

Aekaman Kaewtongson 2011: Aesthetics in Theravada Buddhist Philosophy.  
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Department of Philosophy and Religion. Thesis Advisor: Associate Professor  
Suchoa Ploychum, M.A. 98 pages.

The research aims at studying aesthetics in Theravada Buddhism. The research explores aesthetic concepts and aesthetic teachings of Buddhism for general concepts are to be understood. Then, the research analyzes aesthetics in Theravada Buddhism with qualitative research methodology. Data is taken from Buddha's teachings in Tripitaka, and related contemporary scholars' explanations and concepts.

The results show that aesthetics is an academic field in philosophy in relevant to aesthetic value judgments. It is a theory about perceptions through sense experiences and aesthetic feelings. What is beauty? Does beauty exist? Where is beauty? All these are important questions in aesthetics. Philosophers and aesthetic thinkers have different answers according to their worldviews.

When aesthetic questions are applied in Theravada Buddhism, it is founded out that in the teaching system of Theravada Buddhism, there are two dimensions of beauty - worldly beauty and Dhammic beauty. Worldly beauty is beauty that people generally talk about and understand such as beauty in nature and beauty in art while Dhammic beauty is virtue such as virtue of behavior, virtue of mind and virtue of knowledge. Worldly beauty is in accordance with human passion so it is subjective while Dhammic beauty is about Reality so it is objective. The origins or causes of aesthetics are orderliness, cleanness and purity. Also, in Theravada Buddhism, it is significantly pointed out that there is a relationship between truth, virtue and aesthetic beauty which is all systematically connected.

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