneutical conversation, it was not Gadamer's intention to claim that artworks literally speak, or change their minds, or consciously reflect upon themselves and their world as people do in conversation. Instead, Gadamer was concerned with describing the phenomenon of aesthetic interaction for the people spectating. To properly understand an artwork, the work does not need to *actually* speak. However, the spectator must approach it *as if* it does, because in its contextual complexity an artwork can only be properly understood in itself. The claim for art as person is of a similar metaphorical nature. In utilizing correlative personhood as a metaphor for artistic interaction, an alternative conceptualization of aesthetic representation is uncovered that may not have been recognized otherwise.

With the nature of its intentions stated, my argument should begin as directly as possible, namely through a direct comparison of those notions and values introduced above. As has been

stated, the argument for art as person is grounded upon correlativity as it is embodied within Gadamer and Confucianism. Though the correlative aspects of Confucianism have been explicated in detail, their presence within Gadamer's aesthetic has not been made so obvious, but an analysis of play will bring them to the forefront. Play, as discussed previously, is an interaction between players, a back-and-forth movement that fosters constant innovation. For Gadamer, language is that through which play commences, for understanding is only achieved through genuine conversation. As conversations progress ideas collide and from this collision something new is introduced into the world, engendered by a mutual understanding between two conversing partners. Looking toward these aspects of play and language concerned with innovation and an increase of being, complements to them within the Confucian tradition may be discovered through comparative analysis. One may argue that correlativity in Confucianism is communicative, for such relationships result in constant adaptations and innovations in understanding for those within them. Likewise, one may argue that play for Gadamer is correlative, for such understanding as is fostered through communication transforms those communicating as well as their context. This becomes interesting when the play is between artworks and spectators, for in these interactions play is no longer a literal conversation between persons but still arouses understanding mutually as if it were. However, though the play of the aesthetic fosters understanding communicatively, more must be stated if artworks, in relation to their spectators, are to be understood correlatively in the same way that Confucian persons are.

To address the potential for aesthetic correlativity, it is appropriate to appeal to the central notions of Confucianism, for they are concerned with the development of persons and dictate how personhood should be understood within a correlative framework. It is through *ren* that persons cultivate themselves consummately as authorities and begin to author their relationships

and their context. Similarly, masterful artworks garner much esteem from their spectators and are able to alter those with whom they converse as well as increase being within their context in representing aspects of it, as was discussed through Gadamer's notion of the picture. In respecting *li*, persons are able to appropriate their actions and the rituals practiced within their context, such that relationships may be cultivated through them. Artworks, for Gadamer, are also appropriating themselves within their context, attaining new and retaining old meanings when relevant, which was described before as a heightening of their decorative context. Confucian relationships, however, are not merely concerned with resolving dissonance, as was discussed through *he*, but with mutual productivity engendered through the relationships themselves, such that relationships are able to transform the entirety of their context, like how various ingredients in harmony together create a delicious bowl of soup. A similar understanding of relational interaction can be found in play, for play itself—in its medial position between the players—arouses innovation among them that they could not bring about as autonomous, isolated agents. Apart from the particularities of the specific notions and values within Gadamer's aesthetic and Confucianism's person, similarities may also be found between each at a foundational level. The correlative cosmology on which Confucianism is grounded manifests the world in what may be considered a playful way. In the *Yijing*, the world is understood to be composed entirely of transformations and the interconnectivity of various entities at various moments—and personhood for the Confucians is a result of cultivating these interactions within this perpetual change into entities that do not merely drift along the cycle but evoke change within it. Play also resides amongst the many things in the world—such as through "the play of light" or "the play of waves"—and it is through play that entities are developed, for as players dissolve into their

games the games themselves attain being.²² It is through conversation that understanding is fostered and that the aesthetic is brought into existence, developing spectators and artworks that may both alter their context in relation to one another.

As I made clear at the beginning of this section, it is not this paper's intention to argue for an ontological paradigm shift that would literally conceptualize artworks as persons. However, I do wish for the depth of my proposed metaphor to be understood, which may mean pushing the boundaries between the literal and the figurative, just as it seems that Gadamer's artworks, in some sense, actually speak. Now Gadamer believes that play and language are the means by which the aesthetic attains being and Confucians believe that persons are constituted by their roles and relationships. Concerning this, Henry Rosemont makes an interesting insight, though he may not have intended to, when he states that "early Confucians would insist that I would not play or perform, but am and become the roles I live in consonance with others."²³ In relation to the notions and values explicated thus far in this paper, this claim seems to state that play is not typically understood to be quite as constitutive as correlative personhood is within the Confucian tradition. However, as it has been argued in the development of art as person, play within the aesthetic should be considered to constitute its being. What this means is that the aesthetic, in being formed by the play of artworks and spectators, is relationally constituted just as correlative person are. Thus, if my comparative analyses have been represented properly, there does not seem to be much difference between the composition of an artwork and of a person besides how they are physically composed. This brings to mind David Wong's statement that it may be best

²² Gadamer, *Relevance of the Beautiful*, 22.

²³ Henry Rosemont Jr., "Rights-Bearing Individuals and Role-Bearing Persons," in *Rules, Rituals and Responsibility: Essays Dedicated to Herbert Fingarette*, ed. Mary I. Bockover, Vol. 2 of *Critics and their Critics*, (La Salle, IL: Open Court Publishing Company, 1991), 91.

"to take the one who stands in all the self's relationships as a biological organism," just as one may understand paint and a canvas to stand in all of some artwork's aesthetic relationships.²⁴ What this entails is that persons are only the sum of their relationships and individuality is formed through the creativity engendered within each unique relational set, but it can be argued that artworks possess these constitutive aspects as well. Now there may be various responses and rebukes to these claims as concerns the ontological status of 'art' and 'personhood,' but it is not the goal of this paper to defend against them or pursue them any further. I only want to make it clear that aesthetic interaction and communication between persons may actually be correlated in a much deeper sense than has been previously understood. In evoking innovation through their playful relationships and in possessing a contextually-composed being, the interactions between artworks and spectators should be viewed and judged as if they were relationships between persons.

²⁴ Wong, "Relational and Autonomous Selves," 420.

II

A Foucauldian Perspective

In the previous chapter, I argued that the metaphor of art as person offers an alternative, and potentially more appropriate, perspective on artistic interaction. Both personhood as it is understood within a Confucian context and art as it is represented for Gadamer resonate with one another in their correlative constitutions in such a way that spectators, when interacting with artworks, should approach them as if they were persons. With the nature of this metaphor laid out, a Foucauldian perspective is now incorporated into it in order to further define it and expound upon its implications. Foucault has been specifically chosen as a third contributor to this metaphor for two significant reasons. First, Foucault may be situated properly as an intermediary between the Gadamarian and Confucian notions and values discussed previously. Foucault's subjectification of the self, as well as his contributions as a philosopher of language, develop notions that are relatable in significant ways to Gadamer, Confucianism, and the correlation this paper makes between them. This may also allow for further communication between the Chinese and the Western aspects of this comparative concept by making deeper cross-cultural connections, through Foucault, between Western thought and Confucianism. Secondly, there is present in the works of Foucault an aesthetic notion similar to that argued for within this paper, but which approaches the topic from a different angle. What may be called the aesthetics of existence in Foucault seeks to create the person as a work of art and sets up the means by which one may understand what this entails. In positing this aesthetics of existence,

Foucault intertwines the aesthetic with the person, making it clear that the latter should be approached through the former. This chapter develops this further, arguing that the former should be approached through the latter as well.

Foucault as Intermediary

Concerning the arguments presented for art as person, Foucault provides an interesting perspective as one situated between those notions and values discussed previously for the aesthetic and for personhood. Though his understanding of the aesthetic and of personhood may not coincide entirely with that of Gadamer and Confucianism, Foucault has similar ideas that he is able to bring together in a way that may provide further clarity to the interconnectivity of the ideas that this paper has put forth thus far. If this interconnectivity is to be properly understood, I must make a thorough integrative analysis that locates where Foucault's notions intertwine and where the notions and values of Gadamer and Confucianism fit into this interconnection. I do this by addressing both the Gadamer and Confucianism separately in comparison to Foucault and then bringing them together again, granting art as person improved clarity through a new tripartite status.

1. Of those two philosophical frameworks discussed in the last chapter, Confucianism should be addressed first, for it is the most distant in its cultural differences and may be comparatively analyzed further so as to discover the ways in which it may resonate within a Western framework. One of the most significant aspects of similarity between Foucauldian thought and Confucianism is that the self is not autonomous. Of Foucault's self, Marli Huijer states that "the individual is not a fixed reality...but a historical, cultural and linguistic

construction (or fiction), which comes about in the process of speaking, acting and thinking."¹ Through this understanding of the person, one may already notice the differences between Foucault and Confucianism, for the Confucian person would not be considered a "fiction." However, as a philosopher grounded in Kantian and Cartesian traditions, Foucault's intentions in labeling the individual as a fiction may be understood as resisting the particular sensation of transcendent autonomy that the individual feels within a Western framework, which is typically attributed to something fundamentally separate from the world, like a soul. With this in mind, Foucault's conception of a historically and culturally constituted individuality does not seem so drastically distant from the contextuality of the Confucian person. However, the Confucian person is correlative, meaning one is constituted by one's relationships to others, and this must be accounted for if Foucault is to be integrated properly into a Confucian framework.

If one analyzes the depth of Foucault, relational aspects similar to those in Confucianism may be discovered, though they are conceived in a different manner, namely as *true-and-false games* and *power relations*. Power, for Foucault, is not necessarily concerned with dominance and control as one may initially envision 'power' to be. Instead, one may understand it as "a plurality of intentions that perpetually clash and struggle, so that change continually occurs," as "actions that provoke reactions," such that "the subjectivity that comes into being in the interplay of power and resistance consists of a changeable collection of fragments among which the struggle between powers and resistances takes place."² Just as was stated previously, there are many differences here between Foucault's notion of power and Confucian correlativity. While Foucault tends to depict his notions through strong and almost violent combative terminology—

¹ Marli Huijer, "The Aesthetics of Existence in the Work of Michel Foucault," *Philosophy & Social Criticism* 25, no. 2 (1999): 62.

² *Ibid.*, 66.

such that one "analyz[es] power relations through the antagonism of strategies"³—Confucianism tends toward [s]ystems of aesthetic order," which "place a great deal of emphasis on relationships between constituent elements and sensitivity to change."⁴ However, underneath this there are numerous aspects of Foucault's thought that relate well with what has been discussed of Confucianism thus far. The clashes and struggles of power possess aspects similar to Confucian hierarchical roles and relations, such that both provoke perpetual change. The former, through allegiance and resistance, are able to shift power relations just as the latter, through acceptance and remonstrance, are able to locate themselves within various roles upon various hierarchical levels. Thus, for Foucault, a "changeable collection of fragments" come together into a unified "subjectivity" just as a collection of relationships come together to compose the unique individuality of the Confucian person. These similarities become even clearer through the introduction of true-and-false games. Such truths as compose these games are not absolute or principled truths, but "truths I express about myself," such that one "experiences [one]self as a father, a Christian, an artist, a Conservative and so forth."⁵ In coming to understand these truths, one begins to identify oneself as an individual composed of various truths and falsehoods, both of which are malleable and subject to change. This form of identification brings one even closer to Confucianism's role-possessing person, for Confucian persons develop their identity in a similar way, namely by understanding themselves within their roles, such as being a father or a mother.

To provide further clarity to this comparison, one may compare *ren* in Confucianism with

³ Michel Foucault, "The Subject and Power," trans. Leslie Sawyer, *Critical Inquiry* 8, no. 4 (1982): 780.

⁴ Sarah Mattice, "Artistry as Method: Aesthetic Experience and Chinese Philosophy," *Philosophy Compass* 8, no. 3 (2013): 201.

⁵ Huijter, "Aesthetic of Existence in Foucault," 67.

what Foucault calls "the cultivation of the self" in order to show that both not only understand the person to be constituted in a similar fashion but also seek to cultivate this person in a similar way.⁶ In the previous chapter, *ren* was introduced as authoritative conduct and consummate personhood, such that the person must cultivate oneself consummately as an author of and authority within one's context, and in doing so must also cultivate others through one's relationships with them. In *The History of Sexuality, Vol. 3*, Foucault discusses sexuality in the Hellenistic and Roman worlds, and how the sexual austerity practiced in these periods was not a result of strict transcendental prescriptions, as it was later in the Christian world, but of self-restraint and discipline as concerned the social developments occurring at the time. Foucault analyzes such institutions as marriage and politics in order to show how one conceived of oneself in relation to one's wife or as a member of the political realm. Instead of understanding political activity as merely participating or abstaining from certain political actions, one should instead understand it as a complex process of self-cultivation, the depth of which Foucault describes as follows:

The latter concerned the manner in which one ought to form oneself as an ethical subject in the entire sphere of social, political and civic activities....It also concerned the rules that must be applied when engaged in them, and the way in which one ought to govern oneself in order to take one's place among others, assert one's legitimate share of authority, and in general situate oneself in the complex and shifting interplay of relations of command and subordination.⁷

The practices of self-cultivation described here, like those of Confucian *ren*, involve constant contextual appropriation, such that one must form oneself in relation to others just as the Confucian person must appropriate oneself according to one's relationships.

⁶ Michel Foucault, *The History of Sexuality, Vol. 3: The Care of the Self*, trans. Robert Hurley (New York: Pantheon Books, 1986), 43.

⁷ *Ibid.*, 94.

One aspect of cultural difference that should be addressed here is Foucault's specific appeal to Greco-Roman traditions as the source for his understanding of self-cultivation. In comparing Confucianism within Foucault's aesthetics of existence, Nicholas Gier states that classical Western tradition "generally followed Aristotle in his claim that reason is the essence of being human" whereas Confucian's placed "virtuous relationality rather than rational autonomy" at the center of personhood.⁸ Thus it seems that while Confucian relationality is essential to the constitution of the person the Greco-Roman framework would "put care of the self before care of others," such that others become a means to cultivating the self as opposed to being an intimate part of the self.⁹ However, even though Foucault used the thoughts and texts of the classical Western world as a catalyst for making his claims for self-cultivation, one may argue that they are uniquely Foucault's and do not fit properly in their entirety within this classical Western framework. Andrew Thacker states that the only contents currently available in the West for Foucault's self-cultivation, "those of the Greeks or of Kant, are clearly unacceptable."¹⁰ So though Foucault's may not coincide perfectly with Confucian practices of cultivation, they are not merely historical reiterations of these Greek ideals of rational autonomy either, for it has been shown that Foucault's does not agree with the notion of an autonomous self. This may allow Confucianism to communicate with Foucault in interesting ways. To compare *ren* and Foucault's cultivation of the self, both seem to be concerned with practices of self-cultivation that involve one's placement within a complexity of relationships, which one must appropriate oneself into through the relational reciprocity of allegiance and resistance, or acceptance and remonstrance.

⁸ Nicholas F Gier, "The Dancing *Ru*: A Confucian Aesthetics of Virtue," *Philosophy East & West* 51, no 2 (2001): 282.

⁹ *Ibid.*, 284.

¹⁰ Andrew Thacker, "Foucault's Aesthetics of Existence," *Radical Philosophy* 63, (1993): 18.

Thus it seems that in lacking autonomy, attaining identity through the accumulation of social truths and falsehoods, and possessing the capacity to influence one's context through power relations, the Foucauldian person possesses at least some aspects of comparative interest, which may allow Confucianism to converse more clearly with the Western world and, once Gadamer's relation to Foucault is understood, may clarify why correlative personhood and aesthetic representation work well together.

2. Foucault's comparison with Gadamer may be approached on terms similar to those in the comparison made with Confucianism if one substitutes the concerns of the self with those regarding the subject in works. There is a distinction Foucault makes between the author and the subject within works, a distinction that relates in some interesting ways to Gadamer's notions discussed in the previous chapter. Though authors have been considered to have nearly absolute authority over the constitution of works in the past, Foucault claims that this is not, and more so should not be, the case. In his socio-historical analysis of the "author function," Foucault discusses its numerous occurrences, disappearances and reoccurrences within various mediums.¹¹ Despite its influences as a means of interpretation, Foucault states that the author is "the ideological figure by which one marks the manner in which we fear the proliferation of meaning" and if one is to uncover a work's full potential, one should instead think to themselves, "What difference does it make who is speaking?"¹² In opposition to the author function, the subject in works is not so absolute or definite. As Foucault states, "[The subject] is not in fact the cause, origin, or starting-point of the phenomenon of the written or spoken articulation of a

¹¹ Michel Foucault, "What is an Author?," in *Aesthetics, Method, and Epistemology*, ed. James D. Faubion, Vol. 2 of *Essential Works of Foucault: 1954-1984*, (New York: The New Press, 1998), 211.

¹² *Ibid.*, 222.

sentence.... It is a particular, vacant place that may in fact be filled by different individuals."¹³

Whether it be the narrator in a work of fiction or the 'I' within a work of scientific inquiry, the subject does not require someone to actually speak the words associated with it in order to justify them, as the author function does. It is instead a position within the work itself that may be filled by various individuals within various contexts.

Foucault's connections with Gadamer in this regard may seem much more indirect than his connections with Confucianism, though those also required some investigation to uncover. However, the connections between them concerned with art as person, and the interconnectivity of correlative personhood and aesthetic representation, may be found after some further analysis. The most significant of the relatable aspects within these two views are that both not only understand works to be fundamentally separated from their authors but also attribute meaning in works to something within the works themselves that varies according to the context and relies on the integration of spectators. To elaborate, Foucault presents numerous questions he thinks would be asked of a work once the author function has disappeared:

What are the modes of existence of this discourse? Where has it been used, how can it circulate, and who can appropriate it for himself? What are the places in it where there is room for possible subjects? Who can assume these various subject functions?¹⁴

To put it simply, Foucault's subject does not have any actual, definite presence beyond the work but is understood instead in relation to other discursive aspects, such that the grammatical 'subject' in a sentence is conceived in relation to the sentence's 'object.' The result of this subjectification, in lacking the sole authority granted to the author, is that the work begins to speak for itself, such that its intentions can be pursued no further than the words given by the

¹³ Michel Foucault, *The Archaeology of Knowledge*, trans. A.M. Sheridan Smith, 1972, Reprint, (New York: Vintage Books, 2010), 95.

¹⁴ Foucault, "What is an Author?," 222.

subject throughout its own discourses. Thus, with no exterior authority to expound upon the intentions of the subject, the spectator must analyze the discourse and determine where and how subjects may be appropriated within particular contexts. This contextualization and reappropriation by the spectator resembles aspects of Gadamer's hermeneutical conversation, for both require the interplay of participants, namely spectators and works, to bring about aesthetic meaning mutually.

Lastly, the aspects of language for Gadamer and Foucault should be discussed, for Gadamer's hermeneutics and Foucault's discourse analysis tend to be conceived in opposition to one another, such that even Foucault himself resisted hermeneutics in developing his analyses of language. In their nature, Gadamer's hermeneutics is concerned with an always-biased conversational approach to language while Foucault's discourse analysis concerns empirical analyses of power and social relations. Problems arise when one considers how a contextualized preunderstanding could work in conjunction with a discursive framework seeking to analyze social power objectively. However, despite their potential dissociation, there are theories that attempt to unify them. In his development of critical hermeneutics, Hans-Herbert Kögler states that "the answer to how we can combine a contextual and pluralistic conception of meaning with a critical analysis of power lies in a dialogic reconstruction of the interpretive effect of *self-distanciation*," such that conversations with others allow one to critically reflect upon oneself and discern particular social relations by analyzing various self-understandings—others' and one's own—within a particular context.¹⁵ This attempt at a Foucauldian-Gadamerian relationship does much for this paper's project by making clear the aspects of these two conceptual

¹⁵ Hans-Herbert Kögler, *The Power of Dialogue: Critical Hermeneutics after Gadamer and Foucault*, (Cambridge: The MIT Press, 1996), 252.

frameworks that are relevant for art as person, namely their contextual understanding of language. Hermeneutical conversation, which seeks further understanding through the relationship between two biased perspectives, and discursive analysis, which seeks to understand the historical development of power in social relations, both utilize language as a means to arouse understanding within a perpetually changing world.

Having discussed Foucault's relationship to Confucianism and Gadamer, through the self and the discursive subject respectively, the interconnectivity between correlative personhood and aesthetic representation may now be properly developed. Previously, a quote from Foucault was addressed concerning the subject in works, which claimed that it is "a vacant place" that can be "filled by different individuals." In his discussion of the Foucauldian non-autonomous self, Huijer makes reference to this same quote, such that, when concerned with language, Foucault himself desired "to have his own 'I' become part of the anonymous murmur of the discourse."¹⁶ Thus it becomes clear that there is a foundational relationship, for Foucault, between the subject in works and the self, for both are made a subject through language. What this relationship entails is that the ambiguous Foucauldian self may be defined in reference to the subject in works, for the self cannot appeal back to any one essence, such as a transcendent soul, just as the vacant subject in works cannot appeal back to a sole authority, such as an author. As has been stated, the Foucauldian notions discussed thus far are not synonymous with those Gadamerian and Confucian notions and values discussed in the previous chapter. However, as I have argued, it seems that Foucault, Gadamer and Confucianism resonate in various ways. With this stated, one may further argue that the interrelational aspects of Foucault's self and subject in works may

¹⁶ Huijer, "Aesthetic of Existence in Foucault," 63.

in turn be applied to correlative personhood and aesthetic representation. Thus it would be the case that aesthetically represented beings and correlatively constituted persons relate at a foundational level for reasons similar to those that relate Foucault's self with the subject in works, namely their contextual constitution and lack of authoritative, unchanging influences. These notions in Foucault's are what lead to what he calls the aesthetics of existence, for the self, in its subjectification, must be approached as if it were a work of art. The following section will attempt to dissect this aesthetics of existence in order to provide an alternative 'existence of aesthetics' that conceptualizes artworks as persons.

Existence of Aesthetics

Of art and of the envelopment of artists into the aesthetic, Friedrich Nietzsche marvels at the god-like power of creation and how, in the moment of artistic inspiration, "[m]an is no longer an artist, he has become a work of art."¹⁷ It is with a similar mentality that Foucault approaches his notions of self-cultivation, expanding the horizons of concern beyond the fine arts into all aspects of socialized and contextualized personhood. This aesthetics of existence is Foucault's means of transforming the development of the ethical subject into an artistic process, of aestheticizing one's existence as its name suggests. Though many of the notions within Foucault's aesthetics of existence have been discussed previously in conjunction with Gadamer and Confucianism, they should be addressed separately and in themselves so that a clearer picture of Foucauldian self-cultivation may be attained. With this picture in place, one may properly dissect it and integrate it into the framework of art as person.

¹⁷ Friedrich Nietzsche, *The Birth of Tragedy and Other Writings*, ed. Raymond Geuss, trans. Ronald Speirs, (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1999), 18.

In the last section, Foucault's notion of the self was introduced briefly, which claimed that one would be wrong in declaring the existence of an autonomous individuality. With such a claim made, language and the subject become Foucault's means of making sense of the self, such that one should understand the self like one does the subject in works, as a vacant space that may be filled by various individuals. However, this alone does not provide the foundations for such a fragmented self, so aspects like true-and-false games and power relations were introduced into the formation in order to create a contextually formed individuality that could oppose anything precedent or transcendent. At the center of such individuality, there would be a collection of ever-changing truths and power relations that form together to create an entity that expresses itself through language. All of the above aspects of Foucault's thought have been discussed previously in one way or another. However, what constitutes the aesthetics of existence for Foucault is its prescriptive quality, its attempt to address how such a person should cultivate oneself ethically. According to Huijer, the aesthetics of existence may be summarized as "a political/aesthetic filling-in of oneself, in which without any premeditated plan, without any fixed truths or rules, one links oneself with other people and in this link or practice, tries to turn one's life into a work of art by being a master over oneself."¹⁸ So instead of an immutable essence that precedes the individual and abides by ubiquitous moral principles, the individual is formed aesthetically, in reference to a multitude of relationships within a framework where the precepts must always be contextually reappropriated. Thus it seems that Foucault considers self-cultivation to be an aesthetic process because the self, like a painting or a symphony, must be created without any strict guidelines beyond one's context and relations to others, it must always

¹⁸ Huijer, "Aesthetics of Existence in Foucault," 79.

be attended to like a work of art that is always subject to scrutiny, and it should also be something beautiful that evokes pleasure as it is formed.

With the significant aspects of Foucault's aesthetics of existence addressed, it may be integrated into the metaphor of art as person by addressing this paper's development of artworks and of the aesthetic subject. During the discussions of aesthetic representation, I claimed that artworks, like correlative persons, may be understood as entities that possess contextualized being, such that they are influenced by and are able to influence their context. Meaning for such artworks originates from the works themselves, such that no influence outside of the works themselves—authors included—should be granted sole authority over their intentions. They are also always changing in their play with spectators just as people are fundamentally changing in their relationships with others. All of these factors accumulated into what has been called art as person, such that it was determined that it would be appropriate to address the relationship between artworks and spectators as if it were one between persons. In Foucault's thought, the relationship between personhood and artworks is predominantly present, for he appeals to the nature of art and of the aesthetic subject in his subjectification of the individual. He understands the self just as he understands the subject in works themselves, namely as language positions that may be filled by anyone, for the essence of these positions lies in the discourse as opposed to any particular discursive figure. This may be related back to Gadamer's claim that understanding is achieved through language, for it is the conversation between players that evokes the mutual developments achieved in play, such that the players dissolve and become merely aspects of play itself. However, in appealing to the players themselves, specifically the artworks and spectators present in the play of aesthetic representation, it seems that artworks possess numerous aspects of Foucauldian as well as correlative personhood. Like the aspects of Foucault's individual,

artworks are formed contextually, they possess certain truths, for they represent certain places and figures, and one may argue that they are influenced by power relations, such that certain works prosper in certain ways within various political regimes and social trends. Still, despite all these major potential connections, the most significant factor as concerns the correlation between artworks and persons is that Foucault openly constructs his notion of the self within the aesthetic framework. The self is not constituted by transcendent ethical principles, it is not recognized by a dissociated rationality that allows it to remain constant behind the change in the world, and it does not exist apart from the creative and pleasurable aspects of the artistic and the aesthetic. Instead, the ethical subject *is* an aesthetic subject. The introduction of this aspect of personhood provides a new way to metaphorically personify artworks, namely by adapting those elements that grant the ethical self aesthetic status to also grant the aesthetic work ethical subjectivity.

To again appeal to the disclaimer made in this paper's introduction, the goal here is not to literally grant artworks the capacity for self-cultivation, such that they may consciously reflect on their relationships. However, as discursive subjects, artworks influence their context just as persons do. They accumulate power over others through acclaim and reputation. Within their ever-progressing context, they lose and gain influence as power shifts from one aesthetic subject to another, which may be observed throughout history in the grand shifting of artistic movements, in the political influences of propaganda, and in the philosophical revelations inspired by classic texts, such as those of Aristotle or Plato, as they are interpreted and reappropriated within various contexts. Both artworks and persons, as vacant discursive positions, are filled as their context progresses, are shaped by their collection of discursive relationships, and are able to shape their relation to discourse by accumulating their collection of relationships into a unique individuality. Similar to what was stated last chapter, there does not

seem to be much difference between artworks and persons within the discursive framework besides the composition of the physical body that presents the discourse. So if artworks are to be treated as persons in their relationships, the particularly person-centered aspects of Foucault's aesthetics of existence should be attributed to them at the moment they are engaged in conversation and enter into the play of discourse with spectators. These aspects would be those within the ethical dimension, which are concerned with Foucault's prescriptions of self-cultivation; since artworks are already works of art, it is the 'existence' factor of the aesthetics of existence that one should be concerned with when integrating this notion into the metaphor of art as person. The disclaimer should be reiterated here, for this does not entail that artworks need to literally possess the capabilities needed for such ethical practices. They need not the ability to reappropriate themselves within their social context through their own volition or to look upon themselves from a distance as both an aesthetic object and subject. However, just as it was stated at the end of the first chapter, one should approach artworks *as if* they possessed these capacities. If one is to fully understand them and the depth of their influence as contextually and relationally constituted beings, one should act as if the processes of self-cultivation applied to them, just as it did to oneself, before one engaged them in conversation as a spectator. This way, artworks truly become an *other* to one in conversation with them and one may thus better cultivate oneself in relation to them.

There is much more to be said of this aspect of art as person, which the next chapter does in its analysis of the ethical dimensions of aesthetic interaction. However, the essential aspects that one should take from this chapter are that Foucault's integration into art as person as a intermediary between Gadamer and Confucianism solidifies the interconnectivity between aesthetic representation and correlative personhood, and that the adaptation of Foucault's

aesthetic of existence introduces an ethical subjectivity into artworks themselves in the same way that persons should be conceived as aesthetic subjects for Foucault. From here, the next step is to analyze the current trends in Western philosophical dialogue as concerns the connection between ethics and aesthetic, which makes clear that, according to art as person, these trends may need to be reevaluated.

III

Ethics in Art as Person

In contemporary aesthetics, there are numerous competing theories concerned with the ethical evaluation of art, which argue how one may assess artworks ethically, if one may do so at all. Within the framework of aesthetics introduced through the metaphor art as person, how may one appropriately bring ethics into artistic interactions? If artworks, like persons, are correlatively constituted subjects that are capable of altering their context through discursive/conversational relationships with others, how can/should ethical evaluation be applied to them? This final chapter focuses on developing the ethical implications of this metaphor by analyzing various ethical approaches to aesthetics in order to determine what factors within them resonate best with the understanding of aesthetic interaction in art as person. I do this by first providing an overview of the current trends in Western aesthetics concerning the ethical evaluation of art. Once this has been done, I discuss the approach that was briefly introduced at the end of the last chapter in reference to Foucault's aesthetics of existence in greater detail—and in reference to the current trends in the ethical evaluation of art—so that the aesthetic of art as person may be best understood. To conclude this chapter, I appeal to some more broadly Chinese aesthetic practices and then reintroduce those Confucian values discussed in the first chapter—this time focusing particularly on their aesthetic and ethical implications—so that they may provide an alternative set of guidelines by which to interact with artworks as correlative ‘persons.’

Contemporary Debate

Though the aesthetic may not have been conceptually divorced from the ethical in the past, the ideals that developed within the post-Kantian world resulted in the drastic division of aesthetics and ethics into two autonomous value systems. Not only does Gadamer discuss this in his analyses of the Enlightenment and Romantic periods, but so does Noël Carroll, who states that “philosophers from Plato through Hume supposed that the pertinence of ethical criticism to art was unproblematic,” and that “it is only since the eighteenth century that the view took hold that the aesthetic realm and the ethical realm are each absolutely autonomous from the other.”¹ Thus, the interrelation between ethics and aesthetics in the past was not brought to the fore as a problem in need of critical reflection, for it was either assumed that art was ethical or that it was completely disconnected from ethics. However, in more recent discussions, the relationship between ethics and aesthetics has become a focal point for philosophical argument. Whether for or against the ethical evaluation of art, any views concerned with the integration of aesthetics and ethics can no longer be assumed but must be argued for thoroughly, which has resulted in the development of numerous theories of ethical criticism.

In order to properly introduce the theories developed in these contemporary debates, one should begin by addressing their primary concern: should artworks be ethically evaluated at all? The two views that tend to lead the discussions centered around this question may be called *autonomism*, which "claims that ethical criticism is never legitimate since moral and aesthetic value are autonomous," and *moralism*, which "reduces aesthetic value to moral value."² The

¹ Noël Carroll, “Art and Ethical Criticism: An Overview of Recent Directions of Research,” *Ethics* 110, (2000): 350.

² Peek, Ella. “Ethical Criticism of Art.” *The Internet Encyclopedia of Philosophy*, ISSN 2161-0002. <http://www.iep.utm.edu/art-eth/>. Accessed April 13, 2014.

former of these two views is similar to those held by the post-Kantian thinkers, for it keeps the realm of aesthetics separated and isolated from the realm of ethics, focusing instead on the pure work of art. The latter, conversely, appeals back to the situation in pre-Kantian philosophical thought by reintroducing ethics as the evaluative criteria for judging artworks. However, there are various sub-categories within these two overarching views that approach and alter the concerns of each with varying levels of intensity. The views as they are described in the quotations above are considered more radical conceptions, and may thus be called radical autonomism and radical moralism. Radical autonomism, as stated by Carroll, claims that "art is intrinsically valuable, and that it is not and should not be subservient to ulterior or external purposes."³ Art in this view becomes completely embedded within the aesthetic, such that all other evaluative criteria—moral, social, historical—become irrelevant to the judgment of artworks. Radical moralism, like the account given above, states that aesthetic evaluations should be understood as moral evaluations, such that "art should *only* be discussed from a moral point of view."⁴ Thus, the aesthetic value of artworks is dictated by their moral worth, such that morally flawed and valuable artworks become aesthetically flawed and valuable artworks respectively. There are, however, an assortment of problems that arise due to the radical nature of these views on ethical criticism. Some artworks seem to possess many values other than those of pure aesthetics, such as religious or political significance, which make the isolationist aspects of radical autonomism seem counterintuitive. Also, some morally flawed artworks seem aesthetically valuable while other morally valuable artworks seem aesthetically flawed, which seems to counter the reductive aspects of radical moralism.

³ Noël Carroll, "Moderate Moralism," in *Beyond Aesthetics: Philosophical Essays*, 293-306, (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2001), 295.

⁴ *Ibid.*, 299.

Due the intuitively implausible nature of the radical views discussed above, many ethical critics have turned their attention toward more moderate versions of autonomism and moralism. While still opposed to the integration of aesthetics and ethics, moderate autonomism allows for artworks to be evaluated ethically. James Anderson and Jeffrey Dean state that "both sorts of criticism are appropriate to works of art but the categories of moral aesthetic criticism always remain conceptually distinct."⁵ Ethical evaluation thus becomes a perfectly plausible way to judge artworks, but any ethical value attributed to a work is always fundamentally detached from its aesthetic value. This would allow artworks to properly maintain any religious or political significance they might have by declaring that these values do not affect the aesthetic value of this artwork qua art. Within the framework of moralism, there are two significant moderate views currently in discussion. Moderate moralism, a view espoused by Noël Carroll, states that "some of the relevant ethical defects in artworks can also be aesthetic defects and must be weighed that way in all-things-considered judgments."⁶ Berys Gaut advocates a similar view that may be called ethicism, which he defines as follows:

Ethicism is the thesis that the ethical assessment of attitudes manifested by works of art is a legitimate aspect of the aesthetic evaluation of those works, such that, if a work manifests ethically reprehensible attitudes, it is to that extent aesthetically defective, and if a work manifest ethically commendable attitudes, it is to that extent aesthetically meritorious.⁷

To compare these two views, moderate moralism makes a weaker claim than ethicism, for it posits that only some ethical values in artworks are aesthetic while ethicism claims that they all are. However, both of their claims are much less extreme than that of radical moralism, for they

⁵ James C. Anderson and Jeffrey T. Dean, "Moderate Autonomism," *British Journal of Aesthetics* 38, no. 2 (1998): 152.

⁶ Carroll, "Art and Ethical Criticism," 374-5.

⁷ Berys Gaut, "The Ethical Criticism of Art," in *Aesthetics and Ethics: Essays at the Intersection*, ed. Jerrold Levinson, 182-203, (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1998), 182.

both allow for the existence of aesthetic values that are not essentially ethical. Other aesthetic values may exist within these views—concerned maybe with the formal aspects of artworks—as long as all, or at least some, ethical evaluations are considered aesthetic as well.

These moderate views of autonomism and moralism may allow artworks to be evaluated free from the strict singularity of the radical aesthetic and ethical realms, but even these more moderate views have certain limitations due to the emphasis they have placed on certain aspects over others as the primary concerns of artistic evaluation. Particularly, when one speaks of ethical evaluation within these views, one is concerned specifically with *morality* and the moral claims works make, as opposed to other possible aspects of ethics. In his discussion of possible alternative conceptions of the ethical, Gaut states that some recent thinkers have focused on ethics in a more “broad sense,” concerning themselves with *how* people should go about living their lives and what constitutes a good life.⁸ One with such a broad conception of the ethical does not understand it as synonymous with the moral, but locates morality within ethics as one aspect of it. However, Gaut eventually moves past this broad conception of ethics in order to “carve out the narrower sense” of morality from it.⁹ As a result of this particular focus on morality, ethical criticism has centered its claims primarily on narrative artworks, such as novels or films. This is because these narrative artworks make moral claims by locating characters within particular situations and condoning or condemning their behavior within these situations, while artworks like non-lyrical music or architecture, which lack narrative content, make no particularly obvious moral claims. In his arguments against the autonomist claim that there should be only one evaluative criterion by which to judge artworks, Carroll states that even though “it may be a

⁸ Berys Gaut, *Art, Emotion and Ethics*, (New York: Oxford University Press, 2007), 41.

⁹ *Ibid.*, 43.

mistake to engage moral discourse with reference to some pure orchestral music or some abstract paintings," one may still morally evaluate narratives, for they "are expressly designed to elicit moral reactions."¹⁰ This brief description of this particular debate between moderate autonomists and moralists clarifies their artistic limitations, for autonomists exclude ethics generally from the realm of aesthetics while moralists exclude certain artworks from general ethical consideration. Thus, even though morality may be a significant aspect of artworks, there may be more to discover from a broader ethical perspective.

Art as Other in Self-Cultivation

Near the end of the last chapter, I argued that, within the framework of art as person, artworks should not only be conversed with as if they were persons but should be addressed as persons are within the model of Foucault's aesthetics of existence. What this entailed was that, in the same manner that persons as ethical subjects are made aesthetic as works of art for Foucault, artworks should be made into ethical subjects. However, I left the depth of this entailment unclear. I claimed that artworks should not be literally conceptualized as persons but should be conversed with *as if* the ethical aspects of self-cultivation applied to them so that they may be situated appropriately as others in their relationships with spectators. To clarify, it seems proper to first discuss the aesthetic within art as person in itself so that one may understand it at a foundational level. Once the implications of this aesthetic have been discussed, it may then be related to those contemporary aesthetic-ethical debates introduced in the last section, such that one may discover what aspects of these debates resonate with or contradict the aspects of the aesthetic of art as

¹⁰ Noël Carroll, "Art, Narrative and Moral Understanding," in *Beyond Aesthetics: Philosophical Essays*, 270-293, (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2001), 279.

person.

What does it mean for artworks to be treated as if self-cultivation applied to them? To make sense of this, one must remember that art as person is a metaphor for how persons interact with artworks, and one must understand that it is primarily concerned with defining the experience of the *person as spectator*. Thus, artworks should not be granted the status of ethical personhood for their own benefit but for the benefit of the spectator interacting and conversing with them. This is not to say that artworks should be disregarded in themselves, for as Gadamer reminds us, artworks—in the complexity of their nearly indefinite contextuality—can only be addressed properly in themselves. Instead, what this focus on the person as spectator suggests is that, just as the Foucauldian self is cultivated in relation to others, the self within the framework of art as person should be cultivated in relation to artworks *as others*. To look back at Foucault's cultivation of the self, he claims that within Hellenistic Greece and Imperial Rome, one conceived "oneself in relation to one's wife, to others, to events, and to civic and political activities—and a different way of considering oneself as a subject of one's pleasures."¹¹ According to Foucault, one practiced sexual austerity out of respect for one's wife, governed oneself within the political sphere out of respect for other politicians, and so forth with all other social engagements, private or public. These power relations required one to both submit to the power of others when appropriate and assert one's own power when necessary in order to better these others. In constantly cultivating the self as a work of art through these social relations, one evokes within oneself an aesthetic pleasure for oneself as the work of one's creation. This is the sort of aesthetic framework art as person attempts to develop for persons as spectators of artworks. Artworks become contextually complex others that one must approach genuinely and

¹¹ Foucault, *Care of the Self*, 71

sympathetically in order to cultivate oneself in relation to them, and the artistic becomes a realm of ethical subjects in conversation with spectators, which allows persons to further ethicize, as well as aestheticize, themselves in relation to artworks. The artworks may then be further ethicized and aestheticized themselves, for one would engage them as one engages other self-cultivating persons—through allegiance and resistance. This would allow for them to be contextual reappropriated perpetually as they continue to converse with other self-cultivating individuals.

With the approach to artistic interaction within art as person explicated a bit further, it may now be compared to the aspects of contemporary debates on ethical criticism so that one may fully understand what art as person entails. As was stated in the last section, recent debates on the ethical evaluation of art have chosen to emphasize morality as the aspect of the ethical worth defending. Thus, narrative artworks have become the moralist's tool for confronting any objections made by autonomists, for narratives introduce moral situations to their spectators that ask for moral responses, and such prescriptions within artworks constitute an aesthetic quality for the moralists. This mode of judging artworks, while interesting on many levels, can arguably be considered digressionary as concerns the experience one has when interacting with art. It may seem as if morality is a vital aspect of narrative artworks but it may also seem that the beauty of some artworks overwhelms any moral flaws they might possess; Leni Riefenstahl's *Triumph of the Will* is referenced often as one of these latter ambiguous works, for it seems to be both morally horrendous and aesthetically valuable. One could argue, as many autonomists do, that one's moral evaluations of such artworks are fundamentally separate from one's aesthetic evaluations, thus declaring the work aesthetically valuable. One could also argue, as many moralists do, that any aesthetic evaluations of such works are fundamentally ethical, thus

condemning the work as both morally and aesthetically flawed. However, whether or not philosophical inquiry aesthetically condones or condemns such artworks, these arguments do not necessarily supersede the ambiguous experience one has when engaging them, for one may continue to experience contrasting sensations when evaluating these works. The aesthetic within art as person attempts to show that any ambiguity experienced when engaging artworks is not necessarily a result of a misunderstanding that needs to be clarified, and that arguments attempting to classify and categorize one's evaluations are not necessary.

If one were to approach *Triumph of the Will* from the perspective of art as person, conversing with the work as an other in an attempt to cultivate oneself in relation to it, one would not limit oneself by abstracting particular aspects of the work as representative of the whole, thus praising it or condemning it universally and absolutely. Instead, one would situate oneself within one's context and approach the relationship accordingly. One would first converse with the work in its contextual entirety and allow its attributes to resonate with oneself. At this point, one might come upon the ambiguity mentioned above, such that the work seems morally flawed yet aesthetically valuable. However, instead of attempting to determine the nature of one's evaluations, one would instead focus on cultivating oneself in conversation with the work. Maybe in viewing *Triumph of the Will*, one actualizes within oneself the horrific nature of its manipulative elements, but also realizes that the precision of its cinematography and the careful juxtaposition of its shots are valuable due to their capacity to inspire. Through this, one cultivates within oneself an awareness of manipulation so as to avoid this it, and also cultivates within oneself a respect for precision and care, with the hope of inspiring others more appropriately. From here, one may now address the film as an other through allegiance and resistance so as to grant it the opportunity for contextual reappraisal. One might determine that other artworks

possess all of this film's valuable aspects without any of its flaws, such that this particular film is no longer contextually relevant. One might also determine that the film's flaws could be alleviated with a change of context, such that viewing it within a Holocaust museum may allow it to speak in a way that cultivates appropriate moral development within its spectators.

One may also better understand the aesthetic aspects of art as person thus far discussed if one appeals to the broader conception of ethics introduced in the last section. As was stated previously, the broad sense of the ethical concerns itself generally with how one might live a good life. In the words of Martha Nussbaum, ethics seeks to understand "what it is for a human being to live well."¹² Nussbaum also claims that ethics is a practical affair that attempts to improve people's lives "by promoting individual clarification and self-understanding, and by moving individuals toward communal attunement."¹³ This conception of the ethical already seems to resonate with art as person—it is situated contextually, focused on social harmony and concerned with self-cultivation—but the implications of this ethical broadening may be taken even further if one extends the scope of this ethic's primary concern: how should I live? What might be included within an ethical system with such an all-encompassing yet vague concern? Should it take into account more Aristotelian virtues that may not be considered moral, such as courage or patience? What about emotional responses? As Nussbaum states, "Should we automatically mistrust the information given to us by our fear, or grief, or love?"¹⁴ What about even more general character traits or personal skills, such as speaking powerfully or writing elegantly? Concerning this, Gaut states that "one cannot simply take ethical qualities as any good

¹² Martha Nussbaum, "Perceptive Equilibrium: Literary Theory and Ethical Theory," in *Love's Knowledge: Essays on Philosophy and Literature*, 168-194, (New York: Oxford University Press, 1990), 173.

¹³ *Ibid.*, 173.

¹⁴ *Ibid.*, 175.

or bad aspect of character,” for this would include “having a capacity to write stylishly, beautifully or elegantly and possessing an acute aesthetic sensibility,” which he assumes to be outside of the realm of ethics.¹⁵ Though it may seem problematic that a broad conception of ethics may include such things, art as person would not only tolerate these various aspects but embrace them as pivotal to the contextuality of the relationship between artworks and spectators. If artworks, like persons, are not only relational but are constituted in their entirety by their relationships—and if artworks are allotted the position of personified, discursive subjects in their relationships to spectators—they attain a status of correlational complexity that abstracted moral or aesthetic evaluations cannot sufficiently represent. To properly understand and represent an entity that is the result of nearly indefinite correlative influences, one must recognize the interconnectivity of these influences, such that evaluations of moral or aesthetic value cannot in actuality be disconnected from their contextual entirety.

A Chinese Perspective

So far in this paper, I have elevated artworks to a status of great complexity in making them into ethical subjects. I have described them as a conglomeration of contextual and social parts that come together to form a unique yet malleable individual that not only changes with the world but affects change within it, just as persons do. In being ethically subjectified, they must be approached by their spectators with the sensitivity and authenticity with which one should relate to others, for only then may artworks as others affect spectators to the fullest extent. I have also addressed contemporary debates concerning the ethical evaluation of art in conjunction with the

¹⁵ Gaut, *Art, Emotion and Ethics*, 42.

aesthetic of art as person and determined that the concerns of moralists and autonomists, in attempting to classify artistic evaluations, seem to limit the potential artworks have to inspire self-cultivation within spectators. If I have made anything clear, though, it is that the metaphor of art as person is a complex notion that requires much attention, for just as persons are considered entities of numerous and often ambiguous dispositions, artworks also possess a complexity that must be approached with caution. With this need for cautiousness in mind, this final section appeals once more to Confucianism—placing particular emphasis on its aesthetic and ethical aspects—and to Chinese aesthetic practices more broadly. This is done because these Chinese practices already have within them a correlative understanding of aesthetics and ethics, a recognition of art as a catalyst for self-cultivation, and a set of guidelines by which to approach artworks as well as correlative persons, which may be combined and integrated into the notion of art as person so that this metaphor may properly conceive of its own guidelines for interacting with artworks.

An interesting aspect of Confucian aesthetics and of Chinese aesthetics generally is their particular interest in music. Music in classical Chinese tradition is not merely an art form that possesses abstracted aesthetic value but is intimately connected with ethics and morality. This emphasis on music as moral opposes those contemporary Western debates on ethical criticism discussed previously, for they focused on narratives as the representatives of morality and placed artworks like non-lyrical music within the realm of the non-moral. For the Confucians, however, there is much to be gained ethically from this other, seemingly non-moral art form. Confucius, in addressing his student Zilu, says that those who “have become refined through observing ritual propriety (*li* 禮) and playing music (*yue* 樂)—such persons can be said to be consummate.”¹⁶

¹⁶ Ames, *Analects*, 174: Passage 14.12.

The relationship here between ritual propriety and music is significant, for music, along with other performance arts like calligraphy or dancing, are understood as practices through which one may cultivate oneself. Eric Mullis clarifies the similarities between such aesthetic practices and ritual propriety when he states of calligraphy that “the reciprocal process of absorbing the characters (through repetitious practice) and expressing them is contingent upon and reflects the work of a body that is continually being affected by and is continually affecting its social and physical environment.”¹⁷ This body that is affected by and affects its context in writing is embedded entirely into the world, such that discipline and health can determine the state of one's written characters. These aspects in return reflect upon the person, for whether one is writing characters or relating with others, one who does not practice efficiently will not act properly and one who does not bother to be healthy will not act lucidly. Thus, in order to practice these art forms well, one must embody those essential aspects of the Confucian ethic; one must cultivate within oneself an awareness of one's context, master the art of reappropriating and personalizing the past, and understand what harmonizing relational differences entails by combining various notes into beautiful melodies or experimenting with various brush strokes in order to develop one's own style of writing. These traits, however, not only come into play in artistic practice but are also present when one views these artworks as a spectator. This is because one's ethical disposition becomes an intimate part of one's creation, such that "the viewer sees something of the artist's very corporality in the work and—qua embodiment—becomes tacitly aware of a high level of somatic refinement."¹⁸ An artist's brush strokes or musical notes are intimately connected to the artist's bodily discipline and health, such that one can see illness or a lack of

¹⁷ Eric C Mullis, "The Ethics of Confucian Artistry," *The Journal of Aesthetics and Art Criticism* 65, no. 1 (2007): 103.

¹⁸ *Ibid.*, 103.

proper training within an artwork's form as if one were observing the body of a sick and undisciplined person.

There are many valuable aspects to be taken from the aesthetic perspective discussed above. It applies ethical concerns to artworks like non-lyrical music or calligraphy, which are typically considered non-moral in the West, such that both artists and spectators may be cultivated in their relationships to these artworks. Artists, in the processes of creation, bring numerous influences together to create unique personal expressions and styles, which allows them to cultivate themselves through the aspects of contextualization and appropriateness present within these artistic practices as practices of *li*. Spectators may then cultivate themselves when observing these artist's works, for these works contain aspects of their authors within them and thus express elements of cultivation, or the lack thereof, that spectators may apply to themselves. However, this aesthetic perspective does not resonate in its entirety with that of art as person. One problem is that this Chinese aesthetic does not grant art the status of ethical subjectivity that the aesthetic of art as person does. The majority of artworks within the classical Chinese tradition are understood primarily as expressions of authors, such that the authors' somatic disposition may be recognized through them. This understanding of artworks as expressions of authors results in the Confucian claim that "a good work of art cannot be executed by an immoral person," since artworks are understood as expressions of artists' ethical dispositions and become conceptually confined to these artists' dispositions. As I have stated numerous times, particularly through Gadamer and Foucault, art as person does not grant such definitive authority to the author—or to any one person for that matter. However, if one is able to discover ethical traits of their authors within the works themselves, one could make an argument similar to Foucault's opposition to the author function, namely that the works themselves are capable of presenting

these traits without necessarily making any appeal to the author. This does not mean that authors should not be appealed to at all during artistic interaction. On the contrary, if artworks are to be understood as unique individuals composed of a complexity of relationships, authors may be appealed to as one of many possible aspects of artworks as contextual, subjectified others. The implications of the above statements may be explicated through an analysis of some particularly interesting practices concerning Chinese paintings. In opposition to Western artistic preservation, which attempts to maintain artworks as best as possible in their original condition, Chinese aesthetic practices understand artworks as “organic, growing form[s]” that are always in the process of being created.¹⁹ As a result of this, practices developed within the tradition of Chinese painting that involved modifying paintings by adding “signatures, inscriptions, seals, colophons, titles, labels, and so forth,” all of which could be added by the authors themselves or by other persons, from contemporary critics to future admirers and collectors.²⁰ These Chinese paintings could thus be sustained in a state perpetual transformation by being quite literally changed in their relationships to spectators. Now even though other artworks may not be changed as obviously or as intentionally as these Chinese paintings are, they may also be understood as transformative. As artworks progress, they take on a multitude of meanings, affecting their spectators and being thus affected by them in return within the continuous play of artistic interaction. Even if one attempts to preserve the original status of a work, the fact that the entire context within which that work is embedded is always changing makes the work’s

¹⁹ Jerome Silbergeld, *Chinese Painting Style: Media, Methods and Principles of Form*, (Seattle: University of Washington Press, 1982), 11.

²⁰ De-nin D. Lee, “Colophons, Reception, and Chinese Painting,” *Word & Image: A Journal of Verbal/Visual Enquiry* 28, no. 1, (2012): 84.

transformation unavoidable. The artwork will take on new meaning as the world shapes it and it will in turn affect the world in new ways as its collection of relationships expands.

However, that one may argue that artworks are transformative and not confined to the expressions of their authors does not necessarily imply that they should be understood as ethical subjects. One might just as easily approach artwork as *objects* that take on new meaning as subjects modify them. Also, if artworks can be understood as subjects, why not approach all things that are typically considered objects as subjects? Concerning this second issue, artworks are elevated to the status of subjectivity because of their location within the discursive framework. When one interacts with an artwork, one engages it with hermeneutic sensitivity, conversing with it in such a way that one's dispositions may be altered or improved. When one interacts with objects, however, one typically acts *upon* them as subjects, such that the relationship is not reciprocal but partial to the position of subjectivity. This partiality of the subject-object relationship provides the means to understand what art as person intends through its subjectification of artworks. In the description of Chinese painting given above, though these paintings were understood as constantly progressing, Chinese persons would not have considered them subjects. Instead, they would be understood them as conversational mediums, ways for spectators to understand not only the dispositions of the original artists but of the various other persons who engaged the work in the past as well. This implies that all these relationships remain distinct within the artworks, such that interacting with these paintings would be like interacting with these various other people who have come into contact with them. However, if artworks are engaged through art as person, these relationships would dissipate into the unique individuality that is the artwork itself. When one engages music or calligraphy and determines the artists' dispositions, one would really be determining the dispositions of the artworks themselves, for the

artists may have developed in a different direction or the artworks themselves may be presenting different meanings in different situations than the one they were created in. As for the Chinese paintings, these artworks would most obviously display their correlative subjectivity. The influences that these paintings have accumulated form unique individuals—influenced by multiple persons within multiple artistic mediums—that do not connect solely to any of those persons that modified it. Instead, they integrate all these aspects into unified positions that then project their uniqueness and originality back into the world. In this respect, they are no different than persons conceptualized within a correlative framework, for such persons are *only* their unique collection of relationships and are *only* innovative because these relationships form into a unique individual. The only attribute persons possess that would set them apart as subjects is their capacity for language, which is one more reason why art as person is not an ontological claim. When artworks are engaged in conversation, however, they are granted entry into the discursive framework, so in that moment they may be understood properly as discursive ethical subjects.

Since art as person has determined that artworks should be approached in themselves as personified ethical subjects, the values of Confucianism concerned with the ethical development of persons may be added to the aspects of Chinese aesthetics introduced above in order to develop a set of guidelines for artistic interaction that fully capture the depth of artworks as relationally constituted others. Just as was stated before, the first and most pivotal of these values is *ren*, or consummate and authoritative conduct, for it concerns the disposition of the person cultivating oneself as a spectator. Persons of *ren* become authorities and authors within their context, accumulating their particular collection of relationships into unique individualities that inspire others and incite innovation within their context. Applying this to aesthetic

interaction, one must approach artworks as a person of *ren* would approach others, with a cultivated awareness of the context within which they both reside as well as the ability to appropriately accept and remonstrate with the claims artworks make. Such a person must also grant artworks the opportunity to affect one's own disposition as well so that they both may improve upon each other in their correlative interactions. The implications of *li* for artworks within Confucianism were discussed above, for artistic skills may be practiced in order to cultivate ritual propriety and one may observe ethical traits within artworks in order to discover which stylistic choices one may emulate in the development of *ren*. However, if *li* is applied to artworks in the same way it is applied to relationships with other persons, another implication arises. As was stated of *li* in the first chapter, it requires one to appropriate one's actions within various social contexts and if artworks are to be treated as persons, they must also be given the opportunity to be appropriated in themselves. You may initially think that it is inappropriate to play polka music at a funeral. However, this may be the funeral of a close friend with whom you bonded through polka music. So if this music was played with this relationship in mind, it may take on a new meaning and in turn evoke something new within you. As for *he*, it also becomes intensified if the relationship between artworks and spectators becomes like one between persons. Of aesthetic distance in Chinese aesthetics, Sarah Mattice states:

The role of harmony or unity in distance is to emphasize the fact that aesthetic experience involves a relationship of closeness, where the parts—artist, work, and participant—interact in such a way as to make balanced engagement possible. No one element in aesthetic experience overrides the others.²¹

Though artworks would not typically be granted the status of correlative personhood within the Chinese tradition, it seems their personification could only intensify the spectrum of correlative

²¹ Mattice, "Artistry as Method," 203.

relationships. If the trinity of artists, artworks and spectators is to be one that harmonizes these elements to the fullest extent, each one of these elements must have something unique and interesting to offer into their correlative interaction; the more notes there are in a musical harmony, the more complex the emotion they can express. If artworks are understood merely as windows into the ethical dispositions of particular persons rather than being approached in themselves, then this trinity would be more like a duality that only utilizes artworks as a conversational medium, as was stated before. However, if artworks are granted the ethical subjectivity of correlative personhood, they may incorporate themselves into this relational framework in all their complexity, as unique individuals that are more than just reflections, which provides persons with more relational opportunities through which they may more fully cultivate themselves.

Conclusion

To reiterate those words that began this paper, we are surrounded by art. It is one thing for this to mean that we are surrounded by the objects of personal expression, such that we are able to converse through space and time with persons from distant lands and eras. However, if artworks are elevated to the status of ethical subjectivity, we embrace contextuality to the fullest, allowing these works to live, grow, breed and die as they make their way in the world. In their interactions with persons—artists, collectors, translators, censors, general viewers—they may both mold and be molded. As they progress through their context, they become more complex with each new moment, encountering new spectators, new settings and new cultures that they may integrate into themselves and be integrated into. By discussing Gadamer's views on aesthetic representation and correlative personhood in Confucianism, by analyzing these views in relation to Foucault and improving them through the aesthetics of existence, in contrasting the resulting aesthetic conception with contemporary Western ethical criticism, and in appealing again to Confucianism from an aesthetic and ethical perspective, I hope to have clarified what it is art as person entails and why it might be worth consideration. Like infants who are born unto the world full of potential, who enter the world raw and malleable then bud into complex and unique individuals as they form relationships with others, artworks possess a developmental and relational complexity that provides them with the potential to change the world. However, if one is lacking contextual awareness in one's aesthetic approach, such that one does not recognize the totality of one's context with these aesthetic interactions, then this potential will be lost.

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Vita

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Michael then pursued a Bachelor of Art in Philosophy at the University of North Florida, where he was awarded the Presidential Scholarship and the East Florida Academic Scholarship. While there, he was a member of the Honors Program and the Philosophy Club. In addition to his on-campus studies, Michael also traveled through study abroad programs, visiting Italy and China. He completed his Honors Thesis, completed his Capstone as a student leader in China, and will graduate *summa cum laude*.

Michael will go on to pursue a Master's degree in Philosophy at the University of Hawai'i at Manoa, focusing on comparative and Chinese philosophy, and hopes to continue on to his Doctorate as well.