

Beauty and hope: a moral beauty intervention

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Pedagogical intervention regarding engagement with natural, artistic and moral beauty can lead to an increase in trait hope. In a quasi-experimental design with college students the intervention group showed significantly higher gain scores on trait hope than did the comparison group; the effect size was moderate. The experimental group also experienced significantly larger increases with engagement with moral beauty; the effect size was large. The discussion section focuses on integrating understanding beauty with moral education pedagogy, using a key element in philosophical definitions of beauty: *unity-in-diversity*. It is hypothesized that such pedagogy will increase engagement with natural, artistic and moral beauty and thus raise trait hope.

I used to ask my friends ‘Do we love anything unless it is beautiful? What, then, is beauty and in what does it consist? What is it that attracts us and wins us over to the things we love?’

Unless there were beauty and grace in them, they would be powerless to win our hearts’.
(St. Augustine, 400CE/1961, p. 83)

The trait of hope is essential for students to succeed in life. Hope correlates with, and may be necessary for, academic success, athletic achievement, various forms of social development, as well as the development of optimism and general happiness. Hope is also crucially involved in preventing depression, suicide and a sense of helplessness (Snyder, 1994; Snyder & Lopez, 2002; Peterson & Seligman, 2004). Therefore it is our duty and privilege, as moral educators, to help our students develop and maintain hope.

We have noticed that when students are *engaged* with beauty, that is, cognitively appreciating *and* emotionally involved with beauty, they appear hopeful. Therefore, one of the questions addressed in this paper is: if students actively experience 12 weekly events for engaging with natural, artistic and moral beauty, will their trait of hope (*viz.* Snyder *et al.*, 1991) increase over a 16 week semester?

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A search of the literature reveals only two studies that relevantly relate beauty to hope in a data-based, empirical manner. One was a study that showed *satisfaction with life* (SWL) was significantly correlated with hope; in fact, of the 24 character strengths included in Peterson and Seligman's (2004) *Character strengths and virtues. A handbook of classification*, hope had the highest partial correlation, of all 24 character strengths, with SWL (.48–.59 across three large samples, $p < .002$) (Park, Peterson, & Seligman, 2004). *Appreciation of beauty*, however, had nearly the lowest partial correlation with SWL (.02–.12 across three large samples). This appears to indicate, at least in their three samples, that hope and appreciation of beauty have little relationship (Park, Peterson, & Seligman, 2004). The other relevant study (Isaacowitz, Vaillant, & Seligman, 2003) examined hope and appreciation of beauty, among other character strengths, in four samples. In their young adult community sample and in the older adult community sample, hope significantly correlated with SWL, but in neither of those two samples did appreciation of beauty correlate with SWL; in the middle-aged community sample only *loving relationships* correlated with SWL; however, their fourth sample consisted of elderly male Harvard graduates from the longitudinal Grant Study, and in that select group appreciation of beauty did significantly correlate with SWL, but hope did not.

There appear, however, to be no published studies that have directly addressed the relationship between hope and appreciation of beauty. Theoretically we anticipate at least a weak positive correlation between hope and appreciation of beauty because Peterson and Seligman (2004) have categorized them as character strengths of the transcendence virtue family. Thus hope and appreciation of beauty hypothetically share several attributes of the virtue of transcendence.

Natural, artistic and moral beauty

I see and find beauty in Truth and through Truth. All Truths, not merely true ideas, but truthful faces, truthful pictures, or songs are highly beautiful. Gandhi (quoted in Gier, 2001, p. 41)

There is a plethora of good reasons to educate our students and ourselves aesthetically (viz. Eisner, 1972) – and an appreciation of beauty can certainly be an end in itself (Kant, 1790/1987). Many philosophers have written concerning the relationship between natural and artistic beauty and morality. For example, Kant wrote, 'Now I am indeed quite willing to concede that an interest in the *beautiful in art*...provides no proof whatever that [someone's] way of thinking is attached to the morally good or even inclined to it. On the other hand, I do maintain that to take a *direct interest* in the beauty of *nature*...is always the mark of a good soul' (1790/1987, pp. 165–166). Contra to Kant, Hegel (1835/1993) argued appreciation of artistic beauty was *higher* than natural beauty. 'We may, however, begin at once by asserting that artistic beauty stands *higher* than nature. For the beauty of art is the beauty that is born – born again, that is – of the mind [geist or spirit]; and by as much as the mind and its products are higher than nature and its appearances, by so much the beauty of art is higher than the beauty of nature' (p. 4). Hegel also emphasized the spiritual

and moral effects artistic beauty would have through the ‘true content of art, [art should offer us] all the splendour of the noble, the eternal and the true, [and should teach us to avoid] misery, wickedness and crime’ (p. 51). Vygotsky (1925/1971), on the other hand, thought that art’s ‘educational role is not to serve certain moral purposes’ (p. 294). Vygotsky was, however, quite encouraging about the emotionally cathartic role of art in human development. See Figure 1 for an example of integrated natural (physical), artistic and moral beauty – ‘Psyche’, the most beautiful being in the world (etched by Max Klinger, an artist praised by Vygotsky).

Despite Kant’s and Hegel’s arguments that engagement with natural and artistic beauty will enhance our moral development, there appears to be little or no empirical research that has examined the influence of engagement with beauty on the moral development of children or adults. Although there have been many studies in regard to moral goodness, there appear to be no studies in the fields of moral education or psychology regarding moral beauty, other than the work of Jon Haidt



Figure 1. Vygotsky on Max Klinger’s Psyche

(Haidt, 2002, 2003; Keltner & Haidt, 2003; Algoe & Haidt, 2004; Haidt & Keltner, 2004).

Moral beauty

According as his divine power hath given unto us all things that pertain unto life and godliness, through the knowledge of him that hath called us to glory [great beauty] and virtue... (St. Peter (50CE/n.d., p. 176))

What is meant by the phrase ‘moral beauty’? From a theological point of view moral beauty exists wherever the attributes of God (e.g. love, justice, kindness, truth, bounty, grace) are manifest. From a philosophical point of view the human *virtues*, such as those described by Aristotle in his *Nicomachean ethics*, are the signs of moral beauty. Peterson and Seligman (2004) have identified six great culturally universal virtues: wisdom and knowledge, courage, humanity (love and kindness), justice, temperance and transcendence. The expression of any of these virtues is an expression of moral beauty. Based on Haidt’s research, the appreciation and cognition of moral beauty leads to the moral emotion of *elevation* (Haidt 2002, 2003; Algoe & Haidt, 2004). In particular, Haidt (2002) states, ‘Acts of charity, kindness, loyalty and self-sacrifice seem to be powerful elicitors [of] elevation’ (p. 864). Charity, kindness, loyalty, self-sacrifice, courage and the other virtues are also generally considered signs of moral goodness. Is there any difference between moral goodness and moral beauty; or are they synonyms? In everyday speech the phrases moral goodness and moral beauty may well be used synonymously; their main psychological difference, however, is in emotional response and motivation. An observer may cognitively identify an act as one of moral goodness, but remain unmoved and un-elevated. If, however, one refers to the same act of moral goodness as an act of moral beauty it implies the observer’s emotions have been engaged by the morally good act and she feels moved and elevated. Thus, objectively, moral goodness and moral beauty may refer to the same human act or virtue, but subjectively they differ. When an observer refers to an act as one of moral beauty she implies that her heart has been moved by that act. When one’s emotions are activated by moral beauty the conditions for *elevation* are created (see below; and viz. Haidt, 2003, 2006; Keltner & Haidt, 2003; Algoe & Haidt, 2004).

Haidt (2002) offers a ‘preliminary definition of the moral emotions as *those emotions that are linked to the interests or welfare either of society as a whole or at least of persons other than the judge or agent*’ (p. 853; italics in original). Haidt then describes ‘two prototypical features of moral emotion [as being] disinterested elicitors [and] prosocial action tendencies’ (pp. 853–854). He describes disinterested elicitors as events which do not directly touch the self; that is, such events as ‘triumphs, tragedies, and transgressions’ which occur to others, even to complete strangers. Prosocial action tendencies are motivational and cognitive states that lead to helping others. In Haidt’s (2002) review article of the ‘The Moral Emotions’, he describes three other-condemning moral emotions, ‘contempt, anger and disgust’ (p. 856);

three self-conscious moral emotions, ‘shame, embarrassment, and guilt (p. 859); and two moral emotions from the other-suffering family, ‘distress at another’s distress (DAAD) and sympathy/compassion’ (p. 862). He then mentions that there may be many positive moral emotions, but the emotions that he reviews in the other-praising family are ‘gratitude’ and ‘awe and elevation’ (p. 863). It is elevation that is of particular interest to the goals of this present paper, for two reasons: (1) Haidt (2002) notes that elevation is the only positive moral emotion – reported in the field of psychology – that meets his two criteria of disinterestedness and prosocial tendencies, and (2) in his research he finds that elevation is particularly elicited by moral beauty (Haidt, 2003; Keltner & Haidt, 2003; Algoe & Haidt, 2004).

Elevation: ‘the’ moral emotion

Like a fine flower, beautiful to look at but without scent, fine words are fruitless in a man who does not act in accordance with them. Like a fine flower, beautiful to look at and scented too, fine words bear fruit in a man who acts well in accordance with them.
Buddha (500BCE/1997, n.p.)

Imagine this scene: you are a 10-year-old child in a school during lunch time. You notice that the child sitting in front of you has only a little mound of dried rice for lunch. As you are empathically worrying about this, you see the student on the left of this student quietly reach over and put a piece of fish, from her lunch, next to the little mound of dried rice. You think to yourself, ‘What a nice thing to do! How generous and kind!’ You feel a warm sensation in your chest, like your physical heart is opening up. You have an emotional feeling that is similar to awe combined with a feeling that is somewhat like *admiration*. (This emotional feeling is what Haidt (2002) calls elevation.) Then you say to yourself, ‘The next time I see a fellow student without enough lunch, I will give them some of mine immediately’. (And that is what Haidt (2002) calls a pro-social action tendency.)

Haidt’s (2002) research indicates that elevation ‘is elicited by moral beauty [and] appears to be caused by seeing manifestations of humanity’s higher or better nature; it triggers a distinctive feeling in the chest of warmth and expansion [dilation of the breast]; it causes a desire to become a better person oneself; and it seems to open one’s heart, not only to the person who triggered the feeling but also to other people’ (p. 864). Haidt notes that elevation shares in common with gratitude a sense of affection for the person who elicited the emotion, but its pro-social action tendencies go beyond gratitude’s to include a ‘generalized desire to become a better person oneself and to follow the example of the moral exemplar’ (p. 864). In the scenario in the above paragraph, the student’s generosity in sharing her fish becomes a perception of moral beauty for you. It triggered a distinct warm physiological feeling in your chest and helped create a pro-social action tendency to share your own lunch in the future with any student who needs it.

The importance of moral emotions cannot be over-emphasized. Although the careful, deliberative moral reasoning that was advocated by Kohlberg (1984) is crucial to solving conflicts of justice, and effective in finding the moral principles

embedded in socio-moral problems, his grand theory had trouble bridging the gap between a logical moral judgement and moral action. The missing link is motivation. Moral emotions can *move* us from cognition about moral judgements, and cognitions about moral actions, to performance of those moral actions (cf. Shweder & Haidt, 1993; Haidt & Joseph, 2004).

Is moral beauty a crucially important concept for moral educators to understand and apply in their classrooms? The recent work of Jonathan Haidt (Haidt, 2003; Algoe & Haidt, 2004; Haidt & Keltner, 2004) certainly points in that direction. Haidt's work is allied with the recent theory and research in the Positive Psychology movement (Snyder & Lopez, 2002; Peterson & Seligman, 2004). His theoretical and empirical works have demonstrated that experiences of moral beauty elicit the moral emotions, particularly the moral emotion of elevation, and lead to moral action tendencies.

Encouraging sensitivity to, and recognition of, beauty in the natural world and in art may be a developmental stepping-stone to recognizing moral beauty in the human social world. However, there is historical evidence that simply becoming sensitive to and knowledgeable about beauty is not sufficient to cause moral action. For instance, the German intellectuals who ran the Nazi party in Hitler's Germany were highly educated regarding the beauty of literary and visual art, yet committed heinous moral crimes. This example indicates that knowledge of beauty is not sufficient for moral action. Perhaps, as Haidt's work indicates (Haidt, 2002, 2003; Keltner & Haidt, 2003; Algoe & Haidt, 2004; Haidt & Keltner, 2004), it is also necessary to experience the motivation of moral emotions, elicited by moral beauty, to bridge the gap between the knowledge of beauty and moral action.

Although there is historical evidence, as noted in the above paragraph, that learning about natural and artistic beauty does not ensure moral development, it may be that some approaches to teaching about natural and artistic beauty may have desirable moral education outcomes. For instance, a key concept used in many philosophic definitions of beauty is unity-in-diversity (Diessner, 2004). Assisting students to see how the beauty reflected in the features of nature, and objects of art, consist of various diverse elements that are integrated into unities can serve both intellectual and moral ends (a diversity of leaves, bark, twigs, branches, trunks make up the beautiful unity called 'a tree'; diverse design elements, contents, colours and forms integrate to make a beautiful 'painting'; diverse compositional elements, musicians, instruments and a conductor integrate to make a beautiful unity called 'a symphony'). Exposure to beauty in nature and art can be a stepping stone, a bridge, to understanding unity-in-diversity at the level of human collectivity. That is, appreciating unity-in-diversity in nature and art can be generalized to understanding the beauty of diverse humans uniting to create communities, cities, nations or even a planet of world citizens. Unity-in-diversity will be a key issue in the third pillar of the positive psychology movement: the development of institutions, communities, societies and cultures that enhance the development of good character (Seligman & Csikszentmihalyi, 2000). In order for institutions to authentically and comprehensively set the conditions to enhance good character they must be champions of the

integration of human diversity across the lines of gender, politics, ethnicity and nationality. This will be addressed further in the Discussion section below.

There have been no empirical studies published describing attempts to foster and help develop students' (or anyone's) engagement with moral beauty. Therefore, one of the major questions addressed in this paper is: If students experience weekly activities for engaging with moral beauty, over 12 of the 16 weeks of a semester, will their level of engagement with moral beauty increase?

Summary of hypotheses

Our quasi-experimental hypotheses are: (1) College students who experience 12 weekly activities for engaging with natural, artistic and moral beauty will experience a significant increase in their trait hope; (2) Trait hope will significantly correlate with college students' levels of engagement with natural, artistic and moral beauty, as measured by the total score on the Engagement with Beauty Scale (EBS; Diessner *et al.*, 2005); (3) College students who experience 12 weekly activities for engaging with natural, artistic and moral beauty will develop higher levels of engagement with natural, artistic and moral beauty.

Method

'Beauty is truth, truth beauty' – that is all

Ye know on earth, and all ye need to know. Keats (1819/1967, p. 295)

Participants

Participants were undergraduate college students enrolled in a small (N=3300) college, Lewis-Clark State College, Lewiston, Idaho, in two sophomore level Developmental Psychology classes, in the Pacific northwest of the USA. The experimental group began with N=32 students, and the comparison group with N=29; by the time of the post-test the experimental group had 29 students and the comparison group had 23 (attrition was due to withdrawal from class or missing class on the day of the post-test). Based on the pre-tests, *t* tests show that there were no significant differences between the students who did not complete the post-tests and those who did, on the measures of hope and beauty.

The mean age of the N=29 experimental group was 22.7 (SD=6.35; range 18–40); 72% were female, 28% male; 86% were of European extraction, 7% identified themselves as 'mixed', 3% Latina/o and 3% Native American; 83% considered themselves Christians, 7% agnostic, 3% Buddhist, 3% atheist and 3% marked 'other'. The mean age of the N=23 comparison group was 23.2 (SD=7.8; range 18–47); 74% were female, 26% male; 87% were of European extraction, 9% identified themselves as 'mixed' and 4% were Latina/o; 83% considered themselves Christians, 9% atheist, 4% Buddhist and 4% agnostic.

Instruments

The participants' levels of hope were measured using Snyder's original *Adult Dispositional (Trait) Hope Scale* (ADHS) (Snyder *et al.*, 1991). Snyder *et al.* (1991) consider hope to be a cognitive set that is based on the interaction between goal directed determination (agency) and the ability to plan ways for meeting one's goals (pathways). The ADHS is scored on a 4-point Likert scale, provides a total score (Cronbach's alphas .74 to .84; in our current study it had an alpha of .77), and scores from two sub-scales, the Agency subscale (Cronbach's alphas .71–.76) and the Pathways sub-scale (Cronbach's alphas .63–.80). The two sub-scales have been psychometrically confirmed by principal components analysis (Snyder *et al.*, 1991). Test-retest reliability correlations ranged from .85 ($p < .001$) over a 3-week interval and up to .83 ($p < .001$) over a 10-week interval. Snyder *et al.* (1991) have demonstrated convergent, divergent and construct validity for the scale.

Participants' levels of engagement with beauty were measured using the Engagement with Beauty Scale (EBS; Diessner *et al.*, 2005). This scale was recently developed in response to Haidt and Keltner's (2004) statement that 'There is at present no self-report measure of individual differences in appreciation of beauty and excellence' (2004, p. 546). The EBS offers a total score and scores from three subscales: Engagement with Natural Beauty, Engagement with Artistic Beauty and Engagement with Moral Beauty. Principal components analysis indicated that items from all three sub-scales had their highest loadings on one factor, indicating good unitary properties for the total score; and a varimax orthogonal rotation indicated that there were three distinct factors, each with their highest loadings on the items from the respective subscales. All EBS items are based on a 5-point Likert scale, ranging from *very much unlike me*, to *very much like me*.

In preliminary studies (Diessner *et al.*, 2005), with $N=170$ college students, the EBS showed a Cronbach's alpha of .90 for the total score (in the study reported here, the alpha was .85) and alphas ranging from .80 to .87 for the sub-scales; and one-week test-retest reliability showed an $r=.85$ for total score and .61 to .84 for the sub-scales (all at $p < .01$). Initial convergent validity was shown with an $r=.80$ ($p < .001$) between the EBS and the 10-item sub-scale, Appreciation of Beauty & Excellence (ABE), from Peterson and Seligman's (2004) 240-item Values In Action Inventory of Strengths (VIA-IS) questionnaire.

Design and procedure

At last the vision is revealed to him of a single science, which is the science of beauty everywhere. Plato (1892/1937, p. 334)

The research design was quasi-experimental; the experimental (intervention) group comprised students in a sophomore section of Developmental Psychology, taught by the lead author, and the comparison group was another sophomore section of a Developmental Psychology class, taught in the same college by the second author. During the first week of class students in both sections completed the *Adult*

Dispositional (Trait) Hope Scale (ADHS) (Snyder *et al.*, 1991), the *Engagement with Beauty Scale* (Diessner *et al.*, 2005) and a demography form. Sixteen weeks later the students in both sections again completed the same two measures.

The intervention consisted of written and verbal activities performed weekly over 12 weeks of the 16-week semester. The following passage was in the syllabus for the experimental group's class:

Beauty logs. These are due 12 times, and you can see their due dates on the course calendar. The assignment is to identify and describe three aspects of beauty that you observe during the week before the assignment is due. 1) Describe something you *felt* was beautiful that is from nature. 2) Describe something you *felt* was beautiful that is human-made (arts and crafts in its broadest definition). 3) Describe something you *felt* was beautiful in human behavior (good deeds in their broadest definition). A minimum of three sentences is required (one sentence for each of the three: nature, art, morality), and a maximum of three paragraphs is allowed. They are graded 'pass', and warrant +5 points each.

The students were also informed in the syllabus that the beauty logs were optional and that a student could earn an 'A' in class without completing them; nonetheless, the rate of completion was over 90% for the class as a whole. On each of the 12 days that the beauty logs were due, the professor would invite three volunteers to read aloud to the class from one of the three categories in their beauty log, so that one natural beauty topic, one artistic beauty topic and one moral beauty topic were read aloud to the class from various students. The professor encouraged different volunteers to speak each week. Many sunsets, skies and flowers were mentioned in regard to natural beauty; children's art, objects in their homes and apartments, designs of homes and buildings and pieces of music were frequently mentioned in regard to artistic beauty; moral beauty most typically was described as someone who sacrificed their time to help someone else. The hope and beauty post-tests were given a full week after the last beauty log was due. The comparison group, of course, did not write beauty logs in their class.

Results

God is beautiful and loves beauty. Muhammad (Hadith cited in Chittick, 2000, p. 65)

Independent *t* tests, based on the pre-tests, demonstrated that there were no significant differences between the experimental and comparison groups on either the Hope scale or the Beauty scale, nor on any of the sub-scales. Therefore the two groups were similar on these dimensions prior to the intervention.

Is engagement with beauty related to an increase in trait hope?

Engaging with beauty does appear to influence the development of trait hope. Based on matched gain scores and independent sample *t* tests with Bonferroni adjustments ($.05/3=.017$), the experimental group gained more on the total hope score on the ADHS than did the comparison group, $t(50)=2.20$, $p=.017$. See Table 1 for the matrix of *t* tests, and the effect sizes, concerning these gain scores (all significance

Table 1. Matrix of *t* tests for gain scores on hope and beauty measures

Measure	Group	Mean	SD	<i>t</i>	eta ²
ADHS Hope					
Pathways	Experimental	0.48	1.18	1.72	.06
	Comparison	-0.13	1.39		
Agency	Experimental	0.38	1.21	1.83	.06
	Comparison	-0.30	1.49		
Total	Experimental	0.86	2.07	2.20*	.08
	Comparison	-0.43	2.17		
EBS Beauty					
Natural	Experimental	0.48	2.69	1.11	.02
	Comparison	-0.43	3.24		
Artistic	Experimental	1.07	3.18	2.08	.08
	Comparison	-0.83	3.38		
Moral	Experimental	1.34	2.78	3.57**	.20
	Comparison	-1.61	3.17		
Total	Experimental	2.90	6.51	3.13**	.16
	Comparison	-2.87	6.70		

Note. For the experimental group, N=29; for the control group, N=23; for independent one-tailed *t* tests with equal variances, df=50.

By convention, eta²=.01 is a small effect size; =.06 is a medium effect size; =.14 is a large effect size (Green & Salkind, 2005).

**p*<.017 for Hope gains, ** *p*<.013 for EBS gains (based on Bonferroni adjustments)

tests are one-tailed, as we anticipated and predicted the intervention group would increase in trait hope more than the comparison group).

Relationship between beauty and hope

Pearson correlations did reveal some significant relationships between trait hope and engagement with beauty. We examined the combined pre-test scores for the experimental and comparison groups (N=61), as we thought they would show a *purser* relationship between hope and beauty prior to the beauty intervention (although it turned out post-test correlations between the beauty and hope scales and sub-scales are very similar to the pre-test correlations). The correlation between the total ADHS score and the total Beauty score was not quite significant (*r*=.19; *p*=.07). There were, however, significant correlations between the ADHS Hope Agency subscale and the EBS Moral Beauty sub-scale (*r*=.36; *p*=.002); between ADHS Hope Agency and total EBS score (*r*=.24; *p*=.03) and between the ADHS Hope total score and the EBS Moral Beauty sub-scale (*r*=.302; *p*=.009). See Table 2 for all the correlations between the Hope sub-scales and the Beauty sub-scales.

Development of engagement with beauty

Based on matched gain scores with Bonferroni adjustments (.05/4=.013) the members of the experimental group showed significant development of their

Table 2. Pre-test correlations between hope and beauty measures

	Hope Pathways	Hope Agency	Total Hope
Natural beauty	.05	.09	.09
Artistic beauty	-.04	.09*	.04
Moral beauty	.13	.36**	.30**
Total beauty	.06	.24*	.19

* $p < .05$. ** $p < .01$. N=61

engagement with beauty when contrasted with the comparison group. Comparing EBS total scores showed a $t(50)=3.13$, one-tailed $p=.002$. The EBS Moral Beauty score was also significantly higher for the experimental than the comparison group, $t(50)=3.57$, one-tailed $p<.001$. Although there appeared to be increases in engagement with natural and artistic beauty these were statistically non-significant. See Table 1 for the matrix of t tests and effect sizes concerning these gain scores.

Discussion

Give unto the Lord the glory due unto his name; worship the Lord in the beauty of holiness. Psalms of King David (29:2, KJV)

Although we cannot claim a causal relationship between an increase in engagement with beauty and an increase in the trait of hope (because we did not randomly assign students to the experimental and comparison groups), we did demonstrate that writing weekly beauty logs and briefly discussing natural, artistic and moral beauty once a week was followed by a significant rise in overall trait hope (Snyder *et al.*, 1991) in the intervention group but not in the comparison group. These results lend credence to the idea that engaging students with beauty in the classroom can lead to higher levels of dispositional hope, and all the fine things of life that accompany a sense of hope. As noted in the introduction to this paper, hope correlates with, and may be necessary for, academic success, athletic achievement, various forms of social development and aspects of psychological development such as optimism and general happiness. The trait of hope also serves as a buffer against such undesirable states as a sense of helplessness and helps prevent suicide and psychological disorders such as depression (Snyder, 1994; Snyder & Lopez, 2002; Peterson & Seligman, 2004). Engaging one's students in natural, artistic and moral beauty is a delightful end in itself, but how much better that it assists in the development of the disposition of hope. The study reported here was with college students; clearly more research on the development of hope, through the exercise of engaging students with beauty, needs to be completed with children and teenagers.

We also demonstrated that an agentic sense of hope (as measured by the agency sub-scale on Snyder *et al.*'s, 1991, ADHS) significantly correlated with both engagement with moral beauty and total beauty score on the EBS; engagement with moral beauty and with total hope score was also significant (see Table 2). Snyder

et al. (1991) consider hope to be a cognitive set that is based on the interaction between goal-directed determination (agency) and the ability to plan ways for meeting one's goals (pathways); Snyder referred to this as the 'will and the ways' (p. 570) of hope. It is interesting that engagement with moral beauty correlated with agentic hope but not with pathways hope. Agentic hope appears to be more conative and emotive, and pathways hope appears to be more cognitive. The connection between agency and engagement with *moral* beauty may lie in two dimensions: (1) *engagement* with beauty requires an emotive response, and (2) *moral* behaviour always contains an explicitly conative element, that is, it requires intentionality.

In regard to our third hypothesis, we confirmed that writing and briefly discussing weekly beauty logs was followed by significant increases in college students' engagement with moral beauty, as well as total beauty scale score (but no significant increase for engagement with natural and artistic beauty). Engagement with beauty can certainly be an end in itself (Eisner, 1972), however, engagement with moral beauty may be a crucial end for moral education programs.

Due to research design limitations, this study must be considered as an initial, humble attempt to examine the relationship between hope and engagement with beauty through a moral/aesthetic education intervention. Besides the lack of random assignment to groups (a common problem with authentic classroom action research), we had the problem of different professors teaching the intervention class and the comparison class. Perhaps the teaching style of the intervention class professor encourages hope more than the teaching style of the comparison group professor. In future studies on this topic, some form of experimental design, controlling for professorial style effects, is called for to seek causal evidence.

Another substantial limitation is in regard to the mega-trait of general positive affect, which may underlie much of the findings in the positive psychology movement. The increase in hope that we demonstrated may simply be a sign of generic happiness (optimism, satisfaction with life, gratitude, luckily active front left cortex, etc., all rolled into one super-trait). A future study would need to measure such things as mood, satisfaction with life, level of general positive and negative affect and level of engagement with the class, to sort out whether trait hope was specifically increased, or whether an increase in general happiness explains the results better.

Natural, artistic and moral beauty in moral education

In every face, he seeketh the beauty of the Friend. Bahá'u'lláh (1978, p. 7)

The Master said of the Shao [music] that it was perfectly beautiful and also perfectly good. Confucius (attributed, ca. 450BCE/n.d., Bk III, Ch. 25)

Our small study indicated that engagement with moral beauty is much more strongly associated with trait hope than is engagement with either natural or artistic beauty (see Table 2). Therefore pedagogy that is focused on engagement with moral beauty seems the most likely candidate for increasing students' trait hope. Based on Haidt's research (Haidt, 2002, 2003; Keltner & Haidt, 2003; Algoe & Haidt, 2004), we can

be moderately confident that when students engage in observations of moral beauty, they then tend to want to both (a) improve themselves morally and (b) increase their pro-social behaviour and service to others, especially to those whom they feel emotionally close (Haidt, 2006). As moral self-improvement, and pro-social service to others, are important goals of most moral education programs, engaging with moral beauty takes on great salience.

Moral beauty is a causal factor, and elicitor, of the profound moral emotion, elevation. Why emphasize elevation in moral education? Because to enact our moral intuitions or deliberative moral reasoning (Kohlberg, 1984), we must be motivated, and emotions motivate us to bridge the gap between moral thought (intuitive or deliberative) and moral action (Haidt, 2003; Keltner & Haidt, 2003; Algoe & Haidt, 2004). As noted above in the introduction, moral goodness may be an objective property of virtue or human action; however, one can coldly recognize moral goodness in others and their actions, without being moved to morally improve one's self, or step forward and serve others. The concept of moral beauty, however, implies both an objective appraisal *and* a subjective emotional response. Acts of moral goodness are acts of moral beauty when the observer finds her heart moved and her emotions aroused by the beauty of the morally good action. Although perceptions of moral beauty lead to moral action, there is the open question whether or not carefully crafted classroom experiences of engaging with natural and artistic beauty can lead to moral development.

Although there appear to be no published studies that empirically relate engagement with natural or artistic beauty with moral development, we remain hopeful that there are connections between them, as Kant (1790/1987) and Hegel (1835/1993) have argued. One possible avenue in this regard relates to a major definitional element of the concept of beauty. Although a comprehensive definition of beauty (that is agreed upon by philosophers of aesthetics) is non-existent, there are several themes in regard to defining beauty that recur across most philosophical orientations, one of which is: unity-in-diversity.

At some point in their extant works, philosophers as diverse as Plato, Plotinus, Augustine, Ficino, Hutcheson, Schopenhauer, Dewey, Santayana, Croce, Langer and Murdoch referred to the concept of unity-in-diversity to define beauty (Diessner, 2004). Although most philosophers of beauty and aesthetics do not directly identify beauty with unity-in-diversity, many consider it essential to the expression of beauty or the creation of authentic art, and nearly all philosophers of aesthetics have in some way addressed 'the issue' of unity-in-diversity in regard to beauty (Diessner, 2004).

Similar to the developmental progression of the love of beauty detailed by Socrates in *The symposium*, students could be taught to recognize beauty through the increasing complexities of unity-in-diversity from the mineral, to the vegetable, to the animal and then to the human/moral level of existence. Rocks and minerals and planets cohere diverse elements into unities through the power of gravity and the various atomic and molecular forces, and they are beautiful; plants not only integrate (unify) all that minerals do but also unify absorption of water and nutrients with

photosynthesis through the power of growth, and they are beautiful; animals not only unify many of the diverse elements that plants do, but also unify more complex (greater diversity) systems of internal organs and sensory systems, and animals are beautiful. Each of these levels of unity-in-diversity can serve as metaphors to teach children about the unity-in-diversity at the human and moral level of existence. They could be a springboard for moving toward understanding unity-in-diversity in terms of race and ethnicity, or between women and men, or among nations, and thus help prevent racial and gender prejudice and pernicious nationalism.

Likewise with art. Emphasizing the unity-in-diversity within paintings, music, architecture, dance, theatre, poetry, etc., students could become cognitively sensitized to the concept of unity-in-diversity and thus be prepared to apply it to the moral domain. Discussing the unification of content and colour and structure in a painting, discussing the high level of unity required in performing a play or ballet, and examining the various aspects of melody and harmony in regard to diverse musical instruments in a single unified piece of music, all could lead to a deeper understanding of unity-in-diversity.

One of the greatest moral issues of our historical age is unity-in-diversity in regard to human collectivities, cultures and nations. How can diverse and separate nation states serve the best interests of their citizens if there is no effective international law among nations? Do not nations need to be allowed a relative sovereignty within their borders, while still submitting to international law and standards, i.e. diversity within unity? Religious prejudice is tearing apart the fabric of our world – do we not desperately need some form of unity-in-diversity of religion? That is, a unifying respect for the world's religions and their followers, whether we are an atheist, an agnostic or a member of a particular religion, while allowing or encouraging religious diversity? Do not the cultures of the world need to unify in respect to guiding the use of the planet's resources, while maintaining their cultural distinctiveness? Do we not need to transcend racial and ethnic prejudice, and love everyone regardless of the colour of their skin? All of these practical ethical questions relate directly to the leitmotif of unity-in-diversity.

One of the deep issues of diversity exists between political liberals and conservatives (Lakoff, 2002). How can effective institutions (Seligman & Csikszentmihalyi, 2000) for the development of good character exist in our post-modern world if the diversity of thought between liberals and conservatives is not unified in some meaningful way? As Haidt notes (2006), 'liberals are experts in thinking about issues of victimization, equality, autonomy and the rights of individuals, particularly those of minorities and nonconformists. Conservatives, on the other hand, are experts in thinking about loyalty to the group, respect for authority and tradition and sacredness' (p. 242). Haidt urges us to draw on 'wisdom that is balanced' (read 'balanced' as 'unity of diverse thought') between 'ancient and new, Eastern and Western, even liberal and conservative' (p. 243). Can learning to appreciate the beauty of unity-in-diversity in nature and art provide the cognitive and moral structural basis to acquire such wisdom? The answer is 'maybe', but the hope that it can is strong, rational and grounded in historical truths as well as hints from empirical psychology.

To be clear, by advocating for unity-in-diversity as a critical moral end we are in no way encouraging hegemonic globalization or cultural uniformity. Rather, we are championing a coherent and cooperative way of embracing the beauty of the diversity of nations, cultures, ethnicities, religions and languages. We are not, however, pretending that every cultural practice is good, nor are we value relativists. We are confident that every culture has unique moral goods which could help enlighten other cultures; and it seems likely every culture has its moral disorders as well, which it would be best not to share with the rest of the world. By taking a unity-in-diversity approach, ensuring the attitude that every culture has its own moral beauty, we can put the cultural differences on the table and discuss which are beneficial and which are pernicious, in a spirit of loving respect.

By approaching experiences of beauty in the classroom, through emphasizing the salient definitional element of beauty – unity-in-diversity – we may be able to developmentally prepare our students to see the moral beauty in a united, but diverse, humanity. It is also a reasonable hypothesis to suppose that students' trait hope will be increased as they further recognize the positive personal and societal outcomes implied in the moral beauty of diverse, yet unified, human collectivities. Hopefully, moral educators will design curricula and instruction in such a way as to make unity-in-diversity experiences elicit the moral emotion of elevation, and thus set the motivational conditions for students to better themselves morally and seek to be of greater service to others.

Empirical studies need to be completed to examine whether a metaphorical approach to teaching unity-in-diversity through natural and artistic beauty will have an impact on students' moral development. Likewise, further research into the influences of engaging emotionally in experiences of natural, artistic and moral beauty needs to be performed. The possibility looms large that such engagement, in the context of carefully designed pedagogical curricula, will have a significant and substantial impact on the moral development of students.

There is an old formula for beauty in nature and art: Unity in variety... John Dewey (1934/1958, p. 161)

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