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## Evaluation of the Aesthetics of Nature in terms of Subjective and Objective Perspectives

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**Abstract:** In the theory of beauty, the most well-known basic issue is whether the beauty is an objective feature of beautiful things or in the eye of the beholder - subjective. Science is our best guide for the nature of the world. So, knowledge of science should guide us to give an aesthetic response to nature. Since science is objective, an environment aesthetic guided by science will be objective as well. In this study, existing data collection method has been used to obtain data. Different approaches and samples about "Aesthetics of Nature" have been discussed. We wanted to show different approaches and ideas from subjectivity to objectivity via "scientific monism" and "constrained pluralism". As a result, we can say that nature cannot be evaluated according to one rational type of aesthetic appreciation. On the contrary we should believe that any type of aesthetic judgment is acceptable.

**Keywords:** Aesthetic of nature, nature, philosophy of science, subjectivity, objectivity.

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### Doğanın Estetiğinin Öznel ve Nesnel Bakış Açılılarıyla Değerlendirilmesi

**Öz:** Güzellik teorisinde en iyi bilinen temel husus, güzelliğin güzel şeylerin nesnel bir özelliği mi yoksa seyreden kişiye bağlı yani öznel olup olmadığıdır. Bilim, dünyanın doğasını anlamamız için en iyi rehberdir. Dolayısıyla bilime dair bilgi bize doğaya estetik bir cevap vermemizi sağlamalıdır. Bilim objektif olduğu için, bilim tarafından yönlendirilen bir çevre estetiği de objektif olacaktır. Çalışmada veri toplama yöntemlerinden belge tarama yöntemi kullanılmıştır. Bu çalışmamızda Doğanın Estetiği ile ilgili farklı yaklaşımlar ve örnekler tartışılmıştır. Ayrıca çalışmada, "bilimsel tekçilik" ve "zoraki çoğulculuk" kavramları yoluyla nesnellikten öznelliğe farklı yaklaşımlar ve fikirler gösterilmek istenmiştir. Sonuç olarak doğanın tek bir rasyonel estetik beğeni ile değerlendirilemeyeceği aksine, herhangi bir estetik yargının kabul edilebilir olduğuna inanmalıyız diyebiliriz.

**Anahtar Kelimeler:** Doğanın estetiği, doğa, bilim felsefesi, öznellik, nesnellik

## INTRODUCTION

The beautiful or "beauty" is a basic category of aesthetics and it has been defined differently by authors, researchers, and philosophers. Some of them claim that it is a universal theme.

The beauty has been reduced to clarity and easy comprehension of certain relations by formalist aestheticians. From their point of view, if we are able to realize the unity within the multiplicity, the experience of beauty will occur. Because, beauty represents merely a part of reality. In addition to this, if multiplicity is the sum of such senses as light, sound, color or words, whereas, unity corresponds to integrity and reason. Then, we may say that beauty is a process between the reasons and senses.

Probably, in the theory of beauty, the most well-known basic issue is whether the beauty is an objective feature of beautiful things or in the eye of the beholder - subjective. Beauty has been placed outside of anyone's particular experiences by most of the ancient and medieval philosophers. In spite of this idea, in the eighteenth century, Hume expressed his approach in *Double Standard of Taste* with this sentence:

*"Beauty is no quality in things themselves: it exists merely in the mind which contemplates them; and each mind perceives a different beauty."* (Shelley,1994).

In the same way, Kant also stated his ideas in *The Critique of Judgment*:

*"Judgment of taste is therefore not a judgment of cognition, and is consequently not logical but aesthetical, by which we understand that those determining ground can be no other than subjective. Every reference of representations, even that of sensations, may be objective (and the real of an empirical representation), save only the reference to the feeling of pleasure and pain, by which nothing in the object is signified, but through which there is a feeling in the subject as it is affected by the representations."* (Kant, 1790).

However, if beauty is fully subjective, then the word of "beauty" has no meaning, or when we call something beautiful we do not communicate anything. In addition to this, some people may reject a perfectly shaped and colored rose, or a romantic sunset is beautiful. Also, it is possible to disagree and even discuss about whether something is beautiful or try to show someone which is beautiful and why.

From another point of view, it would be senseless to say that beauty is not connected to subjective response or that is fully objective. Kant says:

*"Now, when the question is whether something is beautiful, we do not want to know whether anything depends or can depend on the existence of the thing, either for myself or anyone else, but how we judge it by mere observation. We easily see that, in saying it is beautiful, and in showing that I have taste, I am concerned, not with that which I depend on the existence of the object, but with that which I make out of this representation in myself. Everyone must admit that a judgment about beauty, in which the least interest mingles, is a very partial and is not a pure judgment of taste."*(Kant, 1790).

In the nineteenth century, Santayana follows the subjectivity in *The Sense of Beauty* but takes it to another level by these sentences:

*"We have reached our definition of beauty, which, in terms of our successive analysis and narrowing of the conception, value positive, intrinsic, and objectified. Or, in less technical language, Beauty is pleasure regarded as the quality of a thing... Beauty is value, that is, it is not a perception of a matter of fact or of a relation: it is an emotion, an affection of our volitional and appreciative nature. An object cannot be beautiful if it can give pleasure to nobody: a beauty to which all men were forever indifferent is a contradiction in terms."*(Logan & Santayana, 1897).

Knowing both subjective and objective approaches on evaluation of aesthetic of nature is very important because it can give us different perspectives. In this study, different approaches and evaluations of the aesthetics of nature were discussed and it was emphasized how important the points of view are, rather than what is right.

### **Methodology**

In this study, existing data collection method was used to obtain data. In this kind of studies data collected by someone other than the researcher. It may also known as archival research or secondary data research, is an imperative part of sociology. In that kind of researches, the main point is not to collect new data but on studying existing documents.

Researchers obtain a great foundation on their research area by studying documents related to their topics. Furthermore, these kind of studies are necessary for the development of their central research question. The main advantages of studies using existing data are speed and economy. Studies using existing data also have disadvantages. The selection of the population to study, which data to collect, the quality of data collected, and how variables were restrained and recorded are all pre-concerted (URL-1).

### **The Aesthetic Attitude and Appreciation**

An aesthetic attitude is the state of thinking about a subject with no other purpose than appreciating it. Aesthetic appreciation can be carried on by means of the senses: listening Mozart's *Rondo alla Turca*; tasting a chili pizza; feeling a cold and refreshing water in a hot day; looking at a panorama, trees in bloom, or the silhouette of Istanbul; and so on. However, senses may not be necessary to obtain an aesthetic attitude: we can make use of imagining a beautiful planet that has never been existed or in discovering the details of a complex human body (Hettinger, 2008).

In theory, thus, the aesthetic attitude can be related to any subject via forms of experiences as senses, imagination or perception.

The aesthetic appreciation of nature is either much less constrained or completely relative than the aesthetic appreciation of art (Hettinger, 2008; Budd, 2002; Fischer, 1998; Walton, 1970). One philosopher who is one of the defenders of objectivity in environmental aesthetics has an argument about the opposite claim: the characteristic of art is not as powerful as the objectivity applicable to disputes about natural beauty (Parsons, 2006).

A great mountain, Ararat from Turkey, would probably impress us as "noble" and "strong", or expressive of nobility and strength, also it is possible that it might impress an observer from foreign culture as comical. There is no real fact whether Mount Ararat is noble or comical. In the same way, snow might remind a person of "happiness" and "cleanness" but in contrast, it may remind a person of "dirtiness" and "inevitability" if that person is in somewhere that is snowy for ten months.

What Fisher suggests is that the emotional features are absolute facts for the artworks but not for the natural objects (Fisher, 1993).

Carlson brings objectivity to environmental aesthetics in *The Appreciation of The Nature, Art and Architecture* by his views over aesthetic responses of the nature. He does that by arguing that environmental aesthetic appreciation should give an answer to what the aesthetic object is rather than what is not. According to him, science is our best guide for the nature of the natural world. So, knowledge of science should guide us to give an aesthetic response to nature. Since science is objective, an environment aesthetic guided by science will be objective as well (Eaton, 1998; Carlson, 2000).

The idea of Carlson's scientific monism has been criticized a lot. Many researchers disagree with his scientific monism. Because according to these researchers, evaluation of the nature

might be guided by science as well but also by sensual, inventive or other cognitive resources (Brady, 2003; Hettinger, 2008).

In Carlson's study, he insists that aesthetic responses to nature not guided by science must be inappropriate, incorrect or false. Despite that, aesthetic appreciation of nature guided by science will be appropriate, correct, and true (Carlson, 2000).

Not everyone agrees that cognitive factors are helpful for maintaining objectivity. Fisher argues that knowledge cannot play a significant constraining role. In response to Carlson's suggestion that *"knowledge of the nature of the particular environments yields the appropriate boundaries of appreciations, the particular foci of aesthetic significance, and the relevant acts of aspect on for that type of environment,"* Fisher maintains, *"Knowledge will certainly affect our experience and bring out features otherwise missed, but I do not think it can dictate frame or significance."* In a similar vein, Budd contends that *"categories of nature do not function to partially determine the real aesthetic properties of natural items as categories of art do those of works of art."*

In Hettinger's opinion environmental knowledge that is consisting of not only knowledge of the environment generally, but also knowledge about the types of environmental items which we try to view as valuable does and should instill appropriate frames and judgments (Hettinger, 2008).

The time we identify correct and incorrect categories to try to view the natural objects as valuable, it helps us to perceive the difference between appropriate and inappropriate aesthetic responses. In contrary to Budd's claims, Carlson exemplifies to show the correct categorization can determine the appropriate aesthetic properties of natural items:

*"Is that a cute woodchuck or a massive, awe-inspiring rat? Is that an awkward deer or a graceful moose? Is that whale a clumsy fish or an impressive mammal? Deciding which aesthetic adjectives are appropriate depends on placing the environmental object in its correct category. (Budd, 2002)*

So, too, with perceptually indistinguishable environmental objects, one of which was manufactured by humans and the other of which is natural: *Is that a beautiful full moon rising over the hillside or an obnoxious satellite dish? Is that lime green creek an amazing work of nature or the revolting runoff from a mine?"* (Fisher,1998; Hettinger,2008)

It is needed that sometimes aesthetic evaluation of nature should be affected by accurate information and categorization.

In addition, Hettinger also believes that it is not helpful to limit our appreciation of aesthetic responses to nature to choices like true or false, correct and incorrect or in other variations. Because we may need many criteria, which are sensitive and not hardly hierarchical, to determine "better" and "worse" in aesthetic responses to nature (Hettinger, 2008).

Hettinger gives us such little example to explain it more clearly:

*"For example, even though a child or an uneducated adult may not know that a glacier is a river of ice, there is nothing incorrect, false, or even inappropriate about their being impressed by the sight of a calving glacier. Nonetheless, informed responses often are better responses. Knowledge about the nature of glaciers can broaden our response to them. For example, we might begin to listen for and hear the groaning of the ice as it scrapes down the valley. "*

We also agree with Hettinger's ideas that the most convincing opinion in the appreciation of environmental aesthetic appreciation is "constrained pluralism." It allows either better or worse opinions about the aesthetic of the nature. According to Hettinger, constrained pluralism distinguishes between better and worse perceptions of the environmental aesthetic in different ways. (Hettinger, 2008)

## **CONCLUSION**

To conclude, we should point out that we have said and discussed a little about approaches and samples about Aesthetic of Nature. We wanted to show different approaches and ideas from subjectivity to objectivity via "scientific monism" and "constrained pluralism".

About aesthetic evaluation of nature, knowledge can always play an affirmative role. This might be seen in some aesthetic categories. Plastic pleasures for color, shape, and scale are just a precision approach towards the changing morphology of environmental processes and structures. Some natural objects need scientific information to be identified and appreciated, for this reason most of the aesthetic evaluations are within the reach of individual transcendental thinking.

We cannot evaluate nature according to one rational type of aesthetic appreciation. On the contrary, we should believe that any type of aesthetic response and judgment is acceptable. Either it is appropriate or not, true or false, correct or incorrect. Because one is better or worse than another. So, we should be open to different types of responses to nature.

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