Chapter 6
The Definition of Aesthetics and Beauty

ABSTRACT
This chapter proposes the definition of beauty and discusses the levels of beauty and the structure of beauty. This chapter points out that Aesthetics should be a science that studies beauty in general, including natural beauty, artistic beauty, design beauty, and aesthetic feelings. Beauty, just like material and thinking, is the foundation of everything, without which the world won’t even exist. Beauty is an evolutionary existence, an objective and natural existence, and an existence of emergence. It is hierarchical, structural, and dynamic, and its core is the “least action principle”.

INTRODUCTION
Since the German philosopher Alexander Gottlieb Baumgarten (1968) defined aesthetics as “the science of the sensitive cognition” in 1750, the essence of beauty has always been at the core of aesthetic controversy. This controversy lasted for centuries without a conclusion, showing the dualistic dilemma of traditional Hegelian epistemology (i.e., phenomena and essence, the essential world and the phenomenal world). In fact, we can use the theory of harmony of differences and the theory of overall optimization in systems philosophy to illustrate the nature of art and beauty. The fundamental problem of aesthetics will be solved so as to change a method and a perspective. This also conforms to contemporary internet thinking.

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THE NATURE AND DEFINITION OF BEAUTY

Plato, the earliest scholar of aesthetic issues in the history of Western aesthetics, proposed that “beauty is a form”, which, instead of solving the controversy of the nature of beauty, left a huge room for imagination to the following generations. As Li Zehou said, Plato hoped to find “a form of beauty”, the imitation of which could make things beautiful.

Plato (1953) believed that the essence of beauty lies in the form” the “form of beauty” is beauty itself and the creator of beautiful things, and beauty itself is eternal and absolute. He made beauty an absolute concept and denied its objective nature. He also concluded that beauty was not appropriateness, usefulness or kindness because forms are distinct from existence.

Form is the core of Plato’s aesthetic thoughts and is higher than things. This view is typical idealism, apparently unscientific. However, in that era, the proposal of the concept of “form” is a significant step forward.

The unity of the true, the good and the beautiful is the foundation of Plato’s aesthetic thoughts. He also designed a community of those three components in the book Res Publica. His thought of form and a series of discourses have produced deep and far-reaching impact on aesthetics around the world. Without Plato’s “form”, there is no later thought and theories and the development of many schools.

Plato’s “theory of madness” also affected the ideas of future generations. Important contemporary thoughts like absurdism, Nietzsche’s philosophy and so on are all derived from this theory.

The ancient Greek philosopher Aristotle (2016) regarded the theory of “four causes” as the cornerstone of aesthetics. He held different views from his teacher Plato and believed that “form” is the “general” abstracted from the “individual” and “form” and “beauty” were never separated from things. Aristotle argued that beauty is among things themselves, whose chief forms are “order” and “symmetry” and “definiteness”, which confirmed that beauty lay in the form and the proportion of things. He insisted on the ancient Greek naive materialism and denied the conceptualism (the so-called idealism). This view had a great impact on the future art practice.

Medieval philosophers and estheticians Aurelius Augustine and Thomas Aquinas did not go beyond the ancient Greek aesthetics. Thomas listed three essential conditions of beauty: integrity, proportion, and clarity. (Emery, 2010, pp. 336)
The Beauty of Design
(2020). New Aesthetic Thought, Methodology, and Structure of Systemic Philosophy (pp. 271-283).
www.igi-global.com/chapter/the-beauty-of-design/239806?camid=4v1a