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# Aesthetic experience of beautiful and ugly persons: a critique

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## Abstract

The question of whether or not beauty exists in nature is a philosophical problem. In particular, there is the question of whether artworks, persons, or nature has aesthetic qualities. Most people say that they care about their own beauty. Moreover, they judge another person's appearance from an aesthetic point of view using aesthetic concepts. However, aesthetic judgements are not objective in the sense that the experience justifies their objectivity. By analysing Monroe C. Beardsley's theory of the objectivity of aesthetic qualities, I examine whether there are really beautiful and ugly persons in the world. I will criticize the way analytic philosophers judge people and art from an aesthetic perspective. If there are no aesthetic qualities in the world, nobody can judge someone beautiful or ugly without oppression. Aesthetic judgement is exercise of power.



ship between a subject and the reality.

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Aesthetics examines the nature of art, beauty, and taste, with the creation and appreciation of beauty. Non-Western cultures have also created their own unique aesthetics, which exists in many different forms and styles. However, it is not easy to say what is beautiful or ugly. People have different opinions and judgements about what is beautiful or ugly. You may think that Salvador Dali's paintings are great, while I cannot stand them. Nevertheless, it has been argued that aesthetic perception, or experience, is objective in the sense that aesthetic qualities belong to natural phenomena, human persons, and artworks. According to that argument, non-aesthetic and aesthetic

qualities exist in an object, and they can be experienced. The Earl of Shaftesbury wrote in 1711 that we cannot deny the common sense of beauty. David Hume, however, disagreed and thought that beauty is not a feature that belongs to reality independent of feeling and sentiment.<sup>1</sup> For Hume, there is no beauty or ugliness inherent in paintings, novels, or fashion models. Therefore, the relationship of experience to aesthetic qualities leads to a challenging problem, which can be expressed in the question of whether there are beautiful or ugly persons in the world. I argue that if there are no aesthetic qualities in the world, nobody can perceive someone to be beautiful or

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ugly without arriving at the contradiction. Those in power reflect their own aesthetic values to people and art in general.

Plato thought that beautiful objects have harmony or unity in their parts. Similarly, Aristotle considered that the features of beauty are order and symmetry. I will discuss why Monroe C. Beardsley partly shares this view of Plato and Aristotle. Therefore, following Plato and Aristotle, we may say that ugliness is deformation. Deformed faces would be ugly. I wonder whether we could recognize beautiful or ugly persons by seeing these features in certain persons. Works of art, natural phenomena, women, men, artefacts, and popular culture influence experience through the senses. We form aesthetic judgements about these things based on the sensory contents of experience. Past experiences also influence these judgements. The problem is: do we experience beauty or ugliness existing objectively in the faces and eyes of figures? Do we perceive *their* aesthetic qualities or are our aesthetic judgements only expressions of our personal opinions? First, it could be proposed that we perceive these objects to be as such and such because they really are such and such. Second, and more specifically, it could be proposed that we perceive a face or eyes to be bad and ugly because they *are* objectively bad and ugly. These two claims can be refuted by saying that aesthetic properties do not exist, and thus that we are not able to perceive objective aesthetic qualities like stunning. Ugliness produces disgust in the observer while beauty pleases the spectators or listeners. Our aesthetic judgements of the objectified or racialised human beings are incorrect if aesthetic properties do not exist in the world. The theory of Monroe C. Beardsley attempts to justify the possibility of people's objective aesthetic qualities being revealed through experience.

First, the arguments of Beardsley for the claim that aesthetic experience is objective will be evaluated, investigating the perception of certain qualities. Second, his arguments will be shown to be invalid because the terms that appear in his arguments are implausible. Different persons have different aesthetic experiences of the same public figure. Finally, by using the methods of critical theory and experimental philosophy, an empirical case of rock stars' and fashion models' appearance demonstrates that people tend to experience differently and reflect different aesthetic qualities to

persons. They have the power to judge based on their reflection.

## EXPERIENCE AND THE OBJECTIFIED

I will first talk about objects of experience in the light of philosophy of perception and aesthetic experience. I will examine aesthetic features later. Every experience is associated with the object to which the perceiver directly attends. For example, the object of experience is a single building or jazz concert: I have the experience of colourful shapes or loud events. The main thing is that the object of experience is distinguished by what belongs to the experience and what the perceiver thinks about the experience. I experience blue as a property of the sky, for instance. However, I do not experience magical as a property of the sky. I can think that the sky is magical.

Direct realism is the theory of analytic philosophy that sense-experience reveals real objects and their qualities to the observer in a real world. For example, in this theory, the existence of a building causes the experience of the building, and past experiences do not influence the present experience of the building. According to direct realism, the observer has experience of the building and its qualities themselves, not simply of the visual image, sounds, and feel of the building in her mind. This description makes me think that the observer "objectifies" something by having an experience of it. The objective externalist theory of the aesthetic experience means in the realist context that this building has aesthetic features that the observer is able to experience when in a suitable location and with functioning senses. Subjectivism denies this, claiming that aesthetic features are not experienced because they are not present in the objects independent of the observer. In subjectivism, aesthetic features cannot be experienced in the same way as a contour emerging from a concrete body or a sound coming from a television. The same formless figure of colours on *Femme Assise* created by Joan Miro can be seen as a woman or as an animal. In a similar way, according to subjectivism, the same human figure can be seen as elegant, inferior, or boring by different persons, so these aesthetic features are not in the figure. In subjectivism, aesthetic features are not empirical objects. To judge that they are in women is to subject women.

It seems clear that the experience of objects presents to us their *intensity, unity, and coherence* and *completeness*. These kinds of properties have been criteria for some philosophers, such as for John Dewey and Monroe C. Beardsley, to claim that aesthetic qualities are perceptual, and thus that aesthetic experience is objective.<sup>2</sup> Aesthetic features are the qualities aesthetic experience has. In brief, according to them, the intensity, unity, and completeness of artworks cause the aesthetic experiences of symmetry, unity, and completeness in different persons. Because intensity, unity, and completeness are objective qualities of artworks, one's perception is about the aesthetic qualities of artworks. However, whether these things can be considered beautiful or ugly on the grounds of unity, completeness, coherence or intensity of experience is a problem. Intensity, unity, coherence, and completeness are non-aesthetic qualities that differ from aesthetic ones.<sup>3</sup>

Sense-experience discloses physical things and their sensible properties. The perceiver sees them. He or she does not add things and their properties to sense-experience. According to Dewey and Beardsley, sensible qualities are inherent in things independent of sense-experience. For example, shades of grey and black appear to reflect in the surface of a long granite boulder. The formations of its surface resemble faces. High and low tones can be heard during a piano piece. The tones seem to be within the performance of a piece of music. Another theory denies that sense-experience reveals the aesthetic qualities of the shape. Following David Hume, beauty and ugliness are not features of the world that are open to sense-experience. Virgil Aldrich and Robert Scruton consider that aesthetic qualities do not exist within works. The work may be interpreted *as* tragic although it is not really tragic. Instead, the perceiver adds the quality "being tragic" to the work that is perceived. According to Aldrich and Scruton, aesthetic qualities are the expression of personal tastes.<sup>4</sup>

Second, the theory of objectivism asserts that aesthetic qualities are features of the object perceived by the senses. Nonetheless, they are dependent on non-aesthetic qualities. For example, faces cannot only be seen as "blazing" or "attractive" without having some non-aesthetic qualities. Blazing and attractive faces must also be colourful and symmetrical. According to objectivism, both

qualities can be experienced by vision. According to Frank Sibley,<sup>5</sup> non-aesthetic qualities are, for example, blackness, roundness, and loudness, whereas aesthetic qualities include sentimentality, lousiness, and gorgeousness. He considers aesthetic qualities to be dependent on non-aesthetic ones, although the aesthetics of thing cannot be recognized alone and thus are justified with reference to an object's other empirical qualities. For Peter Kivy,<sup>6</sup> however, non-aesthetic qualities may justify some aesthetic qualities or the use of aesthetic qualities, and show that both are inherent *in* the object objectified.

Beardsley's theory in the essay *The Aesthetic Point of View* represents the pure objective theory of aesthetic experience. It seems also to represent the male view of female and male beauty. An aesthetic experience is an experience of an object as having the aesthetic features that it has.<sup>7</sup> According to him, artworks *have* a unique feature: they cause aesthetic experience or gratification. In his argument, all of the aesthetic qualities of an object are experienced by the senses. He claims that the aesthetic object only causes aesthetic experience if it really has aesthetic qualities independent of the perceiver. For example, a chocolate cake's essence is necessarily chocolate because a cake that has no chocolate within it cannot be a chocolate cake. In the similar way, a beauty queen's essence must be beauty because without beauty she is not a beauty queen. Therefore, an artwork or a person can only cause an aesthetic experience in the perceiver if it has inherent aesthetic qualities. According to Beardsley, aesthetic qualities exist within them because they are *aesthetic* things. Otherwise, aesthetic experience is a personal expression of feeling. These three theories lead to the problem of whether there is beauty and ugliness in the world independent of experience and language. More specifically, can beautiful or ugly persons be directly experienced? We really see the symmetric and deformed persons, but then if they are also beautiful and ugly is another question.

By "the object" here, I do not mean a solid body or "lump," but a target of intent. For example, in speech perception, "the object" is not a body but the hearing of the words that can be recognized and understood, if one knows the target language. We do not only experience bodies, but also qualities, events, and features. The question is whether aesthetic features have targets in the same

way as colours. A colourful design seems not to have aesthetic qualities. A starting point in responding to this could be that a colourful design is said to be beautiful simply because colourful things tend to please us more than colourless ones. We will see Beardsley's argument regarding this later.

Knowledge about aesthetic features challenges us to discover from nature. Non-aesthetic qualities are not identical with aesthetic ones. Aesthetic facts do not logically follow from non-aesthetic facts. This is similar to the naturalistic fallacy in ethics: you cannot derive how the world ought to be from the way it is or was in the past. Furthermore, empirical methods do not demonstrate the existence of aesthetic qualities in nature. To judge that somebody is beautiful because of his or her visible symmetric qualities does not prove that he or she really *is* the owner of beauty. It is possible that there are no methods to show the objectivity of aesthetics because beauty and ugliness are not objective features of reality, as Hume suggested. There is nothing to discover. To aesthetically judge people occurs in circumstances of domination and oppression.

However, people still judge that somebody or something is good- or bad-looking, beautiful or ugly. Two or more persons express some kind of controversy on aesthetic matter. They are in a state of disagreement. However, do these things have qualities that make them aesthetic solving the disagreement? Beardsley's thesis is that they have and that they make us perceive aesthetic qualities. If the thesis is correct, aesthetic qualities are derived from non-aesthetic qualities: the non-aesthetic and aesthetic qualities of an object cause an aesthetic experience and justify us in naming something beautiful or ugly. Nevertheless, for example, it is inconsistent to judge that (1) the aesthetic quality "sexy" exists in an objectified person, which we see and hear, and (2) the non-aesthetic quality of an objectified person, such as "colourful," justifies our judgement that an objectified person is sexy. Many scholars have theorized that an object has aesthetic and non-aesthetic qualities independent of experience and language.<sup>8</sup> Nevertheless, the inference from non-aesthetic quality to aesthetic quality seems to be a fallacy.

It is not certain that we experience the primary and secondary qualities of an external substance, for example, the Taj Mahal mausoleum: this

depends on what *experience* means. Non-aesthetic qualities, for example, include coldness, greenness, shape, solidity, loud, square, etc. They are presented to us when we perceive. Aesthetic qualities, on the other hand, include good-looking, beautiful, ugly, great, dynamic, noisy, terrible, pretty, etc. They are absent from us when we are perceiving. The non-aesthetic qualities are revealed in experience because we tend to focus our attention on some bodies that appear to be sensible, and measure qualities such as "brownness," "solidity," and so on. Perception is a way of processing sensible entities, or seeing or listening to the details of a sensible object. That is to say, one can recognize a colourful sunset but the idea of measuring a *great* colourful sunset is dubious. Aesthetic qualities do not follow logically from non-aesthetic qualities. The colour property "blackness" appears to be located in the surface of a body. However, we see things as colourful only when we see them. Seeing their colours does not imply colourful things when we do not see the things. When a painting is not presented to us visually, we cannot tell that it is colourful. Although the sight of the colours may be true, the consequence may be untrue. It is not certain that we obtain what we perceive.

What is the method for verifying whether or not somebody's face is beautiful? Looking at somebody's face is not a sufficient method. The visible features of the face may be symmetrical but this does not make them beautiful unless the concept "beauty" means the same as the concept "symmetry." It is possible that one may say a face looks beautiful, because a symmetrical face gives pleasure to them. I say that the empirical method does not solve the problem of whether beauty and ugliness exist inherently in people.<sup>9</sup>

The argument of this paper is as follows: aesthetic features do not belong to experience. The perceiver has no experience of aesthetic features in persons. General background beliefs and prejudices influence what kind of *aesthetic attitude* the observer has about people and what aesthetic qualities he or she attributes to them. More specifically, a positive or negative attitude about models and rock stars influences how the observer "sees," or sexualizes models and rock stars from an aesthetic point of view. By this, I mean that if the observer does not like fashion or rock music, or hates it, this can predict that he or she will experience models or rock bands negatively and

add negative aesthetic qualities to their members. On the contrary, if someone loves human fashion or rock music, they will perceive fashion bodies or the bands' members under positive aesthetic concepts. Next, I will discuss Monroe C. Beardsley's objective theory of aesthetic experience.

### **ARGUMENTS FOR THE CLAIM THAT AESTHETIC EXPERIENCE IS OBJECTIVE**

Beardsley states that the function of artwork is to give us aesthetic experiences. Dewey and Beardsley have claimed that aesthetic qualities are objective qualities of artworks. They claim that we perceive the aesthetic qualities of things because these qualities exist in things independently of us and lead to aesthetic experience. That is why aesthetic experience is objective. They claim that the essential character of aesthetic experience is unity, coherence and completeness.

It would then be unlikely for different persons to have different aesthetic experiences about the same artwork. According to Dewey and Beardsley's argument, if an artwork has features of beauty or of ugliness, then the observer should be able to perceive them objectively. Let us consider Beardsley's reasons for that claim. I do not think that he discussed the feature of experience in itself, as George Dickie<sup>10</sup> has claimed. Instead, Beardsley talked about the content, or the reference of aesthetic experience. In fact, his argument was as follows: one experiences unity, coherence, and completeness of a thing.<sup>11</sup> We do not speak of experience as unified but instead we speak of the content of experience. That is, experience is *about* unified, coherent, and complete things because they are sensible qualities.

Aesthetic perception or experience is only objective if the features of this experience are the same as the qualities that the object bears independent of observers. Beardsley's view of experience is a causal one: one sees a colourful building made of steel and glass and the house causes the mental state of seeing. However, what is Beardsley's argument for the claim that aesthetic perception, experience, or satisfaction, is objective? His argument appears to be as follows:

1. Aesthetic experience or gratification is caused by certain qualities of an object.

2. The features of experience or gratification identify with these qualities of an object.
3. Therefore, aesthetic experience or gratification is about the qualities of an object causing experience.

Beardsley argues that perception, experience, or "gratification" is aesthetic when the object is an artwork that brings about a mental event in the condition of regarding the object from an aesthetic point of view. Examples of artworks that he argues give aesthetic experience include plays, compositions, and poems. By "the artwork" in general, Beardsley means any perceptual and intentional object that is deliberately regarded from an aesthetic point of view. By "regarding," he means looking, listening, reading, and similar acts of attention and *exhibiting* the object, or placing it where it permits such attention. *Exhibiting* is to make something or somebody "objective" in character or quality, although the objectified lacks them.

Beardsley's theory states that artworks have a particular ability to cause aesthetic experience. Art has special qualities that correspond to the features of aesthetic experiences. He considers these qualities important in estimating the aesthetic value of the artwork. As I mentioned above, they are *unity*, *completeness*, and so-called *regional quality*. By "regional quality," he means a structural quality of an object arising from the relations between its parts. For example, a complex colour design is a regional quality of a complex object, and the design can be cheerful or sombre on account of its colours.<sup>12</sup> "Unity" and "completeness" refer to the continuity and coherence of an object "without gaps and dead spaces."<sup>13</sup> For example, a musical composition can be complete and coherent "in the sense of finishing what it starts and thus being sufficient unto itself."<sup>14</sup> Are these qualities, then, aesthetic qualities of an artwork that we can experience objectively?

It seems to me that *Beardsley's criterion of beauty of art* actually refers to gratification or a feeling of pleasure. If an artwork gives pleasure to spectators, it is beautiful.<sup>15</sup> Therefore, "beauty" means a feeling of pleasure. Maybe a criterion of ugliness would then be nausea or a sick feeling. Hence, according to Beardsley, a beautiful good *x* pleases and a bad ugly *x* sickens.<sup>16</sup>

What, then, is Beardsley's argument for beautiful art? A reconstruction of Beardsley's view may

be the following: Because the artwork's quality X causes an experience of pleasure, a person experiences a beautiful artwork. He considers the relevant qualities X to give aesthetic gratification or experience as formal unity and intensity of regional quality.<sup>17</sup> On the contrary, a face portrait can be said to be good by a simpler argument: A face portrait x pleases; therefore, a face portrait x is good. It pleases because it has a unified coherent structure and a powerful regional quality of balance, or even texture.

However, what are Beardsley's arguments for artworks having aesthetic qualities that are perceptible? According to Beardsley, an artwork has regional and non-aesthetic qualities. His argument can be reconstructed in the following manner:

1. An artwork has regional and non-aesthetic qualities.
2. Aesthetic qualities are regional and they fuse with non-aesthetic ones.
3. Therefore, an artwork has aesthetic qualities.

His conditions for artworks have aesthetic qualities, as follows: "A quality of an object is an aesthetic quality if and only if the object exemplifies it (i.e. possesses it and refers to it)."<sup>18</sup> For Beardsley, the main way to know whether the object possesses aesthetic qualities is experience. We perceive aesthetic qualities existing in an object or person. His assumption of experience may be stated in the following way: experiencing such and such because it is such and such. In particular, the argument would be:

1. Jack is cool and handsome.
2. Therefore, one perceives a cool and handsome Jack.

Thus, when asking "Is Jack cool, handsome, and beautiful?" the objective theory of aesthetic qualities answers "Of course, because you perceive a cool, handsome, and beautiful person in front of you." The purpose of this judgement is to make someone inferior: to make another person the object.

It is possible to question the empiricism of aesthetic concepts. That is, whether they refer to the features of objects that these objects have independent of experience and feelings. The regional qualities and non-aesthetic qualities of

an object do not imply any aesthetic qualities. Although a colour-mosaic painting appears to us, the aesthetic quality "elegant" does not actually exist in the work. Neither is that aesthetic quality dependent on the quality "colour-mosaic," simply because we see no aesthetic qualities in a painting. In the next chapter, I will tackle problems in Beardsley's arguments that threaten their validity.

### **BEARDSLEY'S CONDITIONS THAT THE ARTWORK IS GOOD AND BEAUTIFUL ARE NOT SUFFICIENT**

Beardsley's conditions for a good and beautiful artwork are (1) the unity and completeness of an artwork causing aesthetic experience and (2) the experience of pleasure or gratification. First, the unity and completeness of an object is not sufficient reason for an object to be good and beautiful. An object can be united and complete but the aesthetic qualities "good" and "beautiful" do not follow from unity and completeness. We experience many unite and complete buildings which do not appear to us to be good or beautiful. The unity and completeness of an artwork cause different experiences and reactions in people.

Similarly, the experience of pleasure or gratification is not a sufficient reason for an object to be good and beautiful. People enjoying a ballet performance do not invoke the qualities of good and beauty to the work as such. In other words, the ballet is not good and beautiful because people enjoy it but people enjoy it and consider the work good and beautiful only if it is a good and beautiful artwork. Nevertheless, the fundamental question is whether artworks, people or natural phenomena have aesthetic features that are independent of our experience and thought if we simply take pleasure in them. Aesthetic qualities do not seem to have an empirical reference. It is clear that people exist, but the existence of their beauty and ugliness is very dubious. We perceive faces of different shapes, symmetrical and deformed faces. The symmetry does not mean, however, that there really is beauty in the face. Aesthetic judgement is of what people think about experience and with what experience is about.

According to Beardsley, artworks have some inherent aesthetic qualities, which can be perceived by spectators, or they have both aesthetic and non-aesthetic qualities. The latter means that aesthetic

qualities are dependent on non-aesthetic qualities: for instance, “being garish” would be dependent on a riot of bright colours of a painting or a statue. This means that both aesthetic and non-aesthetic concepts would be empirical. The following argument shows that this claim is implausible.

1. Non-aesthetic sensible qualities are empirical.
2. Aesthetic qualities are not sensible and are not like non-aesthetic sensible qualities.
3. Therefore, aesthetic qualities are not empirical.

The argument is plausible. The colour green and its shades and the sounds of a piano are empirical because of sensibility. However, sentimentality and elegance do not exist in objects, so one is not able to perceive a sentimental or elegant movie. The concepts of aesthetic qualities do not refer to visible features of a visible object.

So why does an artwork not meet Beardsley’s conditions? The reason is that the idea that the combined statements “There is a united and complete artwork” and “One feels pleasure in front of it” necessarily mean “A good and beautiful artwork is front of them” is simply not true. “There is a united and complete artwork” and “One feels pleasure in front of it” may be true but “A good and beautiful artwork is front of them” is not a true statement. An experience of completeness about industrial buildings and historic monuments that are external to us frequently occurs. Nevertheless, an experience of beauty about industrial buildings and historic monuments external to us is a more dubious occurrence than an experience of completeness. The experience of beauty changes from one person to another. Beauty is not the same as completeness.

In the next chapter, I will show that Beardsley does not particularly focus on the meanings of “sense experience” and “perception.” People may have a common experience of a person but perceive her differently. Their *behaviour* indicates that they not only have different aesthetic claims but also a different experience of the same person.

## THE FACE-EXPERIENCE AND FACE PERCEPTION

As I mentioned earlier, empiricism can be interpreted as the thesis that the same object causes similar impressions or experiences in different

persons. The content of these experiences is the object; for example, the content of Marilyn Monroe’s face-experience is the object Marilyn Monroe’s face. However, it does not necessarily follow from this thesis that people’s perception will be similar. How do we then discover that they perceive things differently? This can be inferred from differences in behaviour. That is to say, people’s actions are an objective *indirect* indication about their inner states of mind. Experience is an inner state of mind. The content of Marilyn Monroe’s face-experience is Marilyn Monroe’s face. However, it is possible that one person does not perceive Marilyn Monroe’s face because of face blindness, another perceives her face well but does not recognize her, and the third person says that he or she sees Marilyn Monroe. These three observers have a similar experience but perceive differently. In cognitive science, researchers have shown that having a face-experience and perceiving a face are two distinct mental activities. The latter requires the activation of information systems such as memory and is based on the sensory information of sensation. This can indicate that perceiving the face is affected by a person’s background knowledge. One can experience the face of Marilyn Monroe without perceiving her. That is, one does recognize the face of Marilyn Monroe because one has never heard of Marilyn Monroe.

One argument against Beardsley’s thesis that aesthetic qualities are objective is as follows. A representational content of symmetry-experience refers to the symmetrical features of a face. However, the content of beauty-experience has no representational content that refers to the quality of a face. Therefore, a symmetry-experience and a beauty-experience have a distinct content because symmetry is a visible feature of a face and beauty is not. For example, symmetric faces may *look* attractive because symmetry indicates how healthy an individual is. One may have a symmetry-experience of a face portrait without observing and recognize a face but a stroke formation. Perception, then, is a form of sensory interpreting. The stroke formation may look “cool” to someone, but it is not made objectively “cool” simply because it looks “cool” to a person. It is not objectively “cool.”

Two examples clarify the meaning of the representational content of experience that aesthetic



experience lacks (I leave aside the possibility that experience does not exist as a mental state, which is a thesis of eliminative materialism). The idea behind these examples is: many things appear to a person in experience but he or she is able to focus his or her attention only on few of them and interpret them as something special. Furthermore, different persons can be in distinct mental states although they are in exactly the same situation. They have a different aesthetic experience, which appears in their reaction towards what is occurring outside of themselves. If one is walking in the forest, one may have the visual impression of a riot of colours, shades of green, red, and yellow, and perceive the colours on the surfaces of bodies, trees, flowers, and rocks. One may also hear noises, recognizing them as sounds of birds and the rustle and sigh of leaves in trees, although they are hearings affected by the auditory nerve. However, it seems clear to me that these percepts and phenomena do not have inherent aesthetic qualities. Likewise, aesthetic qualities do not exist among real flowers, trees, and birds.

Second, if one is walking in the streets of the city, one may have the visual impression of a riot of shades of grey, green, and black. They appear to be on buildings, bridges, cars, and tunnels. Cars, pedestrians, bars, and cafés make sounds although the sounds are hearings, that is, the sounds that are heard, not un-heard sounds. Why would these sounds of the city that one adds to the real things have inherent aesthetic qualities? Urban sounds and appearances clearly differ from a forest's sounds and appearances. However, where is their beauty or ugliness, which can be experienced? The answer cannot be that they exist in the relationship of their parts, but rather that the beauty or ugliness is a phantasm situated in the observer's mind.

It is fairly certain that the sense organs and the central nervous system are necessary for the existence of the visual scenery and other sensory impressions. Perception, however, focuses a person's attention on the objects in the scenery, such as colours, shapes, and movement, and measures their details. For example, a sound itself does not reveal what sound it is but one must interpret and recognize it as sighing of wind or the buzz of a motorcycle. Perceiving, then, as understanding what appears, guides a person's acts in a different way in a wild forest or on the streets of Cairo. It is possible that people's background thoughts and

beliefs affect how they aesthetically perceive a wild forest or the streets of Cairo. This is because aesthetic judgements themselves do not indicate aesthetic qualities in reality that can be inferred. That is to say, people imagine beauty and ugliness in the world, and sense experience itself lacks aesthetic content of what is pleasurable or disgusting to the senses.

## AESTHETIC EXPERIENCE IS NOT OBJECTIVELY NEUTRAL

I have suggested in the second chapter that the object of experience is distinguished by what belongs to the experience and what the perceiver thinks about the experience. It is directly obvious that we have experience of something. I have the experience of shape, size, texture, colour, sound, noise, hardness or sweetness, for instance. I have the experience of men and women. However, I have no experience of sublimity or disgustingness that would be located on the face. Aesthetic features seem not to belong to the experience. Instead, the perceiver aesthetically thinks about what experience includes even if it lacks the aesthetic feature. My argument *against* a claim that there are beautiful and ugly persons in the world is based on what belongs to the experience. Experience reveals the nature around me but it does not reveal the aesthetic qualities. Experience reveals people around me but they do not seem to be beautiful or ugly. Therefore, aesthetic qualities, beauty and ugliness, are not parts of the experience, but they are what a perceiver thinks about the experience. I think of the beautiful things to be in the world. But I can only see cities, natural phenomena, and people in different clothing.

Are there cases that would show that different people have different experiences about the appearance of the face of the same person? Of course, this person has a unified and symmetrical face. According to Joshua Knobe et al., experimental philosophy pursues the traditional questions of philosophy (free will, the mind-body problem, moral relativism), but they examine people's intuitions about these questions using the tools of contemporary psychology.<sup>19</sup> Claims about intuition are tested in controlled experiments, and results are subjected to the usual statistical analyses. The intuition is that the object has the aesthetic features that it really has. Moreover,

different people would have an aesthetic experience of the face of the same person as having the aesthetic features. It is possible to explain or predict how a person will react in a future situation when a certain type of face appears by knowing something of their background general beliefs and intuitions. Different external reactions and non-verbal behaviour indicate that different persons are in different mental states and do not experience faces that appear in the same way. Aesthetic experience is not a theory-neutral and value-free way to obtain information about the aesthetic qualities of nature.

The idea is simply the following: if a person's conceptual thoughts and beliefs are known, it can be predicted how he or she will experience the appearance of a rock star or a model. A person's background thoughts and beliefs affect his or her experience about this rock star or this model. For example, if a person considers rock music to be rubbish and fashion to be sexy and rock musicians disgusting and models sexy, then his attitude predicts what he will experience and judge when a rock star or a model is seen or heard: "Total garbage!" or "What a sexy doll!" This is not only a verbal opinion, as a person's non-verbal behaviour also reveals his feelings towards a rock musician or a fashion model. A person has the power to aesthetically judge them.

A hypothesis is then as follows: if Susan likes or hates rock music, modern art or fashion, Susan adds positive or negatives aesthetic qualities to classic songs, such as The Clash's *Rock the Casbah* or The Ramones' *Blitzkrieg Bop*, and these two rock bands, abstract paintings, Henry Miller's work or top fashion models, such as Kate Moss. Susan perceives these things in a certain way. This indicates, we can reason, that people's background moral aesthetic views affect their experience of rock bands and their members or fashion models and the verbal judgements that they make about these people. Therefore, it seems clear that fashion models and the rock bands have *no* aesthetic qualities inherent within them. A star's appearance is neither beautiful nor ugly, although people may feel that her looks and face are, for example, attractive and impressive. People state their experience of their aesthetic qualities, especially their subjective *visual aesthetics*.

Therefore, we stop a pedestrian and ask whether he generally likes fashion or rock music,

he might answer "No, I don't like it." Then we will show him some pictures of the top models and he will listen to classic rock songs. We can predict that he will react and politely judge: "They look so stunning. That is not very beautiful music. Noise!" It does not make any sense to conclude from his reaction that the models are portrayed and "sexualized" and The Clash's songs *are* bad. The band members look foolish. In summary, aesthetic qualities are not sensible and empirical phenomena that we perceive as existing in people, however symmetrical or complete they may be.

I do see faces. However, I do not see their aesthetic features. If I say that someone looks disgusting, I do not express any aspect of her or him. I use my power to judge and objectify her or him by appearance. Aesthetic judgements are arbitrary exercise of power. There are no beautiful and ugly persons in the world.

## CONCLUSION

Background thoughts and beliefs seem to influence people's intuitions and experiences about what constitutes beautiful or ugly art and people. However, this does not mean that these thoughts and beliefs influence sense experiences about other people. Experiences of rock stars or models seem to be objective but *aesthetic* experience is not neutral. Moral aesthetic view may affect perception as recognition (such as the question "what is that?") via memory that the senses have activated. People who like fashion and rock style experience models' and rock bands' aesthetics in a positive way and use positive aesthetic words about them. If one hates fashion and rock music, then it is certain that they will have a totally different attitude and aesthetic words. This result completely contradicts Beardsley's objective theory of aesthetic experience, where he argues that artworks have directly perceived aesthetic qualities. It is unclear whether Beardsley would claim that beautiful and ugly people exist. Direct experience does not include beauty and ugliness, and thus aesthetic realism is not sound.

The result of this writing is that aesthetic qualities are not experienced because there are no aesthetic features to perceive in a face. Giving aesthetic meaning to an experience of other persons does not lead to the existence of beauty or ugliness being directly located in persons.

There is no justification or evidence that that a performance of fashion or a rock band can *objectively* be judged as nasty and bad because we feel nasty and bad when watching it. The experience of art as such does not predict how people will experience it and what kind of meanings people will give to their experiences. People's speeches and writings predict and explain why they experience art and other people differently from an aesthetic point of view. This indicates that there are no aesthetic qualities that exist in an objective nature. We know that people's experiences of aesthetic perception are not original and unique. To judge aesthetically is "to reflect" one's aesthetic values onto the objectified human.

### Notes

1. David E. Cooper, "David Hume, 'Of the standard of taste'," in *Aesthetics: The Classical Readings*, ed. David E. Cooper (Oxford: Blackwell, 1997), 76–7.
2. Monroe C. Beardsley, "The Aesthetic Point of View," in *Monroe C. Beardsley: The Aesthetic Point of View: Selected Essays*, eds. Michael J. Wreen and Donald M. Callen (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 1982), 15–34; and John Dewey, *Art as Experience* (New York: Perigree, 1934).
3. For Aaron Ridley, "There are, no doubt, difficulties in specifying exactly what the difference between aesthetic and non-aesthetic qualities or properties is supposed to be." I argue that if the things have no aesthetic qualities, one cannot look and perceive them. See Aaron Ridley, "On the Musically Possible," *British Journal of Aesthetics* 54, no. 1 (2014): 2–3. See also Jon Robson, "Appreciating the Acquaintance Principle: A Reply to Konigsberg," *British Journal of Aesthetics* 53, no. 2 (2013): 237, 239. The acquaintance principle assumes that a work has aesthetic qualities.
4. Virgil C. Aldrich, *Philosophy of Art* (Englewood Cliffs, NJ: Prentice-Hall, 1963); and Roger Scruton, *Art and Imagination: A Study in the Philosophy of Mind* (London: Routledge, 1982).
5. Frank Sibley, "Aesthetic Concepts," *Philosophical Review* 68 (1959): 421–50.
6. Peter Kivy, "Aesthetic Concepts: Some Fresh Considerations," *Journal of Aesthetics and Art Criticism* 37, no. 4 (1979): 423–32.
7. James Shelley, "The Concept of the Aesthetic." *The Stanford Encyclopaedia of Philosophy*, 14, <http://plato.stanford.edu/archives/fall2013/entries/aesthetic-concept/> (accessed July 15, 2013); and Beardsley, "The Aesthetic Point of View," 15–34.
8. Dewey, *Art as Experience*; Beardsley, "The Aesthetic Point of View," 15–34; Sibley, "Aesthetic Concepts," 421–50; and Kivy, "Aesthetic Concepts: Some Fresh Considerations," 423–32.
9. It seems so natural to consider a natural object as having aesthetic properties. However, the aesthetic disagreement is obvious in our everyday life. See for example Roger Scruton, "A Bit of Help from Wittgenstein," *British Journal of Aesthetics* 51, no. 3 (2011): 309–10.
10. George Dickey, "Beardsley's Phantom Aesthetic Experience," *Journal of Philosophy* 62, no. 5 (1965): 131–2. James Shelley claims that Dewey's and Beardsley's theories were internalistic during the early and middle parts of the Twentieth Century: Shelley, "The Concept of the Aesthetic," 13.
11. Monroe C. Beardsley, "Aesthetic Experience Regained," in *Monroe C. Beardsley: The Aesthetic Point of View: Selected Essays*, eds. Michael J. Wreen and Donald M. Callen (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 1982), 82–7.
12. Monroe C. Beardsley, "What Is an Aesthetic Quality?," in *Monroe C. Beardsley: The Aesthetic Point of View: Selected Essays*, eds. Michael J. Wreen and Donald M. Callen (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 1982), 94–5, 106.
13. Beardsley, "Aesthetic Experience Regained," 84–5.
14. *Ibid.*, 85.
15. Beardsley, "The Aesthetic Point of View," 20–4, 26–8.
16. *Ibid.*, 23–4.
17. *Ibid.*, 22–3, 28.
18. Beardsley, "What Is an Aesthetic Quality?," 101.
19. Joshua Knobe, et al., "Experimental Philosophy," *Annual Review of Psychology* 63 (2011): 1–2. See also Joshua Knobe, "Experimental Philosophy and Philosophical Significance," *Philosophical Explorations* 10 (2007), 119–22; and Joshua Knobe and Shaun Nichols, "An Experimental Philosophy Manifesto," in *Experimental Philosophy*, eds. Joshua Knobe and Shaun Nichols (New York: Oxford University Press, 2008), 3–14.