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Fuxing Xue

Nankai University, fuxing_x@vip.163.com

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Two Types of a Doctrine of Objectivity in the Aesthetic Appreciation of Nature

Fuxing Xue

Abstract

Allen Carlson develops and justifies a doctrine of objectivity in the aesthetic appreciation of nature by means of epistemology. This doctrine is quite significant for the self-knowledge of aesthetic appreciation of nature and the healthy development of the aesthetics of nature. However, for concepts in environmental ethics and the requirements of contemporary environmentalism, another kind of doctrine of objectivity for aesthetic appreciation of nature is needed, namely, a doctrine of ethical objectivity, which rests the aesthetic appreciation of nature on acknowledging the intrinsic value of nature and respect for nature. Because of this doctrine, appreciators construe the good of nature as the beauty of nature. They genuinely apperceive, understand, and experience the properties and inherent value of nature. The new doctrine of ethical objectivity for aesthetic appreciation of nature is an important development to Carlson's scientific, cognitive theory. Meanwhile, it's also helpful to promote the connection between environmental aesthetics and environmental ethics.

Key Words

aesthetic appreciation of nature; Allen Carlson; epistemological objectivity; ethical objectivity; intrinsic value of nature

1. Introduction

Cai Yi (1906-1992), a Chinese aesthetician, should be recognized as the herald who launched the problem of objectivity in the aesthetic appreciation of nature. In the 1940s, Cai Yi discussed the varieties of properties of natural objects by means of the concept of "beauty of phenomenon" in his *New Aesthetics*. Then in the 1950s, (the so-called "period of discussion of aesthetics") and the 1980s, in his revised version of *New Aesthetics*, for example, Cai Yi insisted on his objective position involving natural beauty. He stated:

A landscape is not "a kind of mental state," similarly, the image of plum blossom is also not the token of person's character. The image of the object is independent to its appreciator, thus the beauty of image of object is also independent to its appreciator.[1]

When Cai Yi puts the question of objectivity about natural beauty as it relates to natural objects, Western aestheticians discuss it with regard to aesthetic appreciation of nature. Because of the long-term neglect of natural beauty and the notorious art-centered tradition in the West, some aestheticians even hold that it's impossible to appreciate nature aesthetically.[2] Other philosophers, such as Kendall L. Walton, argue that although we can appreciate nature aesthetically, our aesthetic judgments of nature have to be subjective or at least

relative.[3] Canadian aesthetician Allen Carlson opposes such agnosticism and subjectivism concerning the aesthetic appreciation of nature definitely. He claims:

The fact that nature is natural-not our creation- does not mean, however, that we must be without knowledge of it. Natural objects are such that we can discover things about them which are independent of any involvement by us in their creation. Thus although we have not created nature, we yet know a great deal about it.[4]

Carlson holds that objectivity should be the first doctrine for the aesthetic appreciation of nature. It should be a necessary condition for an appropriate aesthetic appreciation of nature. Consequently, Carlson calls for an "object-oriented" appreciation of nature that is based on our correct and in-depth understanding of the properties of nature:

It is that to follow the lead of the object and be guided by it is to be "objectively" guided. This sense of objective is the most basic: It concerns the object and its properties and is opposed to subjective in the sense of concerning the subject and its properties. Appreciating objectively in this sense is appreciating the object as and for what it is and as and for having the properties it has. It is in opposition to appreciating subjectively in which the subject - the appreciator - and its properties are in some way imposed on the object, or, more generally, something other than the object is imposed on it.[5]

Then, in the sense of concrete reality, how can we realize the doctrine of objectivity in our aesthetic appreciation of nature? First of all, after the acceptance of Walton's notion of "categories of art," Carlson claims that we should apply some relevant categories concerning what we will appreciate, and also appreciate the given object with the guidance of correct categories. Second, in order to implement the doctrine of objectivity in the aesthetic appreciation of nature, there can be a right way to ask for help from scientific knowledge, such as geology, biology and ecology actively. He affirms:

If aesthetic appreciation of natural things should be aesthetic appreciation of such things as that which they actually are and if scientific knowledge is that which tells us what natural things actually are, then aesthetic appreciation of natural things should be aesthetic appreciation as informed by the conceptualizations, categorizations, and descriptions that sciences such as geology, biology, and ecology give of the natural world.[6]

For this reason, Carlson's aesthetics of nature is labeled as "Scientific Cognitivism"; its core idea is to emphasize the radical rule of scientific knowledge in the aesthetic appreciation of nature.

2. The importance of doctrine of objectivity

Given the facts of aesthetic appreciation of nature in the West

and the East, we have to acknowledge that we even fail to actualize objectivity, such a common sense, which is why aestheticians need to reaffirm it today. As Carlson notes, due to the impact of well-developed artistic taste, most appreciators are inclined to perceive, understand, and estimate natural objects in their perspective of art or to treat nature as art in their aesthetic appreciation of nature. Thereby, such activity, called the aesthetic appreciation of nature, meets the artistic taste of appreciators.

If the mistake in the Western tradition of the aesthetic appreciation of nature is to treat nature as a work of art, then the subjectivity of the aesthetic appreciation of nature in China is incarnated in the well-developed traditions called "metaphor and arousal" (比兴, Bixing), "analogy in virtue" (比德, Bide) and "emotion expressed by landscape" (借景抒情, Jie-jing-shu-qing).^[7] "Bixing" is a union of metaphor and arousal. According to Zhu Xi (1130-1200), a philosopher in the Song Dynasty, "Bi' means to make analogy between this item and that item" and "Xing indicates to talk about one thing in order to invite another thing."^{[8],[9]} In full, "metaphor and arousal" (比兴, Bixing) denotes a kind of artistic approach by which poets always like to make a metaphor to describe or express social situations or human emotions by referring to natural items or phenomena. For example, "Couple of Jujiu birds are singing in the land of river, beautiful girls are good partners for young boys."^[10]

Concerning "analogy in virtue" (比德, Bide), we can find words such as "Gentlemen always let jade along with themselves, because gentlemen make an analogy between jade and their virtue."^[11] The notion of "analogy in virtue" mentions such a custom in China: People like to describe someone's certain moral virtues or personalities by natural objects or events. For instance, "We can find the enduring features of pines and cypresses only in cold days."^[12] Or, "You are good tree of the Gods of the Heaven and the Land. You live in the southern land in settled for the order from the Gods...although you are young, but you can be my teacher and old brother. Your behavior is as good as Boyi, so I like to take you as a token of moral model."^[13] "Analogy in virtue" has become a special view in the aesthetic appreciation of nature for Chinese people since the late days of the Spring and Autumn Period (771 to 476 BCE). In fact, it is a kind of aesthetic taste involving aesthetic appreciation of nature that is quite moralized.

Meanwhile, "metaphor and arousal" (比兴, Bixing), as people in the Han Dynasty labeled it, has been translated into a kind of artistic approach for poem-making that was quite common in ancient China, namely, "emotion expressed by landscape" (借景抒情, Jie-jing-shu-qing):

Elements for Ci-making are emotion and landscape. What we do in Ci-making is no more than describe scenes in front of our eyes or express the emotion in our hearts. As soon as we can express our feelings in our heart or describe the scenes clearly, we make a piece of good Ci.^[14]

Accordingly, a poem that can combine emotion-expression and landscape description together very well in one piece was

always ranked as masterpiece:

You stand in the countryside with cloud and water, you forget your brothers and sisters and yourself. You keep yourself from cold weather only by your feather. You do not find white seagulls in the sea, but only observes fish that are busy in water. You should jeer at me for my dreariness, how long my journey is! I only can find setting-sun as my partner. You swim at the bottom of flowers that I can not find you, so I only can be in front of pool in the autumn lonely.[15]

All of "metaphor and arousal" (比兴, Bixing), "emotion expressed by landscape" (借景抒情, Jie-jing-shu-qing), and "analogy in virtue" (比德, Bide), which contemplate nature in the view of personal morality, share the same essence as the taste of the aesthetic appreciation of nature. All of them are humanized or subjectification of natural objects or phenomena. In essence, the three deviate from the objective position of the aesthetic appreciation of nature that treats nature in its own right. The ramifications of such deviation are clear. The aesthetic appreciation of nature steps out of the center of aesthetic appreciation. It becomes a kind of tool, a convenient tool of people's self-expression. With these approaches, people express themselves in the name of aesthetic appreciation of nature. As a result, the aesthetic appreciation of nature is transformed into human feelings or moral affairs; aesthetic appreciation of nature exists in name only. Thus we find a profound contradiction in the history of the aesthetic appreciation of nature in ancient China. On the one hand, we witness a tradition of the aesthetic appreciation of nature that comes forth quite early, lasts long, and is well-developed. On the other hand, we are shocked by the very opposite facts in such a tradition where the properties of nature are neglected and are replaced and overtopped by human emotion and moral taste. In brief, the above three traditions are typical models of inappropriate aesthetic appreciation of nature in China.

The doctrine of objectivity should be the first principle for aesthetic appreciation of nature. Without such a doctrine, it would be quite difficult for us to keep the feature of aesthetic appreciation of nature, to distinguish aesthetic appreciation of nature from other aesthetic activities, such as the aesthetic appreciation of art. It is also impossible to be mature and independent for both the aesthetic appreciation of nature and the aesthetics of nature.

Philosophically speaking, it is quite difficult for us to protest a position that is the very opposite of the doctrine of objectivity, namely, that the aesthetic appreciation of nature can be irrelevant to the basic facts of given natural objects, and even can be the very opposite of the facts. For the aesthetic appreciation of nature, more subjective means better. Or in the aesthetic appreciation of nature, we can do what we like to do, anything is always right, and so on. If such a situation is unacceptable, then, we will have to admit that the doctrine of objectivity which is put out by Cai Yi and justified and developed by Carlson should be a universal principle for today's aesthetics of nature. It should be an important foundation for real self-consciousness and the healthy development of aesthetic appreciation of nature in contemporary life.[16]

3. To accord with the properties of nature: objectivity in epistemology

Then how can we correctly understand the concrete connotation of Carlson's doctrine of objectivity in the aesthetic appreciation of nature? As soon as the aesthetic appreciation of nature deals with internal facts of nature, it is necessary for appreciators to possess correct and in-depth knowledge about a given natural object in their aesthetic appreciation of nature. Carlson points out that most of us appreciate nature aesthetically by relying on everyday experiences or common sense from our everyday life. It is still understandable for those who lived before science was well developed; people appreciated nature aesthetically mainly by virtue of common sense. However, in modern society, scientific study has made great advancements. We know the natural world in a richer, deeper, and more correct way. By contrast, common sense concerning the natural world that people accumulated in traditional society seems subjective, unclear, and shallow today. As a result, if we still settle for the aesthetic appreciation of nature based on the public's common sense about the natural world in their everyday life, then our aesthetic experience will be quite different from what modern science describes for the natural world. I think that such a case should be inconceivable, even insufferable today.

Objectivity is the only principle that we ought to persist in for our aesthetic appreciation of nature. The right way to realize this principle, according to Carlson's view, is through detailed scientific knowledge of geology, biology, and ecology. Such special knowledge ensures the correctness and validity of our aesthetic appreciation of nature and leads us to catch the internal properties and values of natural objects properly and deeply. He characterizes it thus:

Just as serious, appropriate aesthetic appreciation of art requires knowledge of art history and art criticism, such aesthetic appreciation of nature requires knowledge of natural history—the knowledge provided by the natural sciences and especially sciences such as geology, biology, and ecology. The idea is that scientific knowledge about nature can reveal the actual aesthetic qualities of natural objects and environments in the way in which knowledge about art history and art criticism can for works of art.^[17]

According to Carlson's view, we can find and correct, in effect, the error that we often make in our aesthetic appreciation of nature. The first mistake that we often make may be called "aesthetic omissions," which means we are prone to neglect the properties and values that a natural object actually has. For instance, Cai Yi indicates that although everyone knows that "red flowers are not independent of green leaves," in fact, what we always pay attention to are the red flowers in our aesthetic appreciation. In most cases, the green leaves of the flowers are neglected by us just as if they are not there! By means of the doctrine of objectivity, aesthetic appreciation in which we can only find the red flowers but fail to pay attention to the green leaves is not comprehensive. When appreciating the plant itself, such appreciation is not objective and appropriate

because both the red flowers and the green leaves belong to the same integrated organism. The red flowers cannot exist for long without the green leaves. However, there is a kind of painting of birds and flowers in the tradition of the aesthetic appreciation of nature in ancient China, the painting of branches of flowers that prevailed between the Dynasties of Song and Yuan.

Now let us check the second mistake that we easily make in our aesthetic appreciation of nature, what Carlson calls "aesthetic deceptions." It refers to such cases where, in our aesthetic appreciation of nature, we like to impose on a natural object something that it doesn't have on its own. Examples are Du Fu's "flowers weep in their sadness for the time, birds are shocked by the state of leaving" (感时花溅泪, 恨别鸟惊心。) [18] and Qin Guan's "emotional peony is tearful, weak rosebush is lying on morning branches." (有情芍药含春泪, 无力蔷薇卧晓枝。) [19] In this case, the aesthetic experience appears to focus on perceiving and enjoying natural objects; however, the fact is that the custom of heavy personifying departs far from the facts of the natural objects themselves. As a result, the aesthetic experience that the appreciator gets from such appreciation is one that the given natural objects do not have at all but ones that belong to a human being's emotion or taste. By such an extreme personifying, natural properties are replaced by human taste; finally, we get a kind of specious aesthetic experience in such an appreciation of nature. Such inappropriate aesthetic experiences are quite common in ancient China. However, it seems too strong to label this model "aesthetic deception" because, in this case, people do not intentionally deceive others but regard the personating as a natural event. So, it may be better to term it as "extrinsic aesthetic attachment."

The third mistake in our aesthetic appreciation of nature that Carlson points out is to confuse what nature appears to be and what nature is. Carlson provides us a typical example of such a situation. People are always inclined to appreciate whales as fish. However, science tells us that, in fact, a whale is not a fish but a mammal. What happens in this case? When we appreciate whales as fish by means of our experiences of everyday life, such a mistake indicates that we regard the appearance of whale as its essence. In other words, we contradict the features of the whale itself significantly, which would be a big mistake in science. Then, will such a mistake cause a notable impact on our aesthetic experience or not? When we treat whales as fish, a whale appears to be not as light as most fish because of its huge body. But when we look at whales as mammals, we see that whales can be quite free in the water while most mammals live on land and cannot freely swim in water. Compared with other mammals, whales appear to be quite nimble and lightsome; as a result, our sense of beauty involving whales is enhanced. [20] In sum, from the perspective of Carlson's scientific, cognitive theory, only that which makes a distinction between what is true of nature and what nature appears to have in our aesthetic appreciation of nature can be an objective, resulting in a correct and appropriate aesthetic appreciation of nature.

In light of the doctrine of objectivity, the aesthetic appreciation of nature is the appreciation of nature itself, concrete, an

appreciation of the properties, values, and functions of natural objects in their own right. Only aesthetic experiences within this range can be genuine experiences of nature. By contrast, those that aim at human self-expression under the label of aesthetic appreciation of nature, in other words, when people use natural objects as a medium to express themselves, should be ranked as inappropriate aesthetic appreciation of nature. Both the tradition of "emotion expressed by landscape" (借景抒情, Jie-jing-shu-qing) in ancient China and the tradition of treating nature as art in the West are exemplifications of such inappropriateness. At least, as aesthetic experiences of nature, they are not pure and typical ones; at best, they have some qualities that are relevant to the aesthetic experience of nature, or a multiplex aesthetic experience of nature.

In sum, the independent and self-conscious aesthetic appreciation of nature, in Carlson's view, should be the one based upon the doctrine of objectivity. Conforming to such a doctrine, those aesthetic experiences of nature that are unintentional in contravention of the facts of natural objects, such as miscalling James, John, is certainly improper. However, when people analogize natural objects or events with human moral virtues or to express human emotions in the name of aesthetic appreciation of nature, they are intentionally violating the facts of natural objects. It is fair to call such cases "aesthetic deceptions": it is the inappropriate aesthetic appreciation of nature at its worst.

How can we ensure the independence of the aesthetic appreciation of nature and the purity of aesthetic experience of nature? To hold the position of objectivity in epistemology should be the primary condition. Then, how can we embody the essential difference between ancient aesthetic experiences of nature and ones in modern time? How can we transcend the simplicity of ancient aesthetic experiences of nature and realize the richness and profoundness of contemporary ones? Carlson's scientific, cognitive theory provides us with answers by introducing the fruits of contemporary scientific studies, namely, scientific knowledge. With help from scientific knowledge, our aesthetic experience can be more correct, more exquisite, more abundant, and more profound than the one in the past.

4. To respect the good of nature: objectivity in axiology

However, with the development of environmental aesthetics, especially, when we try to support contemporary environmentalism by environmental aesthetics, Carlson's theory shows its weakness. It is no more than a type of objectivity in epistemology. This theory can be applied to settle the question of how to appreciate nature appropriately, rather than the question of why we should appreciate nature. Namely, it fails to ascertain the connotation of the aesthetic value of nature and explain why the aesthetic value of environments today is declining. With the turning of contemporary environmental aesthetics from beauty to duty, environmental aesthetics is aiming at inoculation with environmental ethics. These questions are increasingly significant for aestheticians of environmental aesthetics.

It is certain that the doctrine of objectivity is right and the doctrine of objectivity in epistemology is necessary for an

appropriate aesthetic appreciation of nature. However, for today's environmental aesthetics, it does not seem enough to possess only the doctrine of objectivity in epistemology. To answer the above questions, what we should do is develop Carlson's theory in detail to introduce primary ideas from environmental ethics and build a type of doctrine of objectivity by means of environmental ethics based on Carlson's doctrine of objectivity in epistemology.

As an active proponent of Carlson's theory, Yuriko Saito supports this theory from the perspective of environmental ethics. She writes:

The appropriate aesthetic appreciation of nature, I have argued, must embody a moral capacity for recognizing and respecting nature as having its own reality apart from our presence, with its own story to tell. Furthermore, it requires sensitive ears to discern what story it may be telling with its specific sensuous surface, no matter how unglamorous. I suggested that our attempts to somehow make sense of natural objects and phenomena to guide our sensuous experience of nature toward appropriately appreciating it are by modifying, enhancing, illuminating, or transforming its content. Such attempts can be found in (natural history) science and folk narratives, which are constructed to give an account of the specific characteristics of natural objects and phenomena.[\[21\]](#)

This is a quite special appreciation of Carlson's doctrine of objectivity. Regretfully, Saito only puts out a meaningful keyword, "a moral capacity for recognizing and respecting nature." Then, concerning the notion of respecting nature and why we should respect nature, she gives us no further clear theoretical account. Remarkably, with the illumination of other philosophers, Carlson begins to pay attention to such problems and to tries to talk about the requirements of environmentalism. However, a deep justification has not been given by him.[\[22\]](#)

Our misreading of natural objects or phenomena, both unintentionally, such as treating nature as art in the West, or intentionally, such as the tradition of "analogy in virtue" (比德, Bide) and "emotion expressed by landscape" (借景抒情, Jie-jing-shu-qing) in ancient China as aesthetic appreciation of nature, is inappropriate. But the quality of inappropriateness is changed here. It is not inappropriateness in the sense of epistemology, namely, untruth or the false; instead, it is rather a kind of inappropriateness in the sense of axiology. It means that we do not show enough respect for nature in the context of human society. For example, if at a party we miscall someone in front of his or her partner, it indicates that we do not show respect for the partner in our communication. Then, when we treat nature as nature, or choose to express ourselves by natural objects or phenomena in the aesthetic appreciation of nature, do such events also embody the suspicion that we fail to show enough respect for nature? If we cannot show our primary respect for nature in our aesthetic appreciation of nature, how can we let others believe that we really love nature? There are too many times when we seem to admire

and enjoy nature, but they are no more than human narcissism in the tradition of the aesthetic appreciation of nature in the West and China. The core secret is that we still cannot cultivate a type of ethical consciousness of true respect for nature in front of nature. We do not realize that to respect nature in the ethical sense is the very cultural foundation for our aesthetic appreciation of nature. We do not recognize that neglecting and distorting nature is a kind of lack of virtue in morality.

Then, how can we adequately respect nature? First of all, it is necessary to reflect on the idea of aesthetic value in the tradition. In the light of traditional aesthetics, anything possesses aesthetic value because it meets people's aesthetic requirement in certain aspects. Take a flower as an example. A flower is beautiful because its bright color and unique shape meet people's aesthetic need in vision, namely, visual pleasure. On the contrary, a flower, if it cannot make people experience visual pleasure, will be not beautiful. Since Kant, modern aesthetics has tried to make an essential distinction between aesthetic value and instrumental value, and to justify aesthetic experience by means of disinterestedness, strictly distinguishing the sense of beauty and the sense of pleasure. Formalism can be an exemplification of this as its extreme. However, such a pure idea of aesthetic value seems still to justify aesthetic value because of the satisfaction of aesthetic objects for human need.

For example, Kant argued that the sense of beauty comes from the formal appearance of an object in accordance with the collaboration of people's capacities of perception and imagination. That is the reason why people can commonly experience the sense of beauty from a flower. But, the fact is that it is still a kind of justification of the sense of beauty by means of utility. The only difference is that he changes the utilitarianism of practice into one of conception.

Then, how should we consider the aesthetic value of natural objects correctly on earth? We should start from axiology in philosophy. In Western philosophy, Aristotle distinguished two types of good as such:

Good possesses double meaning, one is goodness of a thing's own, the other is good as the way to get a thing's good of its own.[\[23\]](#)

Kant developed Aristotle's two kinds of good into a couple of concepts, "end" and "means," and suggested that a human is an end:

Man and generally any rational being exists as an end himself, not merely as means to be arbitrarily used by this and that will.[\[24\]](#)

Based upon this, philosophers of contemporary environmental philosophy divide value into two species, instrumental value and intrinsic value. The former refers to the value of anything that is available for others. This is a kind of result of being used by users. Thus, it is unnecessary for the given object itself to exist as long as usefulness is satisfied. In contrast,

An object has intrinsic value, on the other hand, when it is valuable in itself and is not valued

simply for its uses. The value of such object is intrinsic to them. To say that an object is intrinsically valuable is to say that it has a good of its own and that what is good for it does not depend on outside factors. Thus its value would be a value found or recognized, rather than given.[25]

Intrinsic value is a core idea for contemporary environmental philosophy by which we realize that it is a long-lasting tradition for humans to possess a kind of utilitarian attitude or so-called anthropocentrism toward nature. Namely, we are inclined to consider almost all natural objects as a diversity of materials or means to meet the requirements of human life. In other words, from the perspective of humans, nature has instrumental value only; nature is significant only for its value to humans. Without such intrinsic value to humans, it is quite difficult to justify the validity of its existence for nature. The story is different today, however. Philosophers of environmental philosophy tell us that nature possesses two species of value. One is its instrumental value, which can be applied by humans; the other is its intrinsic value, which is independent of human's interest and evaluation and serves the being and well-being of nature itself. For nature, the latter is its primary value, while the former is external and accidental value. What's more, the former is always a kind of disadvantage for the survival and prosperity of nature. We can take the colorful skin of tigers and graceful tusks of elephants as examples. So, besides the instrumental value of nature for humans, people today should recognize the intrinsic value of nature. This means that we should admit the rights of being and well-being that are equally shared by natural things and humans. In other words, we need to realize that intrinsic value is more significant than instrumental value for nature itself. Only in this context can humans transform themselves from a selfish and pure predator in this world into a kind of moral agency that can be self-disciplined, have the consciousness of obligation to others, and possess a merciful heart and virtue. So, recognizing and maintaining the intrinsic value of nature is the very starting point for respecting, protecting, and enjoying nature:

Environmental ethics in a primary, naturalistic sense is reached only when humans ask questions not merely of prudential use but of appropriate respect and duty.[26]

From the above understanding of contemporary philosophy, I'd like to make a special supplement to Carlson's doctrine of objectivity in the aesthetic appreciation of nature. It is a new version of the doctrine of objectivity by means of environmental ethics. This doctrine recognizes the intrinsic value of nature, and respects the properties of nature. According to this doctrine, to perceive, understand, and experience the properties and intrinsic value of nature becomes the core of our aesthetic appreciation of nature.

In light of this new doctrine of objectivity, we not only need to admit that natural objects are not the products of our making but also to recognize that all of natural objects do not exist for humans. Instead, they exist for themselves first of all: they are the end of their own existence. In this sense, it is necessary to

modify Kant's moral imperative slightly: "never treat nature merely as a means for us!" This imperative does not only refer to the fate of natural objects and environments but also involves human's conscience, life quality, and the future of human culture.

From the concept of intrinsic value, the idea of aesthetic value that is in accordance with the benefit of nature on its own cannot build upon the foundation that nature meets human aesthetic requirement but rather is cultivated upon the condition that humans find and admit the good of nature on its own and regard the good of nature as the beauty of nature. According to this new concept of the beauty of nature, appreciators should perceive, understand, experience, and bless nature with their sincere and profound sympathy. They should be happy for the good of nature, sad for the evil of nature; they should transform the good of nature into the beauty of nature, regard the rejection of the good of nature as ugliness. In this sense, the beauty of nature is, in fact, a kind of life experience to share the same fate with nature. Aesthetic appreciation of nature, in the sense of the axiology of nature, is objective; it can step out of traditional aesthetics with its subjective bias of anthropocentrism to take meeting human's good as the beauty of nature and embody human's *caritas* to share the same fate with nature. Only in this context can humans appreciate the beauty of nature in truth rather than to entertain themselves by nature. Our aesthetic appreciation of nature reaches the sublimity of self-transcending.

The deepening and enhancing of our experience of nature needs our objective attitude toward nature. How can we have an objective attitude toward nature, and how can we respect nature genuinely? It means that rather than appreciating and evaluating nature by means of its benefit to humans or human's requirements, we estimate nature's value according to the properties and good of nature itself. If the close connection between beauty and good is still available here, then we find the beauty of nature. It is not because nature meets human's requirement in certain ways, or at least it is not the whole reason. Instead, it is mainly because we find that certain of its features satisfy the need of being and well-being of nature itself successfully. In other word, it is because we find the good for nature's own right.

Concerning environmental ethics, to respect nature is the precondition for the aesthetic appreciation of nature. Much of the inappropriateness in our aesthetic appreciation of nature in light of epistemology cannot be ascribed to ignorance in science only. Rather, it reflects the unconscious neglect of the appreciator concerning the independent values and rights of nature. In brief, we do not respect nature. On the contrary, if we really respect nature in our aesthetic appreciation of nature, if we sincerely pay attention to the fate of natural objects and love nature in earnest, then we will want to observe each perceptual detail with great passion and eagerly try to understand its internal features and functions. We will enjoy their beauty and feel happy when natural objects can successfully survive and develop; we will worry and feel sad when they are in misery; and we will be willing to do anything to improve their situation. In this case, on the one hand, many improper events such as "aesthetic omission" or "aesthetic

deception” for the neglect of nature in our aesthetic appreciation of nature will be greatly reduced; on the other hand, in return, the consciousness of duty to respect and care for nature can inspire our desire to step into nature, understand nature, and get more correct scientific knowledge about nature. In other words, it will promote the doctrine of objectivity in epistemology, that is to say, to appreciate nature aesthetically with correct scientific knowledge.

5. Conclusion

It is not enough to possess the doctrine of objectivity in epistemology for comprehensive aesthetics or environmental aesthetics. We cannot only be satisfied with the avoidance of mistakes of scientific knowledge in our aesthetic appreciation of nature. Rather, we should go further to analyze various examples concerning the impropriety of scientific knowledge in our aesthetic appreciation of nature. Then we can find the moral incorrectness beyond the mistakes of scientific knowledge. So it is necessary to suggest a new objectivity, the objectivity of morality. This objectivity asks for a higher requirement for the aesthetic appreciation of nature: to admit the intrinsic value of nature, to respect the rights of being and well-being of nature based upon which we perceive, understand, and experience nature appropriately.

The doctrine of objectivity of morality is a significant development of and supplement to Carlson’s scientific cognitivist theory. This new doctrine of objectivity surpasses the view of epistemology and assimilates the core idea of environmental ethics, answering not only the question of how to appreciate nature but also the question of what to appreciate in nature and why we should appreciate it.

The doctrine of objectivity in axiology also is helpful for environmental aesthetics as a whole. It introduces ethics into aesthetics and aims at the cooperation between the two. The building of modern aesthetics starts from the distinction of beauty and good. Several hundreds years later, we may choose another way to return to the area of good, to introduce good into beauty, and to explain the beauty by good. In concrete terms, for environmental aesthetics that means defining beauty by the good of nature or the intrinsic value of nature. This is the right way to deepen the philosophical implications of environmental aesthetics, to let environmental aesthetics meet the requirements of environmentalism, and contribute to the harmony between human and nature alongside the sustainable development of human civilization.

The accordance between beauty and good is a very old ideal. Today, to transform aesthetic taste into duty and to cultivate virtue by aesthetic taste may open a new land for us.

Fuxing Xue
fuxing_x@vip.163.com

Fuxing Xue is currently Professor of Aesthetics at Nankai University. His research interests include Chinese aesthetics, environmental aesthetics, and environmental philosophy.

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Endnotes

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- [2] Robert Elliot, "Faking Nature," *Inquiry*, 25 (1982), 90.
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- [4] Allen Carlson, "Appreciation and the Natural Environment," *Journal of Aesthetics and Art Criticism*, 37, 3 (1979), 267-276.
- [5] Allen Carlson, "Appreciating Art and Appreciating Nature," *Aesthetics and the Environment* (Routledge, 2000), 106.
- [6] Allen Carlson, "Scientific Representations of Natural Landscapes and Appropriate Aesthetic Appreciation," *Rivista di Estetica (Review of Aesthetics)* 29 (2005), 41-51.
- [7] See Fuxing Xue, "Aesthetic Significance of the Pre-Qin View of Cohesive Moral," *Journal of Shanxi Normal University*, 4 (2009), 10-17; Fuxing Xue, "The 'property' Question of Nature Aesthetics and Chinese Tradition of Lyric Expression Through Scenery," *Journal of Social Sciences*, 9 (2009), 105-113.
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- [9] *Ibid.*, p. 1.
- [10] *Guanju, The Book of Odes*, see Zhu Xi, *Interpretation to the Book of Odes* (Shanghai: Shanghai Ancient Book Press, 1987), p. 1.
- [11] In *Records On Etiquette (Liji)*. Yuzao, *On Etiquette*, see Chen Hao, *Interpretation to Records On Etiquette* (Shanghai: China Press, 1994), p. 266.
- [12] *Zihan, Analects*, see Zhuxi, *Interpretation to The Four Books* (Changsha: Yuelu Press, 1985), p. 144.
- [13] Qu Yuan, *Carol on Ju*, see Jiang Liangfu, *Translation to Qu Yuan's Fu* (Beijing: Beijing Press, 1987), pp. 175-79.
- [14] Li Yu, *Ideas on Ci*, see Ye Lang, ed., *Selections on Chinese Ancient Aesthetics*, Vol. Qing Dynasty, Part I (Beijing: Higher Education Press, 2003), p. 246.
- [15] Zhang Yan, "Langtaosha, Epigraph to Chen Ruchao's Picture of Aigrets," see Long Yusheng, ed., *Selections and Interpretations of Ci by Famous Poets in Tang and Song Dynasty* (Shanghai: Shanghai Ancient Book Press, 1980), p. 314.
- [16] Fuxing Xue, "Allen Carlson's Scientific Cognition Theory," *Literature & Art Studies*, 7 (2009), 22-34.
- [17] Allen Carlson, "Environmental Aesthetics," in *Stanford*

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<<http://plato.stanford.edu/entries/environmental-aesthetics/>>.

[18] Du Fu, "Overlooking in the Spring," Jin Xingyao, *New Annotation for 300 Poems in Tang Dynasty* (Shanghai: Shanghai Ancient Book Publishing House, 1980), p. 174.

[19] Qin Guan, "Days in the Spring," *100 Poems in Song Dynasty* (Shanghai: Shanghai Ancient Book Publishing House, 1978), p. 47.

[20] See Allen Carlson, "Nature, Aesthetic Judgment, and Objectivity," *Journal of Aesthetics and Art Criticism*, 40, 1 (1981), 15-27.

[21] Yuriko Saito, "Appreciating Nature on Its Own Terms," in *The Aesthetics Of Natural Environments*, Allen Carlson and Arnold Berleant, eds. (Broadview Press, 2004), p.151.

[22] We can take two things as examples of Carlson's paying attention to environmental ethics. First, he edited (with others) an anthology named *Nature, Aesthetics, and Environmentalism: From Beauty to Duty* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2008); second, in his essay, "Contemporary Environmental Aesthetics and Requirements of Environmentalism," for an international conference on ecological aesthetics given in Jinan City, China, (2009), one of the five requirements that he ranks is "moral engagement."

[23] Aristotle, *The Nicomachean Ethics*, trans. by Liao Shenbai, (Beijing: Chinese Social Science Press, 2005), p. 8.

[24] *Kant's Critique of Practical Reason and Other Works*, (New York: Longmans, Green and Co. Ltd, 1927), p. 46.

[25] Joseph R. Desjardins, *Environmental Ethics an Introduction to Environmental Philosophy*, (Thomson Wadsworth, 2006), p. 130.

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