Beauty in the Works of Saadi and Opinions of Croce

Masomeh Nazari Charvadeh[1]* and Ahmad Khatami[2]

1. Department of Persian Language and Literature, Astara Branch, Islamic Azad University, Astara, Iran
2. Department of Persian Language and Literature, Shahid Beheshti University, Tehran, Iran

*Corresponding author's e-mail: m.nazari@iau-astara.ac.ir

ABSTRACT: Among aesthetic theorists there are two distinct insights: one celebrates originality of nature and the other one celebrates originality of meaning. The first group seeks art in the objective world while the second group seeks it in the subjective world. One of the followers of the second theory was Bendetto Croce, the Italian philosopher. Croce theorizes that beauty is intuition and revelation, which is the same as perceiving beauty. Beauty is not an inborn attribute of phenomena, because it resides in the ego of the perceiver. The present study explored the works of Saadi to conclude that he had been more interested in objective beauty and originality of meaning years before Croce. Moreover, it was concluded that more than half of the aesthetic topics discussed in Saadi's poetry stressed subjective innate beauty.

Key Words: Aesthetics, Objective Beauty, Subjective Beauty, Croce, Saadi.

INTRODUCTION

Beauty is whatever that attracts human and makes the perceiver listen to it or watch it repeatedly. Prior to the modernism movement, beauty was referred to In Iran as "Jamal", which is word that literally means goodness and virtue. Ansari classifies beauty (Persian: Jamal) into three categories: 1) minor beauty or apparent (formal) beauty, which is called "Hosne Sorat" in Persian and is perceived by "sensation"; 2) abstract (bare) beauty which is created by cleaning the self through reasoning and is called "Soorate Hosn" in Persian. It is embraced by the self; 3) absolute beauty of God, which is sacred and is hidden from the creation due to its extreme clarity. This beauty cannot be perceived directly while the mediums used to perceive it are also innately absolute in relation to the Truth [1]. Therefore, the whole universe is the manifestation of the truth of being. That is to say, the truth has descended and revealed through objects present in the universe. Human is a creature that manifests all divine perfections. In other words, the universe fully shows divine perfections scattered everywhere and human is a creature that possesses all perfections. Moreover, the first step for human to achieve perfection or the basis of human perfection is perception of beauty and distinguishing between beauty and its charm. Prior to the emergence of modernism, beauty was the best guide to virtues leading to the truth. Hence, the origin of all beauty is the Truth (God Almighty). According to Ibn Sina "The Supreme Being that is the all-master is the beloved of all creatures because He is innately pure and abstract. What attracts human is the virtue. Hence, the good is in love with the Good. Moreover, if goodness did not belong to the Beloved, He would not be loved by the universe. Accordingly, as goodness increases the worthiness of the Beloved increases as well. Therefore, the Beloved, who is clean and free of deficits, is the all-good, the all-beloved and the all-loving by nature. The aforementioned points explain the unity of love, lover and beloved as well as the lack of any duality." [2] Aristotle also paid considerable attention to aesthetics. He believed that human is naturally interested in harmony and balance and in fact enjoys it. Therefore, human's tendency to harmony and balance reflects his interest in beauty. Moreover, according to Aristotle, beauty has a substantial function which means that it eliminates human grief and fear and purifies his soul. He uses the word "catharsis" which means "purging" to convey what he means. Seemingly, he defined catharsis as the act of purging human soul and cleaning it from evil. He believed that the works of intellectuals and mystics provide for purging or catharsis [3]. Aristotle introduces harmony, order and proportion as the attributes of a manifestation of beauty and seeks for beauty in the unity of elements of poetry and drama. Based on the effect of drama he goes on to define goodness as beauty [4]. Plotinus, as one of the followers of Neo-Platonism, Plato's Ring of Gyges, and philosophers of the middle Ages describes beauty as follows: "Divinity is the origin of beauty…Reason and its fruits owe their beauty to genuine spiritual beauty. That is to say, they do not derive their beauty from exotic beings. Hence, it is said that a good and beautiful soul is similar to God because He (God) is the better and more beautiful origin of the universe and the origin of the creation or universe, which is beauty." [5] In general, prior to the modernist era, religion, art, truth and beauty were intermingled and there was no difference between sacred and non-scared beings or works. That is to say, art did not originate from art and an artist was not considered a special person. Moreover, the joy in watching works of art was not based on aesthetic

principles as well. At the time, art was one of the ways of manifestation of the divine realm and the works of artists and experts were considered to be beautiful.

Aesthetic Theories

Among the scholars of aesthetics there are two distinct viewpoints: originality of meaning and originality of nature. The first group seeks for the roots of art in the subjective word while the second group seeks the origin of art in the objective world. Followers of the first the group (originality of meaning) believe that beauty is the subjective understanding of objective phenomena. Therefore, a human lacking such an understanding fails to perceive beauty. One of the followers of this theory was Bendetto Croce, the Italian philosopher, who said "Beauty is intuition or revelation or an illuminated vision. That is to say, it refers to the sole human's understanding of perceptibles or subjective assumptions made without reasoning, understanding or conceptualizing." [6] Such beauty is expressed in the form of lyrical poems instead of scientific or philosophic poems. That is to say, first human perceives something through intuition or revelation and imagines it and then he expresses it in the form of poetry for himself or others. Croce believed that human knowledge is gained through two distinct ways: through intuition and through reasoning (the use of intellection and argumentation). Intuition is used in aesthetics and the feeling that brings about understanding. "Revelation and intuition lead to perception of beauty. However, beauty is not an inborn characteristic of objects as it lies in the soul of the perceivers. That is to say, beauty is the product of spiritual activity or growth of a person who ascribes beauty to objects or discovers the beauty of objects." [6] Croce enumerated four distinct spiritual actions two of which were theoretical and two were applied actions. The four actions were as follows: "1) intuition which is the first mental and imaginary action. 2) Conceptualization which results in scientific knowledge and speech and values intentional relationships. 3) Liberty, which includes every day human actions, particularly economic actions. 4) Rational authority which includes actions aimed at the ultimate goal of social life and provides the chance for manifestation of liberty in ethical acts. According to Croce, an aesthetician has to use his/her intuition to perceive lack of knowledge, influences or sensations. In this stage, the intuitive understanding equal to expression is made possible. The origin of the equality is intuition and expression in the philosophy of Croce, who likes Hegel, believed that expression is related to language. Although in language there are two opposing force of intention and intuition, intuition is always the winner [3]. R. G. Collingwood, one of the pupils of Croce, considered art to be subjective also. He theorized aesthetics and described the distinction between conceptual and rational thought on the basis of what he called "imagination". Similar to Croce, Collingwood also used Kant's aesthetic principles which state artistic beauty is separate from concept and productivity as it is ultimate and general without seeking any goal. If someone looks at my face and realizes that I am frightened, his/her perception is solely based on the emotion I express. But if I talk about my fear and use the power of imagination or intuition, I create an artwork. As a result of my action (the artwork), the perceiver realizes that I am frightened. That is to say, I do something to communicate with people and do not only rely on my expressions. Art is nothing but personal imagination or intuition whether there is a perceiver (audience) or whether the imagination is actualized. In response to these theories a third theory was formed which hold that beauty is bipolar. In this view, beauty depends on two poles: intrinsic pole and extrinsic pole. Beauty is the joint product of objective and subjective worlds, but since people seek for the origin of beauty outside of an organism, they consider it to be objective. Moreover, since people feel beautiful they consider their beauty to be subjective. The third theory is approved and considered superior to the other two theories because "On one hand, the spiritual activity that produces beauty is not basically invoked by some perceptibles, which can be called ugly. Therefore, in order to invoke the productive spiritual activity it is necessary for perceptibles to meet some specific conditions. On the other hand, the motive that invokes a beautiful spiritual activity in a person does not usually do the same in other people. Hence, not only the precetibles shall meet some special conditions, but the perceiver has to also possess a specific talent to be impressed with the percetibles". [6]

Beauty and Affection

Every poem embraces affection and emotion. That is to say, emotion and affection are the two elements that lead to creation of a work of literature. Croce says: "Affection is the basic substance used by an artist to change it to a material but affection and thought through artistic creation. Art balances and gentles affection and introduces it as imagination and image instead of grief and groan. It in fact conceals it behind the veil of inspiration and complexity or sophistication." [7] It is noteworthy that the only thing that gives coherence and unity to intuition is affection. Intuition is called so because it embodies an affection originating from affection and emphasizing on it [6]. Affection, as the most important and substantial component of any work, is a shadow of the "ego" creating the work [8].

Saadi and Affection

Feelings and affections of some poets originate from a limited and personal "ego" (or "self"). Evidently, when affection is the product of man's direct experience with the external world or the environment it is more original than the affection resulted from re-examining experiments of others. However, it is worth noting that humans have different varied experiences that cannot be expected to be gained through direct interaction with the environment. In other words, it shall be accepted that a part of human experiences (as is the case for Saadi's use of affection) is the result of human's living in the society and having social and cultural interactions with other

humans because every person is influenced by the cultural experiences of his/her race and widely utilizes them intentionally or unintentionally. Since Saadi was a contemplative human, he reflected on and used any perceivable or thinkable material or spiritual event and phenomena. However, since affection is the result of the direct impacts of the living environment on human and since Saad lived in scientific environments to learn different cultures and sciences, he was influenced by all of those environments. The effects of various environments on Saadi's works are evident and he mostly used his experiences to convey his thoughts. Analysis of the poetic emotions expressed by Saadi reveals that he incorporates all of the three groups of "egos" into his works (i.e. personal ego, social-political ego, and human ego).

The Empirical-Scientific View (or the Aristotelian View)

The empirical view is known as the Aristotelian view. As opposed to Plato, his master, Aristotle focused on the Earth instead of the Sky and claimed that the origin of beauty, the reason behind beauty and the nature of beauty can be found on the Earth instead of the sky as the Earth is the realm of experiment. According to Aristotle, the secret and mystery of beauty lies in the proportion and harmony of constituent parts. In his "Poetics" he puts: "Beauty is a matter of proportion and order. That is to say, a living being is described as beautiful only if it demonstrates order as well as a specific proportion and form." [9] Similar to Aristotle, Saadi also explains the essence of art from the empirical-scientific point of view. According to Saadi, beauty is proportion. He considers human beauty to be the product of a natural proportion and harmony created by God to arrange different constituent parts of human:

He (God) gave you ten fingers and added two arms to your shoulders [10].

In Aristotle's view, Saadi considers good composition, balance, tenderness, good stature and harmony to be the causes of beauty. Examples of this belief are as follows:

1) Good composition: Saadi defines "good composition" (Persian: Hosne Tarkib) as proportion and balance of constituent parts:
Seeing your beauty in the mirror shows the pain of one who was inpatient to see you...It is a figure that cannot be described by a fluent tongue (person) due to its good composition...[10].

2) Balance: Saadi uses the word "Eetedal" (English: balance) to measure the proportions of the body of the beloved with her head, which symbolizes balance. He introduces his beloved as superior to a cedar:
You are the blooming tree whose balance makes it more valuable than a tall cedar [10].
"One year Muhammad Kharazmshah (R.I.P) chose to compromise for God's sake. I went to the Kashgar Grand Mosque and saw a boy who was perfectly balanced and beautiful..." [10]

3) Tenderness: Saadi uses the word "tenderness" (Persian: Latafat) to refer to virtue and harmony of virtues:
He was a sharp and well-spoken youth always smiling. He was among our friends. He did not know grief and was always laughing [10].

4) Good stature: Saadi defines "good stature" (Persian: hamate Khosh) as the fruit of consistency and proportion of constituent parts:
There was a medic with an angel-like face in Marv whose stature was similar to that of a cedar [10].

5) Harmony: Saadi uses the beauty resulting from harmony in to two ways:
1. Human in general and the beloved in particular
2. Your charming proportional and harmonic moves are aimed at me as are your non-thoughtful words [10].
It is worth mentioning that in a story told in his book "Golestan" Saadi considers the inharmonic sound of the singer the reason of his awkward song:
It seems his inharmonic voice hurts the soul. It is even uglier than the news of death of his art [10].
3. Animals in general and birds in particular
Rives sing chain-like songs while birds sing harmonic rhymes.
The beauty of birds singing is explained by harmony and balance. In a story included in "Golestan", Saadi introduces the inharmonic appearance of raven as the reason for its ugliness: "They put a parrot next to a raven in a cage. The ugliness of the raven made the parrot wonder why it was so horrible and abhorred and inharmonic and cursed [10].

Objective Unity and Mind and Beauty

In order to create proportion and balance between components and create beauty it is necessary to find coordination and consistency between form and content, word and meaning, and objective and subjective dimensions. "The intrinsic element is manifested in/through the external dimension while the extrinsic element

denotes something beyond its being (the inner side)." [11] Subjective and objective unity in art is embodied spiritually. That is to say, the best artworks demonstrate the unity and harmony of form (appearance, configuration, or material) and soul (meaning, content or ideal). They also show that none of them (form and soul) is superior to the other. In the nineteenth century, the difference between material (substance) and form was turned into a well-known opposition in the philosophy of aesthetics, which was the opposition between material (content) and form (appearance).

1) Materialism

Followers of this school believe that "art is solely material". They also define the material as a joyful or moral entity which guides human to the realm of sublime philosophy and the world of religion. It may also help imagine creatures as they are (realistic imagination) and celebrate what is beautiful by nature and its material composition". [6] Lipps, Croce, H. D. Martin and Collingwood are among the followers of this school. They consider subjective processes to be the most valuable material entities. This school holds that the true art lies in the mind of the artist and its secondary manifestation in a specific material medium is of second importance. Such intellectuals stress art as a means of expressing emotions and intuitive perceptions. They do not deny that a painter in action may have a full intuitive perception of his/her creation, but they strongly emphasize the thoughts of the painter and not his/her creation on the canvas. The reason is that according to this school, the true work of art resides in the mind of the artist [12]. There are many examples in both "Golestan" and "Boostan" where Saadi considers beauty to be intrinsic and subjective. He usually prefers virtues to apparent beauty as the following verses clearly describe his viewpoint on beauty (i.e. Saadi's aesthetic theory):

"A truth-seeker finds the beauty he sees in the beautiful Chinese and Turkish men in an apple. Grief does not have a status in Saadi's writings as his work hide layers of beauty." [10]

Saadi believes that in order to perceive beauty, human has to go beyond the surface and appearance to look into the inner side of beings. He, in fact, explicitly invites men to do so:

"If you are smart, look for the meaning as it is the only thing that survives the passage of time [10]. Human is not only composed of bones and skins as not every entity contains meaning [10]."

In a story, Saadi elaborates on the notion of inner beauty and shows that there are human beings who prefer inner beauty to beauty of appearance. **"The Story of Mahmud Qaznavi and Ayyaz"**: In this story, Mahmud Qaznavi expresses his love for the good temper of Ayyaz: [10]. **"The Story of the Inferior Prince"**: In this story Saadi introduces a prince who was uglier than his brothers but was superior to them in knowledge and intelligence [10]. **"The Story of the Girl and the Black Man"**: In this story Saadi describes that the love of a girl for a black man is targeted at the virtues of the man and not his appearance [10]. **"The Story of Joneid and the Dog"**: In this story Saadi uses his character "Joneid" to explain that apparent beauty and superiority are useless and what matters is the inner side [10].

2) Formalism

As opposed to the advocates of subjective art, there was also a group who supported word and form. This group values originality of appearance and considers content to be of second importance. Followers of this school believe that material (content) does not matter because it is a means of creating beautiful forms or frameworks used to hold (contain) beautiful forms. Moreover, they believe that only form gives heavenly attributes to artworks [6]. A number of philosophers and critics consider form to be more substantial than content (or its perception). "When Clive Bell referred to art as a "meaningful form" he meant that (1) form is the essence of art; (2) form shall be perceived and thus it is perceptible (i.e. it possesses meaning)." [13]

Saadi sometimes gives credit and value to apparent beauty as well. However, it is worth mentioning that Saadi refers to objective beauty pretty much less than he values subjective beauty. Saadi's belief concerning objective beauty is similar to the European traditional aesthetics and not those of German classic philosophers. The reason is that "the European traditional aesthetics goes beyond the appearance of an artwork while the German classic philosophy stresses the role of the mind and explains art regarding the theme and ultimate goal of artistic education". [10] In his sonnets, Saadi generally talks about the apparent beauty of his beloved. "Sonnet is about affection, enthusiasm and love. It is about a human love that is expressed shamelessly and courageously with utmost beauty and elegance." [14] However, in "Golestan" and "Boostan" Saadi talks about objective beauty and mostly focuses on descriptions of facial and apparent beauty. Examples of such descriptions are as follows:

"She is like a piece of moon that deceits pious men, she has angel-like face similar to the appearance of a peacock. After pious men see her, they lose patience". [10]

"The pious man ate some delicious food, wore a smooth cotton dress, collected some fruits, good flavors, and candies. He looked at the faces of the bondsmen and bondwomen and said wisely: the hair of the beloved confines reason and traps even subtle ones." [10]

3) Unity of Mind and External World

The unity of mind and the external world is a necessity in art. This theory bloomed in Germany by the followers of Hegel and Herbart. Hegel states: "Artistic beauty is a manifestation of idea and spiritual unity is manifested in artworks in the form of sensation and external visualization. Material and soul or objectivity and

subjectivity are somehow unified. "Hence, it can be said that art is aimed to demonstrate and express ideas in perceptible forms (externalization) to be perceived directly (with no mediums). The reflection is the embodiment of metaphysical and physical aspects or perceptibility in a unified form." [9]

In Saadi's works, sometimes objective and subjective beauty are unified and thus physical and spiritual beauties are manifested all together. In addition to the beauty of face references are also made to virtues and attributes. Examples of such references are as follows:

"I saw the son of a general in his house. He was considerably rational, clever, and knowledgeable. It was also evident that he was great by manners.

There was a long-tailed star over his head that reflected his sagacity.

The Sultan accepted the words that were beautiful both formally and conceptually. The sages also believe that art is a sign of capability and power and not property. Moreover, greatness is measured by one's rationality and not his age [10].

I heard two brothers lived on one of the boundaries of the West. They were powerful and strong commanders, who were good-looking and wise warriors." [10]

In sum, analysis of the concepts of objective and subjective beauty as well as the unity of mind and the external world in Saadi's "Golestan" and "Boostan" reveals that these notions are incorporated in these two books with the following frequencies:

	Golestan	Boostan
Subjective	54.12	64.93
Objective	40	22.09
Subjective+Objective	5.88	12.98

The percentages of the above figures are also as follows:
Boostan: [subjective beauty= 64.93%; objective beauty= 22.09%; subjective and objective beauty=12.98%]
Golestan: [subjective beauty= 54.12%; objective beauty= 40%; subjective and objective beauty= 5.88%]
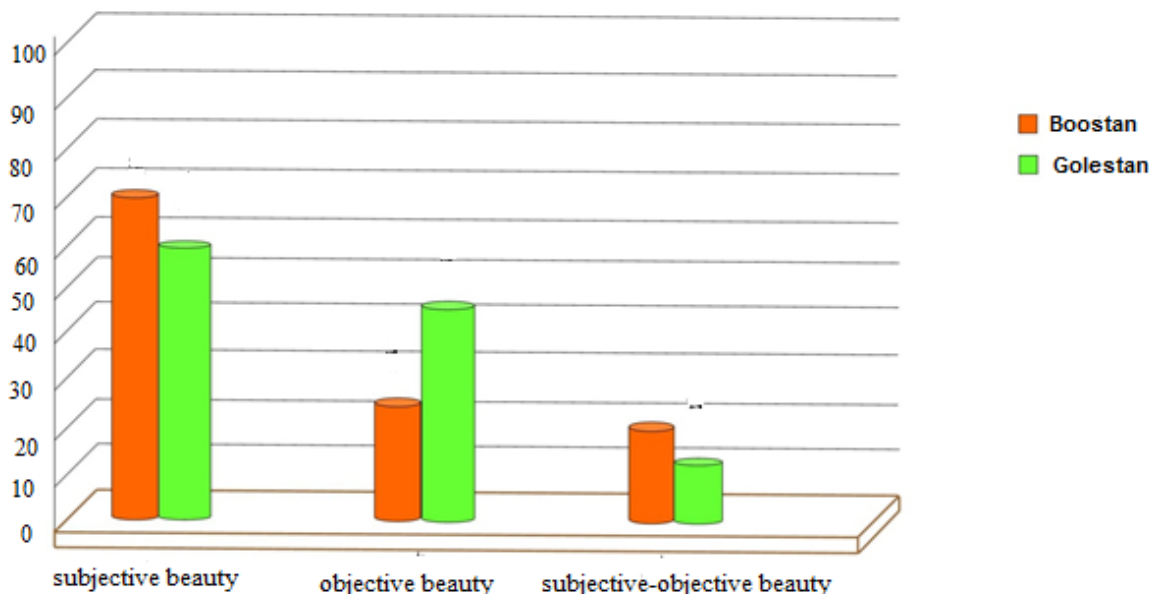Diagrams for the above figures are also as follows:

Diagram 1. Frequencies of objective beauty, subjective beauty and subjective-objective beauty in "Boostan" and "Golestan"

The above diagram indicates that the frequencies of subjective beauty and subjective-objective beauty in "Boostan" are higher than in "Golestan". Moreover, the frequency of objective beauty in "Golestan" is higher than in "Boostan".

DISCUSSION

1) Among aesthetic theorists there are two distinct views. One group values the originality of nature while the other values originality of meaning. The first group seeks for art in the objective world while the second seeks it in the subjective world.

2) Bendetto Croce is the Italian philosopher and advocate of originality of meaning. He considers beauty the result of intuition or revelation and argues that it is the same as perceiving beauty. Moreover, beauty is not an inborn attribute of phenomena as it resides in the ego of the perceiver.

3) Years before Croce, Saadi had been more interested in objective beauty (and originality of meaning) with regard to aesthetic discussion. The idea that a real truth-seeker values the truth of creation and is amazed by effects of creation (and not facial beauty) is reflected by his works. For instance, more than half of the aesthetic notions discussed in Saadi's poetry, especially his books "Golestan" and "Boostan", stress subjective and inborn (innate) beauty.

Boostan: [subjective beauty= 64.93%; objective beauty= 22.09%; subjective and objective beauty=12.98%]
Golestan: [subjective beauty= 54.12%; objective beauty= 40%; subjective and objective beauty= 5.88%]

REFERENCES

1. Taqvai, V. 2002. From aestheticism to aesthetics. Fine Arts Journal, No. 11, pp. 4-12.
2. Ibn Sina. 1981. Rasayel. Translated by Zia al-Din Dorrie. Central Library Press. Tehran, second edition.
3. Ahmadi, B. 2008. Truth and beauty. Central Press, Tehran, 15th edition.
4. Aristotle. 2006. Nicomachean Ethics. Translated by Muhammad Hassan Lotfi, Tarhe No' Publications, Tehran.
5. Plotinus. 1987. Survey of Plotinus' Works. Translated by Muhammad Hassan Lotfi. Khawrazmi Publication. Tehran, first edition.
6. Croce, B. 1971. Review of aesthetics. Translated by Foad Rouhani, Book Translation and Publication Foundation. Tehran.
7. Qarib, R. 1987. Criticism based on aesthetics. Translate by Najme Rajai. Ferdowsi University, Mashhad, first edition.
8. Sabour, D. 2005. Horizons of Persian sonnet. Zovvar Press, Tehran, seconds edition.
9. Zamiran, M. 1998. Phenomenological inquests into art and beauty. Kanoun Press. Tehran, first edition.
10. Saadi, M. 1999. A survey of Saadi's works. Edited by Mojtaba Mowlavi from Muhammad Ali Forouqi's version. Mosta'an Press, Tehran, first edition.
11. Hegel, G. 1984. Lectures on aesthetics. Translated by Muhammad Ebdadian. Avazeh Press, Tehran, first edition.
12. Sheppard, A. 1996. Basics of art philosophy. Translated by Ali Ramin. Scientific-Cultural Publications Company, Tehran, first edition.
13. Hospers, J. and Scruton R. 2000. Philosophy and Aesthetics. Translated by Yaqub Azhand. University of Tehran Press. Tehran, first edition.
14. Movahed, Z. 1994. Saadi. Tarh-e No Publications, Tehran, first edition.