

# On the Understanding of Feng Qi's Aesthetic Concept

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**Abstract**—The category of “beauty” has different meanings. Now when it comes to aesthetics, the first thing that comes to mind is design aesthetics. Design aesthetics is an attempt to apply basic design principles to art design in general. More importantly, it focuses on applied aesthetics. Compared with design aesthetics, philosophical aesthetics is a branch of philosophy-based discipline that discusses aesthetic problems from a philosophical perspective. Philosophical aesthetics is a kind of internalized aesthetics, which has no specific carrier in itself. It often forms an overall cognition of aesthetics through profound logical speculation. The truth, goodness and beauty in Feng Qi's aesthetics well illustrate the relationship between aesthetics and philosophy.

**Keywords**—*Aesthetic; Beauty and character; Beauty and ideal*

## I. INTRODUCTION

It is a well-known fact that aesthetics originated from philosophy and was a part of philosophy until modern times. This indicates the origin of their relationship. This relation proves the origin of philosophy to aesthetics or the internal identity between them. From the perspective of philosophical research, aesthetics is undoubtedly a part of philosophy, because there are three main aspects involved in philosophy, that is, truth, goodness and beauty. Aesthetics with beauty as the research object is naturally contained in philosophy. But even so, aesthetics retains its identity, because beauty cannot be relegated to the true and the good. In this sense, aesthetics is independent, but it does not mean that it can exist completely without philosophy. In other words, the independence of aesthetics does not presuppose its independence from philosophy.

## II. BEAUTY

### A. Feng Qi's definition of beauty

Although Feng Qi did not give a clear definition of “beauty” in his works, according to his interpretation of aesthetic activities, aesthetic ideals and other words, we can see that beauty in Feng Qi's aesthetic system is not only the objective existence of aesthetic objects, but also the spiritual aesthetic feelings of any subject. He said that aesthetic activities are “Through human activities, people's essential power to objectify, visualize”. The aesthetic ideal is “the idealized ideal about the essential power of human being”; The object of artistic appreciation is always “humanized nature”. Considering these classic practical aesthetic languages together, even if it cannot replace Feng Qi's definition of “beauty”, at

least it can be said that Feng Qi measures “beauty” with a subjective and objective unified attitude.

As for the definition of aesthetic feeling, Feng Qi made it clear: “beauty is the content of aesthetic feeling, and aesthetic feeling is to directly perceive the essential power of people in images and experience the pleasure of people's free development.” Feng Qi also talked about Kant's point of view when talking about beauty. Feng Qi himself believed that beauty was the pleasure of freedom, such as PaoDing's ambition, which was the freedom of aesthetic activities. Originally, cattle cutting was just to meet people's material needs, which was a utilitarian activity, but PaoDing achieved aesthetic expression, making it an art. Kant's understanding of freedom and natural necessity and the relationship between them determines that he cannot seek the unity of theoretical rationality and practical rationality in the field of truth and goodness, but only in the field of beauty.

Both the starting point and the final point of Kant's philosophy are human beings. Through the aesthetic experience and interest, moral appearance, pure aesthetic judgment and aesthetic pleasure, the preparation of beauty and freedom, natural beauty and artistic beauty, people have obtained the possibility of upgrading from the mode of instinct to the mode of morality, providing subjective conditions for the awakening of morality. Kant's theory of “aesthetic disinterestedness” not only deeply influenced the development of western aesthetic thoughts, but also actively participated in the construction of modern Chinese aesthetics after it was introduced to China. Feng Qi opposes the distinction between free and dependent beauty -- it is free to appreciate the beauty of a flower, and it is also free to appreciate the beauty of a literary work that gives people wisdom and moral enlightenment.

Viewing Feng Qi's aesthetic thoughts, he obviously preferred the aesthetic category of “guardian's angry eyes”. [1] He made it clear that in beauty and art, the tradition of “guardian's angry eyes” is more important than the tradition of “Antelope hanging horn”. Feng Qi borrowed the words of Lu Xun. He believes that there was an ancient Chinese art tradition of “guardian's angry eyes” at the audience. This tradition requires art to have character and vitality, and art is for life. “guardian's angry eyes”, as understood by Feng Qi, advocated that literature and art should be regarded as life, that is, the unity of truth, goodness and beauty. In the artistic style is expressed as warm.

### B. *The relationship between ugliness and beauty in Feng Qi's aesthetic perception*

In addition, Feng Qi also noted that in some cases, the "ugliness" in reality can be transformed into the beauty of art, so ugliness also becomes the content of beauty. For this problem, Feng Qi made two levels of consideration; First, as the opposite of each other, the beauty and ugliness constitute a mutual contrast. The other is the transformation of ugliness and beauty caused by the relativity of aesthetics. On the former level, he emphasized that external ugliness is a foil to internal beauty, and that god is better than form. On the latter level, ugliness itself becomes beauty under certain conditions, and vice versa. In Feng Qi's opinion, aesthetic feeling is achieved in aesthetic activities, but without a specific criterion. It is a personalized and free inner experience.

## III. THE AESTHETIC

### A. *Feng Qi's analysis on aesthetics*

Feng Qi's theory of "art for life" is a direct criticism of the formalist aesthetics of "art for art's sake". The theoretical system of "art for art's sake" is aesthetic modernization, and it is the most representative one. "Art for art's sake" in the theoretical source of the aesthetic non-utilitarian view put forward by Kant, or he is a specific embodiment of this view. As the scholar Song Shiming pointed out, "it is generally believed that the slogan of art for art's sake is a French invention, but its concept covers literary and artistic ideas such as the independence of art. The utilitarianism of art, the separation of art from life and so on, come from the German classical aesthetics, especially Kant's philosophy.

### B. *Comparison of Feng Qi's aesthetic thoughts with those of Kant and Confucius*

The sublimity of mechanics mentioned by Kant means that the subject finally finds the sublimity of the subject's personality in his imagination when he safely faces the force of nature. But Confucius's theory of "mandate of heaven" noble apparently does not include the "security", "natural force" factors of these problems, because of the "mandate of heaven" itself represents a great positive force, it is deeply rooted and enclosed within the walls of cultural psychology, so a gentleman does not need to keep a safe distance from the "mandate of heaven", on the contrary, the gentleman to "mandate of heaven" into the life of their own process, with all the life energy to practice "mandate of heaven". Therefore, Confucius believed that a gentleman should first "know the destiny" in reason, then "be at peace with the destiny" in action, and finally "enjoy the destiny" in spirit [2]. The personality of a gentleman has also reached the highest aesthetic level. The sublimity of mechanics mentioned by Kant means that the subject finally finds the sublimity of the subject's personality in his imagination when he safely faces the force of nature. However, it is obvious that Confucius' lofty theory of "mandate of heaven" does not include "safety" and "natural power", so a gentleman does not need to keep a safe distance from "mandate of heaven". On the contrary, a gentleman should integrate "mandate of heaven" into his life process and devote his whole life to practicing "mandate of heaven". Therefore, Confucius believed that a gentleman should first "know the destiny" in

reason, then "follow the destiny" in action, and finally "enjoy the destiny" in spirit. The personality of a gentleman has also reached the highest aesthetic level.

Feng Qi also talked about Kant's point of view when talking about beauty. Feng Qi himself believed that beauty was the pleasure of freedom, such as PaoDing's ambition, which was the freedom of aesthetic activities. Originally, cattle cutting was just to meet people's material needs, which was a utilitarian activity, but PaoDing achieved aesthetic expression, making it an art. In the critique of judgment, Kant believes that in the field of aesthetics, freedom and natural necessity, theoretical rationality and practical rationality may achieve a certain unity, but this unity requires that "beauty" must be the beauty of freedom. The beauty of freedom cannot be mixed with the pursuit of truth and the evaluation of morality.

## IV. BEAUTY AND IDEALS

### A. *Feng Qi's "art for life"*

Feng Qi talks about aesthetics from the perspective of philosophy, and develops his aesthetic thoughts with the artistic view of "art for life" as the main point [3]. The formation of Feng Qi's aesthetic thought first came from the extensive absorption and criticism of the ancient and modern Chinese and western aestheticians and school of aesthetics. Secondly, Feng Qi believes that beauty is the "humanization of nature", that beauty is related to the realization of the essential power of human beings, and that art should play a role in life. Feng Qi believes that the artistic tradition of "guardian's angry eyes" is to reflect social contradictions and advocate injustice, so it is inevitable to be indignant. "guardian's angry eyes" is originally the language of Buddhism, which originally refers to the image of the guardian statue in the temple. It forms a contrast with the bodhisattva's low eyebrow nu mu: the former is open and enthusiastic, while the latter is reserved and quiet. From the perspective of aesthetics, the two are the differences between the two art styles, and there is no difference between them. However, in Buddhism, the status of the bodhisattva of the "six realms of existence of mercy" is higher than that of the guardian of the "subjugation of the four demons", and because of the ancient Chinese aesthetic tradition of pursuing harmony and harmony, the latter has long been more respected in history -- as the old saying goes: "guardian's angry eyes", why does the bodhisattva lower his eyebrows? However, "guardian's angry eyes" has attracted attention in the field of aesthetics since modern times, which is derived from Zhu Guangqian's comments on Tao Yuanming's poems and Lu Xun's retort to him. Feng qi said "guardian's angry eyes" was directly derived from the influence of Lu Xun, and his main opinions were consistent with Lu Xun. In Feng Qi's opinion, "guardian's angry eyes" essentially required art to actively reflect reality and function life, and was the reflection of "art for life" in the form of expression.

### B. *Feng Qi's artistic ideal*

According to Feng Qi, human beings obtain their ideal of life from reality, and the ideal of life includes aesthetic ideal, which includes natural beauty and artistic ideal [4]. Feng Qi mainly talks about artistic ideal, which must be expressed without artistic image. Artistic image reflects artistic ideal, in

addition to the law of association, but also to rely more on imagination, forming an organic whole. The reason why "guardian's angry eyes" in the aesthetic field is possible is that it affirms the value of human beings. "guardian's angry eyes" has two components: the unity of truth, goodness and beauty in artistic content and the passion in artistic style. If the passionate style is the expression of guardian's angry eyes, the unity of truth, goodness and beauty, especially the emphasis on some kind of goodness, ensures that "guardian's angry eyes" is possible. In a sense, Feng Qi's moral philosophy and ethical thoughts have become a certain answer to the question why "guardian's angry eyes" is possible.

Running through Feng Qi's moral philosophy and ethics is the principle of humanity. The subject of morality is man, and the relationship between man and man should be handled according to the moral standards. Every man is the subject and the purpose. Therefore, the human dignity and value should be affirmed, which is the principle of humanity (benevolence). Marx said that the evolution of social forms, its development direction is to be from the dependence on people, the dependence on things, so that personality can be more free, more comprehensive development, which is the most essential human requirements, but also the principle of humanity. In short, the principle of humanity is to see one person as an end.

## V. BEAUTY AND PERSONALITY

### A. Truth, goodness, beauty and freedom

Feng Qi emphasized that truth, goodness and beauty are the free expression of human's essential strength -- the beauty of freedom embodies freedom, the beauty of interdependence also embodies freedom, the beauty of freedom, and the truth and goodness also embodies freedom. This is because, in each field of truth, goodness and beauty, the criteria for weighing all come from human beings [5]. They are all the manifestations of human conscience and self-consciousness, and the external manifestations of human freedom. Feng Qi regards freedom as the process of turning ideal into reality, which means that freedom can express itself in many fields. "from the perspective of epistemology, freedom is to transform the world according to the knowledge of truth, that is, to predict the possibility of reality and combine with the requirements of others to form the scientific ideal has been realized [6]. From the perspective of ethics, freedom means to voluntarily choose and consciously follow the natural rules of behavior, thus realizing the moral ideal that reflects the requirements of human progress. From the perspective of aesthetics, freedom lies in the intuitive self in the humanized nature, and the aesthetic ideal is realized in the vivid images infused with people's feelings. Since all fields of truth, goodness and beauty express freedom and embody the unity of freedom and natural necessity, the unity of theoretical rationality and practical rationality cannot be limited to the aesthetic field as Kant said.

## VI. CONCLUSION

In Feng Qi's thought, truth, goodness and beauty are unified, and goodness and beauty are interrelated. On the one hand, goodness is the premise of beauty. Feng Qi inherits the basic view of marxist aesthetics, which holds that beauty is the essential power of human beings directly perceived in objects. Through the practice, to get to heaven and humanitarian attributed to know, in combination with this understanding, the purpose of the people themselves, which is generalized to practice good implementation, in the "to get from the body of reality against it" in the process of the achieved his goal, the ease of materialized for thing for me, at the same time also get continuously development, constantly toward freedom. This is the mechanism by which beauty is possible. Therefore, beauty is based on true and good. On the other hand, beauty has a negative effect on the cultivation of goodness and free personality. Feng Qi attached great importance to the meaning of beauty to free personality. The ideal personality in Feng Qi's mind is the unity of truth, goodness and beauty, and the free personality must have considerable aesthetic ability. People who lack aesthetic ability are not "beautiful".

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