Abstract
Learning a new language can transform one’s life. A monolingual English speaker can learn modern and classical Chinese, become fluent in both, and eventually pursue a Ph.D. in Chinese philosophy. A hearing person can learn a Sign Language, become able to express herself with rich signings, engage in a deaf community, and be inspired by the deaf culture that is radically different from the hearing culture. Among all the changes, there are two kinds of change that have been overlooked and undervalued, but these changes distinctively and collectively exhibit the transformative nature of learning a new language. That is, as a text is translated from one language into a radically new one, the text would undergo an *aesthetic transformation*. Certain distinct aesthetic components of an original text would not be revealed in a translation. Or those aesthetic components of the original text would manifest differently in the translation. As a person learns the new language and reaches a level of fluency, she would also undergo an *aesthetic transformation*. She would be able to discover and come to appreciate those distinct aesthetic components of the original text.

I. Introduction

Learning a new language can transform one’s life. A monolingual English speaker can learn modern and classical Chinese, becomes fluent in both, and eventually pursues a Ph.D. in Chinese philosophy. A hearing person can learn a Sign Language, becomes able to express herself with rich signings, engage in a deaf community, and be inspired deaf culture that is radically different from hearing culture. Among all the changes, there are two kinds of change that have been overlooked and undervalued, but these changes distinctively and collectively exhibit the transformative nature of learning a new language. That is, as a text is translated from one language into a radically new one, the text would undergo an *aesthetic transformation*. Certain distinct aesthetic components of an original text would not be revealed in a translation. Or those aesthetic components of the original text would manifest differently in the translation. As a person learns the new language and reaches a level of fluency, she would also undergo an *aesthetic transformation*. She would be able to discover and come to appreciate those distinct aesthetic components of the original text.

To illustrate these two related transformations, consider a simple example. Suppose you do not know Cantonese, and you hear your friends laughing at a pun in Cantonese, which goes as follows.

(i) 刘备，关羽，张飞，三个人去电影院睇电影，后来赵云嚟左但系票卖晒了。点解最后赵云入左去睇电影了呢？
   答案：关羽张飞刘备（留俾）赵云。

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1 Here, what I mean by text is literary work (e.g., poem) or work that is rooted in a particular linguistic and historical tradition. I do not differentiate a work and a text. Some authors, such as Gregory Currie (1991), argue for such distinction.

2 As a tonal language, Cantonese has a number of homophones and homonyms. And many Cantonese jokes are also based on punning. Cantonese, originally from classical Chinese, is a spoken language. It has its own written scrip and sometimes creates new characters for words that do not exist or have been lost in the standard written Chinese. Cantonese and Mandarin, although they have many vocabularies in common, they differ in phonetics, phonology, grammar, and lexicon. They are “mutually unintelligible.”
You want to know why the pun is funny and ask them what the pun is about. They translate and explain it to you.

刘备 (Lau Bei), 关羽 (Gwaan Jyu), and 张飞 (Zoeng fei) went to a movie theater and watched a movie. Later 赵云 (Ziu Wan) came, but all the tickets were sold out. He watched the movie at the theater eventually. Why?

Answer: Gwaan Jyu Zoeng fei (Gwaan Jyu’s ticket) Lau Bei (was given to) Ziu Wan.

After reading the translation and hearing the explanation, you do not find the pun is funny at all. Translation changes the original pun in various, and leaves you wondering what aesthetic components of the pun must have been changed after it is translated from Cantonese to English. Moreover, you wonder if you knew Cantonese and achieved a level of fluency, your would have experienced the pun differently. For instance, you would discover those distinct aesthetic properties of the original text, pay attention to and come to appreciate them.

Consider a more complicate case, a poem in classical Chinese.

(ii) 空山不見人
但聞人語響
返景入深林
複照青苔上

Suppose your friends who are fluent in classical Chinese explain the poem to you. They first give you a word-for-word translation and then recommend you some scholarly translations. After reading those translations, you understand the poem much more than before, but you also notice that all translations are different in subtle and substantive ways. You start to compare different translations, and your friends explain to you some changes in the first two lines, as they are translated into English.

3 In this pun, 刘备 (lau4 bei6), 关羽 (gwaan1 jyu5), 张飞 (zoeng1 fei1), and 赵云 (ziu6 wan4) are proper names, referring to four different persons (more precisely, historical figures in the novel the Romance of The Three Kingdoms). Moreover, the term 张飞 (zoeng1 fei1) has another meaning, a ticket, such as a movie ticket. So if we say 关羽张飞 (gwaan1 jyu5 zoeng1 fei1) in Cantonese, it has two different meanings: either two different persons 关羽 (gwaan1 jyu5) and 张飞 (zoeng1 fei1) or Gwaan Jyu’s ticket. Furthermore, 留俾 (lau4 bei6) is a verb. It means giving something to somebody and is also homophonous with the proper name 刘备 (lau4 bei6). So the combination of the proper names, 关羽, 张飞, 刘备, 赵云 (gwaan1 jyu5 zoeng1 fei1 lau4 bei6 ziu6 wan4) sounds just like the sentence Gwaan Jyu’s ticket was given to Lau Bei (gwaan1 jyu5 zoeng1 fei1 lau4 bei6 ziu6 wan4).


5 Weinberger and Paz (1995, pp. 6-7, 20-21, 26-27, 42-43) The first translation, different from the other translations, introduces modality via the term can be. Yet, there is no such modality in the original. The original exhibits a kind of specificity through the phrase 不见 (if the modality were in the original, the phrase should be 不可见 or 不能见). The second translation, also different from other translations, translates a general term 人 in the second line as a quantified term someone. The third translation, also different from the rest, translates the term 人 in the first and second line as man and men. The term 人 in the original, however, does not indicate any gender, sex, single, or plural. The fourth translation, different from the first and third translations, changes the passive verb is heard to the imperative hear,
(a) On the empty mountains no one can be seen,
    But human voices are heard to resound.

(b) Empty hills, no one in sight,
    only the sound of someone talking;

(c) Empty mountain: no man is seen,
    But voices of men are heard.

(d) Empty mountain:
    no one to be seen.
    Yet- hear
    human sounds and echoes.

After seeing these differences and being explained to the changes between the translations and the original, you start to wonder what aesthetic components of the original poem would have been changed as the poem is translated into a radically new language. You also wonder how such changes might have affected your experience. Moreover, you do not know classical Chinese. If you knew classical Chinese and read the poem its original language, you might have found that your experience of reading the translation in the language you know would have been different from your experience of reading the original in the language you do not know.

The upshot of these two examples is to illustrate the two kinds of transformation, *aesthetic transformation in a text* and *aesthetic transformation in a person*. They can be visualized as follows.

In this paper, I mainly focus on the *aesthetic transformation in a text*. Specifically, in section II, I explain what aesthetic transformation in a text is first. I then argue that as a text, such as the pun in Cantonese and the poems in classical Chinese, is translated from one language to another, it undergoes an aesthetic transformation. In section III, I consider an objection to my argument and offer two responses. In section IV, I outline an argument for *aesthetic transformation in a person*.

**II. Aesthetic Transformation in a Text**

To explain what aesthetic transformation in a text is, first, I propose an analogy between translation and picture. The analogy goes as follows. A translation of a text is analogous to a picture of a painting. More specifically, a picture can be seen as a faithful or distorted depiction of the original painting. Analogously, a translation can also be seen as a faithful or distorted depiction of the

and creates the exact presence moment (now). The original, however, does not indicate any tense and maintains a kind of abstractness.
original text. To make the analogy of translations and pictures more precisely, let us consider a concrete example, Vincent van Gogh’s *Irises* at the J. Paul Getty Museum. Suppose we have not seen the painting before. How can we come to understand and appreciate the aesthetic properties of the *Irises*? One way is to stand in front of the original painting at an appropriate distance and to look at the painting itself. By doing so, we attend to and recognize its specific aesthetic properties—such as the gorgeousness of the colors; the vividness of the movement of the Irises; the powerfulness of the thick brushstroke; and the harmony among different aspects of the painting, such as the Irises, the background flowers, and the ground.

Suppose there are other ways to appreciate the painting. For instance, we can appreciate it by looking at a high-quality photograph that looks like a reproduction—one that can be purchased at the museum shop, for instance. By perceiving the photograph of the painting, we can also appreciate its aesthetic properties. And yet some of them—for instance, the thickness of brushstroke, might be missing in the photograph or not be as salient as the one in the original painting.

Now, we might ask, can we appreciate the aesthetic properties of the original painting by looking at (1) a highly compressed (>>50%) photograph that distorts the shape and size of the original; (2) a highly enlarged photograph that also makes significant distortion to the shape and size of the original; and (3) a photograph that adds a number of filters and significantly changes the original colors? Alternatively, can we appreciate the painting by just reading a detailed written description of the painting from an art history textbook without seeing the painting itself?

My answer to these questions is: No, we cannot. A highly compressed or highly enlarged photograph would not have all crucial the aesthetic properties of the original painting—for instance, the vividness of the movement of the Irises, the strength of the thick brushstroke, and so on. The photograph with lots of filters would likely change the gorgeousness of the colors of the original, as well as the harmony among the Irises, the background flowers, and the ground. As for the merely verbal descriptions, by reading them we would not come to appreciate the aesthetic properties of the original painting like the way we come to appreciate those properties via seeing the painting itself. There are phenomenological differences between these two ways of appreciation.

Now we turn to the analogy between translation and picture. The thought is that some translations of a text are analogous to those distorted pictures of a painting. More specifically, just as we cannot appreciate the aesthetic properties of the *Irises* by perceiving those pictures, we cannot appreciate the aesthetic properties of the original by reading those translations. Moreover, just as we

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6 Several theorists propose the analogy between translation and a form of art. For instance, Robert Hopkins (2015, p. 14) proposes that reproductive print is analogous to translation. Specifically, he suggests that “reproductive printmaking is not coping,” but to exploit the differences between the medium on which the reproductive print is made on and that of the source. He thinks that this is like translating. Translating is to exploit the very differences between the original text and the translation as well. Another example is from Gregory Currie (1989). He thinks that performing a musical work of art is seen as representing an event type ‘playing of sound structure S’ and as different from composing the work. Some theorists argue that Currie’s view on performing a work can be used to describe translation. For instance, Leena Laiho (2019, p. 456) argues that translation can be seen as the event type of performing or presenting a structure and as different from writing the work. “Translating the specific word structure S presupposes, naturally, that the translator has identified the work behind the structure, the heuristics as intentions, etc., like a literary critic. After identifying the work, the translator has to decide on the manner of presentation – whether to use a feminist approach, to translate hermeneutically, to foreignize or domesticate, etc. – in order to produce literary products as specific presentations.”

7 For the detailed analyses of the conditions under which a picture will resemble a copy of the original object, see John Kulvicki (2006, Ch 3, pp. 51-70) and Michael Newall (2011, pp. 95-113)

8 Such differences might arguable be similar to the phenomenal differences between knowing red by actually seeing red and knowing red by reading a physical description of red, as in the Black-and-White Mary’s case (Frank Jackson, 1983).
cannot appreciate the aesthetic properties of the *Irises* by reading merely verbal descriptions of the painting, we cannot appreciate the all aesthetic properties of the original by reading those translations either.

An example of the written text that I have in mind is poetry. Often, the translations are scholarly, literary translations. One might immediately question how scholarly literary translations are analogous to distorted pictures? Didn’t scholarly translators, at least some of them, put tremendous and sincere efforts into their translations? Aren’t there good literary translations? Is it even fair to say that literary translations distort the aesthetic properties of the original work? Before I answer these questions, consider a reflection from a translator who has been translating classical Chinese poetry into English.11

“For some terms I offer a wide variety of translations depending on context…I have tried to make these decisions term by term and text by text, with my primary goal being to give an English reader insight into the Chinese argument rather than graceful English. Much has been written about the best possible English translation for many of these terms but there is no best translation, only good explanations. Every translation is weighted in some way that does an essential violence to the Chinese concept; this will be true in the central conceptual terms of any tradition; these terms are important to the civilization, they bear complex history, and they are embedded in texts shared by the civilization.” (My emphasis, Stephen Owen, 1992, p. 17)

It should be clear that I do not question the sincerity or the efforts behind the act of literary translation. Nor do I deny the existence of good literary translations. What I am claiming is that the kind of distortion, as the translator frames it in the quote, “violence,” is built into the act of literary translation. Such a distortion is similar to the one we could make in the case of the *Irises*. Here is how the analogy works. In the case of the picture, we change the shape, size, and color of an original work (e.g., painting) by significantly compressing it, enlarging it, or adding filters. By changing the original work in this way, its aesthetic properties are significantly and inevitably changed. Similarly, in the translation case, we change the tonal, semantic, and syntactic features of a piece of work in a foreign language by translating it into a language that has dramatically different tonal, semantic, and syntactic features. By changing the work in that way, the aesthetic properties of the original work are also significantly and inevitably changed. This is the analogy that I want to establish.

A question the analogy arises immediately. What forms of distortion can a translation create? In the following section, I offer two forms, destructive and constructive distortion. I argue that translations, specifically scholarly translations of a literary text can create these two kinds of distortion to their original, destructive and constructive distortion. Destructive distortion is a radical change of some distinct aesthetic properties of the original text. Such radical change results in the loss of those crucial aesthetic properties. For instance, when a text with a distinct tonal pattern is translated into another language, its tonality would likely be lost. Constructive distortion is also a radical change of the aesthetic properties of the original text. Unlike destructive distortion, constructive

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9 Other examples of written work could be novels in dialects and proverbs.

10 In this paper, I am not concerned with or try to address the metaphysical question of what a literary translation is. For more discussions this question, see Kwame Anthony Appiah (1993), Susan Bassnett (1998), and Laiho (2009, 2013)

11 See Owen, Introduction, *Readings In Chinese Literary Thought*
distortion is based on the occurrence of distinctively new aesthetic properties, as well as the integration of the old and the new properties presented in the translations. For instance, as a text with concise semantic content is translated into another language, the conciseness could be enriched.

To show how scholarly translations make both distortions to the original text, let us consider a poem written in classical Chinese. The poem is written in classical Chinese poem by the poet 杜甫 (dù fǔ, 712-770). It is called 《春望》 (chūn wàng). It is written in 757 after the capital Chang'an of Tang dynasty fell into the hands of the rebel army during the An Lushan Rebellion (755-763). It is also one of the best known and the most frequently recited poems and has been chosen as one of the must read poems in elementary curriculums in mainland China for several years. The following is the poem and a word-for-word translation (Zong-qi Cai, 2008).

| country | broken | mountain | river | remain | 国破山河在 (guó pò shān hé zài) |
|---------|--------|---------|------|--------|
| city    | spring | grass   | wood | thick  | 城春草木深 (chéng chūn cǎo mù shēn) |
| feel    | time   | flower  | shed | tear   | 感时花溅泪 (gǎn shí huā jiàn lèi) |
| hate    | separation | bird | startle | heart | 恨别鸟惊心 (hèn bié niǎo jīng xīn) |
| beacon  | fire   | span    | three | month | 烽火连三月 (fēng huǒ lián sān yuè) |
| home    | letter | equal   | ten thousand | gold tale | 家书抵万金 (jiā shū dǐ wàn jīn) |
| white   | head   | scratch | even | shorter | 白头搔更短 (bái tóu sāo gèng duǎn) |
| simply  | be about to | not | able (to hold) | hairpin | 浑欲不胜簪 (hún yù bù shèng zān) |

It is not difficult to see that the word-for-word translation is choppy and ungrammatical. From such translation, we would not know what types of thoughts and emotions 杜甫 (dù fǔ) are being captured, how he captures them, what the poem’s linguistic features and aesthetic properties are, how they intertwine, or how to appreciate those aesthetic properties. Just like a highly compressed photograph of the *Irises* destroys the aesthetic properties of the *Irises*—for instance, the brightness of the colors, the vividness of the movement of the Irises, and the strength of the thick brushstroke, the word-for-word translations destroy the linguistic nuances and aesthetic intricacies of 《春望》 (chūn wàng).

One might think that the word-for-word translation is not a good translation. A scholarly translation would be doing a better job. Consider the following translation,

*Spring Scene*

The country is broken, but mountains and rivers remain.
The city enters spring, grass and trees have grown thick.
Feeling the time, flowers shed tears,
Hating separation, a bird startles the heart.
Beacon fires span over three months,
A family letter equals ten thousand taels of gold.
My white hairs, as I scratch them, grow more sparse,
Simply becoming unable to hold hairpins.


From this translation, we would have a better understanding of the poem. The poem outlines the despair of those affected by war and juxtaposes the sorrows of human affairs with the enduring beauty of nature. Yet, the translator evaluates the translation as follows.
“Reading this translation, an English reader may not find the kind of poetic greatness that he or she has encountered in, say, Shakespeare, Wordsworth, or Keats. There is no profound philosophical or religious contemplation, no astonishing insights of imagination, no dazzling display of poetic diction…Du Fu’s Spring Scene deserves no less acclaim. The poetic greatness of Du Fu is of an entirely different kind. To appreciate it fully, we must go beyond the English translation and find out how the poem was composed and read in the original.” (Cai, 2008, p. 162)

According to the translator, many distinct aesthetic properties of the original poem, such as “the profound philosophical contemplation,” “the astonishing insights of imagination,” and “the dazzling display of the poetic diction in the original poem,” are not in the translation. The translation makes destructive distortion to the original poem by eliminating some distinct aesthetic properties of the original poem (e.g., tonal pattern, symmetry of tonal, ).12 This is similar to what happens in the Irises case where lots of filters are added to a photograph of the painting. A photograph with lots of filters can change the gorgeousness of the colors and the harmony among different objects depicted in the original.

Besides making destructive distortion, the translation also makes constructive distortion to the original. In the translation above, the pronoun I and my are introduced, whereas there are no personal or possessive pronouns in the original poem. The absence of pronoun in the original poem leaves room for its readers to imagine what it would be like to witness the fall of a country and the pain and suffering attached to it. Such absence also contributes to the abstractness of the poem. Did the poet himself witness the fall of his country and suffer from the physical decline? Or did he abstract himself from his pain and suffering by not explicitly refer to himself? Or did he try to capture the pain and suffering of whoever encounters the situation? We don’t really know these answers from the original poem. Adding the pronoun I and my gives the readers a concrete, fixed perspective and allows them to imagine the person I, such as the poet or the reader, in the situation.

The argument from aesthetic transformation in a text can be summarized as follows.

1. A translation of a text is analogous to a picture of a painting. A picture can be a faithful or distorted depiction of the original painting. Analogously, a translation can also be a distorted depiction of its original text.
2. Translations, specifically scholarly, literary translations of a literary text can create two kinds of distortion to their original, destructive, and constructive distortion.
3. If a text is translated from one language to a different language, and if its translations create destructive and constructive distortion to the original, then the text undergoes an aesthetic transformation.

Therefore, a text undergoes an aesthetic transformation.

III. Literary Translations as Reproductive Prints?

12 Another way to articulate destructive distortion in the case of 《春望》 (chūn wàng) is to show that many linguistic properties of the original poem, such as the tonal pattern, semantic richness, and syntactic conciseness, are the foundation of some aesthetic properties of the poem, yet they are mostly gone as the poem is translated into English. I would be happy to give a detailed linguistic and aesthetic analysis of the poem during the question period.
One may claim that my argument would have the following implication. That is, if some distinct aesthetic properties of the original text are not preserved in the translations, then people who do not know the original language or read the original text would not be able to appreciate those properties. However, this implication is not true. We often can appreciate a painting by looking at its reproductive prints. Reproductive prints are not mechanical copies of their source, but capture the aesthetic properties of the original painting in creative ways. Despite the striking differences they have, we are still able to engage with some aesthetic properties of the original painting through their reproductive prints. Theorists have considered that reproductive prints can be acting as aesthetic surrogate, aesthetic testimony, or aesthetic variation of their source. Specifically, a reproductive print can be acting as an aesthetic surrogate of its source by allowing its audiences to make a judgment and respond affectively to the aesthetic characters it depicts. It can also be acting as an aesthetic surrogate by enabling its audiences to imagine the aesthetic properties of its source. Besides acting as an aesthetic surrogate, a reproductive print can also be offering aesthetic testimony directly about the aesthetic characters of its source. Last but not least, a reproductive print can be an aesthetic variation of its source by literally exemplifying some but not all properties of the source and metaphorically exemplifying other properties. So people who do not know the original painting still can appreciate it through those reproductive prints.

Literary translations of a text are just like reproductive prints of a painting. Specifically, literary translations can be acting as aesthetic surrogates, aesthetic testimony, or aesthetic variations of their original. Here is how it works. A literary translation can be acting as an aesthetic surrogate of its original by allowing its readers to make a judgment and respond affectively to the aesthetic properties of the original it captures. A literary translation can also be acting as an aesthetic surrogate by enabling its readers to imagine the aesthetic properties of the original. Besides acting as an aesthetic surrogate, a literary translation can be offering aesthetic testimony directly about the aesthetic characters of the original. Last, a literary translation can be an aesthetic variation of its original by literally exemplifying some but not all properties of the original and metaphorically exemplifying other properties. So people who do not know or read the literary text in a foreign language can still appreciate the aesthetic properties of the original through its translations. Just as we can appreciate the aesthetic properties of a work of art via its reproductive prints, we can appreciate the aesthetic properties of a literary text via its translation. Therefore, the implication of my argument from aesthetic transformation in a text, “we cannot appreciate the aesthetic properties of a literary text via its translation,” is not true. Therefore, my argument should not be accepted.

I have two responses. First, for the kind of text I focus on, such as puns and poems in a foreign language, and novels written in dialect, I am hesitant to say that we would be able to appreciate some distinct aesthetic properties of the original text, if we did not know the original language well enough or are not able to read the original. Those texts heavily rely on certain distinct linguistic properties of the original language to reveal the subtlety of one’s psychology, capture the complexity of thoughts and emotions, and propel the plot. It is unclear how a translation in a radically different language would manage to take over those very specific tasks of the original language. Moreover, sometimes the aesthetic properties of a text heavily rely on the manifestations of those distinct linguistic properties. And sometimes, the aesthetic properties are or constituted by

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the distinct linguistic properties. Appreciating the aesthetic properties of the original text is recognizing, acknowledging, and respecting the distinctiveness of the linguistic properties of the original language, as well as engaging in the ways in which they reflect the aesthetic properties. And what we can appreciate through translation is some other non-aesthetic properties that are described by and captured in the translation (e.g., the moral loyalty or intellectual wisdom of a protagonist), as well as some non-aesthetic values (e.g., moral and intellectual values). Therefore, it is not wrong to say that we cannot appreciate the aesthetic properties of some texts via its translations.

Second, I think that it is far from clear how literary translations can be acting as aesthetic surrogates, aesthetic testimony, or aesthetic variations of their original. In the case of reproductive prints, theorists have argued that all the suggested views (aesthetic surrogates, aesthetic testimony, and aesthetic variations) encounter great difficulties to explain why we still can appreciate a source via its reproductive prints. I show that as these ways apply to the case of literary translation, they encounter even greater difficulties.

First, consider the **Aesthetic Surrogate** view. It would be very difficult for a literary translation to allow its readers to make a judgment and respond affectively to the distinct aesthetic properties of the original because those properties might not be in the translation. If those properties are not in the translations, then how would the reader make a judgment and respond affectively? They might have make a judgment and respond affectively about totally different properties. It would also be difficult for a literary translation to enable its readers to imagine the aesthetic properties of the original. If the aesthetic properties of a text (e.g., a poem) heavily rely on its linguistic properties (e.g., tonal pattern), and if the text is translated into another language, then what allows the readers to imagine the aesthetic properties of the original poem?

Now, let us consider the **Aesthetic Testimony** view. Suppose we are told that many translations of the poem 《春望》 are different from each other and that they involve a number of aesthetic judgments from different translators. For instance, translator 1 judges that the word A in English captures the word X in one of his poems by the aesthetic standard B. And yet translator 2 judges that a totally different word Z in English captures the same word X in the poem by a different aesthetic standard C. Moreover, many literary translations are actually quite controversial and involve errors and biases. How can a literary translation be offering aesthetic testimony directly about the aesthetic properties of the original? Which testimony should a reader believe or accept? And if a reader does not know the language well enough, or if a reader is not able to read the original and compare the original and the translations, then on what grounds should a reader take testimony about the aesthetic properties of the original text? Moreover, there is an issue about whether it is legitimate to take translation as testimony. Testimonies in most cases are considered as “pure testimonies.” For instance, “this piece of work is graceful.” Literary translations are not pure in that sense.

The third one is the **Aesthetic Variation** view. It unclear whether a literary translation can be an aesthetic variation of its original by literally exemplifying some but not all properties of the original and metaphorically exemplifying other properties. Suppose the properties being exemplified are not aesthetic properties. In what way the readers can appreciate the aesthetic properties of a literary text through its translation? Suppose the properties being exemplified are aesthetic properties. What is it for a literary translation to exemplify those properties literally and metaphorically? If it is

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15 See Hopkins (2015, pp. 14-17)

16 There are many good examples that touch on the issue of translation biases. A good example would be various English translations of *The Odyssey*. See Emily Wilson’s discussion on this issue in her translation *The Odyssey* (2017).
literal, isn’t it saying that the literary translations have the same or at least some crucial aesthetic properties of the original? How can that be true given that a literary translation differs from its original linguistically and aesthetically, especially for the kind of literary text I focus on? If it is metaphorical, does it mean we appreciate the aesthetic properties through a translation metaphorically? What is to appreciate something metaphorically? How does this work? I think that the variation view leave too many question.

If the three views do not work well in the case of translation, then it is not clear what reasons would be given to support that claim. Furthermore, unlike the case of reproductive prints, which we have an *a priori* claim or a strong intuition that we still can appreciate a source via its reproductive prints, we, however, do not have such an *a priori* claim in the case of translation. Instead, the claim that we can appreciate the aesthetic properties of a literary text via its translation is something my interlocutors needs to argue for. Again, if the three views do not work well in the case of translation, then it is not clear what reasons would be given to support that claim.

**IV. Aesthetic Transformation in a Person**

After exploring *aesthetic transformation in a text*, I turn to the discussion of *aesthetic transformation in a person*. As a person learns a radically new language and reaches a level of expertise, such as a monolingual English speaker becoming fluent in classical Chinese, the person would undergo an aesthetic transformation. To explain this idea, I introduce the philosophical exploration of *Transformative Experience*, initiated by L.A. Paul (2014, 2015a, b). She characterizes *epistemic and personal transformation* as follows.

“When a person has a new and different kind of experience, a kind of experience that teaches her something she could not have learned without having that kind of experience, she has an *epistemic transformation*. Her knowledge of what something is like, and thus her subjective point of view, changes…[S]he gains new abilities to cognitively entertain certain contents, she learns to understand things in a new way, and she may even gain new information.” (2014, pp. 10-11, my italics)

“In any case where you undergo a sufficiently deep personal change, that is, in any case where your core personal preferences are significantly changed, leading to a significant change in how the post-change you would evaluate the act, questions about choices under *personal transformation* arise.” (2014, p. 51, my italics)

According to the characterization of epistemic transformation, epistemic transformation involves the acquisition of something distinctively new—something we could not have learned without having that kind of experience. It also involves the acquisition of new abilities to imagine, recognize, and model possible future experiences of the same kind. For personal transformation, it involves significant changes in one’s core preference and core value. *Aesthetic transformation in a person* is an *epistemic transformation* because it involves the appreciation of some distinct aesthetic properties that are not revealed or manifested differently in the translations. Furthermore, aesthetic transformation can lead to *personal transformation* because having an aesthetic transformation is cultivating a sense of

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17 One might suggest that appreciating the beauty of Du Fu’s poem, for instance, is like appreciating that of Shakespeare’s poem. But the question is why we would think these two experiences are the same and what ground their sameness?
empathy. It is a disposition (or an ability) to take on certain shared core beliefs and values from a distinct linguistic community that could be different from our old ones.