

Four Essays on Aesthetics

Toward a Global View

Zehou Li and Jane Cauvel



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Philosophical Aesthetics

What is aesthetics? Many artists and scholars have given their responses to the question. Because none seem satisfactory to me, I will examine a few of these responses before explaining my own approach. Even though there is little agreement about the meaning of aesthetics, so-called aesthetic questions prevail. We speak of beautiful sights and sounds but frequently disagree about particular objects. We enjoy the sigh of the wind in the pines and the whisper of mountain streams. We appreciate objects as different as the bright moon is to colorful flowers, as fashionable dress is to handsome dwellings, and as human bodies are to works of art. How prevalent, how diverse, how complicated, and how wonderful are the objects we appreciate.

Is it possible that underlying all this glorious diversity there is something common among these sights and sounds that we can identify as an object of thought? Can we find, or should we even try, a basic form, principle, or law to account for all cases? With so many lovely, different, and changing images that the world offers, why do we seek after what may be a nonexistent law or principle?

MANY SCHOLARS REJECT THE POSSIBILITY OF PHILOSOPHICAL AESTHETICS

If there are no forms or laws common to beautiful objects, how can we pursue a discipline of aesthetics? Many scholars from ancient to contemporary times believe it is impossible to develop such a discipline. They say that the study and experience of beauty cannot become an academic discipline because neither knowledge nor science is involved. They say that the study of

beauty has to do neither with the cognition of truth nor with universal principles or objective laws. For example, two thousand years ago, Zhuangzi, the famous Daoist thinker of ancient China, wrote that every living thing has its own taste of beauty. He said that birds and fish are often frightened at the sight of the beautiful women that men admire and even the men disagree among themselves. For Zhuangzi, beauty is subjective and relative, varying from person to person, without a common criterion. For him, it was impossible to try to find a theory or science for beauty or for the experience of beauty.

Similarly, Hegel, in his *Introduction to Aesthetics*, mentioned the idea that experience or judgments about beauty could not have a scientific basis.

For the beauty of art presents itself to sense, feeling, intuition, imagination; it has a different sphere from thought, and the apprehension of its activity and its products demands an organ other than scientific thinking.¹

On the one hand, "imagination with its whim and caprice, the organ of artistic activity and enjoyment, remains excluded from science."² On the other, "a purely intellectual treatment" will destroy the beauty of art and break up the reconciliation between concept and reality.³

Artists, especially, refuse to talk about meaning or intention in their creations and do not want them judged intellectually. Very often, they cannot explain their own creations because they really do not know what they want to express even after their creations have emerged. If artists knew what they wanted to say, they would be art critics or commentators, not creators.

Many modern Western philosophers, such as the logical positivists, take a similar theoretical view. A. J. Ayer remarked that any judgment of value in aesthetics is, in fact, an expression of emotion without any scientific truth or objective validity in it.

Aesthetic terms are used in exactly the same way as ethical terms. Such aesthetic words as "beautiful" and "hideous" are employed, like ethical words, not to make statements of fact, but simply to express certain feelings and evoke a certain response. It follows, as in ethics, that there is no sense in attributing objective validity to aesthetic judgments and no possibility of arguing about questions of value in aesthetics but only about questions of fact. I conclude, therefore, that there is nothing in aesthetics, any more than there is in ethics, to justify the view that it embodies a unique type of knowledge.⁴

Ayer believed that the controversy among different aesthetic theories, just like that among individual tastes in appreciation, is actually a problem of the use of words.

The dullness of aesthetics arises from the attempt to construct a subject where there is none. Perhaps the truth is that there is no aesthetics and yet there are principles of literary criticism, principles of musical criticism, and the like.⁵

If art is just an emotional expression, then analysis is limited to art criticism, reducing aesthetics to meta-criticism or linguistic analysis.

Because the fundamental terms and vocabulary in philosophy and the humanities come from everyday speech, their meanings are often equivocal, metaphorical, and ambiguous. These have caused many controversies in Chinese aesthetics and art theory to be meaningless. A heated debate several years ago on the concept of *thinking-in-images* is a typical example. After arguing for a long time, the participants discovered the real reason they debated so vigorously was that the meaning of the phrase *thinking-in-images* is not clear because everyone has her or his own understanding of the phrase. In cases such as this, analytic philosophy does indeed help people use concepts more precisely.

Nevertheless, we need not abolish a discipline of aesthetics merely because of the ambiguity of its concepts and expressions, or as the Chinese say, "never giving up eating for fear of choking." Individual variations in judgments of beauty and art do not prevent aesthetics from becoming a science. Scholars seem always to have sought laws and principles that govern aesthetic experience, artistic creation, and appreciation. The desire to understand is itself a question worth pondering. Does it mean that the mind possesses a natural tendency toward metaphysical pursuits, or do the multifarious artistic phenomena spur humans to simplify by seeking common laws?

THE CATEGORY OF AESTHETICS IS MORE INCLUSIVE IN CHINA THAN IN THE WEST

In Chinese, the word for aesthetics is *meixue*. Literally translated, it means "the study of beauty." The word *meixue* came from the Japanese character *bi-gaku*,⁶ a translation of the Western word *aesthetics*. In the West, the word *aesthetics* derives from a Greek term referring to perception. It came into scholarly usage when Alexander Gottlieb Baumgarten, the founder of German aesthetics, named aesthetics a science in 1735.⁷ He claimed that aesthetics was "an independent science for the theory of imagination."⁸ However, compared with logic, aesthetics derives from a lower level of cognition and knowledge. The arts are creations of the imagination, not products of the intellect or reason. In Chinese, a more exact translation of aesthetics should be *shenmeixue*, which means a study of the process of recognizing and perceiving beauty. However, since the word *meixue* is the conventional term, we will retain it and incorporate the ideas of recognizing and perceiving beauty into the study of beauty.

In addition, *meixue* as the study of beauty has an advantage because it means that the study and pursuit of beauty surpasses in importance both the

categories of sense perception and morality and religion. It has similarities to a spiritual category but is more inclusive because the aesthetic realm is a broader realm for Chinese than for Westerners.

Although the use of the term *aesthetics* is relatively recent, scholars have discussed philosophical and theoretical questions about the nature of beauty and art for centuries. They were raised in the context of established philosophical disciplines rather than from within a discipline of its own. Chinese universities offer courses in philosophical aesthetics, psychological aesthetics, and sociological aesthetics, whereas Western universities offer courses in aesthetics as a separate discipline within philosophy departments.

What, then, is the basic view of aesthetics presented here? The answer is pluralization or diversification. I wrote previously that

Truth is a whole composed of manifold parts. We should approach it from different angles and by different ways. We may address different questions and satisfy different demands. We can reach different levels and aspects, and seek after different objects.⁹

Let there be researches into multiple strata and aspects, from different standpoints and considerations, with manifold aims and questions, by various ways and means, each complementing and perfecting the other.¹⁰

The approach I have recommended for truth, which is pluralization and diversification, is the one I follow for studying aesthetics: there is no need for a unified and complete system. Philosophy should advance certain ideas or viewpoints, not all-embracing and omniscient systems. It must recognize various kinds of aesthetics as it examines different angles, means, and methods, as well as beginnings and processes of development. This approach must apply to the different branches of aesthetics as well as to theory, and my interest in pluralization and diversification refers chiefly to different branches and forms. Accordingly, I classify aesthetics into various categories (see tables 1.1 and 1.2).

Since any classification possesses only relative significance, there is certainly something in it far-fetched, imperfect, indefinite, and nondistributive. It is impossible for two simple tables to express or embrace such extremely complex relationships of mutual penetration, interaction, decomposition, and synthesization between and among various categories. In addition, since basic aesthetics and practical aesthetics include such vast domains, scholars will specialize, differentiate, and scrutinize these various aspects. In doing so, they will inevitably bring forth new branches of learning. Some of these areas will be accessible only to a few specialists, forming sets of terms, vocabularies, conceptions, and formulae which will keep the nonspecialist from understanding or participating in the endeavor.

Table 1.1. Beauty: A Summary of the Previous Discussion

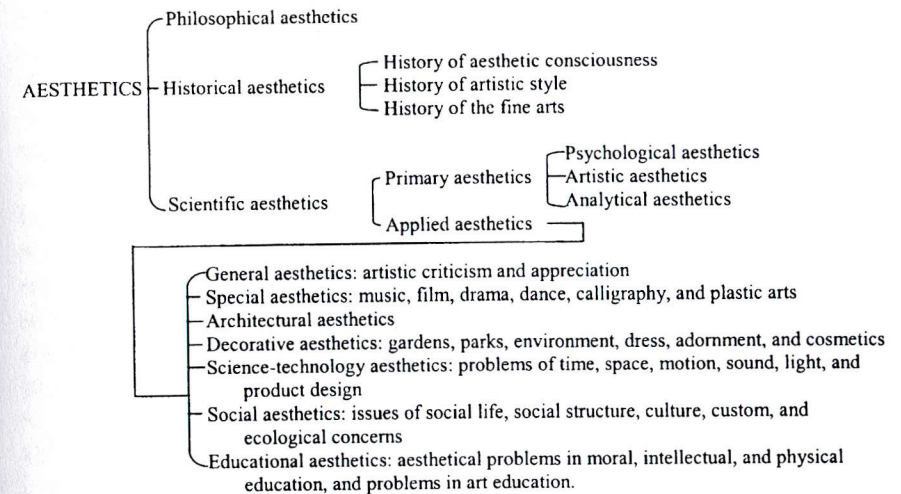
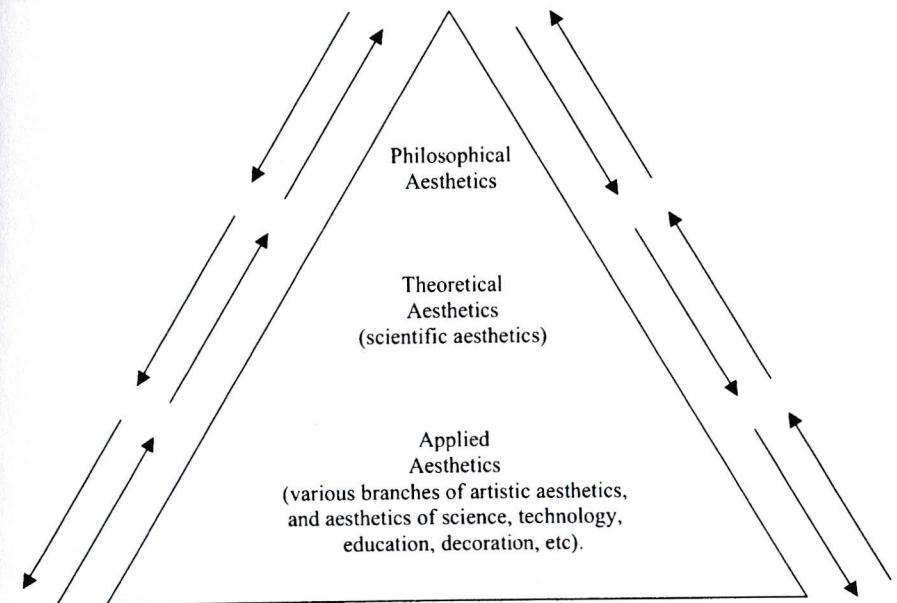


Table 1.2. Philosophical, Theoretical, and Applied Aesthetics



Aesthetics has and continues to be an ever-growing, interacting network of games, an *open family*, as Wittgenstein says. Within aesthetics, there are only family resemblances, for it is hard to say that there is something in common among calligraphy aesthetics, science and technology aesthetics, and movie aesthetics. Earlier, I wrote that aesthetics is a "branch of learning which, with aesthetic experience as its central focus, studies beauty and art." This way of looking at aesthetics sets forth an area of study commonly held by philosophers. However, my approach, as any approach, is limited. I believe that philosophy must belong not only to professional philosophers but also to all people. It seeks the truth and the poetry of life, and aesthetics is one aspect of this endeavor. Everyone has the capacity to seek the truth and enjoy the poetry of life.

The *aesthetics fever* in China during the 1980s exemplifies the truth of my belief. Following the Cultural Revolution (1966–1976), there was a period known as *aesthetics fever*. From 1979 to 1984, scholars, students, and the public were interested in aesthetics. Courses in aesthetics were in demand at schools and universities, even engineering schools. Public lectures attracted thousands of students and even common workers. Books on aesthetics were best sellers and found in philosophy and humanities sections of bookstores, whereas books on ethics, epistemology, and political philosophy were absent. Many students applied for postgraduate study in aesthetics. Jiangping Gao's excellent essay, "Chinese Aesthetics in the Past Two Decades," includes important information about this period.

These years saw a historical recovery of aesthetics as a discipline. From the late 1950s to the early 1960s, there was a "great debate (or discussion)" on aesthetics. The "debate" was originally intended to establish Marxist aesthetics in China. This was part of the effort to establish the national ideology after the Chinese Communist Party took power in 1949. During this period, there were many "debates" in the fields of literature, art, history, and philosophy, and all of them shared the same purpose. The "debate" on aesthetics was different, however.

There was a common pattern among all the other "debates": in the beginning, different opinions appeared and then the highest political leader made a conclusion, which was immediately accepted and, in the end, the criticism toward the exponents of the "wrong opinions" began, sometimes accompanied by personal punishment. The aesthetic "debate" might be the only exception, however; it ended in no consensus, and each of the participants of the "debate" voiced his own opinion separately and independently and, along with the continuation of the discussion, the discussants paid more and more attention to the character of scholarship in their arguments. Everyone claimed to

be the true Marxist and, in order to prove that, they read Marxist classics carefully. This "debate" educated a generation of Chinese aestheticians, and cultivated a general interest in the discipline. Although aesthetics was overwhelmed by the ideological propaganda, political crisis, and social turbulence during the subsequent Cultural Revolution, the achievement of "debate" did not disappear but became a precious legacy of Chinese scholarship.

The "aesthetics craze" met the need of Chinese society immediately after the Cultural Revolution. An ideological movement (which was called ideological liberation) also occurred during this period; it can, in some sense, be regarded as both the Renaissance and Enlightenment in China. To take as an example, I was told by some former students of Sichuan University that, in 1980, after the first congress of the Chinese Society of Aesthetics held in Yunnan, some aestheticians went to Sichuan University and gave lectures there before they came back to Beijing. The lecture hall was filled by students and they overflowed to the outside. I published a paper titled "The 'Aesthetics Craze' in China—Its Cause and Significance" in *Dialogue and Universalism* no. 3–4 (1997). The following works illustrate the extent of the craze.

Zehou Li: *Meixue lunji* (Collected Essays on Aesthetics, a collection of twenty-five papers, most of which had already been published in various journals or newspapers from the 1950s to the 1970s), 1980: 15,000 copies; 1981: 21,000 copies. Zong Baihua: *Meixue sanbu* (Peripatetics in Aesthetics, a collection of twenty-two papers written from the 1920s to the 1970s) 1981: 25,000 copies; 1982: 46,000 copies. Zhu Guangqian: *Tan mei shu jian* (Letter on Beauty, a book in the form of a collection of letters in which some aesthetics ideas are explained in simple language), printed four times from 1980 to 1984, altogether 195,000 copies. Zehou Li: *Meide de Licheng* (The Path of Beauty, a book describing the development of tastes in ancient China), more than 200,000 copies published. It is difficult to know how many copies of these books were printed eventually, since later they were printed by many different publishers. Each of them, particularly the latter three, must have sold more than one million copies.¹¹

The *fever* for aesthetics arose during this period of *ideological liberation*, a time free from the ideological constraints that had controlled Chinese people for four decades and a time when different theories and opinions were debated. These serious, scholarly debates were ones in which resolutions were always open to renewed challenges. In contrast to the sensitive political, ethical, and social ideas at that special time, issues of aesthetics were safe to debate; to gain new perspectives, scholars began studying the traditional Chinese scholarship that preceded the 1949 Revolution.

On the popular level, people were feeling a sense of liberation from the restrictions of the revolutionary asceticism. They explored new ways to decorate their homes, to color and cut hair, and to try various fashions of dress. As

they did so, they were asking, What is truly beautiful? This question led to many discussions, especially between the young and the old. Some young people wanted longer hair, others shorter; many girls wanted to wear colorful dresses, others wanted jeans and sneakers. All wanted to express their own tastes and to manifest their own individuality. Fashion in clothes and household decorations were lively subjects of discussion and instead of following the dictates of the government, people sought peer approval. In spite of the interest in contemporary fashion, since the mid-1980s, both the popularity of aesthetics and scholarly study has declined.

However, because aesthetics is more influential and the field broader in China than in the West, it continues to connect directly to the daily life of common people. Today people in China talk a lot about the so-called aesthetics culture, which has become, once again, a matter of public as well as scholarly interest and significance—this is not surprising since aesthetics has traditionally held a much higher position in China than in the West.

To experience aesthetically the visual arts, poetry, music, and scenes of nature was always a valuable pursuit for the Chinese. According to the Chinese tradition, including Confucian, Daoism, and Zen Buddhism, the aesthetic experience is an experience of the highest state of mind-heart. It holds a position of importance similar to that of the religious experience in Western cultures. Confucius says it is “building up (your personality) through rites but completing it through music.” It is a wholly *human* experience, which gives a person the feeling of transcendence, of a higher level of being. It is not an experience of Plato’s world of ideas, or of a transcendent world of God, or a pure spiritual experience. It is a wholly human experience of this world without dual realms.

THE CHINESE EMBRACE A ONE-WORLD VIEW

The Chinese reject a dualistic worldview with its essential divisions between mind and matter, soul and body, and reason and emotion. I was curious about the origin of our one-world view and as I pursued the question, I discovered that its beginnings lay in the rationalized shamanistic tradition. In this tradition, human beings have great powers to communicate among several realms, including heaven and earth. They believe human faculties and actions influence and control many things, even heaven and earth, and play an active and determining role in making the world. Almost every tribal culture has its shamanistic stage but in China, at a very ancient time, these shamanistic powers were rationalized and transformed into external rites and internal music. The external rites became rational guides to behavior, and the internal music

became the emotional, poetic responses to the harmonies of the world. The magical forces of the shamans became the spiritual morality of the sages. When this occurred, music and poetry became transformative arts because they had the power to transform a person in ways reminiscent of the powers of the shamans. In classical texts, the Chinese word for music was the same as that for happiness. Happiness meant moderation in a human’s internal and external life and, since music moderated human excesses, it contributed to a harmonious and happy life. In a similar way, we might trace the origin of the inspired artist in the West to the Greek oracles and muses whose creative powers could inhabit human beings. In fact, it was the very seductive power of the muses and hence of the arts that may have led many philosophers, scientists, and religious writers to reject the arts or at least to exclude them from serious endeavors. Plato, more than most philosophers, recognized the attraction of the arts—how they could intoxicate people and hence needed to be controlled. He referred to a poet as a “light and winged thing, and holy, and never able to compose until he has become inspired, and is beside himself, and reason is no longer in him.”¹² Poetry feeds the emotions for “it waters and fosters these feelings when what we ought to do is to dry them up.”¹³ Emotions distract people from responsible citizenship, which required human beings to know themselves rationally and to guide themselves by reason and sound arguments. Humans should develop intellectually from the stage in which they are subject to the opinions of others to the stage of knowledge in which they are governed by sound principles. Ideally, humans should develop by way of reason to the realm of Truth itself, to a glimpse into the realm of Ideas.

If all subsequent Western philosophies are footnotes to Plato, as Alfred North Whitehead wrote, then we can understand the problematic nature of the arts for human development. From Plato’s perspective, the arts are suspect for several reasons: They seduce people from serious activities governed by reason, they intensify humans’ emotional nature leaving them subject to volatile feelings, and they chain individuals to the shadowy realm of opinion binding them to the transitory world of appearance.

I find major contrasts between the Chinese worldview and Plato’s. Chinese writers do not believe that emotions and imagination detract from a person’s reasoning ability but penetrate it. They do not contrast reason to emotion and imagination because they should function together harmoniously. Plato set the stage for a dualistic worldview by distinguishing between the realm of ideas and our shadowy, imperfect realm. Many Christians believe in a sharp distinction between heaven and earth, soul and body, and spirit and matter. For them, the arts are creations of this world and distract us from the heavenly realm or, at best, point us toward the heavenly realm. From this per-

spective, the arts have no intrinsic value and must not impede a human's spiritual growth.

The dualistic worldview was sharpened by the writings of Descartes in which the mind (thinking, reasoning) characterized human beings, and the body was a material tool or machine of the mind. In Hegel's hierarchy of human development, the arts were encouraged, as long as people recognized they were subservient to religion, and religion to philosophy and philosophy to the Absolute Spirit. Likewise, Kierkegaard classified *Aesthetic* man lower than the *Ethical*, and the *Ethical* lower than the *Religious*.

Fortunately, these judgments of philosophers did not impede the creativity and imaginative production of Western artists. They simply set the arts apart from the serious study of the sciences. Feeling and imagination function differently from the structures and principles imposed on science. The arts are designed for pleasure, for imaginative insights, while the sciences are designed for the search for truth and are grounded in reason.

I believe these contrasts are truly thought provoking. Chinese sages transformed and rationalized the power of the shamans into rites and rituals and interpreted these powers as manifested in music and poetry to be constructive. Western scholars considered the powers of the muses attractive and powerful, but whimsical, and a threat to humans' most treasured faculty: reason. The historical aesthetic culture of China continues to give the study of the arts and natural beauty great importance, whereas the Western world gives more attention to science and religion. Because of great differences between Chinese and Western approaches to art and aesthetics and because of the variety of approaches within worldviews, it seems obvious there can be no one principle, essence, or law governing the study of art and natural beauty. However, rather than thwart the study of aesthetics, this diversity enhances it and encourages a plurality of approaches.

PHILOSOPHICAL AESTHETICS SEEKS TO UNDERSTAND THE BASIC VALUES AND CONSTITUTION OF HUMAN EXISTENCE

Among the various approaches to aesthetics is the philosophical one. Prior to the twentieth century, this approach constituted the major writing on aesthetics in the West. Following from Plato, philosophers pondered over the questions that fell under the categories of the True, the Beautiful, and the Good. The nature of art, the aesthetic experience, the essence of beauty, and the ways in which beauty affects human experience were all of great interest. Among the most influential philosophers were Plato, Aristotle, Kant, Hegel, Hume, Croce, Nietzsche, and Dewey. Each of them developed aesthetic con-

ceptions that formed the issues and methodology for many successive thinkers. They literally shaped the domain for writing and thinking about beauty and art. Even though these philosophers were not interested in the concrete issues of specific works of art and did not make a detailed study of aesthetic psychology, their abstract and even obscure theories had a profound and far-reaching influence. As time elapsed, philosophers ignored the more detailed studies of specific works of art, but continued to review the classical theories.

Today, very few people read the scientific writings of Newton, Euclid, or Darwin, yet many read and reflect on the ideas of Plato, Laozi, and other major philosophers. Scientific writings, however great the discoveries, cannot escape being sifted into obscurity by Father Time, whereas profound philosophical writings and great works of literature and art remain ever-green. Why is that so? Perhaps because it is here that we find the charm of the unique *poetry of life*. The poetry of life is not of art but of thinking, not of spontaneous emotion but of highly deliberate speculation. It seeks to express and satisfy the intellect and reason as well as the deep emotions that underlie thoughtful speculation and reflection. This poetry of life has immortal charm for it is the highest expression of human self-consciousness and self-realization.

The seeds of this idea may be derived from Marx's conception of the *humanization of nature*.¹⁴ From the middle of the twentieth century until the last decade, Marxist aesthetics dominated and shaped the thinking about art and beauty in China. Even though he did not develop a systematic theory, his brief comments are immensely thought provoking, as suggested in the article "Aesthetics" in *The New American Cyclopaedia*, 1858-1863. Although there is still not enough evidence, I am inclined to believe Karl Marx wrote these comments, even though a few sentences or words may have been revised by someone else. Even if they were not written by Marx, I would still like to give my Marxist interpretation of them.

I believe that Marx's observations of *humanized nature*,¹⁴ and his saying that "man therefore also forms things in accordance with the laws of beauty,"¹⁵ must be thoughtfully considered. Perhaps we can find cardinal questions about beauty from his seemingly outdated, short, but meaningful remarks. It may be that the dazzling material achievements of the modern world have deprived many people of their interest in abstract speculation, or perhaps the exactness of modern technology has made scholars suspicious of sweeping generalizations. Nevertheless, I wonder, how could we grasp and comprehend the world and ourselves, and express our pursuits and attitudes toward life without philosophy? Consequently, in spite of my actively advocating the differentiation and scientification of aesthetics, and the establishment of subjects such as applied and scientific aesthetics, I still insist on the

preservation of philosophical aesthetics as a field of free speculation because the primary problems that philosophical aesthetics seeks to understand are the basic values and constitution of human existence.

Concepts and classifications of the basic values of human existence retain their moving and everlasting charms. Just what are truth, goodness, and beauty? What are the similarities and differences among them; what are their significances to individuals and to humanity; and how do they change with the evolution of time? The eternal existence of humankind will enable philosophy and individual self-reflection to exist forever, as will philosophical aesthetics. Because philosophy deals with the fate of humanity, it is the poetry of life and acquires an everlasting charm.

Because of its inclusive nature, philosophy includes elements of science and poetry. On the one hand, it contains scientific elements to achieve a general comprehension of the basic developments in objective reality (nature and society). On the other hand, it contains the expressions of human subjective intentions, desires, and sentiments in a specific age and society. These philosophical expressions reveal ideas that are subtle and obscure, unable to be grasped and defined by science, and yet which have to do with the existence of human beings, with the value and significance of life, and with the fate and poetic feelings of persons.

Different ages and societies enrich these eternal issues with new and concrete content, and, hence, ancient concepts of truth, goodness, and beauty, as well as philosophical explorations of them, will continue to reemerge and change. Every philosophical school in every age responds to questions concerning human values with its own replies, and applies these words in its own way. Because the replies and applications involve the whole of life and the world, they influence, dominate, and determine the explorations and answers concerning many other issues. For example, different philosophical views about art influence the appreciation, study, and evaluation of various artworks, schools of art, and history of art. Philosophy is always the quintessence of the current thoughts and life poetry of its time. Even though it may appear abstract and remote from worldly affairs, philosophy is rooted in life and deeply involved in the profound questions of contemporary ethics, science, and art. Moreover, since we know that different philosophical systems shape the approaches and content of aesthetics, any study of aesthetics must be a philosophical one that includes elements of the poetry of life, science, and the social and historical aspects of contemporary life.

NOTES

1. English translation quoted from G. W. F. Hegel's *Introduction to Aesthetics*, translated by T. M. Knox (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1979), 5.

2. Hegel, *Introduction*, 6.

3. Hegel, *Introduction*, 6-7.

4. Alfred Jules Ayer, *Language, Truth and Logic* (New York: Dover Publications, 1943), 113-114.

5. William Elton, ed., *Aesthetics and Language* (Oxford: Basil Blackwell, 1967), 50.

6. The same compound of the character for bigaku but it has different pronunciations in China and Japan. Who was the first scholar to make this compound? *Kodansha Encyclopedia of Japan* (1983) says it was coined by Nakae Chomin (1847-1901) around 1883, but Chinese scholar Lü Cheng wrote that it was coined by Nakamura Atsusuken when he translated Eugene Villon's book *Esthétique* in 1878. See Lü Cheng, *Wanjin Meixue Shuo he Mei de Yuanli* (*Recent Aesthetic Opinions and the Principles of Aesthetics*) (Shanghai: Shangwu yinshuguan, 1925), 2. The latter seems closer to truth, but further research is needed.

7. Katharine Gilbert and Helmut Kuhn, *A History of Aesthetics*, revised and enlarged (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1954), 289.

8. Gilbert and Kuhn, *History*, 289.

9. Zehou Li, *Zou wo ziji de lu* (*Following My Own Course*) (Beijing: Sanlian shidian, 1986), 233. The title of this book comes from a sentence quoted by Karl Marx in the preface to the first German edition of *Capital*, vol. 1, as cited in Dante Alighieri, *La divina commedia* (*The Divine Comedy*), translated by C. H. Sisson with an introduction and notes by David H. Higgins (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1998). The original sentence is "Segui il tuo corso, e lascia dir le genti." (Follow your own course, no matter what people say.) Li mainly collected his short essays and records of conversations into this book, which shows a more personal aspect of the author than his other books.

10. Li, *Zou wo ziji de lu*, 235.

11. Gao Jianping, "Chinese Aesthetics in the Past Two Decades," *Acta Orientalia Vilnensia* 3 (2002): 129-138.

12. Plato, "Ion," trans. Lane Cooper in *The Collected Dialogues of Plato*, eds. Edith Hamilton and Huntington Cairns (New York: The Bollingen Foundation, 1961), 220.

13. Plato, "Republic," trans. Paul Shorey, in *The Collected Dialogues of Plato*, eds. Edith Hamilton and Huntington Cairns (New York: The Bollingen Foundation, 1961), 832.

14. Karl Marx, *Economic and Philosophic Manuscripts of 1844*, Robert C. Tucker ed., *The Marx-Engels Reader* (New York and London: W. W. Norton & Company, 1978), 89.

15. Marx, *Economic and Philosophic Manuscripts*, 76.