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THE AESTHETICS OF NATURALISM IN THE WEST, THE EAST
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“All the history of the human culture is the history of either creating new or
discovering old cultural values.

The cultivation of the understanding of other cultures
merges to a certain extent with the history of humanism”

D. S. Likhatchov

Absract

The article deduces the originality of the interpretations of naturalistic approach in Western, Eastern and Russian aesthetics. Aesthetic values are interpreted as the result of suprapragmatically, non-utilitarian spiritually-sensitive human comprehension of the object that occurs in a particular sociocultural context. His account allows the researcher to explain the reasons for the (mostly) negative relationship to the natural components in Western aesthetics since Plato; contemplative-active attitude in the aesthetics of China, Japan, Korea; and the vital-active attitude in Russian aesthetics.

Keywords: aesthetics of naturalism, aesthetic value of nature, body aesthetics, aesthetics of the environment, Western European aesthetics, the aesthetics of China, the Russian aesthetic tradition.

Aesthetic value is understood here as a special spiritual value, whose *emotional and sensual experience* promotes *spiritual human harmonization*.

Aesthetic values are shaped when a man masters the environment spiritually (suprapragmatically). It is fundamental that these values are of non-utilitarian nature, i.e. they result rather from the contemplation and admiration of an object than the assimilation or subordination of it. The man needs them in order to experience his individuality and integrity, while practice-significant objects make a man, as a rule, dependent upon their existence or a functionality-specific being (N.A. Berdyaev, for example, in his prominent work “Man and Machine”, mentions reification when a man serving a technical product loses his integrity).

The research of the genesis and modifications of aesthetic values is the subject of aesthetics.

The aesthetics of naturalism puts at the forefront the value of the natural component in different culture products, from the body to the art. We don't

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consider naturalism as a method of artistic creation only, although it's most actively studied in Russian sources; in addition, the authors agree about the difficulty of defining this term. *Axiological refraction of the nature is directly linked to its philosophical and cultural interpretation.*

In other words, when speaking about natural phenomena (material, physical or objective) in aesthetic thinking, we ought to consider directly or indirectly its involvement into sociocultural context. It is meaningless, for example, to speak about the beauty of a natural object without this consideration.

The article focuses on comparative analysis of the aesthetics of naturalism in Western, Eastern and Russian philosophical traditions and cultures. The main points for comparison are understanding the nature and aesthetic attitude to it and its objects; interpretation and evaluation of the body as the existence of nature; aesthetic valuing of natural component in the habitat.

The Platonic tradition in European culture is principal. It considers the matter as inert amorphous substance and belongs to the manifestations of naturalism with increasing suspicion, which reaches its climax in medieval culture and art. Representations of Plato's approach to aesthetic side of natural basis can be considered as negative attitudes to the body in medieval Christian culture; corsets and veils in women's clothes; classicist Parks of the eighteenth century or allonge wigs; aesthetics of functionalism (1920–1960). French naturalism (1840–1920) can be assess as the first reaction to long silence of natural and body components in the world and culture. Photographic "objectivity" of art images including spheres that were ethical taboo on this time was considered to be the main value of naturalism [see: 9]. At the same time philosophical-scientific position of positivism occurs whose main idea is to think the material world as the single substance of the being. Art and literary aesthetics match up with this approach.

As W. Tatarkiewicz truly pointed out [12; Ch. 6], Plato did warn in his conclusions: "I don't speak about what someone likes but what is beautiful", that is, he did not deny that subjective and relative judgments express beautiful things. The point is that judgments can and must have objective reason. Moreover, they do have it when relying on mind rather than impressions and feelings.

At the same time, one should emphasize that Plato distinguishes aesthetic problems into two groups. The first group is the nature of the aesthetic, the peculiarity of the beautiful. The second one is the nature of aesthetic and creative (as well as artistic) activities and co-creativity (perception).

A.F. Losev in his works illustrates the universal aestheticism of Plato's opinion: the idea always forms thingness, which expresses the idea. Rather the idea is the active principle of being and expresses itself in shape, through shape. In itself, any idea is perfect and beautiful as it embodies the most essential features of an object, a phenomenon or a man. The perfect condition has already been achieved in an idea even devoid of a contact with a matter. To be more specific, when nothing burdens, an idea exists in its perfect condition up to its materialization. This is the way Plato realizes Socrates' theoretical and worldview attitudes that prove the priority of ideal and universal over substance-material and single.

Philosophical, scientific and artistic naturalism is accordingly the climax

point and denial of Plato's aesthetics. It appreciates nature that is described *in terms of natural and technical Sciences* (E. and J. Goncourt, E. Zola, A. Daudet, and others); the body in its life and natural forms (G. de Maupassant, T. Dreiser, K. Hamsun, T. Hardy, and others) [5; 10; 11]. Paradoxically that these approaches don't affect the aesthetics of environment, which evolved first under the influence of Victorian and later of the modern style.

Despite the difference between the naturalism of the nineteenth century and the aesthetics of Platonism, their basis is common *epistemological* interpretation of nature as opposite basis to the world of ideas [1]. Until the nineteenth century (with exception of pantheists and empiricists) the nature was understood as "privation" of form and significance. The exceptions are architecture projects by A. Gaudi and Goethe's concept of the anticipation – the giving of yourself to a natural basis in the creative process [see: 2]. Contemporary philosophical naturalism in the West has scientific color and refers to aesthetic issues rarely because it is focusing on the methodological monism.

The aesthetic traditions in China, Japan, Korea are connected with Confucianism and Taoism and treat natural basis as a subject of not only admiration but also of disclosure and development. We can say that it's more consistent in the implementation of naturalism and gives it a totally other comprehension. Natural beauty is the subject of *contemplation* and of (spontaneous) creative efforts at all levels of the organization of aesthetic objects. The nature is primary substance compared to human, art, technology, whose being (especially in Zen tradition) is to follow nature. Such naturalism leads to *holism thinking, organic design and ecological culture*. Aesthetics of naturalism is versatile, flexible in responding to the socio-cultural changes due to the breadth of interpretation of the concept of "nature" (for example, the interpretation of design as one of six types of aesthetic activity by Kenzo Ekuan; Japan [2; p. 123]), incorporates and adapts elements of other concepts and styles relatively easily.

In the aesthetic tradition of this region, what's developing by specialists today, nature is estimated as the embodiment of wisdom and knowledge. If you *follow* it, you can go not only to the creation of expressive forms, but also to understand the truth.

Important impact to interpretation of the aesthetic value of nature in Russian culture is a climate itself: isn't possible to coexist harmoniously with harsh and rigid nature. Despite this, nature is understood from the beginning of paganism culture as the absolute epitome of spiritual beauty and a source of bright, strong emotions. Vitalism of Russian aesthetics is reflected in the predominance of red color, bright color combinations, redundancy of forms. This base fits to the theory of Aristotle, who speaks about the *master's disclosure of the potentials* into the matter [see: 7, p. 5]. The main value is the relationship to nature, the *active relationship between human and nature*. It is fixed not so much in the texts, much in the way of everyday life, in the phenomena of culture, in philosophical and artistic traditions, from wooden architecture to free cities planning.

In the Russian concept of nature dominates not epistemological that *vital* component. This leads to the aesthetics. The nature is beautiful because it creates life in all its dynamics and diversity [3]. Cultivated nature is more beautiful because it creates order and it is home for each person. In turn,

human (Vl. Soloviev, N. A. Berdyaev, N. Fedorov, V. I. Vernadsky) capable to active discovery of the nature potential and this activity is beautiful. These ideas form the basis for the identification of aesthetic and moral principles, whereas in the West philosophy these categories were considered separately until S. Kierkegaard and F. Nietzsche.

Conclusion

To conclude, we specify basic features of aesthetics of naturalism in three worldview systems that interact in a complicated manner in the twenty-first century due to globalization, internationalization and cross-cultural cooperation:

1 The understanding of nature and aesthetic attitude towards it and its individual objects can be expressed somewhat schematically. The West European civilization up to the latter half of the twentieth century is characterized by the dominance of subject-centered approach: the nature transformed is beautiful; the matter subjected to the man's intention is beautiful. The understanding of nature as the source and the principle driving force of culture is characteristic of the cultures of China, Japan and regional countries. The Russian distinctive feature is the admiration of nature in all its manifestations.

2 Interpretation of body as the manifestation of nature. According to the West European civilization up to the latter half of the nineteenth century, body is ambivalent. It is the source of sensational pleasure that is not approved by the Christian culture; body is defined as "a body in a corset". Orientalism considers body as the natural part of a big space "body". Dynamics, mobility and diversity are beautiful in a human body as well as in the overall world. It is reflected, for example, in feminine beauty and can be symbolically called the "dancing body". In Russia until now, especially at the level of ordinary aesthetic consciousness, body is beautiful and manifests health and moral characteristics of a man who actively shows his worth in a society. It is called the "working body".

3 Aesthetic evaluation of a natural component in the habitat. Accordingly, one can distinguish three models in this part of reasoning. Concealed and modified nature; nature to achieve harmony with and cultivated nature to help a man to be himself are beautiful.

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