

Rethinking the Ego/Reconceptualising Philosophy: Shusterman's "Man in Gold"

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Abstract: The paper provides a reading of Richard Shusterman's 2016 *The Adventures of the Man in Gold: Paths between Art and Life*. I contend that this book, that brings together philosophy, literature and photography, provides a compelling, albeit implicit, expression of two of the challenges that somaesthetics poses to philosophy – first, a rethinking of the foundations of subjectivity in the Western philosophical tradition by way of the concept of the alter ego; and second, a challenge to the received perception of the nature and relation of philosophy and art.

There is nothing in theory, and certainly nothing in experience, to support the extraordinary judgment that it is the truth about himself that is the easiest for a person to know. — Harry Frankfurt, *On Bullshit*

It was the greatest pity in the world, when philosophy and fiction got split — D.H. Lawrence, *Phoenix*

Introduction

Blurring the lines between literature and philosophy, Richard Shusterman's 2016 *The Adventures of the Man in Gold: Paths between Art and Life*, is, I contend, an attempt to rethink the foundations of subjectivity from a life-affirming and somatic perspective consistent with his somaesthetic agenda. The book is presented as an "experience" – in the sense of "experimentation and risk"¹ - and that experimentation can be read, in my view, as an oblique dissection of the modern ego in order to critique the metaphysics that undergirds it.

¹ Shusterman, Richard, *The Adventures of the Man in Gold: Paths between Art and Life* (Paris: Hermann Éditeurs, 2016), 13.

Specifically, in my reading, Shusterman's book takes a place in the long series of attempts to critique modern subjectivity, and it achieves this by means of an exploration of an alter ego – *l'homme en Or* (the Man in Gold). The book becomes a place to unmask, in a quintessentially Nietzschean fashion, the fragility of the philosophical foundations of the "subject" – that (white, male) subject who aims, amongst other things, "to bring light, and faith and commerce to the dark places of the earth."² I demonstrate in this paper how the figure of Shusterman's Man in Gold stands as a challenge to the positivistic vision of the subject understood in terms of unity, rationality, free will and self-control. In addition, I posit that this juxtaposition of ego and alter ego can be also understood as an implicit commentary on the relationship of philosophy (the ego) and its "rival" art (the alter ego).

It must be noted at the outset that my reading of *The Adventures of the Man in Gold* in this paper cannot address the myriad other philosophical questions I think are raised either directly or obliquely by the book. These include the capacity of the self for aesthetic experience; the "ethical consequences in opening oneself to possession and transformation;"³ the value and nature of "limit experiences;" the relationship between art and pornography; the question of difference and belonging; the problematic nature of knowledge in the context of the aesthetic; as well as the existential dimensions of understanding the self as being revealed through art. Although all of these questions stand in an intimate relationship to the two themes addressed in this paper, they deserve separate and sustained treatment due to their complexity and significance, and so are not addressed in any detail here.

The paper takes the following form: I begin with a brief history of the "double" or alter ego, which I interpret as a challenge to the concept of self as single, homogenous, rational and free, and situate this reading within the philosophical debate on the "death" of the subject. This is followed by a section in which I discuss Shusterman's broader understanding of the self as it is presented in his other, more strictly philosophical, works. The next section then focuses on providing a reading of *The*

² Lawtoo, Nidesh, *The Phantom of the Ego: Modernism and the Mimetic Unconscious*, ed. Nidesh Lawtoo, (Michigan: Michigan State University Press, 2013), 95.

³ Shusterman, *Man in Gold*, 8.

Adventures of the Man in Gold and on showing how it functions as an attempt to dissolve the unitary conception of the self by means of the concept of the “double” or alter ego. This is followed by a brief discussion what I see as a parallel to the ego-alter-ego duality explored in Shusterman’s book – the relationship between art and philosophy. I show that this duality, although addressed more directly in Shusterman’s other texts, finds distinctive expression in *The Adventures of the Man in Gold*’s hybrid form.

The Death of the Subject: The Alter Ego as Challenge to the Unitary Concept of Self

Humanism is perhaps one of the most significant expressions of the modern in the Western philosophical tradition. As Charles E. Scott⁴ points out, humanism engendered a kind of “theoretical hope” in the face of the harms that human beings inflict upon one another. This hope was presented in the form of a “scaffolding” for the “recognition of human identity across racial and cultural barriers” and for the values of human dignity and human rights.⁵ And yet, humanism was revealed by a number of thinkers as concealing within itself the seeds of colonialism, gender bias and fascism, specifically due to its impulse towards the value of universal truth and identity.⁶ As a result, the humanism of the modern was subjected to the critical gaze of the postmodern, which is, as Jean-François Lyotard puts it, an “incredulity” towards metanarratives.⁷

The postmodern suspicion towards the grand stories expressed in modernity finds potent expression in Martin Heidegger’s pointed rejection of Descartes’ portrayal of human being as a rational mind situated in a material body, and as a transcendental

⁴ Scott, Charles E. “Postmodernism” in *Columbia Companion to Twentieth-Century Philosophies* ed. Constantin V. Boundas (Columbia University Press, New York, 2007), 507-8.

⁵ Scott, *Postmodernism*, 508.

⁶ Scott, *Postmodernism*, 508.

⁷ With Shusterman, I read the “post” in postmodernism to point towards an *extension* of the modern by means of “critique, inversion or subversion.” See Richard Shusterman, “Aesthetics and Postmodernism” *The Oxford Handbook of Aesthetics*. Edited by Jerrold Levinson. (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2003) 771-782, citation from page 775.

subject standing over and against objects that can be known in the world⁸. Heidegger challenges the Cartesian opposition, claiming that "... subject and object are not the same as Dasein and the world"⁹. Rather, in his view, "...in grasping something, Dasein does not first go outside of the inner sphere in which it is initially encapsulated" since for him, "...in its primary kind of being, [Da-sein] is always already 'outside' together with some being encountered in the world already discovered"¹⁰. The Heideggerian "destruktion"¹¹ of the ontology underlying twentieth century continental philosophy, combined with Nietzsche's rejection of the traditional conceptions of universality and time by means of his genealogical strategy, provides the impetus for Michel Foucault's archaeological and genealogical approach.

Foucault's dissection of the grand narratives of knowledge and reason, and his exposure of the hidden forms of value and power within those accounts, turns on his rejection of the modern, humanistic concept of the subject as a unified subjectivity. Although a difficulty remains in terms of how to interpret and reconcile Foucault's early insistence on "Man's death" in the western "epistêmê", and how subjects are "fabricated" and subjugated by disciplinary power, with his later development of an ethics based on aesthetic self-fashioning that advocates a "care of the self"¹², Foucault's fundamental critique of the idea of a unified and timeless subject is far-reaching in its effect on philosophy in the twentieth century.

⁸ Martin Heidegger, *Sein und Zeit*, 17th edition, (Tübingen: Max Niemeyer Verlag, 1993), 89; translation from Martin Heidegger, *Being and Time: A Translation of Sein und Zeit*, SUNY Series in Contemporary Continental Philosophy. Trans. Joan Stambaugh, (New York: SUNY, 1996), 83.

⁹ Heidegger, "Sein und Zeit," 60; Heidegger, "Being and Time," 56.

¹⁰ Heidegger, "Sein und Zeit," 62; Heidegger, "Being and Time," 58. Although I cannot discuss this here, it must be noted that Heidegger's position has been vigorously criticised, most notably by Jacques Derrida, who points out that Heidegger's concept of *Jemeinigkeit* conceals "a singularity, an irreplaceability of that which remains nonsubstitutable in the structure of *Dasein*" and so which "risks pointing toward both the ego and an organic or atomic indivisibility". See Jacques Derrida, "Eating Well" in Jacques Derrida, *Points...Interviews 1974-1994*. Ed. by Elisabeth Weber, translated by Peggy Camuf and others. (Stanford University Press, Stanford, 1995), 271.

¹¹ See my "From Destructio to Deconstruction: A Response to Moran" *South African Journal of Philosophy*, Volume 27 Number 1, 2008: 52-68 for an extended discussion of Heidegger's concept of destruktion and how it differs from Jacques Derrida's deconstruction.

¹² I cannot discuss what I will call the "fabrication-constitution" debate in any significant detail here. See Peter Dews, "The Return of the Subject in the Late Foucault," *Radical Philosophy* 51 (1989): 37-41; Rob Devos, "The Return of the Subject in Michel Foucault," *American Catholic Philosophical Quarterly* 76, 2 (2002): 255-280 and Thomas Flynn, "Truth and Subjectivation in the later Foucault," *Journal of Philosophy* 82 (1985): 531-540 for excellent discussions of this important theme in the scholarship on Foucault.

Foucault's "death of the subject" is taken up in the context of literature and art by Roland Barthes, for example. Barthes, in his "The Death of the Author," (1977) argues that the reader of a text can exist only at the expense of the author: "the birth of the reader must be at the cost of the death of the Author."¹³ For Barthes, texts involve any aspect of culture that express the thoughts of a writer and so include books, periodicals, artworks and television. For Barthes, the traditional view of the Author is that the Author is "...the father and the owner of his work: literary science therefore teachers respect for the manuscript and the author's declared intensions, while society asserts the legality of the relation of author to work (in the form of various copyright laws)."¹⁴ Barthes' position stands in direct contradistinction to such a conception of an Author, and so constitutes yet another challenge to the modern idea of the subject.¹⁵ The pervasiveness of this challenge is fittingly expressed by Slavoj Zizek, who opens his book *The Ticklish Subject* thus: "A spectre is haunting Western academia [...] the spectre of the Cartesian subject. All academic powers have entered into an unholy alliance to exorcise this spectre."¹⁶

The "exorcism" of the Cartesian conception of the subject as a fixed unity that I have briefly surveyed also appears in how the concept of the doppelgänger or alter ego has been employed within both philosophy and literature. Jacques Derrida, to name but one example, specifically mentions the alter ego in his discussion of the "problematic of the subject" that he asserts cannot be reduced to a homogeneity. He says:

The alter ego can never be given "in person," it resists the principle of principles of phenomenology – namely, the intuitive given of originary presence. This dislocation of the absolute subject from the other and from time neither comes about, nor leads beyond phenomenology, but rather, if not in it, then at least on its border, on the very line of its

¹³ Barthes, Roland, "The Death of the Author," in *Image-Music-Text*, trans Stephen Heath (New York: Hill and Wand, 1977), 148.

¹⁴ Roland Barthes, "From Work to text," in *Image-Music-Text*, trans. Stephen Heath (New York, Hill and Wang, 1977), 160.

¹⁵ I cannot provide an extended discussion of this here, but in my view, the poststructuralist insistence on the death of the subject, or the author, does not entail equating death with complete absence This is in line with the view of Dimitris Vardoulakis as expressed in *The Doppelgänger*, (Fordham University Press, 2010), 1.

¹⁶ Slavoj Zizek, *The Ticklish Subject: The Absent Centre of Political Ontology*, (London: Verso, 1999). Zizek names feminists, New Age obscurantists, postmodern deconstructionists and deep ecologists as examples of trends that are all hostile to the Cartesian subject.

possibility. [...] There has never been The Subject for anyone [...]. The subject is a fable [...] but to concentrate on the elements of speech and conventional fiction that such a fable presupposes is not to stop taking it seriously. [...] ¹⁷

As Derrida points out here, the alter ego is a concept that is resistant to the idea of originary presence, a notion that allows for the conception of a subject as absolute and unitary. Taking the “fable” of the subject seriously, as Derrida suggests here, is also evident in how the figure of the alter ego, “double” or the other self as a challenge to modern conceptions of the self emerges in the history of literature. The concept, rooted in Greek and Roman mythology, emerges as an especially significant theme in German literature of the Romantic Movement. The “double walker” or *Doppelgänger* is interpreted variously as a true double or twin, a split personality, or an alter ego, and has been used to represent a number of themes including, most significantly for this paper, the dual nature of human beings.¹⁸ Vardoulakis provides a fitting description of the doppelgänger or alter ego in this context as:

[...] an operative or effective presence to the extent that it effects the undoing of the framing of the subject by the opposition between mere presence and absence. Such an operation indicates a function of relationality—the various relations that structure the subject’s ontology.¹⁹

As such, in both the history of philosophy and in literature, the alter ego takes its place as an important challenge to the humanism of modernity that revolves around a very specific conception of the subject. Specifically, by introducing the alter ego in both literature and philosophy, the idea of an unchanging, unitary subject is called into question. How then does Shusterman’s somaesthetic approach contribute to this challenge?

¹⁷ Jacques Derrida, “Eating Well”, 263 - 264.

¹⁸ Deborah Ascher Barnstone in her *The Doppelgänger*, (Peter Lang AG, Internationaler Verlag der Wissenschaften, 2016) provides an extended discussion of the use of the concept in literature, film and other art forms that I cannot explore here.

¹⁹ Vardoulakis, *The Doppelgänger*, 1.

Shusterman on the Self and Subjectivity– a Somaesthetic Approach

The “doubleness” that I will presently show is explored in *The Adventures of the Man in Gold* is a theme that Shusterman in fact identifies as characteristic of his own life. Long before the Man in Gold was born, Shusterman notes, in an autobiographical piece, that a doubleness is to be found in his bi-nationality, the fact that he completed a double major, was twice married with two sets of children, and in the fact that his philosophical roots that are to be found in both the analytic and continental traditions in philosophy.²⁰ Yet these pluralities do not render the idea of the self empty or suspect, but rather that, in his view, they can be held together in a reasonably unified and stable field”.²¹

The doubleness that Shusterman himself sees as characteristic of his life, and, most importantly, his contention that a self centred around “order, grace and harmony”²² is possible despite the postmodern suspicion against a “true” self, is also clearly evident in his philosophical writings on the self. Shusterman’s somaesthetic approach itself is explicitly a challenge to the Cartesian split of the self into mind and body.²³ As he explains:

The body-mind connection is so pervasively intimate that it seems misleading to speak of body and mind as two different, independent entities. The term body-mind would more aptly express their essential union, which still leaves room for pragmatically distinguishing between mental and physical aspects of behavior and also for the project of increasing their experiential unity.²⁴

²⁰ Richard Shusterman, “Regarding Oneself and Seeing Double: Fragments of Autobiography.” In *The Philosophical I: Personal Reflections on Life in Philosophy*, edited by George Yancey, 1–21. (Lanham: Rowman and Littlefield, 2002), citation from page 5.

²¹ Shusterman, “Regarding Oneself”, 5. Interestingly, this view is already present in Shusterman’s earlier critique of Richard Rorty in his “Postmodernist Aestheticism: A New Moral Philosophy?” *Theory, Culture and Society* 5 (1988): 337-55.

²² Shusterman, “Postmodernist Aestheticism: A New Moral Philosophy?”, 348.

²³ I provide an extended discussion of Shusterman’s valorization of Maurice Merleau-Ponty’s celebration of the body, and his (problematic, in my view) criticism of Nietzsche’s position in detail in my “Nietzsche on Embodiment: A Proto-somaesthetics?” *Studies in Somaesthetics*. Eds. Richard Shusterman and Sandor Kremer. (Amsterdam, Brill-Rodopi, forthcoming).

²⁴ Richard Shusterman, *Thinking through the Body, Educating for the Humanities: A Plea for Somaesthetics* *Journal of Aesthetic Education*, 40 (1) (2006): 1-21, citation from page 2.

So, although Shusterman admits that there is pragmatic need for a distinction between the mental and the physical, the body and mind are essentially one in his view. This is reflected in his definition of somaesthetics as:

...devoted to the critical, ameliorative study of one's experience and use of one's body as a locus of sensory-aesthetic appreciation (*aisthesis*) and creative self-fashioning. It is therefore likewise devoted to the knowledge, discourses, practices and bodily disciplines that structure such somatic care or can improve it.²⁵

From his somaesthetic vantage point, Shusterman maintains that the concept of soma denotes *not* the mere physical body but the “lived, sentient, intentional, body that involves mental, social, and cultural dimensions.”²⁶ As a result, Shusterman can avoid the indictments levelled against a heightened attention to the body in some other approaches. These approaches depend on conceiving somatics in terms of a “...reifying exteriorization of the body – the body as a mechanical instrument of atomised parts and measurable surfaces – rather than the body as a living dimension of individual experience and action.”²⁷

In addition, Shusterman posits the soma as a site of “intelligent, discriminating subjectivity”, as well as “unreflective spontaneity”.²⁸ This means that in addition to somaesthetics rejecting the Cartesian view of the human being as split between a mind and a body by means of the notion of embodiment, the embodied self is seen as not merely rational, intelligent and discriminating, but also as encompassing and embracing the range of human emotion as being equally significant.

However, as has already been mentioned, Shusterman's rejection of the Cartesian self does not comprise an espousal of the idea of “...a tireless insatiable Faustian

²⁵ Richard Shusterman, “Somaesthetics and the Body /Media Issue,” *Body and Society* 3 (3) (September 1997): 33-49, citation from 34.

²⁶ Richard Shusterman, “Soma, Self, And Society: Somaesthetics as Pragmatist Meliorism,” *Metaphilosophy* 42 (3) (April 2011): 314-327, citation from page 315.

²⁷ Richard Shusterman, *Performing Live: Aesthetic Alternatives for the ends of Art*, (Ithaca, Cornell University Press, 2000), 161.

²⁸ Shusterman, “Soma, Self and Society,” 315

quest for enriching titillation through curiosity and novelty, a quest that is as wide-ranging as it is unstructured through the lack of centre it so celebrates.”²⁹ Just as the poststructuralist insistence on the death of the subject (or the author) does not, in my view, have to entail equating that death with complete absence, so Shusterman’s somaesthetics does not encompass a complete rejection of the concept of self. As he explains:

...the maximised spawning of alternative and often inconsistent vocabularies and narratives of the self, an aim which explicitly seeks to undermine the idea of the true self and replace it with an open, changing, growing, multiplicity of selves or self-descriptions, makes the whole idea of an integral enduring self seem completely empty and suspect. But without such a self that is capable of identity through change or changing description, there can be no self capable of self-enrichment or enlargement...³⁰

In Shusterman’s view, serious consequences could result from the move towards denying the self’s very existence that he asserts has become a “dominant dogma” in both establishment and anti-establishment movements.³¹ He claims, for example, that by denying the existence and agency of the self, intellectuals seek to legitimate their “own political and social inaction, [their] unjustifiable and unhappy complacency, even [their] own responsibility for [their] own lives.”³² Although Shusterman is willing to admit the need for a “tolerance’ of ambiguity, alternative narratives, and alternative vocabularies, he rejects the “celebration and maximisation” of such things.³³ Why?

Shusterman draws on a reading of Nietzsche (as well as Emerson and Wittgenstein) to develop his call to give “style” to the self, an idea that is central to his somaesthetics. Although he acknowledges that Nietzsche’s own metaphysics “repudiates the idea of an individual having his ‘own true self’ that is fixed and autonomous”³⁴, he rightly, I

²⁹ Shusterman, “Postmodernist Aestheticism: A New Moral Philosophy?”, 346.

³⁰ *Ibid.*

³¹ *Ibid.*, 352.

³² Shusterman, “Postmodernist Aestheticism,” 353.

³³ Richard Shusterman, “Deconstruction and Analysis: Confrontation and Convergence,” *British Journal of Aesthetics* 26.

³⁴ Shusterman, *Performing Live*, 211.

think, highlights the Nietzschean idea that the elements that make up that self can nonetheless be brought into a “dynamic, developing unity of tension.”³⁵ In Nietzsche then, Shusterman finds a “doubling” of the self that includes what one already is, as well as what one can become,³⁶ and so, the means to develop a somaesthetics that is able to exorcise the spectre of the transcendental subject, and yet accommodate his concern with “embodied self-care.”³⁷

How then does the *Man in Gold* reflect this challenge to the transcendental subject of modernity?

Reading the *Man in Gold* as alter ego

The Adventures of the Man in Gold engages with the theme of the double on multiple levels. The book’s text, for example, is presented in both French and English placed alongside one another on the pages. Right from the outset, this arrangement enhances the reader’s impression that she is “seeing double”.

In addition to the doubling of language, the book contains both text and image, with Yann Toma’s striking photographs of the *Man in Gold* providing a “double” of the “adventures” related in the text. Toma’s photographic style that derives from Man Ray’s space writing³⁸ can itself be seen as a play on the theme of the double, since the photographer’s “...lights needed darkness to work their magical energy on the *Man in Gold*.”³⁹ The theme of light and dark is, of course, one that is significant within especially the literature on the doppelganger or alter ego, since the alter ego is often portrayed there as representative of “dark” forces as compared to the ego’s lightness.⁴⁰

³⁵ *Ibid.*

³⁶ *Ibid.*, 212.

³⁷ *Ibid.*, 144. I reserve a discussion of whether Shusterman’s Nietzschean approach is able to succeed in this aim for another occasion, but my hunch is that it suffers from the same difficulties that are present when trying to reconcile Foucault’s earlier and later works as mentioned in an earlier footnote.

³⁸ For a discussion of Yann Toma’s photographic technique, Richard Shusterman’s *Thinking through the Body: Essays in Somaesthetics* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2012), 239-261.

³⁹ Shusterman, *Man in Gold*, 112.

⁴⁰ Here the story of Dr. Jekyll and Mr. Hyde is perhaps the most well-known example. See Richard Stevenson’s *Strange Case of Dr Jekyll and Mr Hyde*. (London: Longmans, Green & Co., 1886) for a discussion.

It is, however, in the figure of the Man in Gold that a very different portrayal of the traditional theme of the alter ego or double is brought into sharp relief. Shusterman tells us that the Man in Gold was born in the afternoon, on Saturday 12 June 2010 in the medieval abbey of Royaumont.⁴¹ As the book relates, the Man in Gold works with Yann Toma to transform "...an ordinary middle-aged philosopher into a golden work of art." From the outset, the Man in Gold "profoundly and quite visibly unsettled"⁴² the sense of identity of the philosopher. Significantly, Shusterman points out that one of the key themes of the text is "...the instability and transformational potential of the self through the powers of possession." As a result, without mentioning it directly, Shusterman already situates the Man in Gold within the history of literature and philosophy on the double or alter ego as challenge to the traditional idea of the subject as unitary.⁴³

Emerging silent⁴⁴, as opposed to the philosopher, who relies on "dry, unimaginative philosophical prose"⁴⁵, and clothed in a shimmering gold body suit, the Man in Gold is constantly contrasted with the figure of Shusterman, who narrates the book. The contrast is, however, one that is set up to express how the Man in Gold and Shusterman, are, "...like *yin* and *yang*, woman and man, earth and heaven, [and] darkness and light", "...necessary synergetic complements."⁴⁶ As a result, the figure of the double or alter ego in the book highlights the idea that despite the fact that the idea of a unitary and autonomous self is "largely illusory", aspects of that self can indeed be brought into a beautiful harmony, despite the risks this entails.⁴⁷

In Shusterman's view, this has important aesthetic and somaesthetic effects, since by "inhabiting and transforming" Shusterman's soma, the Man in Gold allows the philosopher "new capacities and avenues of aesthetic experience."⁴⁸ So the light and dark contrast between the Man in Gold and Shusterman as philosopher is transformed

⁴¹ Shusterman, *Man in Gold*, 17.

⁴² Shusterman, *Man in Gold*, 18.

⁴³ Shusterman, *Man in Gold*, 8.

⁴⁴ Shusterman calls the Man in Gold "a philosopher without words" and sees himself as his "philosophical spokesman." (Shusterman, *Man in Gold*, 19).

⁴⁵ Shusterman, *Man in Gold*, 14.

⁴⁶ Shusterman, *Man in Gold*, 112.

⁴⁷ Shusterman, *Man in Gold*, 8.

⁴⁸ *Ibid.*

into the synergy that can exist between the aesthetic and the cognitive aspects of the self. My contention here finds support in Shusterman's discussion of the three factors driving what brought the Man in Gold to him. When discussing the first factor, he notes that artists generally expressed dissatisfaction with his explanation of how somaesthetics applies to contemporary art. Shusterman's response – "...that the soma (with its sensory, motor, and affective resources) is the medium through which we both create and appreciate works of art and that therefore improved somatic mastery could generate better aesthetic experience" was not enough of a concrete and practical application of his theory in contemporary artistic creation.⁴⁹ The Man in Gold was to allow for a concrete and practical exploration of Shusterman's conception of aesthetic experience.

The second factor Shusterman mentions also supports my contention here. As he explains, like most philosophy of art, his theory is "...dominated by the observer's or interpreter's point of view" and so would be more complete by including the artist's experience.⁵⁰ Once again, the Man in Gold became a means to interrogate the theoretical difficulties Shusterman grapples with in his more strictly philosophical works – here, the question of the experience of the artist in aesthetic theory.

The Man in Gold, who "...eschews discursive language, recognizing it as the glory of philosophy but also an imprisoning source of its oppressive folly – its one-sidedness"⁵¹; who is driven by both the love of beauty, and the love of knowledge in the sense of a curiosity to learn through immediate sensuous experience⁵²; and who is animated by both love and fear; becomes an expression of Shusterman's contention that the self cannot be reduced to the unitary, rational, free and self-controlled subject. However, this does not mean that as alter ego, the Man in Gold dissolves the idea of the self in its entirety. As the book relates, the Man in Gold and Shusterman become the "necessary synergetic complements" that allow, in Nietzsche's sense thereof, for the philosopher to give "style" to his character.

⁴⁹ Shusterman, *Man in Gold*, 9

⁵⁰ Shusterman, *Man in Gold*, 10

⁵¹ Shusterman, *Man in Gold*, 58

⁵² Shusterman, *Man in Gold*, 60

Reading the Man in Gold: Philosophy and Art

The doubling explored in terms of the theme of alter ego in the book can also be read as an implicit commentary on the nature of the relationship between philosophy and art more generally. As Shusterman explains in another text:

Contrary to traditional philosophy, from the somaesthetic philosophical perspective, knowledge of the world is improved not by denying our bodily senses but by perfecting them. Experience [...] remains the vital heart of philosophy.⁵³

In his view then, art and philosophy can and should be brought into productive and mutually illuminating contact. This is based on his contention that “philosophy should be transformational instead of foundational” since “[i]mproved experience, not ordinary truth, is the ultimate philosophical goal and criterion.”⁵⁴ Philosophy then becomes more than mere theory in Shusterman’s recalling of the ancient idea of philosophy as an embodied practice. Shusterman specifies the way in which art and life should be conceived from his pragmatic viewpoint thus:

My pragmatism argues against the traditional Western division between art and life that has led to art’s marginalization from ethical self-cultivation and political praxis; it instead urges more continuity between art and life by refining life aesthetically with artistic skill to make one’s life a work of art. But in doing so, it does not deny that there is a difference between art and ordinary life and that this difference is important. It is arguing only against certain sharp divisions between art and life that have been drawn by philosophers and that have been damaging to the role art has played in Western culture⁵⁵.

With its hybrid form, bringing together philosophy and art (in the form of literature and photography conceived of as performance), Shusterman’s *The Adventures of the Man*

⁵³ Richard Shusterman, “Dewey on Experience: Foundation or Reconstruction?” *Philosophical Forum* 26 (2) (1994):127–148, citation from page148.

⁵⁴ Richard Shusterman, “Somatic Experience: Foundation or Reconstruction?” *Practicing Philosophy: Pragmatism and the Philosophical Life* (London: Routledge, 2016), n.p.

⁵⁵ Richard Shusterman, “Aesthetics as Philosophy of Art and Life,” *JTLA* 37 (2012): 1-6, citation from page 2

in Gold: Paths between Art and Life expressed this assertion in a concrete and practical way, once again playing with and between the concept of the double.

Conclusion

The *Man in Gold* stands as a daring expression of Shusterman's Nietzschean/Foucauldian impulse to live life one's as a work of art. As I have shown in this paper, Shusterman's hybrid work can be read as a dual challenge to philosophy: first, a challenge to the tradition of the subject understood as unitary, rational, free and self-controlled; and second, as a challenge to the tradition of understanding philosophy as juxtaposed to art. Shusterman's work reminds us that the ego can no longer be contained within a single, homogeneous, and unitary frame, but aims to exorcise this spectre and the metaphysics it entails in a way that nonetheless allows for the embodied self-care that is characteristic of his somaesthetics. In addition, as a daring work that dances over the lines so strictly drawn between philosophy, art, and literature, *The Man in Gold* provides a concrete and practical application of Shusterman's theory, and so likewise challenges the strict divisions between philosophy and art. As such, it provides, in my reading, a thought-provoking experience for philosophers and artists alike.