The Conception of Social Aesthetics(4) :
Aesthetic Pleasure as Common Pleasure

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ABSTRACT

What is beauty? What does it mean that something is beautiful? Having developed ideas for social aesthetics in a series of previous papers in this Journal, it is now imperative to examine the nature of beauty in its own right.

‘Social beauty’ refers to ‘the aesthetically good’ of certain social situations where persons interact with each other. Within the conventional ideas of beauty represented by arts and nature, the beauty of social interaction is not easily identifiable nor recognizable. I have been trying to demonstrate the actuality of ‘social’ beauty as opposed to ‘artistic’ or ‘natural’ beauty. As my work progresses, however, I have been drawn more and more to the fundamental question of the nature of beauty as such. I am now confronted with the problem of social ‘beauty’ rather than ‘social’ beauty. This new direction of research reveals its own sociological significance.

In addressing the problem of beauty in its own right, I focus on the quality of pleasure accompanied by the experience of beauty. Beauty accompanies pleasure, and yet, this is a special kind of pleasure that is called ‘aesthetic’. ‘Aesthetic’ pleasure must be clearly distinguished from both physiological and ideational pleasure. My hypothesis is that the essence of ‘aesthetic’ pleasure lies in its ‘common’ character as opposed to both the ‘private’ character of physiological pleasure and the ‘public’ character of ideational pleasure.

In order to substantiate the hypothesis mentioned above, I examine the relevant writings of important forerunners who struggled to understand the special quality of ‘aesthetic’ pleasure. Such forerunners include I. Kant, F. Shiller, J=M. Guyau, T. Okamoto and B. Stiegler. Through a systematic reading of these writings, I attempt to arrive at a proposition that ‘aesthetic’ pleasure is an eminently social pleasure. Beauty accompanies pleasure which is neither private nor public but ‘common’ within each one of us.

In my previous papers, I tried to show that ‘the social is aesthetic.’ In this paper, I try to show that ‘the aesthetic is social’ as well.

**Key Words:** social aesthetics, beauty, aesthetic pleasure, common, Kant, Shiller, Guyau