

## Journal Entry #3:Chapter 10 Summary and Reflection What is Beauty?

In chapter 10 of *The Big Questions A Short Introduction to Philosophy*, readers examine what identifies something as beautiful and its relevance to the philosophy of art. We are introduced to Plato's concept of how human life thrives off the element of aesthetic by the appreciation of art and beauty. The art we are viewing is appreciated not because of its reality, but rather the truth that resonates with the specific person associated with the art, and for beauty to be understood on its own terms. This raises questions on how beauty and truth are related as well as what is it that makes something more beautiful than something else?

When looking at different pieces of both western and eastern artwork, it is evident that the differences in the reality and surroundings correlate to what each place finds beautiful. However, because of the "artistic realism in the nineteenth century and other shifts in taste, great art can even be ugly, in both subject matter and depiction"(325). This leads to the assumption by many philosophers that aesthetics doesn't focus on the appreciation of beauty. According to Plato, beauty itself is not just the truth but is actually all things that are incorporated into what makes something beautiful, identifying beauty as a transcendent form. However, many infamous eastern and western art do not illustrate reality, now leading us to explore the concept that art displays ideals. For example, we can see this in medieval art and how it represents scenes of Jesus and his crucifixion. The artists in this era intended to display Jesus with unnatural characteristics and scenes of his life instead of human-like normal ones. We also read that "the divide between truth and beauty...is nowhere more evident in the case of fiction"(326). This idea raises arguments on the limitations and censorship art should have since it leaves space for a false narrative.

In an attempt to deeper analyze art, we read that Aristotle's philosophy of art was "to analyze forms and structures to find out what made some artworks 'work' and not others"(328). This means that he focused more on the theatre since they offered a better understanding of the expression of human emotions and how the plot and effectiveness of the character can convey these emotions. He also says that even in gruesome plots of theater plays, the way we express our worst emotions is so we can achieve **catharsis** release. Both Aristotle and Plato conclude that beauty is objective, but what does it mean to have good taste? The idea of taste was created in determining the worth a form of art has. The textbook argues that although taste is also subjective and only decided from the art person who views the art, there isn't a way to actually determine the worth of artwork. Art also plays a significant role in ethics and religion. For example, "the idea of music has a powerful influence on personality can be found in many of the cultures of the world"(333). Music plays a pivotal role in defining aspects of different cultures around the world, along with other forms of art such as dancing. According to philosopher Friedrich Schiller, art is also essential in a child's education because when we are "in the experience of beauty, we discover that our interests and those of others can coincide" influencing the idea of good citizenship. This was determined through his study in modern Germany.

Friedrich Nietzsche is another philosopher who provided the idea that “aesthetic values should replace standard moral principles” meaning that we should not only follow societal rules imposed on people but live as free as art(335). He also determines that there are two different forms of art. Apollonian, which is focused on individual things and conveys an orderly world, and dionysian, which involves an irrational state, yet that the best art is a mixture of both.

After reading this chapter, I was intrigued by the relationship art had with philosophy and believe the author allowed the readers to understand the several issues in aesthetics and beauty. We see how art and the forms on how we choose to express it alter between personal preference and cultural differences as well understand that the worth of the art only being reliant on how we choose to perceive it as individuals. Beauty is identified as an idea that cannot be measured but is still an important aspect in philosophy since we still show appreciation for it.

### **Works Cited**

Solomon, R. C., & Higgins, K. M. (2017). *The big questions: A short introduction to philosophy*. Boston, MA: Cengage.