

CHRISTIAN HELMUT WENZEL

## BEAUTY IN KANT AND CONFUCIUS: A FIRST STEP

1. Kant and Confucius have often been compared, mostly with respect to issues of morality and humanity. This is only natural: Both are influential philosophers, and as Confucius is mainly concerned with issues such as *ren* (goodness, humanity) and *li* (ritual, rites), one naturally looks into Kant's moral, social, and political writings for similarities; and indeed, there one finds many parallels. Less has been written on aesthetics in this way, comparing Kant and Confucius, and I am not sure that there are good excuses for this lack of attention. In Kant, aesthetics is part of his third *Critique* which unifies his system of transcendental philosophy as a whole, and in Confucius one soon feels that some sort of aesthetics is central to his ideas about education, person, and interpersonal relationships. Hence, a comparison in matters of taste would make sense. But where should one start? And how should one proceed?

The first problem one faces is the following: Kant writes about beauty (*Schönheit*), or rather, more in accord with the general approach of his transcendental philosophy, he writes about our judging something to be beautiful (*schön*). At first blush, the obvious places to look at in Confucius would be where he talks about *mei*, such as in his statement that “[i]t is Goodness (*ren*) that gives to a neighborhood its beauty (*mei*),” (4.1),<sup>1</sup> or that “[i]n the usages of ritual (*li*) it is harmony (*he*) that is prized; the Way (*dao*) of the Former Kings from this got its beauty (*mei*)” (1.12). But are we justified in making such straightforward associations? Do *schön* and *mei* mean the same thing? And how would we ever find out?

Aesthetics is not only about beauty but also about the arts. Thus, we could look at passages where Confucius talks about the arts (*yi*), the polite arts (*wen*), music (*yue*), and archery (*she*). This will lead us further.

The second problem arises from the following fundamental asymmetry: Kant offers a whole theory about aesthetics. Apart from the

---

CHRISTIAN HELMUT WENZEL, associate professor, Department of Foreign Languages and Literature, National Chi Nan University, Taiwan. Specialities: Kant, Aesthetics, Analytic Philosophy. E-mail: wenzel@ncnu.edu.tw

early article “Observations on the Feeling of the Beautiful and the Sublime” (1764), Kant wrote a systematic analysis of the subject, the “Critique of the Aesthetic Power of Judgment,” which fills almost 200 pages in the *Critique of the Power of Judgment* (1790). Confucius does not present such a theory, either in the *Analects* or in other writings attributed to him. He merely offers some comments, descriptions, and suggestions dispersed here and there, about the relevance of *mei* in various circumstances. This asymmetry places these two thinkers onto very different levels of abstraction and theorizing to start with. Although Kant, too, gives examples and descriptions, these do not constitute the heart of his mature aesthetics, which is part of his transcendental philosophy and therefore more abstract and theoretical in nature: Kantian aesthetics is based on an analysis of the judgment of taste, and this analysis is guided by the “categories,” more precisely, by the “logical functions of judging,” which are taken from the first *Critique*. This involves rather complicated ideas, such as the “a priori principle of subjective purposiveness” and the “free play of imagination and understanding.” There is nothing so elaborate in Confucius that we could draw on to make comparisons at an equal level. Instead, what I think naturally offers itself here is to apply Kant’s theory of aesthetics to what Confucius says about *mei* and the arts. This, we should keep in mind, is then not a way of drawing parallels at the same level, so to speak horizontally. Rather, the comparison is more along a diagonal, from a theory to a phenomenon unfamiliar to that theory. It would be an application and at the same time a test of Kant’s theory.

Kant was well aware of the fact that we find cultural differences in matters of taste when we look at different societies from different countries and different periods. He knew that some cultures might tend to call beautiful what others would ignore, not pay attention to, or even find ugly. For example, he noted (and explained) that “a Negro must necessarily have a different normal idea of the beauty of a figure than a white, a Chinese person a different idea from a European” (section 17; 5:234).<sup>2</sup> Nevertheless, he believed that what does not vary is the fundamental human ability to make judgments of taste to begin with. Kant saw this as an essential part of what constitutes a human being. Thus, he wrote: “Agreeableness is also valid for nonrational animals; beauty is valid only for human beings, i.e., animal but also rational beings . . . ; the good, however, is valid for every rational being in general” (section 5; 5:210), and “[o]nly that which has the end of its existence in itself, the human being, who determines his ends himself through reason . . . is capable of an ideal of beauty” (section 17; 5:233). Hence, we should expect to be justified in applying his *Critique of the Power of Judgment* to Confucius and

to various descriptions, comments, ideas, critiques, and advice that we find in the *Analects*. We do not know in advance which passages might be suitable, but we are justified in expecting that there should be some such passages. The best way, then, is simply to try. If we are lucky, this will benefit us in two ways: First, by casting some light on Confucius and his ideas; and second, by serving as a challenging test for Kant and his aesthetic theory. We might learn at both ends. On the one hand, if Kant's theory is universal and insightful, making use of it in this way should give us a chance to get a better understanding of Confucius. Taking sides with Confucius, so to speak, we have a chance to see how well, and whether at all, Kant's system allows us to handle the issues and to explain the insights we find in the *Analects*.

Keeping these methodological problems in mind, we might now want to think of which concepts and aspects of Kant's aesthetic theory we should try to apply. It is a well-known idiosyncrasy of Kant that he drew strict distinctions, especially the one between sensibility (*Sinnlichkeit*) and understanding (*Verstand*). Less well known is that he limited beauty to objects of the senses, that he drew separating lines between three kinds of satisfaction (in the agreeable, the beautiful, and the good), and that, strictly speaking, there is no intellectual or moral beauty for Kant (see for instance sections 16 and 5, respectively, of the third *Critique*). All this, as we shall see, creates problems when we look at Confucius. For Confucius, it is primarily acts, attitudes, manners, and behaviors between human beings in society that are called *mei*. Would we then want to say that these are objects of the senses? Are (moral) acts objects of the senses? Do we really see someone's attitude? Manners seem to be a borderline case here. That objects of beauty are objects of the senses is a prerequisite for Kant's "free play of imagination and understanding," which always underlies a judgment of taste, at least according to his understanding. This limitation to objects of the senses thus creates problems as soon as we apply Kant's aesthetics to Confucius. Can behavior be beautiful, and how should we account for this?<sup>3</sup>

Kant not only made fundamental distinctions, but also introduced ways of bridging what he had separated. He developed intricate theories of genius, aesthetic ideas, ideals of beauty, the supersensible, and maybe most famously, of beauty as the symbol of morality (in section 59 of the third *Critique*). These we could then try to apply as well. But they are all quite intricate and presuppose abstract and problematic distinctions such as the one between sensibility and understanding. Applications to Confucius will therefore be difficult and demanding (not so much for Confucius, but for us), and I will here only offer a first step.

There are at least two ways in which we could proceed. We could start with Kantian concepts and see where they apply in Confucius, or we could begin with promising passages in Confucius and then think of suitable Kantian concepts that might be meaningfully applied. I will proceed in the latter way. I will start with the phenomena, so to speak.

2. The Chinese character *mei* appears twelve times in the *Analects*. As I am only allowed five thousand words for this article, I cannot discuss all twelve passages, certainly not in detail. One should also say something about music and the arts in general. Here I want to restrict myself to some of those twelve passages. Let us first look at 3.25.

3.25. The Master spoke of the Succession Dance as being (or as embodying) perfect beauty (*jin mei*) and at the same time perfect goodness (*jin shan*), but of the War Dance as being perfect beauty, but not perfect goodness.

This passage is interesting in that it separates beauty from goodness: Something can be beautiful without being good. But it is instrumental goodness (*shan*), goodness for something,<sup>4</sup> an “aptness” and “efficaciousness.”<sup>5</sup> It might be moral goodness or benevolence (*ren*) that Confucius has in mind here. He speaks of “perfect beauty” (*jin mei*) and of “perfect goodness” (*jin shan*). The Succession Dance “mimed the peaceful accession of the legendary Emperor Shun,” whereas the War Dance “mimed the accession by conquest of the Emperor Wu, who overthrew the Yin” (Waley). Confucius found the War Dance beautiful but not good, probably because it was too aggressive and forceful and thus not (instrumentally) good for educational purposes (which in turn might imply that it was also not morally good, as it would hinder the development of certain moral ideals underlying those educational purposes). Now, would this separation between beauty and instrumental goodness cause problems with respect to Kant’s notion of beauty?

For Kant, “satisfaction in the beautiful” (*Wohlgefallen am Schönen*) must be “without interest” (*ohne Interesse*, see section 2 of the third *Critique*). But a relation to moral or educational purposes might constitute an interest and therefore make satisfaction in the beautiful impossible. If moral or educational purposes were justifying reasons for the “beauty” of the Succession Dance, this would contradict Kant’s notion of beauty. The satisfaction would be “satisfaction in the good” and not “satisfaction in the beautiful.” Of satisfaction in the good, Kant distinguishes two kinds, both of which might play a role here: “We call something good for something (the useful) that pleases only as a means; however, another thing is called good in itself that pleases for itself. Both always involve the concept and an end,

hence . . . some sort of interest” (section 4; 5:207). For Kant, the Succession Dance might be beautiful. But it should not be beautiful because it is good. It has to be beautiful for other reasons (purposiveness without purpose and the free play of our faculties). Beauty, Kant insists, has to be independent from goodness: For beauty to be the symbol for, and thereby to help us to develop, goodness and morality, it has to stand on its own feet first. Kant has helped beauty emancipate itself, so to speak. Beauty and goodness can go together but should never be justifying grounds for each other. The more each has its own grounds, the more they can support each other. Turning back to Confucius, we can say that the combination “beautiful and not good” (the War Dance) goes well with Kant. So does the combination “beautiful and good” (the Succession Dance), at least as long as goodness is not the reason for beauty.

Whether Confucius would still call the War Dance beautiful if it was also morally bad is another question. He speaks of *shan* and not of *ren*. Kant would similarly be pressed hard here, if we asked him whether something could be beautiful and, under another aspect, morally bad, because he has a theory of how beauty and morality are symbolically connected: A combination of beauty and evil is unlikely to occur for (and in) those who reflect at a higher level, namely at the level of reason, where the symbolic connections exist.

Let us now look at the two passages, 1.12 and 4.1, which are not about instrumental goodness (*shan*) but about moral goodness (*ren*) and ritual (*li*). The Confucian idea of *ren* involves benevolence and humanity and is often connected with ritual (*li*). Both are connected with beauty here:

1.12. In the usages of ritual (*li*) it is harmony (*he*) that is prized; the Way (*dao*) of the Former Kings from this got its beauty (*mei*). Both small matters and great depend upon it.

4.1. It is goodness (*ren*) that gives to a neighborhood its beauty (*mei*).

These two passages are different from the previous one (3.25). They relate beauty to ritual (*li*) and goodness (*ren*). They suggest that *mei* has its grounds, or roots, in *li* and *ren*. Will this cause problems if we look at it from the Kantian perspective and think of Kant’s concept of beauty and the kind of freedom from interest and conceptual constraint that he demands for it? Can ritual and goodness be reasons for beauty? Or would they impose interests and conceptual constraints that make pure beauty in the Kantian sense impossible? Here we arrive at a central question that we will have to face sooner or later, it seems to me, if we want to apply Kant’s aesthetics to Confucius. Rituals involve rules and this suggests the involvement of concepts.

But for Kant, concepts should play no determining role when it comes to beauty. However, in 1.12 it is not ritual as such, but the harmony (*he*) in it that provides the grounds for beauty. This again might go well with Kantian ideas, especially with Kant's notion of a "harmonious free play of imagination and understanding" that underlies a judgment about the beautiful. The harmony Confucius sees in the ritual might be the mirror image of the harmony in the free play of our cognitive faculties, imagination and understanding, which Kant points out and upon which he builds his aesthetic theory. The harmony seen outside, in ritual, might correspond to a harmony in us—in the free play of our faculties. In this way, we could link Confucius to Kant, using Kant's theory to explain the feelings and ideas of Confucius. The general problem of correspondence between a harmony outside and a harmony inside is part of the third "moment" of the judgment of taste, the moment of purposiveness without purpose (*Zweckmäßigkeit ohne Zweck*), which is central to Kant's aesthetics (it establishes the *a priori* principle for the judgment of taste). According to this moment, an object of beauty is purposive for the free play of the faculties and this free play in turn is purposive for cognition in general (*Erkenntnis überhaupt*). None of these kinds of purposiveness are conceptual or rule governed, but instead they are without concept, purpose, or end. Whenever we find an object beautiful, we see harmony in it: Partly we project this harmony into the object, and partly it is really out there. The crucial point for Kant is that there must never be a determining rule connecting the two: Between what is inside (the free play in our mind) and what is outside (the ritual). Thus, there is room for the possibility that the harmony in the ritual is the ground for our finding the ritual beautiful, provided this ground is not a conceptually determining one. If we see 1.12 in this way, Kant's demand for freedom from conceptual constraints can be accommodated. The ritual can be beautiful because of some kind of harmony that goes beyond our conceptual understanding.

Whether this necessarily points to individuality (in the performance of the ritual) is another question. Individuality has often been said to be ineffable (*individuum est ineffabile*), and something similar has been said about beauty (*je ne sais quoi*). Thus, the idea of a connection between the two, individuality and beauty, suggests itself. Alfred Bäumler, for instance, believed that Kant makes such a connection in his third *Critique*.<sup>6</sup> Should we therefore see Confucian rituals as expressing individuality? Or would this contradict his idea that rituals should provide social stability by establishing fixed frames of reference? Can individuality get along with such fixed frames? I think there is a way of avoiding this contradiction and seeing instead the possibility for combining, through ritual, social stability and origi-

nal individuality: Rituals can provide fixed frames of reference within which original individuality can unfold itself. Just think of someone who plays and thereby (individually) interprets a French suite by Bach (which is fixed in musical notation), or of someone who (individually) writes calligraphy by copying (fixed standard) Chinese characters.<sup>7</sup> Nevertheless, I am not sure how far one can go with the idea of individuality in Kant and Confucius. There certainly is room for creativity and originality in both, but we should never forget that Kant preferred Latin poetry and Confucius the rituals of former kings. Both reach for standards from the past.

Let us now turn to 4.1. This passage is beautiful in its brevity, but exactly this causes a philosophical problem for us: There is no further factor given besides goodness (*ren*) that “gives to a neighborhood its beauty.” There is no additional factor of harmony here that we could resort to (as we did in 1.12). The suggested relationship between beauty and goodness is therefore more direct. The text at least offers no intermediate link, and this creates the following two problems.

First, for Kant an object of beauty must be an object of the senses. It must be an object that we can perceive. Now, can we “see” a neighborhood? Of course, in some sense we can. We have neighbors and we can see what they do. But when it comes to seeing beauty in it that is based on goodness (*ren*), it seems that we must have an understanding of the neighborhood. It is the practice of *ren* that gives the neighborhood its beauty, and we have to ask whether seeing this practice requires some conceptual understanding (of the neighborhood, the practice, and *ren*). We have to ask this question, because Kant says that if we judge a rose to be beautiful we do not find it beautiful as a rose, *qua* rose (see for instance section 16; 5:229). Our conceptual understanding of the rose should play no determining role in our judging it to be beautiful. A botanist knows more about flowers than most of us do, but he should therefore not be entitled to make better judgments of taste about roses (*ibid.*). Even though we know that what we see is a rose, our conceptual understanding of roses should have no determining influence on whether we find the rose in front of us beautiful or not. Kant makes this demand because he wants to make sure that there cannot be any determining rules of taste. Beauty should never be an objective concept.<sup>8</sup>

When we now look at the neighborhood, this becomes problematic. A (social) neighborhood is less of an object of the senses than a rose. Recognizing the beauty of such a neighborhood involves more understanding than does recognizing the beauty of a rose: An understanding of culture, society, and humanity. Confucius presupposes such an understanding, it seems to me, when he says that it is *ren* that gives it its beauty. Humanity and goodness must be part of what constitutes the

neighborhood. This makes demands on the concept of a neighborhood and the role it plays in our finding it beautiful. Even if we (boldly, to help Kant out) construct the neighborhood as an object of the senses, humanity and goodness must show through, and this implies and demands a lot, which in turn might make its beauty impossible from a Kantian perspective.<sup>9</sup> On the other hand, we might want to think of a more “intuitive” education that involves the practice of rituals and the arts, and that is based on presenting one’s own action as an example for others to follow (*shen jiao*). If one undergoes such an education, one might arrive at a stage where one intuitively sees *ren* and beauty and understands them without thinking too much. Then one could see the beauty just by having the right kind of feeling for what constitutes a neighborhood based on goodness (*ren*).<sup>10</sup> Kant, though, would find this problematic, because he insists on a strict distinction between intuition (*Anschauung*) and understanding (*Verstand*) and does not allow for any kind of immediate or “intuitive understanding” (*intuitiver Verstand*) or “intellectual intuition” (*intellektuelle Anschauung*).

The second problem grows out of the first. For Kant, goodness may never be a reason for beauty. Goodness and beauty may of course occur together, and there might even be connections between the two, namely at the level of reason, via aesthetic ideas and symbolism. But these connections would be indirect. Beauty for Kant must first be established on independent grounds and as an object of the senses. Beauty must first stand on its own feet, so to speak. Only then can there be connections on a higher level. Such connections might play a role in the background of 4.1. But this would be open to speculation.

If we think of the neighborhood as a merely physical entity that we can see with our eyes, then moral goodness will less likely play any role in our finding it beautiful. However, if we allow for a wider concept of neighborhood, things change. Connections with moral considerations might come to play a role. For Kant, such connections are indirect and never justifying: They might add to beauty, but they never enhance beauty as such. As philosophers, we might be aware of such distinctions, and Confucius might be such a philosopher. He might have experienced the *je ne sais quoi*, which is an experience of our limitation of knowledge. We encounter such limitations not only in aesthetics but also in morality, and there might be a parallel to this in Confucius: When asked whether someone was really *ren*, we often find him saying, “I do not know” (see 5.8, 5.19, and 14.1). At this point one should discuss Kant’s notion of the “supersensible” and the way he refers to it in the *Dialectic* of the beautiful. But this would lead us too far away from the basic topic of this article, beauty, about which there are still some passages from Confucius that we should discuss.

3. We will discuss three passages from the *Analects* in which Confucius talks about beauty in a jewel and about beauty versus ugliness in people. First, let us look at the jewel:

9.13. (Waley and Legge IX.12) Tzu-kung said, Suppose one had a lovely jewel (*mei yu*), should one wrap it up, put it in a box and keep it, or try to get the best price one can for it? The Master said, Sell it! Most certainly sell it! I myself am one who is waiting for an offer.

Here Confucius is compared to a beautiful piece of jade (*mei yu*). At that time jade was an object of value, exquisiteness, and beauty, and it still is so today. Confucius accepts this comparison and adds that he is ready to sell “his jewel,” that is, to take office as soon as the right opportunity presents itself. Accepting an offer is not a question of money for Confucius, but one of “matching *mei*”—a question of “taste,” we might be tempted to say. Confucius would not accept any offer from anybody just as long as the money was right. The circumstances, the person who made the offer, and the kind of work Confucius would have to do, all must be right, too. They must “match” his idea of *mei*. There is more to the “beauty” of a piece of jade here, as there is (similarly) more to Confucius’ virtues and expectations. What exactly this “more” consists in is not said in 9.13. What Confucius expects cannot so easily be spelled out, either in detail or in general. Similarly, what exactly the beauty of a piece of jade consists in cannot so easily be said either. People who love jade can spend much time marveling over a piece without being able to put into words all that comes to their minds. There is something ineffable about jade and its beauty.

This is a nice occasion to apply Kant’s notion of “aesthetic ideas.” For Kant, an aesthetic idea is an object of intuition (*Anschauung*), an object of the senses that we find beautiful and that gives us much to think about without allowing us to ever fully conceptually grasp it. Kant develops his notion of aesthetic ideas as a complement to his notion of ideas of reason. Ideas of reason, such as God or infinity, we can think, but not perceive. Aesthetic ideas, as in good works of art, we can perceive, but not fully grasp. Each lacks what the other has. They are diametrically opposed and complement each other. For the concept of a tree, we can give examples in intuition: A tree in nature that we can point to and perceive. But for an idea of reason (which is also a concept for Kant) we can never find a suitable object of the senses. The aesthetic idea complements this inability on our side, and a genius, so Kant explains, can make use of this. A genius can use aesthetic ideas to “express” ideas of reason. He or she can create an object for us to perceive that fits an idea of reason in symbolic ways. Often without knowing how, a genius produces a piece of art that suggests many of the attributes we think of as belonging, for instance, to a king, or God. God is an idea of reason and we can never see him

as we see a tree. For how should he be represented? Could we ever see him with all his might and love? A king, we might think we can see. But even this is not so easy. Can we see a king in his kingliness? An artist can use an eagle to symbolically exhibit to our senses the power, status, and character of a king. Such a painting or sculpture of an eagle would be an aesthetic idea, Kant explains. It would suggest more than what words can convey. It would complement an idea of reason and thereby give (visual) support to it.

It should by now be clear how all this can be applied to the piece of jade and to Confucius. As an object of the senses, a piece of jade is visible, but there is something to it that goes beyond our understanding and conceptual comprehension, namely its beauty. So it is with Confucius: There is something about him as a person that cannot be seen. This is, I suggest, what would be *ren* about him.

We should notice that by applying the Kantian notion of an aesthetic idea to 9.13, by seeing the piece of jade as an “aesthetic idea” that visually expresses the aspect of *ren* in Confucius, we must, to be consistent in our application, see *ren* as an “idea of reason.” This again gives us much to consider. Would the Confucian idea of *ren* be an idea of reason in the Kantian sense? This problem cannot be avoided. The notions of *ren* and *li* are too central to Confucius to be circumnavigated in any aesthetic account that tries to do justice to his philosophy. If we consider Confucius as a person and think of the *Analects* as a whole, or even if we just look at the twelve passages that talk of *mei*, we find that Confucius sees beauty primarily in the social sphere, in human beings, their actions, interactions, behavior, and comportment. The connection to people is obvious in the following two passages:

12.16. The Master said, The gentleman calls attention to the good points in others (*cheng ren zhi mei*); he does not call attention to their defects (*cheng ren zhi e*). The small man does just the reverse of this.

20.2. What must a man do, that he may thereby be fitted to govern the land? The Master said, He must pay attention to the Five Lovely Things (*mei*) and put away from him the Four Ugly Things (*e*).

When the Master here talks of making other people become beautiful (*mei*) or ugly (*e*), of seeking to perfect their admirable and not their bad qualities,<sup>11</sup> of calling attention to their good points and not their defects,<sup>12</sup> of helping them to realize what is good and not what is bad in them,<sup>13</sup> then he does not refer to their outer appearances (as they would walk out of a beauty parlor). Similarly, the Five Lovely (*mei*) and the Four Ugly Things (*e*) are less objects of the senses, such as trees or paintings, than they are ways of doing things in the government (as the continuing text in 20.2 makes clear). They are practices, excellent or wicked.<sup>14</sup> They are virtues and vices.<sup>15</sup>

Here the contrast with Kant becomes apparent, even more than in 1.12 and 4.1. What are called *mei* and *e* are not objects of nature or artifacts, not objects of the senses, as is the case in Kant, but human practices, ways of ruling and ways of doing things to others. Now why would that be so? Does this reflect idiosyncrasies of Confucius and Kant? Do they have different philosophies? Or does this just reflect different common usages of the words *mei* and *schön* in their historical times?

This should not leave us with the wrong impression that Kant and Confucius are incompatible or even incomparable from the start. Kant indeed separated beauty from morality, but he did so not because he thought they are incompatible but because he thought they have independent justifying grounds (which would be the better for them, for each of them as well as for the possibility of mutual support in symbolic connection). In a second step he then showed that there are similarities between these justifying grounds (in our power of judgment), and that the everyday connections we usually see between beauty and morality are merely symbolic and in the end based on those similarities (in our power of judgment). If we now find Confucius not making such distinctions, then this will not prove that Kant and Confucius would disagree. If Kant's theory of taste is right, then it might just be the case that Confucius sees the symbolic connections between beauty and morality without being aware of them as symbolic (as Kant did) and without being aware of their deeper roots in our "power of judgment in its reflective function" (*reflektierende Urteilskraft*), where Kant saw the connections. If all this makes sense, then Kant's theory will provide us with conceptual tools of analysis of Confucius and the *Analects*.<sup>16</sup> On the other hand, Confucius might want to persuade Kant to extend his notion of beauty so that he can speak of the beauty of ritual, behavior, manners, and even morality.<sup>17</sup> Confucius might have another theory of how this extension works.

NATIONAL CHI NAN UNIVERSITY  
Nantou, Taiwan

#### ENDNOTES

I would like to thank Philip J. Ivanhoe, Martin Schönfeld, and Chung-ying Cheng for helpful comments and suggestions.

1. I will follow Arthur Waley's translation, unless otherwise noted: Arthur Waley, trans., *The Analects of Confucius* (New York: Quality Paperback Book Club, 1992; originally published in New York: Modern Library, 1938). In cases where I do not follow Waley, I will draw from the following: James Legge, trans., *Confucius: Confucian Analects, The Great Learning and The Doctrine of the Mean* (New York: Dover Publications, 1971; unabridged republication of the second revised edition, Oxford: Clarendon

- Press, 1893, Volume I in “The Chinese Classics” series); D. C. Lau, trans., *Confucius: The Analects* (London: Penguin Books, 2001; first published in 1979); Roger T. Ames and Henry Rosemont, Jr., trans., *The Analects of Confucius: A Philosophical Translation* (New York: Random House, 1998); Edward Slingerland, trans., *Confucius Analects, with Selections from Traditional Commentaries* (Indianapolis/Cambridge: Hackett Publishing, 2003). I take the Chinese text from Ames and Rosemont. The numbering of passages from the *Analects* is not always the same in different editions. I will follow the numbering of Lau, Slingerland, and Ames and Rosemont, indicating them as e.g. “5.2.” If Waley and Legge give different numbers, I will point this out and give them in the form of “V.2.”
2. I follow the translation from *The Cambridge Edition of the Works of Immanuel Kant: Critique of the Power of Judgment*, trans. Paul Guyer and Eric Matthews (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2000). Volume and page numbers, such as (5:217), refer to those of the *Akademie Ausgabe*, which are also indicated in the *Cambridge Edition*. As there are many editions that do not indicate these page numbers, I will also specify the section number, such as (section 9; 5:217).
  3. Applying Kant’s aesthetics to less perceptual and more abstract objects becomes particularly problematic when we look at mathematics. See Christian Helmut Wenzel, “Beauty, Genius, and Mathematics: Why did Kant Change His Mind?,” *History of Philosophy Quarterly* 18 (Oct 2001): 415–32.
  4. See Ames and Rosemont, *The Analects of Confucius*: “The character *shan* . . . is first a relational term and only derivatively an essential attribute. It means ‘good at, good to, good with, good for, good in’ and so on” (footnote 39, p. 234). Maybe this is not always true, but I follow their suggestion, which allows me to make a clear application of Kant’s notion of “interest” here. The interest might be a moral one here.
  5. Ames and Rosemont, *ibid.* See also their glossary.
  6. Alfred Bäumler, *Das Irrationalitätsproblem in der Ästhetik und Logik des 18. Jahrhunderts bis zur Kritik der Urteilskraft* (Halle: Max Niemeyer, 1923; Reprint, Darmstadt: Wissenschaftliche Buchgesellschaft, 1967), 303, 322–23.
  7. Nicholas F. Gier has discussed the importance in Confucianism of developing one’s “personal style and character” and mentions the idea that “though violin virtuosos are reading the same musical score, each [of] them will give the piece a unique interpretation.” See his article “The Dancing *Ru*: A Confucian Aesthetics of Virtue,” *Philosophy East and West* 51 (2001): 280–305, here 285. For a discussion of “what is essential to having a good style of life” (176) and the “naturalness of a skilled composer” (181), see Joel J. Kupperman, “Confucius and the Problem of Naturalness,” *Philosophy East and West* 18 (1968): 175–85.
  8. For an explanation of this, see the section “The Aesthetic Dimension between Subject and Object,” in Christian Helmut Wenzel, *An Introduction to Kant’s Aesthetics: Core Concepts and Problems* (Oxford: Blackwell, 2005), 1–4.
  9. Slingerland translates 4.1 as: “To live in the neighborhood of the Good is fine,” and Lau talks of benevolence as a kind of neighborhood. This suggests that *ren* itself *is* or *has* a neighborhood, which makes it even harder to accommodate Kant’s demand for an object of the senses. How abstractly did Confucius think? Did he imagine a concrete neighborhood with houses and gates? (Ames and Rosemont translate: “In taking up one’s residence.”) Or did he think abstractly of *ren*?
  10. For the importance of *shenjao* and the interdependence of mind and body in musical education and ritual, see Gier, “The Dancing *Ru*,” 283, 286, 289, and 292. He also briefly discusses 4.1: “The beauty of the sage kings lies in their virtue; the beauty of any neighborhood is due to the goodness of its residents,” *ibid.*, 293. Beauty and virtue are often mentioned together in Confucius. It was my task to apply Kant’s theory of beauty, and in order to do so, we must first try to separate them, although they might occur together.
  11. Legge, *Confucius: Confucian Analects*, 12.16.
  12. Waley, *The Analects of Confucius*, 12.16.
  13. Lau, *Confucius: The Analects*, 12.16.
  14. *Ibid.*, 20.2.

15. Ames and Rosemont, *The Analects of Confucius*, 20.2.
16. Gang Xu claims that Kant views literature and art as “amoral.” He writes: “Kant stresses the independence of the aesthetic judgment, i.e. its neutrality and irrelevance to utility and morality. The aesthetic is to morality neither harmful, nor useful, it is simply irrelevant. The aesthetic has nothing to contribute to the ethical.” See “The Aesthetic in Confucianism Examined from Three Viewpoints,” *Journal of Chinese Philosophy* 26 (Dec 1999): 425–44, here 435. Gang Xu is right in pointing out the “independence” (as far as justifying grounds go), but he is wrong in claiming “irrelevance” and “uselessness” and that Kant’s aesthetic has “nothing to contribute to the ethical.” To the contrary, Kant has a whole theory of how beauty can be the symbol of the morally good (section 59 of his third *Critique*), which had great influence on Schiller and subsequent ideas about moral education. Kant’s theory shows us that beauty has independent grounds and can *therefore* support morality on independent grounds. The support is not direct and not guaranteed, but the value of having independent grounds for morality has often been ignored.
17. For an account from a wider perspective, see Chung-ying Cheng, “Confucian Onto-Hermeneutics: Morality and Ontology,” *Journal of Chinese Philosophy* 27 (Mar 2000): 33–68. Cheng discusses *ren*, self-cultivation, harmony, and the human person from a more holistic viewpoint. He also addresses himself to the question “How and why has Confucianism developed the way it has?” (33). One might say that Confucius has a wider notion of beauty, or that he “extends” the notion of beauty to morality, making it an “aesthetic–moral” notion. Kant does not do such a thing. He keeps them apart. But he makes connections (via his theory of symbolism). If one keeps this in mind, their views are in many respects compatible. Nevertheless, Confucius puts more emphasis on ritual, poetry, dance, and music. Kant, although he was not a man without taste (he paid attention to good manners, was always well dressed, and was called the “elegant teacher”), in his writings did not pay so much attention to our body and tended to emphasize reason and rational aspects. After all, he was a leading figure from the time of the German Enlightenment. See Wenzel, *An Introduction to Kant’s Aesthetics. Core Concepts and Problems* (Oxford: Blackwell, 2005), 141–42.

## CHINESE GLOSSARY

cheng ren zhi mei	成人之美	mei yu	美玉
cheng ren zhi e	成人之惡	ren	仁
dao	道	shan	善
e	惡	she	射
he	和	shen jiao	身教
jin mei	盡美	wen	文
jin shan	盡善	yi	藝
li	禮	yue	樂
mei	美		