

Endnote

*. This paper rewriting an article entitled "critique on schuan's aesthetics" which have been published in the Journal of Bagh-e Nazar (Vol.2, No.3, Summer 2005).

1. In addition to these three topics, metaphysical bases of include other cases from Schuon perspective including: the relationship between ethics and beauty, taste role in the evaluation of beauty, the relationship between beauty and the benefit, and difference between artistic beauty and beauty of nature. For further reading, see: paper titled facts and errors on beauty written by Schuon in the "Art and spirituality" book (Rahmati, 2004), and paper written by Frithjof Schuon and meaning of beauty in "Eternal Wisdom" book (Bina-ye Motlagh, 2003).

2. Oliver Leaman believes that while there is Islamic aesthetics, he denies this issue that Islam has a special artistic forms or templates. For further reading, see: introduction to Islamic aesthetics Pages 15 to 27.

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From the perspective of semiotics in the critical reviewing of inherent symbolism of forms, it can be said that almost all views provided about the sign and semiotics emphasize on this issue that that the first signs as one of three types of signs, including 1- Symbol 2- image 3- index have no inherently meaning that we add it for them and give credit for them meaning is added for them in contractual way (Zeimaran, 2003: 41). According to Saussure, the meaning of sign is significant on the occasion of issues and we should not regard them among inherent characteristics of sign but we should give priorities to occasions not to objects and phenomena. From his perspective, no sign has meaning per se, but it finds meaning in relation to other signs. Meaning cannot be extracted without resorting to the process of interpretation, and form has no meaning per se (Ibid: 42). Secondly, no sign or symbol has a precise meaning can be referred intellectually. Today, it

is proved that a necessary condition of sign and symbol is not that it must refer to necessarily fixed text. This matter has been pointed out by people such “Ulan” “Bart”, “Michael Rifatr” and “Saussure”. Saussure believes that meaning of the sign is shaped in the realm of society and it is developed gradually. According to “Sapir Whorf”, the meaning of sign is the result of the way of viewing and the way of understanding or knowledge of one culture (Ibid: 62). In general, it can be said that symbols have multiple meaning and nature, and they subject to various interpretations. This implicit meaning of symbol or sign due, given cultural-social aspects of symbol creation and cultural base, class, gender, and other characteristics of audience, can include conflicting concepts. Semioticians claim that no symbol involves clear meaning, but correct meaning of implications always guide us to implicit realm (Ibid: 121).

Conclusion

Definition provided by Schuon regarding beauty in the form of statements has ambiguity, uncertainty and complexity, logically it is not comprehensive and there are many defects and shortcomings in this regard. The proposed relationship between beauty and truth and perfection by Schuon is not logical and right relationship. In expressing the characteristics and features of beauty features, he has relied on some of its characteristics in exaggerated manner.

- The independence of beauty, an objective reality, of humans and the human mind which is the base of Schuon views about beauty, has no clear and rational basis. According to views proposed by late and early Islamic scholars quoted in this regard, beauty has subjective or mental dimension, depending on perception.

- Schuon introduces beauty as true and real perception or understanding that it can be judged theoretically and rationally. According to Allameh Tabatabai, if we consider beauty and human, due to their dependence on emotions and human conditions and goals, we cannot make judgment

that if they are accurate, right, wrong, or false.

- Assigning specified inherent meaning for forms and beauty, as symbol by Schuon also has some drawbacks, since shapes and forms and various artistic beauties, due to dependency on conditions, goals, or cultural context in their shaping is contractual, and their meaning and interpretation will be different with respect to cultural considerations.

- It seems that considering the credit that Schuon and Traditionalists give for historical art and culture before Renaissance and modern period, the definition provided for beauty has been based on explanation of characteristics of art forms of historical periods and his theorizing has been conducted based on historical and traditional authenticity of these forms and shapes.

- Traditionalists method in providing unconsidered and superficial generalizations and assigning inherent meaning for models and historical models eternal symbols lead to a kind of rigidity of formalism preventing from true view on real values of religious art.

conventions or social conventions or the (poetry and art) conventions. These perceptions and meanings are the result of emotional factors not related to real perceptions and science and poetry subscribe cannot be proved by argument and some classifications of real meanings will obvious, theoretical, impossible, and possible. In describing this issue, "Morteza Motahari" in the book has said: "poet as is poet dealing with feelings and with imagination, sees the world with imagination and glass of his feelings and desires. "Poetic judgments about anything says always something of spiritual ties of poet and that object, not real attributes of that object. In other words, poetic thoughts are not reflection of inner feelings of poet. Inner feelings of the poet are different based on various circumstances and therefore poetic judgments are subject to these differences, unlike rational and theoretical judgments that is free from the influence of these factors" (Ibid: 150).

Regarding the evaluation of these perceptions, "Tabatabai" states: 'in credit affairs, the relationship between the two sides is always hypothetical and gives credit this hypothesis and credit to achieve in order to realize his goal. The single rational scale used in credits is the cancellation and no cancellation of credit (Ibid: 159). By rational comparing the views of Schuon and contents of Allameh Tabatabai, it was concluded that contrary to Schuon's view, the beauty and artistic perceptions as perceptions of credit, are not independent of human perception and mentality, but subject to his feelings and due to this, it is not constant and without change. These perceptions cannot be proved and only can be measured by scale of cancellation and no cancellation. In other words, as beauty, as subjective-objective reality, is affected by various human perceptions, it is relative not absolute and pre-specified.

Artist, as the creator of beauty or audience of artistic art, is affected by inner feelings in terms of various circumstances and in order to achieve the goal, he creates beauty as a credit and a contractual and hypothetical relationship between an assumption, not a reality per se. that is why beauty does not include rational judgment, like precision (accuracy) and the traits of true, false, right, and wrong do not apply for it.

2-1-2. Inherent symbolism of forms

Views of Schuon and traditionalists about the inherent symbolism of forms as methodology can be reviewed critically. In the first glance, in the generalizing and interpretation of forms and Islamic art models with Islamic teachings, the method of traditionalists has this drawback that it prevents direct understanding of world and artistic works: Trying to discover various symbolisms in Islamic arts is done by relying on Pythagoreans approach in which geometric and mathematical arrangements are representative of esoteric meanings of facts. Disadvantage of this approach is that it requires faith that some people may not be committed to it. What is reason to this commitment? Could not they admir a carpets, an inscription in the mosque, poetry and calligraphy without knowing of theory of symbolism? If the answer is that they can not, then it will be difficult to explain the process of admiration when viewing art works, because they are not armed with theory to explain the cause of admiration. Sometimes it is believed that they are feeling the theory without knowing it, but it must be said that this explanation is humiliating and patronizing about humans that their interpretation is different from one that is in the base of reality or truth (Leaman, 2013: 25).

According to Lehman², this kind of symbolism against traditionalists claims is not Islamic but it is originally from ancient Greece. In addition, he thinks that these kinds of interpretations lack of rational and logical base and reasoning: "unconsidered generalizations have been always made about Islamic art and in Incidentally, there are examples that violate these generalizations» (Ibid: 27). For example, Leaman reviews critically the Nasr interpretation and other traditionalists of the Kaaba in Islamic as: "Without doubt, the Kaaba has great importance in Islam. But if its shape merits such care? Kaaba name is not derived from form of this building. However, in the rituals of Hajj, there are other ceremonies that emphasize on other shapes such as circle, mountain, water, etc. These forms or shapes have become important Islamic symbols, and they can represent Islam. Kaaba is cubic building that has importance but this importance is not due to its cubic shape" (Ibid: 22).

of reasonableness or symbolism. In religious or traditional art, the beauty is guaranteed by integrity and authenticity of symbol and qualitative aspects of traditional art. Religious art often ignores the goal of superficial and focuses on real beauty more than other thing. Therefore, it is resulted from accuracy of its utility for religious practices and mystical observation and personal incommensurable factors are merely secondary element” (Schuon, 1993: 97). Accordingly, Schuon believes that in sacred art (or traditional religious art) beauty has been guaranteed by integrity and originality of symbol quality traditional aspect of it that (Ibid: 97) In other words, from his perspective, traditional forms and models include symbols and inherent meaning providing aesthetic and spiritual credit of them. The idea is one of the theoretical and methodology principles of contemporary Traditionalists’ interpretation of traditional and sacred art. For example, Bukhart and Nasr in the definition of sacred art write:

“Art is essentially a form. In order to that art is called sacred, it is not enough art is emanating from spiritual truth, but its formal language of that art certifies the existence of that source. The only art that its form reflects special spiritual insight of religion merits such trait. Spiritual insight is necessarily expressed by its special formal language. Every sacred art is based on knowledge of forms, or in other words, it is based on symbolic ritual that requires forms. This is tradition that guarantees the spiritual credit of forms by transferring sacred models” (Burckhardt, 1990: 7, 9). “The traditional art is a tradition not because of the subject matter and content, but due to its correspondence with cosmic and symbolism rules created in it” (Nasr, 2002: 210). “The traditional art is related to truths included in tradition and it has provided a formal and artistic expression of them. The art must correspond with symbols endowed in the related object and with symbols directly related to revelation. Such art is aware of the essence nature of objects” (Nasr, 1996: 211). Nasr and Burkhard interpretation of the Kaaba building and its role in Islamic is remarkable in this regard: The internal secret and symbol of Kaaba contain everything expressed in the sacred Islamic art, both in its form and rituals related with it. As if God is at the incomprehensible center of the universe, as he is in

the innermost center of human. Kaaba, as the house of God and the only sacred and holy place, has such a feature. Cube is related with the concept of the center, because that combination is manifestation of all the space and each of its levels matches with one of the main directions of the peak, perigee and four sides (Burckhardt, : 35 - 38). Regarding Kaaba and its color as the most important visualization of Islamic architecture, Nasr states as follows:

“This sanctity is shaped mainly in light of polarization of space based on the presence of the Kaaba. Kaaba is the center of the earth and Muslim pilgrims around it and turn to it in daily prayers. Kaaba that Lord has chosen it as the direction of prayer of the Muslims has comprehensive presence since it determines directions and creates a set of invisible power center calling for all surrounding points to center” (Nasr, 1996: 47).

“The black color plays a key role in Islam and it has particular place in terms of architecture, because it is the color of the Kaaba cover. Black color is the symbol of supreme principle that Kaaba associated with it since it is regarded as principle governing on sacred architecture in Islam” (Ibid: 55).

2-1. Critical review of symbolic aesthetics of traditionalists

In issues stated in short as outlines of views of Schuon about the aesthetic characteristics, there are two criticizable issues: First, beauty as concept and true understanding independent and true of the human mind, and has the ability to prove the truth or falsity, and second, giving meaning and inherent and defined concept to forms as symbol in Islamic tradition.

2-1-1. The beauty capacity to be proved

According to classification that Allameh Tabatabai has provided in the book of “Principles of philosophy and Realism Method”, perceptions and human sciences are divided into two true and credit types (Tabatabai, 1980: 150) and artistic and poetic perceptions are placed under credit perceptions. Aesthetic perceptions as other credit perceptions are not beyond illusion, they are subject to inner feelings, each has truth, they are not without external effect, and argument has no place in them. Change in thought and imaginations are high in moral

1-1-3. Beauty as an objective reality

The third criticizable concept aesthetic principles of Schuon which is the most important concept of his views is that "beauty is an objective reality", not a product of imagination of human perception. According to this definition, beauty is mind-independent reality and perception is beauty evidence, and as a tangible, meaningful, special, and unique reality different from type and temporal and spatial conditions affecting perception of humans and perception has no role just reflecting it.

Despite these views of Schuon, the dependence of beauty to human mind and evidence is so clear and obvious from human mind. The first evidence of subjective dimension of beauty is diversity, plurality and even conflict in beauty and its different forms in different cultures and in the eyes of different people belonging to same culture. Another reason is the reactions of the human soul and the human mind to the beauty and human interpretation of perception of beauty. In addition, the history of that beauty has subjective dimension-due to intervention of internal senses of human to understand it- backs to thinkers and scholars of ancient Greece and then more clearly Islamic and Christian scholars and thinkers of the Middle Ages, So that Necipoglu says in this regard: "In Middle Age, this theory not only is related to objective (external) concept of perfect beauty, but also it is related to subjective (internal) procedures and psychological perception of beauty. This theory assumes that there is relationship between mental (subjective) issue and the objective issue that evokes the emotional reactions of observer" (Necipoglu, 2000: 269). One clear and definite example of this common way of thinking in the Islamic period can be found in views of "Ibn al-Haytham," Iraqi scientist, who has stated on beauty and its perception: "from Almanazer book of Ibn al-Haytham, it becomes clear that the deduction of beauty has been placed in mental and psychological of visual perception which always deals with the internal senses. Thus, beauty was not considered as absolute industry (and only objective), but it was considered as result of the relationship between subject and object have correlation with mental and internal procedures of recognition and it is not shaped in cultural vacuum" (Ibid: 274). Allameh

Jafari criticized Schuon's opinion in this way: "If beauty is the objective manifestation that is desired and pleasant and the human mind has no role but reflecting it, what will be the pleasure derived from its beauty. Feeling pleasure of beauty is the clearest evidence that beauty has relationship with our brain and mind above purely subjective reflections. When we are faced with beauties, we can part in interpret them and express then their cause in brain and the pleasure we take of them and we use in this interpretation mainly from our inherent internal contents" (Jafari, 2000: 188). Unlike Schuon, a number of theorists considers beauty as subjective perception of objective phenomena and regard its existence subject to human subjectivity. In definition of beauty, Javadi Amoli says: "The beauty tangible or intangible thing which is in harmony with perception and enjoys of it" (Javadi Amoli, 1996: 5).

2. Symbolism as the foundation of traditional aesthetics

Schuon definition of beauty as a manifestation of truth and objective, independent of the human mind and his taste, leads aesthetics of traditionalisms to symbolism. From his perspective, form (shape) is the symbol and beauty meaning manifestation of glory of truth is not separate from symbol (natural and artistic) and aesthetics is the knowledge of symbols or knowledge of forms since they are symbol: "Beauty is tangible on the one hand, and on the other it is meaningful and as appearance of inside manifestation" (Bina-ye Motlagh, 2003: 107). "True aesthetic truth is nothing but the knowledge of forms and shapes not objectivity per se. The shape and form of of traditional art is based on this fact. On other hand, meaning of forms can play important role in rationality. The truth or logic of sizes in every area in which formal elements are included is a criterion to measure the truth and falseness of something, since super formal light in formal is not something formless, but it is based on accurate form. Super formal is embodied in the formed and formal issue that is reasonable and generous" (Rahmati, 2004: 68). In another place, Schuon introduces symbolism as the main condition of beauty: "The eternal forms of sacred art, heaven inspirations. It is a beautiful shape and has beauty that this beauty is result

Frithjof Schuon and the meaning of beauty” (Binaye Motlagh, 2003). Schuon expresses his aesthetic views on metaphysics of Plato, and this phrase of Plato “beauty is the splendor of truth” is the refrain of his writings on this subject, so beauty begins with manifestation and it is in fact same with perfection, that is, on the one hand, it is manifestation of absolute and on other hand it is manifestation of infinite. In other words, in the beauty, order is symbol of absolute and mystery is symbol of infinity. Perfection is born from the juxtaposition of order and mystery, both in nature and in art. Splendor of truth means that beauty has two sides or faces: Mystery and order. In short, the source of beauty is divine truth or more accurately is indefinite or its creative face.

Therefore, beauty is objective reality and it is not result of human perception (Bina-ye Motlagh, 2003: 106). In his view, the beauty, as truth, has independent reality and separate from the humans in terms of ontology and it is beyond the perception and knowledge of human: “In fact beauty is essentially an objective element that we may see it or not, or we may understand it or not, but, as with any objective reality or as fact, it has its own intrinsic quality. Therefore, the beauty is before and independent from human. It does not human that creates one as Plato. The existence principles of beautiful things are in something much deeper than our knowledge and understanding limited to phenomena” (Schuon, 2004: 26).

1-1. Reviewing the Schuon’s metaphysical principles

In summary stated about metaphysical principles or foundations, Schwan focused on three themes¹: beauty as manifestation of truth, unity of beauty and perfection and beauty as an objective reality (as opposed to the subjective reality). Then, using the Allameh Jafari and Javadi Amolie’s views, these points are evaluated.

1-1-1. Relationship between beauty and reality

If as he Schuon says that beauty was manifestation of the truth always, there will be no need to explain, interpret and distinguish human or divine characteristics versus false and evil beauties. The

presence and providing the beauty characteristics of religion or reality represent this fact that beauty is not always in the reality path, but in light of its characteristics, it can agree or disagree. When beauty is considered as a container, it can be against truth or reality and distort the truth. Therefore, beauty is not manifestation and display of truth.

There are several examples in this regard that that can be provided in culture and art of different civilizations throughout of history, that they have hidden real beauty and even reversed it. “Beauty has a feature that can hide content in itself and the confrontation of beauty and truth begins from the moment that beauty wants (and can) hide a truth” (Jafari, 2000: 154).

Allameh Jafari states his view on beauty, art and their relationship with the truth as follows: As the beauty and truth value and people's perception of them is different due to their differences in thinking and mental state and specific cultural situations, therefore we cannot consider the relationship between the three concepts (beauty, truth and art) as absolute and same. This issue can be raised out as principle in a way that as human brain development and perfection rise, he will consider the human truth and art beautiful that is same mental expansion feeling in the intuition of beauties (Ibid: 155).

1-1-2. Unity of perfection and beauty

As stated, according to Schuon beauty is same with perfection. As perfection, beauty is born by companionship with order and mystery. While the logical relation between beauty and the excellent affair (something that has an element of perfection) is general and particular that is both beauty and perfection are considered as subset of perfection. “Beauty and perfection have one common material and two differentiate materials that are separate from each other. The first differentiation material is that it is excellent creature or reality but it has no beauty manifestation, as a machine that does not beauty manifestation but it has complete and optimal efficiency. The second differentiation is manifestations of usual beauties around us created from beautiful colors and simple forms that are beautiful but not excellent” (Ibid).

Introduction

Islamic art has been interested by Muslim orientalist, artists and scholars throughout and historical aspects to providing spiritual concepts. Different approaches and different methods of studying and recognition of this art have been conducted over the years, and various materials have been written in defining and providing the intellectual framework of it. On other hand, careful study of the theoretical foundations of Islamic art and architecture in Iran illuminates a kind of chaos, generalization, and plurality of simplistic and wrong assumptions to adapt the religion with beauty. "Finding the impact of various affairs on a work is not difficult, but insists on the discovery of religion in the heart of Islamic art often suggests imagination and intellectual laziness than anything else. When we talk about religion and art, we should be more careful because these concepts are broad and if do not pay enough attention, we encounter with mixed and unclear thoughts" (Leaman, 2014: 10). Treatment of this problem is to adopt a new approach in the understanding of Islamic art that critical look at existing theories is the first it is necessary. For this purpose, this article aims to have a rational review on contemporary aesthetics conducted by Traditionalists. The Traditionalism is main way of thinking in the interpretation of Islamic art in Iran started about half a century ago. Frithjof Schuon is one of the prominent figures in this regard that after the "Rene Guenon" and "Coomaraswamy", as the main theorist of Traditionalism, has trained many students. Schuon like other Traditionalists has provided views mainly

on metaphysics, ethics, mysticism, religion and art considered as Traditional aesthetic references. Before turning to the concept of Traditional aesthetics of Schuon, it is necessary to state a brief description about the concept of Tradition and Traditional art among Schuon and Traditionalists so that his considered concept of beauty can be identified and investigated in this way of thinking. Tradition in the sense that Traditionalists use is not a custom or habit and merely something that they have believed in it at specific periods in the history of a particular civilization. Tradition is something rooted in sky and it is manifested in the revelation in the most general meaning, the same source that is the origin of the tradition. Coinciding with its emergence in a particular place and time, it gives determination to it. Tradition, not only to the fact of a divine origin, but due to principle application included areas to diversity of law and art it is referred as methods of cultivation of a garden (Khandaghabadi, 2004).

Therefore, the use of this term is not only in the field of metaphysics and religion, but also it is used in traditional art, traditional social structures and traditional science. From their perspective, tradition is eternal and universal truth include all aspects of human life from, including thought and industry, art and everyday life affairs. This Tradition has not been evolved and made by human experience, but tradition comes from a source that everything comes from it and everything goes back to it, so tradition covers all things (Mansouri & Teimouri, 2013: 58).

1. Metaphysical principles of beauty from Schuon perspective

Although Frithjof Schuon does not have independent book about aesthetics but he has talked about something that can be interpreted as traditional aesthetics in the works such as transcendent unity of religions, spiritual arenas and human realities, and spirituality as a principle in detail, he has referred to this issue in his other

books and articles. Among his translated works on beauty and art, we can refer to articles of beauty and art from the perspective of Schuon, facts or errors about beauty, about the forms in art, aesthetics in art, nature, and the principles and criteria of art in art and spirituality book (Rahmati, 2004), the article of "The principles and standards of international art" translated by "Seyyed Hossein Nasr", the book of principles of spiritual art (1990), and the article of "

Critical Look on Frithjof Schuon's Views on Islamic Aesthetics*

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Abstract

Main theorists of Traditionalists' way of thinking pay more attention to the importance of art and beauty, and they have considered aesthetic of religious arts including Islamic arts in their works, explicitly or implicitly. The history of expansion and development of ideas and views of traditionalists about art and beauty in the intellectual and cultural climate of our country's history is nearly five decades. Presence of critical aspects denying western culture and civilization and focus on interpretation and restoration of religious culture are two major reasons of paying attention to views and opinions of traditionalists, especially in the field of religious and traditional art, both before and after the Islamic Revolution. However, what has been neglected in this regard is lack of serious and rational critiques on this way of thinking as dominant and influential way of thinking in artistic space. In this paper, a summary of "Schuon" views on metaphysical foundations or bases of beauty are provided firstly. In the second stage, these metaphysical foundations including topics related to beauty and truth, unity of perfection, beauty, and objective reality are evaluated in terms of logic and content compared to thinkers of original Islamic intellectual tradition, including "Jafari" and "Tabatabai". The next part of the article reviews the symbolism as base of Schuon's aesthetics and traditionalists reviewed in the form of ability to prove beauty and inherent symbolism of forms in terms of methodology and content. As a conclusion, it is stated that the aesthetics of Schuon and traditionalists lack of clear logical and scientific properties as the theoretical foundations of Islamic art due to unconsidered generalizations, and the application of these ideas leads to a useless formalism.

Keywords

Aesthetic, Beauty, Traditionalists school, Islam, symbol, Schuon, Traditional art, Religious art.