

COMPARATIVE STUDY OF ORIENTAL AND WESTERN AESTHETICS

Bhawana Sharma, Research Scholar, Jayoti Vidyapeeth Women's University, Jaipur

Dr. Sandhya Sharma, Associate Professor, Jayoti Vidyapeeth Women's University, Jaipur

INTRODUCTION

Aesthetics is a branch of philosophy dealing with the nature of art, beauty, and taste, with the creation and appreciation of beauty. It is more scientifically defined as the study of sensory or sensori-emotional values, sometimes called judgements of sentiment and taste. More broadly, scholars in the field define aesthetics as "critical reflection on art, culture and nature". In modern English, the term aesthetic can also refer to a set of principles underlying the works of a particular art movement or theory: one speaks, for example, of the Cubist aesthetic.

AESTHETICS AND THE PHILOSOPHY OF ART

For some, aesthetics is considered a synonym for the philosophy of art since Hegel, while others insist that there is a significant distinction between these closely related fields. In practice, aesthetic judgement refers to the sensory contemplation or appreciation of an object (not necessarily an art object), while artistic judgement refers to the recognition, appreciation or criticism of art or an art work. Modern day aesthetics, especially among younger people, refers to the simplicity in beauty in art.

Philosophical aesthetics has not only to speak about art and to produce judgments about art works, but has also to give a definition of what art is. Art is an autonomous entity for philosophy, because art deals with the senses (i. e. the etymology of aesthetics) and art is as such free of any moral or political purpose. Hence, there are two different conceptions of art in aesthetics: art as knowledge or art as action, but aesthetics is neither epistemology nor ethics.

WESTERN AESTHETICS

Western aesthetics usually refers to Greek philosophers as the earliest source of formal aesthetic considerations. Plato believed in beauty as a form in which beautiful objects partake and which causes them to be beautiful. He felt that beautiful objects incorporated proportion, harmony, and unity among their parts.

We may study Plato in detail for more clear understanding. Plato was a philosopher in Classical Greece and the founder of the Academy in Athens, the first institution of higher learning in the Western world. He is widely considered the most pivotal figure in the development of philosophy, especially the Western tradition. Plato laid the very foundations of Western philosophy and science. In addition to being a foundational figure for Western science, philosophy, and mathematics, Plato has also often been cited as one of the founders of Western religion and spirituality. Plato's influence on Christian thought is often thought to be mediated by his major influence on Saint Augustine of Hippo, one of the most important philosophers and theologians in the history of Christianity.

Plato was the innovator of the written dialogue and dialectic forms in philosophy, which originate with him. Plato appears to have been the founder of Western political philosophy, with his *Republic*, and *Laws* among other dialogues, providing some of the earliest extant treatments of political questions from a philosophical perspective. Plato's own most decisive philosophical influences are usually thought to have been Socrates, Parmenides, Heraclitus and Pythagoras, although few of his predecessors' works remain extant and much of what we know about these figures today derives from Plato himself.

Similarly, in the *Metaphysics*, Aristotle found that the universal elements of beauty were order, symmetry, and definiteness. Aristotle was a Greek philosopher and scientist born in the city of Stagira, Chalkidice, on the northern periphery of Classical Greece. At seventeen or eighteen years of age, he joined Plato's Academy in Athens and remained there until the age of thirty-seven. His writings cover many subjects – including physics, biology, zoology, metaphysics, logic, ethics, aesthetics, poetry, theater, music, rhetoric, linguistics, politics and government – and constitute the first comprehensive system of Western philosophy. He established a library in the Lyceum which aided in the production of many of his hundreds of books. The fact that Aristotle was a pupil of Plato contributed to his former views of Platonism, but, following Plato's death, Aristotle immersed himself in empirical studies and shifted from Platonism to empiricism. Aristotle's views on physical science profoundly shaped medieval scholarship.

From the late 17th to the early 20th century Western aesthetics underwent a slow revolution into what is often called modernism. German and British thinkers emphasized beauty as the key component of art and of the aesthetic experience, and saw art as necessarily aiming at absolute beauty. For Alexander Gottlieb Baumgarten aesthetics is the science of the sense experiences, a younger sister of

logic, and beauty is thus the most perfect kind of knowledge that sense experience can have. For Immanuel Kant the aesthetic experience of beauty is a judgment of a subjective but similar human truth, since all people should agree that "this rose is beautiful" if it in fact is. However, beauty cannot be reduced to any more basic set of features. For Friedrich Schiller aesthetic appreciation of beauty is the most perfect reconciliation of the sensual and rational parts of human nature. For Friedrich Wilhelm Joseph Schelling, the philosophy of art is the "organon" of philosophy concerning the relation between man and nature.

So aesthetics began now to be the name for the philosophy of art. Friedrich von Schlegel, August Wilhelm Schlegel, Friedrich Schleiermacher and Georg Wilhelm Friedrich Hegel also gave lectures on aesthetics as philosophy of art after 1800.

For Hegel, all culture is a matter of "absolute spirit" coming to be manifest to itself, stage by stage, changing to a perfection that only philosophy can approach. Art is the first stage in which the absolute spirit is manifest immediately to sense-perception, and is thus an objective rather than subjective revelation of beauty.

For Arthur Schopenhauer aesthetic contemplation of beauty is the most free that the pure intellect can be from the dictates of will; here we contemplate perfection of form without any kind of worldly agenda, and thus any intrusion of utility or politics would ruin the point of the beauty. It is thus for Schopenhauer one way to fight the suffering.

The British were largely divided into intuitionist and analytic camps. The intuitionists believed that aesthetic experience was disclosed by a single mental faculty of some kind. For Anthony Ashley-Cooper, 3rd Earl of Shaftesbury this was identical to the moral sense, beauty just is the sensory version of moral goodness. For Ludwig Wittgenstein aesthetics consisted in the description of a whole culture which is a linguistic impossibility. Hence his viewpoint can be paraphrased as "That which constitutes aesthetics lies outside the realm of the language game".

For Oscar Wilde, the contemplation of beauty for beauty's sake (augmented by John Ruskin's search for moral grounding) was more than the foundation for much of his literary career; he once stated, "Aestheticism is a search after the signs of the beautiful. It is the science of the beautiful through which men seek the correlation of the arts. It is, to speak more exactly, the search after the secret of life."

Wilde toured the United States in 1882 spreading the idea of Aesthetics in a speech called "The English Renaissance". In his speech he proposed that Beauty and Aesthetics were "not languid but energetic. By beautifying the outward aspects of life, one would beautify the inner ones." The English Renaissance was, he said, "like the Italian Renaissance before it, a sort of rebirth of the spirit of man".

For Francis Hutcheson beauty is disclosed by an inner mental sense, but is a subjective fact rather than an objective one. Analytic theorists like Henry Home, Lord Kames, William Hogarth, and Edmund Burke hoped to reduce beauty to some list of attributes. Hogarth, for example, thinks that beauty consists of (1) fitness of the parts to some design; (2) variety in as many ways as possible; (3) uniformity, regularity or symmetry, which is only beautiful when it helps to preserve the character of fitness; (4) simplicity or distinctness, which gives pleasure not in itself, but through its enabling the eye to enjoy variety with ease; (5) intricacy, which provides employment for our active energies, leading the eye on "a wanton kind of chase"; and (6) quantity or magnitude, which draws our attention and produces admiration and awe. Later analytic aestheticians strove to link beauty to some scientific theory of psychology (such as James Mill) or biology (such as Herbert Spencer).

Now, when we now know that aesthetics is the branch of philosophy that deals with the nature of art, then its time to study in detail that what basically are the primary components of Western art aesthetics. So, basically there are three primary aesthetics of Western art which are classicism, Baroque, and Romanticism. The most straight forward possible explanation of these terms is attempted here.

CLASSICISM:

Classicism, in the arts, refers generally to a high regard for a classical period, classical antiquity in the Western tradition, as setting standards for taste which the classicists seek to emulate. The art of classicism typically seeks to be formal and restrained: of the Discobolus Sir Kenneth Clark observed, "if we object to his restraint and compression we are simply objecting to the classicism of classic art. A violent emphasis or a sudden acceleration of rhythmic movement would have destroyed those qualities of balance and completeness through which it retained until the present century its position of authority in the restricted repertoire of visual images.

Classicism is a force which is often present in post-medieval European and European influenced traditions; however, some periods felt themselves more connected to the classical ideals than others, particularly the Age of Enlightenment, when Neoclassicism was an important movement in the visual arts. The qualities associated with classicism can be summed up in one word: stability. The elements of a classical composition are generally depicted as at **rest** (or in gentle motion), and are arranged in a **balanced, harmonious** manner. The impression of stability is enhanced by restraint: that is, an absence of "showy" elements, such as dramatic curves, rich decoration, or harsh lighting.

Italian Renaissance painting and sculpture are marked by their renewal of classical forms, motifs and subjects. In the 15th century Leon Battista Alberti was important in theorizing many of the ideas for painting that came to a fully realised product with Raphael's School of Athens during the High Renaissance. The themes continued largely unbroken into the 17th century, when artists such as Nicolas Poussin and Charles Le Brun represented of the more rigid classicism. Like Italian classicizing ideas in the 15th and 16th centuries, it spread through Europe in the mid to late 17th century.

BAROQUE

Baroque qualities may be summarized with the opposite term: dynamism. The elements of a Baroque composition are generally depicted as being in vigorous **motion**, and arranged in an **unbalanced, dissonant** manner. The impression of dynamism is often heightened via extravagance: that is, "showy" elements like dramatic curves, rich decoration, or harsh lighting. One may therefore view art in terms of an **aesthetic spectrum**, with classicism at one end and Baroque at the other.

ROMANTICISM

Romanticism can also be defined in **opposition** to classicism, but in a different way. The defining feature of Romanticism is the uninhibited expression of **emotion**. In order to achieve this, the **constraints** of classicism are rejected: whereas classicism is logical and ordered, Romanticism is intuitive and free.^{8,10} (The foremost literary genre of the later Middle Ages was the **romance**, an imaginative tale of fantasy and adventure; the term "Romanticism" is derived from this word.) Romantic art may be classified according to mood: **stormy**

Romanticism expresses overt emotions (e.g. joy, wrath, determination), while **atmospheric Romanticism** expresses calmer emotions (e.g. tranquility, pensiveness, wonder). Note that the aesthetic techniques of **Baroque** (dynamism and extravagant effect) can also be used to convey overt emotions. Consequently, there is often much **similarity** between a Baroque work and a stormy Romantic work, despite the difference in aesthetic approach.

Romantic art is also characterized by a number of typical **themes** (established largely by German literature), which were embraced by Romantic artists simply because they are so **emotionally compelling**. Romantic artists enjoyed increasing freedom in their choice of subject matter thanks to the rising **prosperity** of the Early Modern period. Up until the modern age, artists were generally dependent on **patrons**, who decided what types of works an artist would produce (and how quickly); an artist's **creative freedom** was therefore restricted by the open mindedness of their patron. With the massive economic growth of the Early Modern age (and the consequent rise of the middle class), patrons were gradually superseded by a **public audience**. Artists thus attained much more creative freedom (limited only by the marketability of their work), and the pace of artistic **innovation** surged.

INDIAN AESTHETICS:

The Indian aesthetics tradition traces to the Vedic era texts of Hinduism. The Aitareya Brahmana (~1000 BCE) in section 6.27, for example, states the arts are a refinement of the self (atma-samskrti). The oldest surviving complete Sanskrit manuscript that discusses a theory of aesthetics is of Natya Shastra, estimated to have been complete between 200 BCE and 200 CE. This theory is called rasa in the text. Rasa is an ancient concept in Indian arts about the aesthetic flavor of any visual, literary or musical work, that evokes an emotion or feeling in the reader or audience, but that cannot be described. According to the Natya shastra, the goal of arts is to empower aesthetic experience, deliver emotional rasa (juice, taste). In many cases, art aims to produce repose and relief for those exhausted with labor, or distraught with grief, or laden with misery, or struck by austere times.[15] Yet entertainment is an effect, but not the primary goal of arts according to Natya shastra. The primary goal is to create rasa so as to lift and transport the spectators, unto the expression of ultimate reality and transcendent values. The most complete exposition of aesthetics in drama, songs and other performance arts is found in the works of the

Kashmiri Shaivite- Hindu philosopher Abhinavagupta (c. 1000 CE). Abhinavagupta's analysis of Natyasastra is notable for its extensive discussion of aesthetic and ontological questions. The concept of rasa is fundamental to many forms of Indian arts including dance, music, theatre, painting, sculpture, and literature, the interpretation and implementation of a particular rasa differs between different styles and schools. In Indian classical music, each raga is an inspired creation for a specific mood, where the musician or ensemble creates the rasa in the listener. In the aesthetic theories of Indian poetics, its ancient scholars discuss both what is stated and how it is stated (words, grammar, rhythm), suggesting that the meaning of the text and the experience of rasa are both important. Among the most celebrated in Hindu traditions on the theory of poetics and literary works, are 5th-century Bhartrhari and the 9th-century Anandavardhana, but the theoretical tradition on integrating rasa into literary artworks likely goes back to a more ancient period. This is generally discussed under the Indian concepts of Dhvani, Sabdatattva and Sphota. In the Indian theories on sculpture and architecture (Shilpa Shastras), the rasa theories, in part, drive the forms, shapes, arrangements and expressions in images and structures.

CHINESE AESTHETICS

Chinese art has a long history of varied styles and emphases. Confucius emphasized the role of the arts and humanities (especially music and poetry) in broadening human nature and aiding li (etiquette, the rites) in bringing us back to what is essential about humanity. His opponent Mozi, however, argued that music and fine arts were classist and wasteful, benefiting the rich over the poor.

By the 4th century AD artists had started debating in writing over the proper goals of art as well. Gu Kaizhi has left three surviving books on the theory of painting. Several later artists or scholars both created art and wrote about the creation of it. Religious and philosophical influences on art were common (and diverse) but never universal.

Modern Chinese aesthetic theory took shape during the modernization of China from Empire to republic in early 20th century. Thus thinkers like Kant, Hegel, Marx and Heidegger have all been incorporated into contemporary Chinese aesthetic theory, through philosophers like Li Zehou.

AFRICAN AESTHETICS

African art has existed in many forms and styles, with relatively little influence from outside Africa. Most of it followed traditional forms; the aesthetic norms were handed down orally as well as textually. Sculpture and performance art are prominent, and abstract and partially abstracted forms are valued, and were valued long before influence from the Western tradition began in earnest. The Nok culture is testimony to this. The mosque of Timbuktu shows that specific areas of Africa developed unique aesthetics.

ARAB AESTHETICS

Arab art has the context of Islam, started in the 7th century, is sometimes referred to as Islamic art, although many Arab artists throughout time have not been Muslim. The term "Islamic" refers not only to the religion, but to any form of art created by people in an Islamic culture or in an Islamic context, whether the artist is Islamic or not. Not all Muslims are in agreement on the use of art in religious observance, the proper place of art in society, or the relation between secular art and the demands placed on the secular world to conform to religious precepts. Islamic art frequently adopts secular elements and elements that are frowned upon, if not forbidden, by some Islamic theologians. Although the often cited opposition in Islam to the depiction of human and animal forms holds true for religious art and architecture, in the secular sphere, such representations have flourished in nearly all Islamic cultures.

The Islamic resistance to the representation of living beings ultimately stems from the belief that the creation of living forms is unique to God, and it is for this reason that the role of images and image makers has been controversial. The strongest statements on the subject of figural depiction are made in the Hadith (Traditions of the Prophet), where painters are challenged to "breathe life" into their creations and threatened with punishment on the Day of Judgment. The Qur'an is less specific but condemns idolatry and uses the Arabic term *musawwir* ("maker of forms," or artist) as an epithet for God. Partially as a result of this religious sentiment, figures in painting were often stylized and, in some cases, the destruction of figurative artworks occurred. Iconoclasm was previously known in the Byzantine period and aniconism was a feature of the Judaic world, thus placing the Islamic objection to figurative representations within a larger context. As ornament, however, figures were largely devoid of any larger significance and perhaps therefore posed less challenge.

Human portrayals can be found in early Islamic cultures with varying degrees of acceptance by religious authorities. Human representation for the purpose of worship is uniformly considered idolatry as forbidden in Sharia law.

REFERENCES:

- An introduction to Indian aesthetics: history, theory and theoreticians. By Mini Chandran and Sreenath v. S. New Delhi: Bloomsbury, 2021. Xii + 218 pp. [review] Aadoulou bitang - 2022 - Journal of comparative literature and aesthetics 45 (4):170-172.
- From physical world to transcendent god(s): mediatory functions of beauty in plato, dante and rupa gosvami.dragana jagušić - 2020 - in martino rossi monti & davor pećnjak (eds.), what is beauty? A multidisciplinary approach to aesthetic experience. Cambridge scholars press. Pp. 189-212.
- Language, Meaning, and use in Indian Philosophy: an introduction to Mukula's "Fundamentals of the Communicative Function". Malcolm keating - 2019 - New York: Bloomsbury Academic. Edited by mukulabhāṭṭa.
- Review of minds without fear: philosophy in the Indian renaissance. [review] christian coseru - 2018 - notre dame philosophical reviews 2018 (10):1-5.
- History of indian philosophy. purusottama bilimoria (ed.) - 2017 - new york, abingdon uk: routledge taylor & francis palgrave.
- Review of alternative standpoints: a tribute to Kalidas Bhattacharyya. [review] subhasis chattopadhyay - 2016 - prabuddha bhārata or awakened india 121 (september):673.