

Some Critical Reflections on Berleantian Critique of Kantian Aesthetics from the Perspective of Eco-aesthetics

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Abstract: In order to develop environmental aesthetics, Berleant takes environment as an aesthetic paradigm. His understanding of the nature of environment decides the nature of his aesthetics of engagement, which emphasizes experiential continuity and rejects the separation between subject and object. Based on these ideas, he criticizes Kant's core idea of disinterestedness in his series of books. Berleant's environmental aesthetics has a significant impact on ecoaesthetics in China. However, Berleant's criticism of Kant's core idea of disinterestedness is a misunderstanding and his conception of environment is not fundamentally sound. The future of ecoaesthetics is taking ecosystem not environment as a new aesthetic paradigm.

Keywords: environment; aesthetic paradigm; environmental aesthetics; ecoaesthetics; ecosystem.

Introduction

Since the first national conference on ecoaesthetics (i.e. ecological aesthetics or eco-aesthetics) in 2001 in China, this newly emerging field has attracted more and more scholarly interest in the subsequent 16 years. In order to construct ecoaesthetics in an academically reasonable way, at least two related theoretical issues must be considered carefully. The first one is the difference between ecological aesthetics in China and environmental aesthetics in the West. The latter began to be introduced into the Chinese academic world at the beginning of the 21st century. Is it necessary to make a new phrase beyond environmental aesthetics, say, ecological aesthetics, if the two terms mean the same story? The second one is the revolutionary nature of ecological aesthetics compared with modern aesthetics: why is modern aesthetics "non-ecological" or even "anti-ecological" if there really is a kind of new aesthetics which can be called an "ecological" one?

Interestingly, answers to the above two questions in China both have close connections with Arnold Berleant's works. Berleant was invited to give lectures at some top Chinese academic institutes such as Zhejiang University and Shandong University in 1992 and 1993 separately, and two of his major books about environmental aesthetics, *The Aesthetics of Environment* (1992) and *Living in the Landscape: Toward an Aesthetics of Environment* (1997), were translated into Chinese and published in China in 2006, and both of them were taken as the main theoretical resources for the construction of Chinese ecoaesthetics.

Berleant's critique of Kant's core idea of disinterestedness in his series of books is one of the key points of his influence in China. As is well known, Kantian aesthetics is the peak of modern aesthetics, which is certainly the focus of critical reflections on the nature of modern aesthetics from the perspective of ecological awareness in general. So, at least three related questions should be investigated one by one: Firstly, why does Berleant criticize Kant's core idea of disinterestedness? Secondly, what does Chinese ecoaesthetics borrow mainly from Berleantian environmental aesthetics? Thirdly, how to evaluate Berleantian critique of Kantian aesthetics from the perspective of ecoaesthetics? Based on the three

questions, the last one should be, what is the future of ecoaesthetics? The article will discuss these questions and might be viewed as a friendly polemical exchange with Arnold Berleant.

The Nature of Environment and the Aesthetics of Engagement

If we understand what we called generally “aesthetics” as “aesthetic theory,” then, it is very reasonable to ask a question at the beginning of our aesthetic research: what should be taken as the “aesthetic paradigm” for the construction of an aesthetic theory? Unfortunately, this question of great importance had not been discussed for a long time, until Berleant’s statement of “Environment as an Aesthetic Paradigm” was proposed as chapter 10 in his 1992 book, *The Aesthetics of Environment*. It is in this chapter that Berleant makes his brief declaration as follow: “By taking aesthetic experience of environment as the standard, we are led to abandon the aesthetic of disinterestedness in favor of an aesthetic of engagement” (1992, p.157).

In the Berleantian context, what is called “aesthetic experience of environment as the standard” actually means the title of the chapter, “environment as an aesthetic paradigm.” Meanwhile, what is called “the aesthetics of disinterestedness” is mainly Kant’s aesthetic theory and “an aesthetic of engagement” is Berleant’s own position. It is a very good way to take the above brief declaration as the guideline for our discussion. The first question here is what does it mean to take environment as an aesthetic paradigm? The exploration also asks, before “environment” is taken as an aesthetic paradigm, what objects have been taken as aesthetic paradigm(s)?

Historically speaking, we can find at least three aesthetic paradigms. The first one is poetry, which is proposed by the German philosopher Baumgarten in his *Philosophical Meditations on Some Matters Pertaining to Poetry*, where he applies the term “aesthetics” to the sensory realm for the first time. Although Baumgarten also suggests ways that would also apply to painting, sculpture, and music, it is clear to see that poetry is his “aesthetic paradigm” when he tried to propose a science of the perceptual realm. The second aesthetic paradigm is nature, which is proposed by another German philosopher, Kant. Kant borrows the term “aesthetic” from Baumgarten, but shifts it to his own account of sensibility and the conditions of knowledge. In his “Critique of the Aesthetic Power of Judgment,” the first part of his *Critique of the Power of Judgment*, Kant takes nature as aesthetic paradigm to develop his aesthetic theory, which clearly declares the priority of nature over art. Hegel’s *Aesthetics: Lectures on Fine Art* asserts clearly that the term of “aesthetics” proposed by Baumgarten is not proper for the new discipline, which should be replaced by “philosophy of fine arts,” or briefly, “philosophy of art.” The five kinds of “fine arts” in Hegel’s “aesthetics” are architecture, sculpture, painting, music, and poetry, which indicate his aesthetic paradigm very clearly. To sum up, poetry, nature, and fine arts are the three aesthetic paradigms before the emergence of environmental aesthetics.

Based on the above historical narration, we may briefly define what is called “environmental aesthetics” as “aesthetics taking environment as its aesthetic paradigm.” The nature of the new type of aesthetics depends mainly on the nature of its aesthetic paradigm, environment. So, what is the nature of environment? In order to discuss the question, Berleant quotes the definition of environment as stated in the *Oxford English Dictionary*, which is “the object or the region surrounding anything.” Berleant asserts that “Cartesian dualism remains alive and well” in this definition (Berleant, 1991, p.81). What he calls “Cartesian dualism” here mainly means “the dualism of subject-object.” Within the Cartesian philosophical framework, the environment is usually viewed as a kind of “object” which can easily be objectified, and the appreciator is viewed as the subject outside it.

However, Berleant declares that “*The very notion of environment is problematic*” at the beginning of his 1992 book (p.2), because according to his understanding, to think of environment in the usual sense as “*physical surroundings or external world*” suggests that it lies outside the person, it is a container within which people pursue their private purposes (p.3). On the contrary, Berleant defines environment as “*a seamless unity of organism, perception, and place, all suffused with values,*” which is very different from such expressions as “*setting,*” “*circumstances*” and the like. Briefly, Berleant refuses to think of environment objectively and dualistically, in the sense of regarding humans as placed in it rather than as continuous with it (Berleant, 1992, p.10). So, there are at least two key points in Berleant’s conception of environment: the first is that environment is not an object and cannot be objectified, and the second is that humans are not separated from environment but are continuous with it. The new understanding of environment and its significance to aesthetics is expressed clearly in his following words:

“Environment, in the large sense, is not a domain separate and distinct from ourselves as human inhabitants. We are rather continuous with environment, an integral part of its processes. The usual tradition in aesthetics has difficulty with this, for it claims that appreciation requires a receptive, contemplative attitude. Such an attitude befits an observer, but nature admits of no such observer, for nothing can remain apart and uninvolved” (Berleant, 1992, p.11-12).

Here, Berleant views environment as a synonym for “*nature*” and declares that everything, including that which is human, is “*involved in it.*” In a word, “*involvement in environment (nature)*” should be taken as the proper starting point for the discussion of the aesthetics which takes “*environment as an aesthetic paradigm.*” As a matter of course, the nature of environment decides nature the new type of aesthetics. The technical term selected by Berleant in his official expression is not “*involvement,*”¹ but its synonym, “*engagement.*” Berleant asserts that: “*This aesthetics of engagement, as I call it, leads to a restructuring of aesthetic theory, a revision especially congenial to environmental aesthetics, in which the continuity of engagement in the natural world replaces the contemplative appreciation of a beautiful object or scene*” (Berleant, 1992, p.12).

We can see clearly that there are two related points contained in the new type of aesthetics (i.e., the aesthetics of engagement), especially in what Berleant calls “*environmental aesthetics,*” which are, first, “*the continuity of engagement in the natural world;*” second, “*the contemplative appreciation of a beautiful object or scene.*” The fundamental reason for Berleant’s critique of Kantian aesthetics lies in his thought of Kant’s aesthetic theory as the theory which can lead to “*the contemplative appreciation of a beautiful object.*” The next section moves to his criticism of Kant.

An Overview of Berleantian Critique of Kantian Aesthetics

From his first book *The Aesthetic Field: A Phenomenology of Aesthetic Experience* published in 1970 to his 2012 book *Aesthetics beyond the Arts: New and Recent Essays*, over the course of half a century, Berleant’s philosophical approach can be summed up as adopting Husserl’s phenomenological method and Heidegger’s criticism of Western cultural detour into subjectivism. With this as his theoretical background, Berleant has been trying to revise modern aesthetics with a series of criticisms of Kant’s aesthetic theory. The focus of his criticism is on Kant’s famous notion of disinterestedness and its philosophical limitations. According to Berleant’s criticism, Kantian aesthetics contains the dualism of subject-object

¹ Berleant also sometimes calls his “*aesthetic engagement*” “*aesthetic involvement.*” See his *Art and Engagement*, (1991, p.17).

inherently and treats aesthetic experience as merely subjective feeling. Berleant, on the contrary, emphasizes the contextual character of aesthetic appreciation, which involves active participation in the appreciative process, sometimes by overt physical action but always through creative perceptual involvement. Meanwhile, by absorbing the theory of perception proposed by Merleau-Ponty, Berleant views aesthetics as a return to its etymological origins by stressing the primacy of sense perception. In a word, by emphasizing the importance of participation and involvement, Berleant proposes a new aesthetic phrase, “engagement” or “aesthetic engagement.” Briefly speaking, the three key words used by Berleant, participation, involvement, and engagement mean almost the same story, all of them emphasize the continuity between appreciator as subject and artworks as object. Based on this understanding of the nature of aesthetic experience, Berleant asserts that Kant’s theory of disinterestedness leads to the separation between appreciator and artworks. He asserts that the famous notion of “disinterestedness” is:

“[...] an attitude denoting the perception of an object for its own sake without regard to further purposes, especially practical ones, and requiring the separation of the object from its surroundings in order that it may be contemplated freely and with no distracting considerations. Disinterestedness began to emerge as the mark of a new and distinctive mode of experience called “aesthetic,” a kind of awareness distinct from more commonly recognized alternative modes, such as instrumental, cognitive, moral, and religious experience. It was in the work of Kant, however, that the concept of aesthetic disinterestedness became fixed and assumed a distinct and integral place in aesthetic theory, just as aesthetics itself was integrated in his philosophy into a comprehensive system” (Berleant, 1991, p.12).

According to Berleant’s understanding, “disinterestedness” or “aesthetic disinterestedness” is not only an “attitude” but also “*a new and distinctive mode of experience.*” The core of disinterestedness is what he calls “separation” or “isolation.” So, this kind of experience might be called “experience of separation.” However, Berleant argues that empirical tradition and traditional aesthetics prejudge “*our experience by imposing on it a division between person and world.*” Berleant points out that “*this dualistic tradition of separating consciousness from an external world*” is “*so deeply ingrained in modern thought,*” which cannot be assumed as given (Berleant, 1991, p.14). In a word, “*the pattern of separation*” which continues to prevail in the way the arts are explained and treated should be reflected and criticized. In contrast to it, Berleant proposes “continuity of experience” as the clear alternative to the dualistic tradition, which emphasizes “*joining [the] perceiver with the world in complex patterns of reciprocity.*” He declares that “*experiential continuity in the arts can serve as a model for other areas of inquiry*” (Berleant, 1991, p.15).

It is not hard to see that Berleant’s two early books (the 1970 book and the 1991 book) as not being “aesthetic theory” in general but “philosophy of art,” which can be viewed as the starting point of his study of environmental aesthetics. Compared with art forms such as music and literature, the nature of environment is more helpful for him to criticize the “*tradition of separation in modern philosophy*” and to propose “*the idea of experiential continuity,*” because it is much easier for us to see the ordinary fact that, whenever we enter into an environment, the environment is no longer an “object” in its general sense, because we are in the environment and surrounded by all kinds of its factors. In this case, what Berleant calls “*the pervasive dualism of the modern period*” is no longer reasonable for us to explain the “*the meaning for aesthetics of the continuity of experience,*” which should be described in a more proper way by such keywords as “involvement and engagement” (Berleant, 1991, p.15-16).

What should be mentioned here is Dewey’s role in Berleant’s aesthetics of engagement. In Berleant’s view, Dewey exhibits a more explicit recognition of total organic involvement in art. He asserts that what

underlines Dewey's account of experience is the biological, evolutionary model. He cites Dewey's famous statement of "*the interaction of the live creature with his surroundings*" to support his idea of "engagement between perceiver and object" (Berleant, 1991, p.17). In this sense, "engagement" may be taken as a synonym for "interaction." Some sentences in the "preface" to the 1991 book, *Art and Engagement*, can show Berleant's train of thought very clearly, which goes as follow:

"In developing a theory that responds to the unpremeditated experience of art, then, we confront the larger philosophical structure of which the tradition in aesthetics is but one part. We face, in particular, an array of tendentious and obstructive dualisms, especially that of subject and object, which are widely accepted as fundamental truths.Aesthetic engagement challenges this entire tradition. It claims continuity rather than separation, contextual relevance rather than objectivity, historical pluralism rather than certainty, ontological parity rather than priority" (Berleant, 1991, p.xiii).

Berleant realizes very clearly that his theory of aesthetic engagement is primarily a new theory of art. Then, how is it possible to apply this art theory to those things beyond arts, say, nature or environment? Berleant explains this possibility in his 1991 book *Art and Engagement* as follow:

"Despite the reference to art in the title, this book moves freely at times between the arts and aesthetic experience in nature, especially when discussing landscape, architecture, and environment. This is not a careless disregard for their differences but a deliberate bridging of what I consider to be another of the misleading divisions that dog aesthetic theory. For the natural world does not stand apart from human presence and action. We are increasingly aware of the inescapable and pervasive effects of human agency, both local and global, on our natural environment. In nature as in arts there is an active transformation of materials in the shaping of experience, and the same conceptual structure of an aesthetics of engagement applies as readily to the one as to the others" (Berleant, 1991, p.xiv).

In Berleant's view, nature, the natural world and natural environment are the same; there is only one kind of aesthetics, aesthetics of engagement, which can be applied to both arts and nature. I think that his above statement is very problematic, because I believe that nature is natural fundamentally, which is very different from arts made by human agency. The next part of the paper will criticize Berleant's core idea mainly from the perspective of Chinese ecoaesthetics.

A Criticism of Berleant's Aesthetics from the Perspective of Chinese Ecoaesthetics

Chinese ecoaesthetics emerged in 1994 and has grown rapidly in the 21st century. Berleant's aesthetics of engagement played an important role in its theoretical construction, which is mainly embodied in Zeng Fanren's 2010 book *An Introduction to Ecoaesthetics* and Cheng Xiangzhan's works.

As the leading scholar in the field of Chinese ecoaesthetics, Zeng's core idea is founded and represented by his conference paper in 2001 when he participated in the first National Conference on Ecoaesthetics, which is entitled "*Ecoaesthetics: A New Aesthetic Conception of Ecological Existence in the Post-modern Context.*" In a subsequent academic career of nearly 10 years, Zeng has absorbed, firstly, the postmodern philosopher David Griffin's thinking and proposes a "view of ecological existence," then he takes it as an entry point to absorb the existential philosophy of Heidegger, later he treats the view of "ecocivilization" as a theory guideline. By borrowing theoretical resources from western environmental aesthetics and emphasizing its differences from ecoaesthetics at the same time, Zeng proposes nine basic categories in his 2010 book to build up his framework of ecoaesthetic, such as "ecological view of existence," "poetic dwelling," "sense

of place” and “aesthetics of engagement.” It is noteworthy that Zeng, twice, directly declares that Berleant’s “aesthetics of engagement” is “aesthetics of ecological existence” (Zeng, 2010, p.343, 346), which means that in Zeng’s view, Berleant’s environmental aesthetics should be called “ecological aesthetics.” According to Zeng’s understanding, Berleant’s “aesthetics of engagement” is a response to Heidegger’s famous statement of “being-in-the-world” in the field of aesthetic theory. As an aesthetic model, it breaks through the model of the dualism of subject-object.

Cheng’s theoretical train of thought of developing ecoaesthetics is to consult the more mature discipline of environmental aesthetics. He thinks that the objective of study of environmental aesthetics is “environmental appreciation,” which is clearly different from “art appreciation.” It critiques and transcends the Hegelian philosophy of art, which views an artifact as an object of study. For scholars of environmental aesthetics, the main issue concerns the distinction and relationship between environmental appreciation and art appreciation. As for the study of ecoaesthetics, its object of study concerns how to appreciate aesthetically and ecologically. While it disapproves of traditional aesthetic appreciation that is not ecologically oriented (or without ecological awareness), it does not necessarily oppose a form of aesthetic enjoyment based on artistic form. In a nutshell, the argument of environmental aesthetics centers on the issue of the aesthetic object: is the object for the study of aesthetics artwork or the environment? By the same token, the argument of ecoaesthetics concentrates on the issue of the aesthetic way (or manner) and asks how to engage an aesthetic activity governed by an ecological awareness. In other words, it asks how to form an ecological aesthetic way (or manner) by letting ecological awareness play a leading role in human aesthetic activity and experience. So, his major argument is that ecoaesthetics is different from non-ecological oriented aesthetics (or “traditional aesthetics”). It is a new type of aesthetics and conception responding to global ecological crises, using ecological ethics as its theoretical foundation, relying on ecological knowledge to inspire imagination and elicit emotions, and aiming at conquering conventional, anthropocentric aesthetic preferences. He asserts that: “*The first keystone of ecoaesthetics is that it completely abandons a conventional aesthetics that is predicated on an opposition between humanity and the world. Subsequently it is replaced by the model of aesthetic engagement that promotes the idea of the unity of humans and the world*” (Cheng, 2013, p.86).

By taking Berleant’s aesthetics of engagement as his theoretical support, Cheng argues that only through an aesthetics of engagement that transcends the subject-object opposition can an intimate relationship between humans and the world be established, through which to experience the interconnectedness of all life explained by ecology and deep ecology. He even declares that this is the fundamental contribution of aesthetic activity to ecological awareness.

The major reason for both Zeng’s and Cheng’s interest in Berleant’s aesthetics of engagement is one key point, the criticism and objection of the model of the dualism of subject-object, which is proposed mainly by Berleant’s criticism of Kant’s notion of disinterestedness. In Berleant’s view, the notion stresses distance and separateness not just from the other areas of experience, but from the very person of the perceiver. He declares that like architecture, environment cannot be objectified. Reciprocity is, in fact, a constant feature of environmental experience. I appreciate Berleant’s phenomenology of environment which implies an aesthetics of environment. However, I don’t think his criticism of Kant is totally acceptable, because I think that Kant’s theory of disinterestedness has been misunderstood by many theorists since Hegel, and Berleant is no exception. Berleant thinks that the Kantian model of disinterested contemplation contains a contemplative, distancing attitude. However, this is a misunderstanding, at least an over-interpretation of Kant’s original text. The best way to clarify this key

point is return to Kant. The first step is to grasp the real meaning of what Kant calls “interest.” At the very beginning of the section 2 of his *Critique of the Power of Judgment*, Kant asserts that: “*The satisfaction that we combine with the representation of the existence of an object is called interest*” (Kant, 2000, p.90).

According to Kant’s own official definition here, “interest” is a kind of “satisfaction,” which is connected to “the representation of the existence of an object.” So, the object of the “interest” is in nothing but in the “the existence of an object.” Kant makes this point very clear. He continues, “*But if the question is whether something is beautiful, one does not want to know whether there is anything that is or that could be at stake, for us or for someone else, in the existence of the thing, but rather how we judge it in mere contemplation (intuition or reflection)*” (Kant, 2000, p.90).

Here, “the existence of the thing” means exactly “the existence of an object.” “Contemplation” is a special way of appreciating the thing, or the object’s representation in Kantian philosophy. What Kant emphasizes here again and again is “the existence of an object.” He repeats this key point below,

“One only wants to know whether the mere representation of the object is accompanied with satisfaction in me, however indifferent I might be with regard to the existence of the object of this representation. It is readily seen that to say that it is beautiful and to prove that I have taste what matters is what I make of this representation in myself, not how I depend on the existence of the object. Everyone must admit that a judgment about beauty in which there is mixed the least interest is very partial and not a pure judgment of taste. One must not be in the least biased in favor of the existence of the thing, but must be entirely indifferent in this respect in order to play the judge in matters of taste” (Kant, 2000, p.90-91).

By three repetitions of the “the existence of the thing” or “the existence of an object,” Kant asserts that in order to use our taste to make an aesthetic judgment about something, we must have no interest in its existence. So, the object of Kantian interest is very clear, which tells us that what is called “disinterestedness” is not about “desire,” but about “the existence of an object.” In a word, the real meaning of the traditionally called the notion of “disinterestedness” has nothing to do with subject’s desire, but with the existence of the aesthetic object. The fundamental reason for Kant’s emphasis on the disinterestedness in the existence of the object lies in his basic belief in the dualism of phenomenon and the thing-in-itself. What human agency can know is not the thing-in-itself, but a phenomenon or representation constructed by human *a priori* frameworks.

The purpose of the above re-interpretation of Kant’s third critique is not to deny the fact that the subject-object dichotomy is intrinsically contained in his aesthetic theory, but to revise Berleant’s criticism about Kant. From the perspective of Chinese ecoaesthetics, the Kantian notion of “thing-in-itself” is very attractive, because it is the best and most powerful way to explain human limitations and to make us realize our limitations, which is very helpful for us to reflect the defect of anthropocentrism and move to ecological humanism or eco-centrism. It is in this sense that Kantian philosophy should be viewed as the philosophical base of ecoaesthetics. An ecoaesthetics based on Kant might be possible.

The Future of Ecoaesthetics

The construction of ecoaesthetics is an ongoing project internationally. For my research project of ecoaesthetics, both Kant and Berleant are inspiring resources. Inspired by Berleant’s idea of taking environment as aesthetic paradigm, it is very reasonable to raise a fundamental question as below: What kind of aesthetic paradigm is the most suitable one for ecoaesthetics? My tentative proposal is ecosystem.

The basic guideline of this proposal is to develop Heidegger's idea of "being-in-the-world" and Berleant's notion of "being-in-the-environment" to a new conception, "being-in-the-ecosystem."

In Heidegger's philosophy, "being-in-the-world" is a metonym for "Dasein," which signifies the holistic or unified phenomenon in terms of which Heidegger explicates Dasein's worldhood. Being-in-the-world is an *a priori* and necessary constitution of Dasein. "*As being-in-the-world Dasein exists factually with and alongside beings it encounters within-the-world*" (Dahlstrom, 2013, p.37). Berleant usually cites Heidegger in his series of works. When he discusses swimming in his 2005 book, *Aesthetics and Environment*, he asserts that, "*No environmental experience involves a more direct physical encounter. The eye of minor importance for one, as the physical urgencies of "being in the world" usurp the relative safety of visual distance*" (Berleant, 2005, p.62).

Although Berleant does not give a note for his citing here, it is clear that he is quoting Heidegger's idea. Swimming as an activity of being in water (water here certainly is the swimmer's intimate environment) indicates clearly the potential expression of "being-in-the-environment."

There are many ways of defining the keyword of "environment." From the perspective of ecology, we can view any environment as an ecosystem to emphasize the interconnectedness of all the elements in the whole environment. Meanwhile, environment can be defined by "the" and can also be objectified with the changes of human scale. Berleant always insists that environment cannot be objectified and does not have clear boundaries. However, it is not true in our society. For example, Central Park is an urban park in Manhattan, New York City. Its boundaries are very clear, which are described as follow: It comprises 843 acres (341 ha) between the Upper West Side and Upper East Side, roughly bounded by Fifth Avenue on the east, Central Park West (Eighth Avenue) on the west, Central Park South (59th Street) on the south, and Central Park North (110th Street) on the north. If we read its location on a map of Manhattan, or if we view it from Rockefeller Center, we can have a panoramic view of the park. Berleant might argue that these two ways of appreciation of the park are not "appreciative;" the only appreciative way of appreciating the park is entering into it and immersed in it. However, just like the terms "environmental justice" and "political ecology" show, the boundaries of environment are defined very clearly by political, economic, even military forces. What we experience in the reality is various kinds of "the" environments, say, those beautiful and healthy ones inhabited by the rich, and those polluted ones inhabited by the poor. What Heidegger declares as "poetic dwelling" is our ideal.

The contribution of Berleant's aesthetics of engagement is mainly its focus on continuity, i.e. experiential continuity. He even calls his aesthetic theory as "aesthetics of the continuity of experience" (1991, p.15). In brief, Berleant's aesthetics of engagement is based on his key idea of the continuity of appreciative experience. From the perspective of ecoaesthetics, it is proper to raise a more fundamental question: Is it possible to reinterpret the idea of continuity from the perspectives of scientific ecology, philosophical ecology, and ecosophy? The answer might be yes. Taking ecosystem as the aesthetic paradigm, ecoaesthetics might have a more productive future.

Conclusion

The paper's thread of thought is to reflect on Berleant's critique of Kant's idea of disinterestedness from the perspective of Chinese ecoaesthetics. The purpose of the paper is to search for new directions for the future development of ecoaesthetics based on the reflection. The author believes that ecoaesthetics is different from environmental aesthetics because it takes ecosystem, not environment as its aesthetic paradigm.

Ecosystem is one of the keywords in ecology as a branch of science. It shows that the human is only one species in the whole system. Without a healthy system as precondition, it is impossible for human beings to emerge, to exist, and to survive. In this sense, ecoaesthetics is a new type of aesthetics facing the global ecological crisis. If we say that saving the global ecological crisis is primarily an ethical consideration, we can say that ecoaesthetics should reflect the close relationship between ethics and aesthetics, between ethical norms and aesthetic norms, and between ethical judgment and aesthetic judgment. To some extent, ecoaesthetics is an ethical-aesthetic theory with what I called the “ecological aesthetic appreciation” as its core. Both Kant and Berleant play significant role in my construction of ecoaesthetics. I believe that ecoaesthetics is open to any theoretical resources.

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