

Aesthetics in Korea: Traditions and Perspectives

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This paper aims to introduce the historical traditions of Korean aesthetics, focusing on the views of prominent thinkers, and further examine the contemporary tasks of Korean aesthetics. Thanks to ‘chinoiserie’ and ‘japonism’, Chinese and Japanese aesthetics were introduced to Europe relatively early, but Korean aesthetics has received little attention until recently. Korea has developed a great art culture with a long historical tradition and unique language in East Asian culture, and has accomplished its own specific achievements in aesthetics. | *Keywords: Korean Aesthetics, Pungryu or Aesthetic Way of Life, Inner Beauty, Naturalness, Cultivation of Character*

1. Preface

Today, academic and cultural circles in Korea are displaying a keen interest in reaffirming the nation’s cultural identity and discovering the historical roots of their own unique cultural traditions. The craving for ethnic identity may be a universal phenomenon in humans. Due to the special historical and cultural context in which their nation struggled to survive and develop, Koreans have a greater need to establish clear and obvious cultural self-identity. Since the beginning of history, the Korean people have been forced to contend with powerful neighbouring countries. Even now, a strong Western influence is being exerted over the nation in the process of rapid modernization. The influence also applies to circumstances pertaining to academia. In reality, most of the work conducted in universities and research institutes relies on foreign imports. Just as our forefathers struggled for hundreds of years to master the ideas of Confucius and Laozi, Korean aesthetic researchers today devote their intellectual efforts and time to studying Kant and Hegel, Nietzsche and Heidegger, Foucault and Deleuze, Dewey and Dickie. But aren’t we really overlooking what’s important to us? Until the present, have we not been too negligent in expounding Korean aesthetics and traditional Korean thinking about aesthetics?

However, does ‘Korean aesthetics’ really exist? If so, in what sense does it exist? What else is it about? We need to think seriously about this question. Aesthetics is the expression of the human spirit, and aesthetics history develops as it relates to politics, society, culture, and religion that form the worldview of each era. Korean ideological traditions were formed by Shamanism, Confucianism, Buddhism, and Taoism. Therefore, the contents of traditional aesthetics are also affected by these factors. No one can doubt the value and vitality of Korean aesthetics in the sense of academic exploration of its own tradition. However, it is not important to insist solely on discovering the unique and characteristic Korean elements in such exploration. Such stubbornness leads to narrow nationalism in the intellectual sphere and distorts our views. What is important is to understand and evaluate the aesthetic achievements of our forebearers in the proper historical context. It is necessary to recognize that these aesthetic traditions and the achievements of excellent thinkers are related to the universality and generality of aesthetics. While pointing out the universality of aesthetic problems and methods and focusing on solving such tasks, we should push beyond cultural and historical limitations in our aesthetic thinking.

2. Historical Survey

I argued earlier that the source of traditional Korean aesthetics should be found in the concept of *pungryu* which can be translated into the word ‘elegant life’ in English (Min, 1999, pp. 131–132). I think *pungryu* (or *fengliu* in Chinese and *furyu* in Japanese) is the basic concept of East Asian aesthetics as well as Korean aesthetics, which comprises three main aspects of aesthetic studies, namely, beauty, fine arts and sensual cognition. *Pungryu* means ‘the stream of wind’ in the literal sense of the word. It implies giving full play to one’s free-spirited and prodigious mind. In Eastern thought, the concept of *pungryu* is able to integrate and accommodate various aspects related to aesthetic issues. It has had an important and continuous role in the historical development of Korean aesthetics. In short, *pungryu* has the tendency to enhance the ordinary life to the aesthetic state or the world of art. Therefore the full import of *pungryu* is tantamount to the aesthetic way of life. I think it is necessary to consider the historical transition process of Korean aesthetic thinking from the perspective of the genealogy of *pungryu*. The outline is as follows.

The first usage of the word *pungryu* was in Preface to Nanrang Inscription written by Choi Chiwon in the late ninth century in the Silla period (B.C. 57–A.D. 935). According to the record, ‘the way of *pungryu*’ (*pungryu-do*) was the main practical idea of education. Its contents included the thoughts of Confucianism, Buddhism and Taoism. It was originally derived from ancient traditional Korean ideas and was afterwards combined with those three foreign teachings. The idea of *pungryu* had been established in conjunction with the *hwarang* corps which was an educational and military organization meant to train and cultivate the youth. Perhaps it was called ‘the way’ of *pungryu* in the sense that it was the educational idea of *hwarang* to nurture an aesthetic man. Its main contents are as follows: firstly, to learn morals and

beautiful customs; secondly, to enjoy music in daily living; and thirdly, to play with beautiful nature. The way of *pungryu* was a principal idea in Silla culture, especially as an educational idea for *hwarang*, and it contributed a great deal to national prosperity (Min, 1999, pp. 136–137).

The Silla era monk Won-hyo (617–686) was well versed in Buddhist scriptures and behind left many writings. The essential core of his idea lies in combining and harmonizing the hundred schools of thoughts, that is, ‘the principles of dialogues’ (*hwajaeng*), and as a practice method, he displayed a free-spirited behaviour that was not bound by strict commandments. Although he was a monk, he dressed as a commoner, and even though he was an aristocrat, he acted as a clown. In other words, he wandered around performing songs and dances as a person characterized by a style of ‘boundlessness’ (*mu-ae*). As a monk and aristocrat, he first tried to eradicate his own privileged consciousness. As the phrase the ‘Unconstraint of Won-hyo’ intimates in *The Heritage of the Three States*, it is entirely appropriate to refer to his behaviour as unconstrained if we review historical records regarding his lifestyle (Yil-yeon, 2022). It goes without saying that there is no bondage. He sings if words are not enough, and dances if songs are not enough. Dancing or singing in him is a way to convey the truth.

The newly pioneered Zen Buddhism philosophy that arose in the middle of the Goryeo Dynasty (918–1392) led to a change in intellectual history by deeply exploring the problems of human survival, the universe and nature, and human freedom. The monks of the Zen temple thought that abandoning fame and wealth and secluding themselves in the forest would restore human nature. As their ideological tendencies reach the realm of art, so-called Zen poetry rises. In such poetry, there is an idea to change the values of the world, where we can feel a unique vitality. It is understood that there is a beauty associated with Zen arising from the Zen thinking, and it is the unique rhetoric that enables the expression of vitality. Hye-sim (1178–1234) broke away from stereotypes through expressions of uncommonness and unconventionality, and Gyeong-han (1299–1374) pursued a state of indifference that became one through contact with nature. This is nothing but the spirit of *pungryu* that tries to escape the mundane world and be free. The level of enlightenment pursued by the monks was the world of mental beauty from a focused mind.

Lee Gyu-bo (1169–1241) was a literary official during the Goryeo Dynasty and discussed the literary theory of ‘meaning and spirit’ based on his unique personality and progressive worldview. He appreciated the vitality of vocabulary and the vivacity of the poetic mind and placed an emphasis on magnanimous vigour. Vitality and vivacity are the core contents of *pungryu*. He had a prodigious appetite for poetry, calligraphy, zither, alcohol, etc. as a medium for *pungryu*. He highly appreciated naturally flowing poems, rather than poems that he had worked hard to produce. According to him, if a poet develops an outstanding personality through discipline and study and has mature ideas, his character and thoughts will overflow spontaneously. There is no formality at such time. It is really like a new meaning is being

created. In his literary theory, the term of ‘dignity’¹, such as ‘magnanimous’, reflects his own character and at the same time represent the spirit of *pungryu* and the content is freewheeling (Usami and Aoki, 2014, pp. 207–214).

The Joseon Dynasty (1392–1897) established Confucianism as part of its national policy and used the ideologies of ‘courtesy and music’ and ‘respect for writing’ as its cultural foundation. In the early days, a refined elegant culture blossomed to the backdrop of political and social stability. Seo Geo-jeong’s theory of a ‘shining country’ that seeks to make the country shine through literary art and Seong Hyeon’s music theory of ‘harmonization’ reveal the ethical and aesthetic values of this era.

Seo Geo-jeong (1420–1488) enumerated three functions of literary art. Firstly, it plays a role in reorganizing the cultural system and raising the cultural level of the people; secondly, it promotes fame through a talent for poetry; and thirdly, it serves as the basis for exchanges with foreign envoys or writing diplomatic documents. For him, the mission of literary art is to evoke an emotional world of joy, happiness, and peace. This world of emotions is called *pung-a* or elegance. In short, he thought that it was the task of the king and his subjects to spread the energy of peace, and that literary art must be helpful in this task. He valued ‘abundance’ and ‘magnificence’ as denoting the dignity of literary art, which exemplifies the style of royal statesmanship.

Seonghyeon (1439–1504) was also a representative bureaucratic scribe of the early Joseon Dynasty. In particular, he showed outstanding talent in arts such as calligraphy, painting, and music. He said in his biography that he enjoyed poetry, landscape exploration, and playing the musical instrument zither, which illustrated his life of enjoying *pungryu*. Furthermore, he had a great interest in national culture. In particular, he served as the director of the Music and Dance Management Institute and the Academic Research Institute. He visited China three times during his tenure, and was always involved in entertaining Chinese envoys in Joseon. He put the most importance on and effort into realizing ‘order by courtesy and music’ in society. What makes society peaceful, and what makes human emotions gentle, is his aesthetics of harmonization (Usami and Aoki, 2014, pp. 215–222).

In the middle of the Joseon Dynasty, the ‘Confucian scholar faction’ (*sarimpa*), which was not in a position of political power, advocated the ideal politics of Confucianism with the contents of virtue and courtesy. Based on the spirit of fidelity, they oppose the tyranny of the ‘aristocratic faction’ (*hun-gu-pa*) and aimed for ‘people-oriented ideas’ and ‘the good of the people’. Lee Hwang and Lee Yi are representatives of this Confucian scholar faction. They considered purifying human nature to be the most important role of learning.

For Lee Hwang (1502–1571), who lived during the peak of Korean Confucianism and achieved many notable successes, it was the goal of *pungryu* to promote personal cultivation by standing aloof from the fame or wealth of the world and

¹ The word dignity is a translation of *pum-gyok*, which refers to the foundation of a person and his natural character, and also to the class felt in objects. It can be said to be a stylistic normative criterion used to evaluate works of art or human character.

instead to love nature. He declared that he naturally got excited when he encountered good scenery and enjoyed it for a long time, and he loved walking around in nature such as in mountains and valleys. When he came across a scenic spot, he stopped and recited a poem alone, and he became lost in his own thoughts. In addition, he built a study room in a place where the river meandered and became absorbed in reading. And when he encountered beautiful scenery, he floated a small boat in the river and played while rowing until the excitement subsided. Lee Hwang placed the most importance on the dignity of 'tenderness and gentleness' (*onyu-donhu*). This means the most desirable and complete character is one that is generous and decent. It can be said that his *pungryu* was an aesthetic life aimed at the formation of character.

Lee Yi (1536–1584) theoretically systematised the 'temperament aesthetics'² of the Confucian scholar faction following Lee Hwang. For him, it was the purpose of *pungryu* to discover the highest and truest emotional state that could be obtained from nature and to help him cultivate his personality. Such views can also be found in his literary thinking. Lee Yi was not just a person who enjoyed singing about the wind and moon or played with the decoration of the sentence. He was not merely a poet, but rather a Neo-Confucian scholar and a high-ranking official. For him, the poem refuses to decorate the words beautifully because it must wash away the dirt from the heart and help him to cultivate himself. Therefore, his poems were seemingly dry and plain, and showed an aesthetic sense of 'decorating without decorating' with little literary modification. 'Natural flavor' denoted the dignity of poetry that best represents this aesthetic consciousness.

The late Joseon Dynasty became the era of 'practical study'³, and *pungryu* was also associated with an active attitude toward reality in keeping with the trend of this era. Therefore, there was a keen interest in human natural emotions, people's lives, and social contradictions.

Hong Dae-yong (1731–1783)'s starting point of practical study was in a strict confrontation with 'false study'. At that time, he conducted outstanding studies in military science, built an astronomical observatory, and compiled mathematical books that were useful for practical tasks. Furthermore, he showed exceptional talent in music, and played various music instruments. According to him, writing poetry is more effective than drinking alcohol, and playing zither is more effective than writing poetry to forget the troubles that occur in our worldly life and to dispell the suffering of melancholy. Music, which represents human natural emotions, is recognized as a means of cultivation to those who sing and play it, and as a means of exhortation to

² 'Temperament aesthetics' is based on the external objects and the subject who perceives them. As Neo-Confucianism takes personality cultivation through introspection as an important core, Neo-Confucian temperament aesthetics focuses on aesthetically shaping this inner temperament.

³ 'Practical Study' (*sil-hak*) refers to a new academic style that flourished from the 17th century to the 18th century in the late Joseon Dynasty, aiming for the benefits of real life. It valued scientific academic attitude and promotion of public welfare, respected technology, and studied the improvement of national economic life.

those who listen to it. He stated that 'pure nature inherent in man' and 'heavenly spirit' were the criteria for evaluating works of art. And folk songs were said to be more beautiful than others because they are based on nature and come from heaven. The heavenly spirit is the original state of mind of a human being before being bound by desire. It was his *pungryu* that revealed the human mind in a natural manner.

Park Ji-won (1737–1805) said that art was a creative activity based on the lives of people in each era, and the role of an artist was to create works with 'true taste' based on reality. This is also an argument for originality in art creation, but it can be said to be an innovative attitude diverging from ways of ancient worship that prevailed at that time. He argued that the ancient Chinese texts should be interpreted in an independent manner so that they could be applied to the reality of Joseon by using the method of 'keeping up with the changes'. Here he proposed a strategy 'to create new things by imitating the old ones'. He criticized the trend of indiscriminately copying and plagiarizing Chinese writings from the past, while insisting on creating unique and original writings based on the reality in which the author exists. He tried to realize this based on a thorough observation of objects and perception of reality. So, he argued that the author should see through to the truth of things and express it in a sincere and honest manner similar to 'the innocence of childhood'. And he enjoyed comparing writing to fighting on the battlefield, because writing to him was combative (Usami and Aoki, 2014, pp. 223–230).

Jeong Yak-yong (1762–1836) expressed more mature ideas after enduring a long exile. He thought it was the scholar's mission to widely understand the hardships of the people and find solutions to them, regardless of his own circumstances. For him, artistic activities should promote a harmonious mind, and orientate resentment or adoration in a positive direction. In addition, art must be helpful in promoting 'patriotism', 'social criticism' and 'encouraging good and punishing evil'. In short, it is the mission of art to lead human relations and to reform society. For this reason, he regarded 'a spirit of intense anguish' as an example of the dignity of poetry. In addition, if it was a poem criticizing the contradictions afflicting society, it was considered to be a kind of tragedy. For him, the spirit of *pungryu* was characterised as being a strong criticism of politics and society, or satire (Usami and Aoki, 2014, pp. 231–238).

Kim Jeong-hee (1786–1856) was a prominent literary figure and master of calligraphy in the late Joseon Dynasty. He established his own individual style of calligraphy called the 'chusa style', and possessed excellent connoisseurship. By combining his natural talents with a wide range of scholarship, he achieved brilliant results in various fields such as poetry, calligraphy, painting, and seal engraving. In addition, based on the similarities between these arts and Zen Buddhism, the theory of literati art was pursued. He emphasized the need to break away from narrow viewpoints and strive toward the universal path of art, and to study the masterpieces and authenticity of the old masters. In particular, he considered the beauty of 'rough and clumsy', shown by clerical scripts, as the highest ideal, and pursued the mature beauty of simplicity, not the beauty of skillfulness. He believed that the quality of excellent art was only

possible by the artist's outstanding personality and learning. And he especially emphasized that in order to reach the level of noble art like that conveyed in Orchid Painting, the sincerity of 'not fooling oneself' must be presented. For him, the goal of *pungryu* was to pursue the formation of a noble personality, as the dignity of clerical scripts and Orchid Painting showed.

3. Characteristics

As a result of examining the history of Korean traditional aesthetics from ancient times to before modern times, it was found that there was a characteristic aesthetic consciousness in each era. It can be summarized in the art evaluative term 'dignity', which is a concept corresponding to aesthetic quality or aesthetic characteristics. In the Silla period, 'tidiness' was a typical example, and in the Goryeo Dynasty, the beauty of 'freshness' or 'magnanimousness' was pursued. In the Joseon Dynasty, the beauty of 'refinement' became the norm in the early days, and in the mid-term, the beauty of 'naturalness' became the ideal, and in the latter half, the beauty of 'clumsiness' was pursued.

If we summarise the traditional aesthetics of Korea, the following several points can be said to be continuously bequeathed. First of all, the traditional aesthetics of Korea places more importance on inner beauty rather than external sensory beauty. In other words, it does not pay close attention to the beauty of form or the surface. It values the energy and spirit inherent in the object and takes a position that respects the aspect of creation in art, especially the inner world of the artist. This sense of beauty is well seen in the idiom of 'abandoning flowers or appearance while protecting fruits or content'. Fruit is the essence and source of things. In order to find such fruit in art, one must not be forced into focusing on flowers or decorative things that are only trivial.

Secondly, the aesthetic consciousness of Koreans is not directed to the flashy and luxurious, but to simple, frugal, and plain beauty. It is supported by the consciousness of seeking to return to nature that exists by itself without adding human artificiality. From this point of view, the dual evaluation of good and evil, beauty and ugliness, technique and clumsiness is avoided, and instead, nature itself can be maintained intact only in a state where the object is viewed in its totality or 'oneness'. This aversion to artificiality is a characteristic of Korean beauty. This is the art philosophy of Lee Yi's 'decoration without decoration'. From the Korean perspective on nature, nature is 'so in itself', and beauty and art follow this law of nature.

Thirdly, the value of beauty and art is not just for the self-satisfaction of the creators or the appreciators, but for its pragmatic role in contributing to human life in a broader sense. In other words, true art is considered to realize practical purposes such as purifying human nature and educating society. For this reason, beauty and art are not valued for their uniqueness, but are accepted as having a close relationship with human ethics and politics. Korean aesthetics starts with a sense of character. Here, it is impossible to think of art

that deviates from human formation or life. Art is a method of cultivating the completion of character and is valuable as the manifestation of noble character.

The above three characteristics, namely, the spirit of abandoning flowers while protecting fruits, the preference for naturalness or simplicity, and the ethical and practical tendency are elements of an aesthetic consciousness that aims for spiritual nobility away from the bondage of the world.

4. Formation of Korean Modern Aesthetics

However, since the end of the 19th century, Korea has undergone great social upheavals due to political turmoil and foreign invasions. Entering the 20th century, the situation regarding academic research took on a completely different character disconnected from tradition. The formation of modern learning in Korea was not carried out based on independence and autonomy, but was forced to commence with and incorporate foreign elements as a result of invasions by Western powers and the establishment of Japanese imperialism (Min, 2020, pp. 16–17). Regarding aesthetics research, we cannot help but mention Ko Yu-seop, the only Korean who majored in aesthetics at Gyongseong Imperial University, founded in 1924.

Ko Yu-seop (1905–1944) was the first Korean scholar to study aesthetics as a modern academic discipline, and at the same time also an art historian who tried to elucidate the aesthetic characteristics of Korean art. He was engaged in academic activities during dark and difficult times, but his achievements have had a significant impact up until the present day. He studied mainly modern German aesthetics, especially psychological aesthetics and the science of art, from his Japanese teacher Ueno Naoteru (1882–1973) (Ueno, 2013; Kim, 1992). Ko submitted *The essence and significance of artistic activities* (1930) as a bachelor's degree thesis, which summarizes the art theory of Konrad Fiedler, the founder of *Kunstwissenschaft*. After graduation, Ko tried to develop the learning he had acquired from Japanese scholars in his own way to discover the essence of Korean beauty from his own perspective. So he studied art historical methodology, such as style history, spiritual history and social history, and by applying those methodologies to Korean art history, he wrote *Studies on Korean Buddhist Towers* (1936) and *Celadon of Goryeo Dynasty* (1939). Furthermore, he defined the characteristics of Korean beauty as 'a savoury big taste', 'asymmetry', 'skills without skills' and 'quiet humour' (Ko, 2007, vol. 1, pp. 106–113).

Park Eui-hyun (1909–1975) graduated in 1936 with a major in philosophy and worked as Professor Ueno's assistant at Gyongseong Imperial University. He led aesthetic education at Seoul National University since the founding of the Republic of Korea. Park seems to have devoted himself to philosophical aesthetics, especially German idealistic aesthetics and the aesthetics of realism through lectures such as *Theory of Aesthetic Object and Theory of Aesthetic Experience*. From a realistic point of view, he acknowledged that aesthetic research not only serves as a shield for art to suggest methods and principles on art criticism, but also enhances sensibilities, which is the ability

to appreciate. He summarized the tasks and directions of aesthetics as follows. According to him, the structure and content of each aesthetic phenomenon are different, but overall, it is under the control of a unified aesthetic principle. It naturally pursues aesthetic norms as a unifying principle that considers all aesthetic attitudes, aesthetic appreciation, art criticism, and art creation. Therefore, aesthetics should borrow a philosophical methodology that deals with unified principles and norms (Park, 1963).

The Department of Aesthetics of Seoul National University was the only educational institution of aesthetics for a long time after national liberation in 1945. The Korean Society of Aesthetics was founded in 1968 with members of the Faculty of Aesthetics at the centre, and the first issue of the journal *Aesthetics (mihak)* was published in 1971. Around this time, Kim Jeong-rok (1907–1982) took charge of Eastern aesthetics courses, expanding the scope of aesthetic research. While discussing the three perfections of poetry, calligraphy, and painting, Kim summarized the main features of Eastern aesthetics into six concepts: moderation, forcefulness of strokes, state of old age, tranquillity, nature, and Buddhist beauty. In the inaugural address of the first issue of the journal *Aesthetics*, he argued firstly for spreading awareness of aesthetics and using aesthetics in promoting art culture, secondly for the empirical exploration of aesthetic or artistic phenomena based on specific experiential facts, and thirdly for establishing a legitimate value for unique art culture by accepting foreign cultures (Kim, 1971).

On the other hand, Korean studies researcher and poet Jo Ji-hoon (1920–1968) contributed to the clarification of the characteristics of Korean aesthetic consciousness by analysing the meaning of the word *meot* in his *A Study on Meot* (1964) and structuring the concept. And Paik Ki-soo (1930–1985), who succeeded Park Eui-hyun and Kim Jung-rok, argued that art is a phenomenon of value closely related to human life, and that aesthetics should be considered in order to establish an aesthetic man, to set up an aesthetic environment, and to create an aesthetic life (Paik, 1978, pp. 255–256).

5. Current Situation and Tasks

The Korean Aesthetics Association and its journal *Aesthetics* have led the discourse on aesthetics while forming the centre of the academic world of aesthetics. However, it is not free from the criticism that it is too focused on the import of Western aesthetics to study Korean aesthetic thinking. Analysing the papers published in *Aesthetics* so far, the number of those dealing with Western aesthetics and artistic philosophy is overwhelmingly large. In the case of dealing with Eastern aesthetics, Chinese aesthetics features fairly prominently, but Korean aesthetics is underrepresented. In fact, Korean aesthetics accounts for only about 7% of all papers. A more serious problem is the fact that the number of papers on Western aesthetics has increased over time, recently reaching 85%.

Looking at the research trends in the 1970s and 1980s after the establishment of the Korean Society of Aesthetics, it can be seen that the focus was on the understanding of the history of Western aesthetics, especially German

idealistic aesthetics propounded by figures such as Kant and Hegel. There were also translations and introductions of aesthetics written by Anglo-American scholars, but full-fledged research on Anglo-American aesthetics by Korean scholars was conducted only by several researchers who returned home from studying in the United States after the 1990s. They mainly conducted aesthetic research based on analytic philosophy, and in most cases, it is regrettable to say that they mostly discuss issues unrelated to Korean life or cultural roots. In the 2000s, research on French aesthetics as expounded by such figures Foucault and Deleuze became more and more active. Recently, young researchers are showing great interest in film aesthetics, aesthetics of popular art, and aesthetics in the new media era.

As such, most of the current aesthetic research in Korea is in the Anglo-American, German, and French domains, and next, research on Chinese aesthetics occupies a certain part, but unfortunately, research on Korean traditional aesthetics is still not very active. Most of the research results on Korean aesthetics are not by professional aesthetic researchers, but rather are artistic studies dealing with related studies such as musicology and art history, or reviews by critics or essayists. The reality is that most Korean or Eastern aesthetics researchers do not have a strong knowledge of Western aesthetics or contemporary aesthetics, and they also have little interest in them. Therefore, in terms of problems and methods, there is a disconnection between Korean and Western aesthetics, and there has been little progress in exploring Korean aesthetic thinking in terms of it being part of the universal phenomenon of aesthetics.

In the global era, dialogue between the East and the West is becoming more important in aesthetics. Historically, European and East Asian aesthetics have formed two major axes. The 18th century's chinoiserie and the 19th century's japonism had a great influence on European cultural history. Thanks to this influence, Chinese and Japanese aesthetics were introduced to Europe relatively early, but until recently, Korean aesthetics received little attention. Korea has cultivated a great art culture with a long historical tradition and unique language in East Asian culture, and has formed its own aesthetics. Since the 20th International Congress of Aesthetics was held in Seoul, Korea in 2016, many people have become interested in Korean aesthetics. In addition, performances by young Korean artists, including the pop group BTS, have recently become popular around the world. Today, we can see the active 'Korean Wave' throughout the world, which is not limited to popular areas such as K-Pop and TV dramas, but is expanding to high-quality artistic areas.

Considering these waves, it becomes clear why Korean aesthetics should pursue universalization and globalization in the future. Therefore, the future task is to derive new results by applying logical ways of thinking and problem presentation, accumulated through Western aesthetic research, to the actual situation in Korea. For example, it is expected that researchers majoring in analytical aesthetics will not be immersed in the logic of Western thinking, but will use Korean classical writings in a more in-depth manner to contribute to the clarification of the meaning and significance of Korean aesthetics.

Meanwhile, a comparative study of Eastern and Western aesthetics will be conducted. Through this process, it is expected that the significance of Korean aesthetics will be discovered and become widely known to the world. Among the topics currently being enjoyed in contemporary aesthetics, it is necessary to recognize that fields such as ecological aesthetics, environmental aesthetics, and living aesthetics have occupied an important position in the Korean tradition.

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