

The schematization of aesthetics was founded in ancient times

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The schematization of aesthetics was founded in Ancient times, which is manifested in Plato and Aristotle's philosophies. Plato's stance on aesthetics is very negative because it can distract the innate nature of soul. But his pessimism on aesthetics specifically of arts in general is best represented in his conjecture that an art "is thrice removed from reality". Aristotle, on the other hand, has a positive note on aesthetics because he sees art as a representation of Forms or of truth.

From these two ancient philosophers, the debate and conceptualization of aesthetics has transformed greatly in different periods. Friedrich Nietzsche posits that aesthetics is a means of preservation, meaning, beauty for him is encapsulated in terms of life prolongation. Leo Tolstoy postulated that aesthetics is based on peasant artistry because these workers understand the beauty of life. The complexities of aesthetics have metamorphosed throughout the progression of different civilizations and epochs of philosophy. In line with this, contemporary aestheticians like Jun'ichiro Tanizaki and Susanne K.

Langer joined the bandwagon to advance aesthetics epistemic views. And these contemporary philosophers agreed on one point, that aesthetics or the valuation of beauty, as well as, its intricacies, nuances and elements, is greatly influenced by geographic positioning. This assertion was deduced from the fact that in every period novel ideas on aesthetics sprouted wherein this period shaped new debates on the topic at hand. In summation, each period in philosophy supplemented new keys on the development of philosophy.

In Tanizaki's *In Praise of Shadows*, he juxtaposed Oriental aestheticism to Western aestheticism wherein he highlighted the significance of going back to the remnants of the past because it served as the defining moment of every stance on arts. He argued that one must embrace his own aesthetics even if it is tarnished and old because it is the precursor of one's culture and tradition, and therefore, any concept of beauty from foreign culture must be disregarded altogether since it can eradicate the innate nature of one's aesthetics. This is very prominent in the character of Tanizaki because when he was just a budding novelist he appreciated Western aestheticism, which has influenced his writing during those times, until he realized that he must represent Japanese concept of arts and beauty through literature.

Tanizaki conjectured that the key note in Japanese concept of beauty is founded on the ideas of shadow. The architectural blueprint of traditional Japanese highly embodies shadows manifested through the quiet and murky interiors, which emanates a nostalgic atmosphere due to the independent existence and presence of shadows. Tanizaki reinforced his idea of shadow in the articulateness of beauty in the form of polished tableware, temple toilets, kimonos, and Japanese stage, which are highly affected by the intensity of its dark spectrum.

In lieu to this, Tanizaki pointed out that if light was applied on Japanese aesthetics all of its essence will diminish because light is the attribute of Western aestheticism, and likewise will happen if darkness was incorporated to Western arts. His basis on the above mentioned arguments is embedded on his credence on the delineation of Western culture and Japanese culture.

According to Tanizaki, Western citizens in ancient times give importance to gold because it emanates unspeakable beauty when candlelight reflects it. On the other hand, Japanese people vehemently dislike light because it exposes the imperfection of their own white skin. According to Thomas J. Harper (translator of *In Praise of Shadows*), Tanizaki distinguishes Japanese aestheticism based on shadows because it shows an unfathomable yet beautiful reverence and somberness, which is lacking in the magnificently lit arts of the West.

Like Tanizaki, Langer also believed that one's perception of aesthetics is dependent of his geographic positioning. At the first chapter of her book entitled *Philosophy in a New Key: A Study in the Symbolism of Reason, Rite, and Art*, she defined philosophy as "characterized more by the formulation of its problems than by its solutions of them"[1], which implies that each group or societies see things in different perspectives and in their perception of things, they have their own understanding of what they see and have their own questions about it. Therefore, when it comes to beauty or aesthetics definitive schema, each society has the authority to posit their own stance about it, and mostly their stance is deeply rooted in culture and tradition.

Tanizaki's key of aesthetics is logically plausible in Langer's philosophy since she espoused a relativistic means of understanding the nature of things and the contingency of the universe, in context with aesthetics. But Langer has her own philosophic inclination on beauty, wherein her key is discourse and representation. For Langer, aesthetics expresses the emotive form of arts

through symbols and logic. But it must be noted that she saw that the main problem in expressing aesthetic is the means of expressing it. According to her, music possesses a degree of mood or emotion towards the meaning of life wherein it represents a form of epistemic valuation and truth. This music that embodies a certain feeling of purely perceptible matters can be expressed in innumerable manners, but the musician has to figure out which manner because wrong choice of manner will annihilate the content of its emotion and its purity.

In toto, Langer saw philosophy as perpetually progressing, as well as aesthetics, because different epochs have either discovered or created a new key to elucidate the universe. She purported that the fecundity of new keys in the philosophical realm will always exist because human understanding is innately transformational. Unlike most philosophers like Bertrand Russell who argued that novel ideas in philosophy is impossible because what is left to humanity is to recycle old philosophies, Langer believed that the past has influenced on our present cogito but it does not necessarily follow that it will shape the present landscape of philosophizing. The point is that man's rationality is not fixed; therefore present and future generation can discover or create a new motif of intellectual intercourse, which will eventually define the philosophy of their period.

Tanizaki and Langer's philosophies on aesthetics are significant because of its willingness and openness to the possibility of new keys, in terms of new perspectives and theories. It broadens the horizon of philosophical enterprise since new schemes and conceptualizations are doomed to realization. The

only danger on their stance on the concept of “ new keys” is that it jeopardized the universality of things, specifically of aesthetics or beauty. Their postulate that aesthetics valuation is based on geographic positioning or dependent of one’s social constructs breathes relativism, meaning, every perspective on aesthetic is sound and valid, or to put it simply “ beauty is in the eye of the beholder”. And worse, the innateness of aesthetics seems impossible to be exposed because of diverse perceptions on it.

REFERENCE:

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[1] Langer, Susanne. *Philosophy in a New Key: A Study in the Symbolism of Reason, Rite, and Art*. Harvard University Press, 1957 p. 4.