

Aesthetics of the Body: Beauty and Worth



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OVERVIEW

1. The Classics

From the ancient Greeks to 18th and 19th century thought

2. Modern Understandings

Contemporary views built off the longstanding tradition

3. Worth and Value

How aesthetic value of the body is determined and the impacts of such judgements

4. Practical Solutions

Modern strategies to combat oppression

THE CANON

Plotinus (205 CE – 270 CE)

“An ugly thing is something that has not been entirely mastered by pattern, that is by Reason, the Matter not yielding at all points and in all respects to the ideal form”

David Hume (1711 – 1776)

“Beauty is no quality in things themselves”

Immanuel Kant (1724 – 1804)

“The judgement of taste is therefore not a judgement of cognition...*no other than subjective*”

CONTEMPORARY AESTHETICS

Rejection of Tradition

An attempt to unlearn naturalized prejudice through the elimination of a standard

Intersectionality

Feminist, Black Aesthetics, Disability, Queer, Performance, etc.

Worth and Value

Fluid concept that varies from object to object

THE BODY AND BEAUTY: INHERENT WORTH

Subjectivity vs. Objectivity

Are aesthetic judgements of the body personal or can they be standardized?

Form and Function

What does it mean to have a properly functioning body?

Value for its own sake

Is the body aesthetically worthy in its own right?

STRATEGY & SOCIOCULTURAL IMPACT

Tangible Consequences
“Pretty Privilege”

Awareness and Exposure
Deconstructing explicit and implicit biases

Aesthetic Exploration
A high-level practical solution by Sherri Irvin

CONCLUSION

Since aesthetic judgements founded in the oppressive tradition of classic philosophy spur real-world negative impacts, contemporary body aesthetics seek to deconstruct that oppression through the promotion of justice for those bodies which have been excluded and discriminated against. Aesthetic Exploration, consciousness raising, and increased exposure to those that deviate from the standard are some of the practical solutions modern philosophers employ to achieve equality.

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