

A Comparative Study on the Significant Elements of the Philosophies of Beauty According to Lao Tzu and Heidegger

Yabo Wang, Elis Syuhaila Binti Mokhtar, Ida Puteri Binti Mahsan

Department of Art & Design, Faculty of Art, Sustainability & Creative Industry
Sultan Idris Education University, Malaysia

Corresponding Author Email: elis.mokhtar@fskik.upsi.edu.my

To Link this Article: <http://dx.doi.org/10.6007/IJARPED/v12-i4/19929>

DOI:10.6007/IJARPED/v12-i4/19929

Published Online: 29 December 2023

Abstract

The purpose of this study is to reveal the similarities and differences between Lao Tzu's and Heidegger's philosophies of beauty. This research aims to deepen the understanding on the essence of beauty of these two philosophies more systematically. This study employs a qualitative approach that consists of three main stages. The first stage involves using a document review to study the philosophy of beauty according to Lao Tzu, and analyzes the significant elements of Lao Tzu's philosophy of beauty. The second stage involves using a document review to study the philosophy of beauty according to Heidegger, and analyzes the significant elements of Heidegger's philosophy of beauty. The third stage involves juxtaposing the significant elements of Lao Tzu's and Heidegger's philosophies of beauty, and get the similarities and differences. The qualitative data was collected through document review, and analyzed through comparative analysis. The results showed that the similarities are that they all pursue the truth, confirm existence, and express transcendence, but they use different ways to achieve them. the research findings provide important insights into understanding the diverse phenomena of beauty and its implications on the communication of beauty between different cultures.

Keywords: Philosophy of Beauty, Lao Tzu, Heidegger, Truth, Existence, Transcendence.

Introduction

The nature of beauty is one of the most enduring and controversial themes in Western philosophy, and is with the nature of art--one of the two fundamental issues in the history of philosophical aesthetics (Sartwell, 2012). From Plato to modern neuropsychological studies, the concept of beauty has always been a theme for adamant debates and passionate thoughts. Different aspects of beauty, from intellectual to pure physical, have received a tremendous amount of attention. The true definition of the concept of beauty is still ambiguous, and there is not a unanimous explanation for it (Sisti et al., 2021). Throughout history, the philosophy of beauty has been praised, cherished, scorned, and debated. It has been viewed as an underlying quality with associations to perfection or as being synonymous

with truth. The philosophy of beauty is a basic concept of aesthetics, which is the most controversial issue and challenging to reach a consensus. Beauty is a widely used term, however, its meaning is vague and diverse in different contexts (Xiao, 2003). A well-known example of this is Plato. According to him, when individuals are asked to define beauty, they typically just mention things that are beautiful rather than "beauty in itself." Many beautiful things share the essence of beauty, which serves as the foundation for many other beautiful things to be beautiful. Plato discussed "beauty in itself" and denied various popular views at the time, holding that beauty is not something that is beautiful, not a substance or form that gives things appearances of beauty, not a spiritual satisfaction, not appropriate, useful, beneficial values, not pleasure brought on by sight or hearing, and so forth. Nevertheless, he fails to offer a clear and precise solution to the question of beauty and concludes that beauty is difficult (Plato, 2018).

Since ancient times, both China and the West have had theories about beauty. In ancient China, thinkers such as Confucius and Lao Tzu proposed and illustrated the proposition of the essence of beauty; many thinkers and aestheticians conducted in-depth discussions on the category of beauty. In the West, the study of the principles and essence of beauty has drawn a lot of interest. All of them have made an effort to define beauty precisely, but there have always been differences among different schools of philosophy. From the perspective of China, philosophical reflections and discussions on beauty are often included in aesthetic works and literary books. Unlike the West, the philosophy of beauty is not a central idea in many aesthetic categories and has not developed into a comprehensive system in Chinese literary theory (Ding, 2013). For Chinese aesthetics, Western culture has always been the most significant frame of reference because it is the mainstream of the globe. Many philosophical ideas of beauty in Chinese aesthetics are primarily formed within the cross-cultural setting of comparing Western and Chinese aesthetics (Yu, 2011).

Based on the famous Contemporary Chinese Philosopher Zhang Shiyang (1996), said in his article *Traditional Chinese Philosophy and Modern Western Philosophy* that traditional Chinese philosophy is dominated by the unity of man and nature, while traditional Western philosophy is dominated by the subject-object dichotomy. Traditional Chinese philosophy and traditional Western philosophy have different dominant thoughts, which has resulted in many differences between the two. Traditional Chinese philosophy places a strong emphasis on the unity of man and nature and does not make a distinction between subject and object, so there is less emphasis on epistemology—the study of how the subject comes to know the object—and natural science is not emphasized. Instead, philosophy is more concerned with life and the ethics of how people should live in the world. On the contrary, traditional Western philosophy emphasizes the dichotomy of subject and object, thus emphasizing the subjectivity of human beings toward nature. Whereas, the opposition to subjectivity and the dichotomy of subject and object is the main feature of modern Western philosophy. The unity of man and nature, thought and poetry, is one aspect of modern Western philosophy that is comparable to or connected to traditional Chinese philosophy. Although there are differences philosophical transformation process from a demand for a fight against nature to a demand for a harmonious integration with nature. From Heidegger's philosophy to Derrida's philosophy, although their philosophies are different, they all have the idea of the unity of man and nature. This is a manifestation of modern Western philosophy approaching traditional Chinese philosophy, and it is also a manifestation of the thought of harmonious integration between man and all things in the world, which is close to the Chinese thought of the unity of man and nature. Both traditional Chinese philosophy and modern Western

philosophy seek to get a kind of pure pleasure and poetic realm in the harmonious integration of man, objects, and nature., this characteristic of Western modernism emerged after Westerners experienced the drawbacks of the dichotomy of subject and object and the principle of subjectivity, causing people to blindly seek and fight against nature, thus pursuing endlessly, and ultimately unable to obtain spiritual peace and freedom, which makes Westerners gradually realize the thought of the unity of man and nature, and they should coexist harmoniously. From traditional Western philosophy to modern philosophy, it can also be said that it is a

In Chinese philosophy, I chose an ancient Chinese philosopher, historian, founder, and main representative of Taoism named Lao Tzu (571 B.C.-471 B.C.) as the traditional Chinese representative philosopher for the comparative study. Firstly, Lao Tzu is the founder of Taoism. Lao Tzu made a unique contribution to the development of ancient Chinese philosophies. In Lao Tzu's philosophy, beauty is the ultimate realm pursued by Lao Tzu, and it is combined with Tao to achieve the ideal pursuit of the natural and true state of human nature. The philosophical category proposed by Lao Tzu had a significant influence on the development and traits of ancient Chinese philosophies. His philosophical ideas of beauty have significant implications and are highly significant for the advancement of philosophies and contemporary society. Secondly, Lao Tzu's book entitled *Tao Te Ching* (2010) is one of the greatest masterpieces in Chinese history, which has a profound impact on traditional philosophy, science, politics, religion, and so on. *Tao Te Ching* is not a philosophical monograph of beauty, but it contains extraordinarily profound ideas and vital significance. Several of his viewpoints have been applied to the creation and appreciation of calligraphy and painting by later generations, which have had a far-reaching impact and become an extremely valuable philosophical proposition in the history of the development of calligraphy and painting. However, unlike Western philosophers, Lao Tzu did not elaborate on beauty or create an entire ideology or philosophical framework. Lao Tzu's philosophical ideas about beauty need to be sorted out and organized.

In Western philosophy, I choose Heidegger (1889-1976) as a Representation of Modern Western's Philosophers. Firstly, there is evidence that Heidegger incorporated Taoist principles into his thoughts. The unquestionable factual relationship between Heidegger and Lao Tzu, which can be seen in Heidegger's publications and speeches, is what gives Heidegger's and Lao Tzu's thoughts their similarity. He had a strong interest in Chinese Taoism for half a century, especially drawing nourishment from the *Tao Te Ching*, in order to gain ideological enlightenment and enrich his contemplation of the ultimate problem of existence. His conception of existence shines with a thinking that is known to Chinese scholars due to his relationship with Lao Tzu. Secondly, Heidegger and Lao Tzu can be contacted in a direction that is incongruous with traditional Western philosophy. This junction is a unique and ultimate situation (Cao & Han, 2017). Heidegger's philosophy, especially the thinking mode of the unity of man and nature, has something in common with Chinese philosophy. After Hegel, the majority of modern and contemporary philosophers in the West, particularly those who follow the trend of humanism, try to get beyond the subject-object dichotomy and reach a state-like unity of man and nature. Among them, Heidegger is an epoch-making and representative figure (Zhang, 2016). Thirdly, Heidegger's philosophy shares an intrinsic relationship with Lao Tzu's major concepts, including Tao, nothingness, romanticism in art, truth, and naturalness, and others. For the fusion of Eastern and Western philosophy, Heidegger's interpretation of the *Tao Te Ching* and his assimilation of Lao Tzu's ideas have typical relevance and academic worth. Fourthly, Heidegger is the founder of existentialism.

Heidegger was one of the greatest philosophers and thinkers of the 20th century, and in China, academic research on his philosophical views is becoming more and more popular (Zhang & Li, 2015).

Subsequently, Zhang Shiyong's *Lecture on New Philosophy* (2004) presented in more detail and vividly the new philosophical viewpoints elucidated in books such as *Introduction to Philosophy*. One of the remarkable features of these books is to use of Heidegger's philosophy to interpret the thought of the unity of man and nature in ancient China. Thus, Lao Tzu and Heidegger could communicate on an equal basis and realize mutual convergence in their central themes and basic ideas.

Consequently, the purpose of this study is to find out the similarities and differences between Lao Tzu's and Heidegger's philosophies of beauty.

Literature Review

This section consists of two major parts. In the first part, Lao Tzu's philosophy of beauty will be listed, and the significant elements of Lao Tzu's philosophy of beauty will be analyzed. In the second part, Heidegger's philosophy of beauty will be listed, and the significant elements of Lao Tzu's philosophy of beauty will be analyzed.

Lao Tzu's Philosophy of Beauty

Lao Tzu's book entitled *Tao Te Ching* (2022) is one of the most important philosophical works in the pre-Qin era and one of the most important classics in Chinese traditional culture. In the book entitled *The Outline of Chinese Aesthetics History* (2005), Professor Ye Lang said that "Lao Tzu's aesthetics is the beginning of the history of Chinese aesthetics", giving Lao Tzu's aesthetics a high status. The book reveals the influence of Lao Tzu's philosophy on Chinese classical aesthetics and makes a detailed aesthetic interpretation of Lao Tzu's thought.

Lao Tzu's *Tao Te Ching* (2010) has many insightful aesthetic ideas, even though it is not entirely an aesthetic monograph. Apart from the Chinese philosopher Zong Baihua and other scholars who had tackled this subject, not many studies had been done before the 1980s. Before the 1980s, most of Lao Tzu's research was focused on deciphering the *Tao Te Ching*, evaluating his life, and interpreting his philosophy. Since the 1980s, when aesthetic researchers started to pay greater attention to Lao Tzu's aesthetic concepts as the aesthetic craze started to take off (Liu, 2000). Lao Tzu's aesthetic research has emerged as a fresh and vibrant field. Li Tiandao's *Contemporary Significance of Lao Tzu's Aesthetic Thought* (2008) is available for the monograph on Lao Tzu's aesthetics, moreover, it only introduces some Lao Tzu's aesthetics. In several domestic aesthetic history textbooks, such as Ye Lang's *Outline of the History of Chinese Aesthetics* (2005), Chen Wangheng's *Twenty-one Lectures on Chinese Classical Aesthetics* (2007), Li Zehou and Liu Gangji's *History of Chinese Aesthetics* (1984), Wang Zhenfu's *Course of Chinese Aesthetics History* (2004), Zhang Fa's *History of Chinese Aesthetics* (2000), Qi Zhixiang's *General History of Chinese Aesthetics* (2008), and Zhu Zhirong's *Study of Aesthetic Thoughts in Xia, Shang, and Zhou Dynasties* (2017). There are also many papers on Lao Tzu's aesthetic studies. Lao Tzu's aesthetics are still being discussed in depth, and much progress has been achieved. These studies mostly concentrate on Lao Tzu's ecological aesthetics, naturalness of beauty, and aesthetic quality. These investigations into Lao Tzu's aesthetics, meanwhile, are still insufficient.

The main points of Lao Tzu's philosophy of beauty are as follows: firstly, Lao Tzu's philosophy and aesthetics are centered around the concept of Tao. Lao Tzu's concept of

beauty is based on his theory of Tao. In chapter 25 of *Tao Te Ching* (2010), Lao Tzu said: "Before the heaven and earth existed, there was something nebulous, silent, isolated, standing alone, changing not, eternally revolving without fail, worthy to be the mother of all Things. I do not know its name, and address it as Tao. If forced to give it a name, I shall call it Great. Being great implies reaching out in space, reaching out in space implies far-reaching, far-reaching implies reversion to the original point. Therefore, Tao is Great, the heaven is great, the earth is great, the king is also great. There are the great four in the universe, and the King is one of them. Man models himself after the earth, the Earth models itself after heaven, the Heaven models itself after Tao, Tao models itself after nature". According to Li Zehou's book on the History of Ancient Chinese Thought (1986), Tao is the universal law, the utmost truth, and the most genuine existence. Existence, truth, and the law are all one. The formation of Tao was understood by philosopher Liu Gangji in the context of the prehistoric clan society that Lao Tzu lived in. Tao was viewed as the mother of all things, the beginning of heaven and earth, and the common ancestor and entity of all things in heaven and earth, according to Liu Gangji's article *The Outline of Lao Tzu's Thoughts* (1989). The term Tao refers to the rules and laws that have a huge influence. Through his arduous search for the fundamental nature of the cosmos and his profound comprehension of real life and society, Lao Tzu constructed an ideology system with Tao as its central tenet and developed the theory of Tao follows nature. The term nature in this context does not relate to an objectively existing nature, but rather to a state of passive submission to naturalness. It is both the rule and the basic nature of things. Lao Tzu's conception of nature tries to remove the constraints of other forces and concerns and promotes the idea that everything should be conducted in accordance with its inherent laws.

Tao is the source of beauty since it is the source of everything. The qualities of Tao are embodied in Lao Tzu's conception of natural beauty. In the book *The Chinese Artistic Spirit*, the scholar Xu Fuguan (2020) said that Lao Tzu's Tao embodied the highest artistic spirit. Lao Tzu believes that naturalness represents the pinnacle of aesthetics. Naturalness and simplicity, without too much artificial manipulation, are the essence of natural beauty. Lao Tzu is opposed to beautiful colors, intricate music, and a variety of flavors since they simply serve to stimulate the senses and deal with beauty excessively, which prevents people from maintaining a calm and simple disposition. In Chapter 19 of the *Tao Te Ching*, Lao Tzu (2010) endorsed the advice to "reveal the simple self, embrace the original nature". The phrase simple and original alludes to naturalness as opposed to artificiality. This is precisely how the Tao appears and behaves.

Secondly, natural beauty. Lao Tzu proposed the idea that Tao follows nature. The word nature in ancient Chinese thought has two primary meanings: first, it refers to the existence of nature itself, which can be either the entirety of the natural world or specific natural items. In addition to referring to the natural condition or state of natural objects, this is the natural state of existence as a fact. Both fundamental meanings of nature exist in Lao Tzu's conception, but the latter is the main one. According to Lao Tzu, nature is first and foremost opposed to human intervention, following the course of events naturally, and not reluctance to use human power to meddle. The Dao follows nature as a fundamental proposition in Lao Tzu's aesthetics, which indicates that the most natural is the most beautiful, and the highest aesthetic standards and realm must follow the Dao of nature. At the same time, Lao Tzu expressed his worship of natural forces and nature indirectly.

Thirdly, Lao Tzu's aesthetics, which promotes the beauty of the worth of individual survival, particularly reflects the opposition to human alienation, the quest for individual

freedom, and group harmony. Lao Tzu lived in China during a time of significant social change. Over 200 years were spent in the war of aggression during the Spring and Autumn Periods. Pre-Qin History, written by renowned historian Jian Bozan (1988), claims that over the 250 years of the Spring and Autumn Period, 36 rulers were assassinated, and 52 nations were conquered. Human nature has been perverted, becoming cruel and greedy. In Tao Te Ching, Lao Tzu (2010) stated: "On the decline of the great Tao, the doctrine of humanity and justice arose. When knowledge and cleverness appeared, great hypocrisy followed in its wake. When the six relationships no longer lived at peace, there was the praise of kind parents and filial sons. When a country fell into chaos and misrule, there was the praise of loyal ministers".

It is clear that Lao Tzu does not admit that benevolence and justice are inherent in human nature. He makes a distinction between good and evil in human nature, which is the source of societal disorder and psychological distortion. Lao Tzu even criticizes the harm that loud voices, and colorful, and overstimulating the senses due to human nature. Lao Tzu concluded in chapter 12 that "Therefore the Sage, provides for the belly and not the eye". It does not imply that all artistic and aesthetic pursuits must be abandoned, nor does it imply that saints should eat sufficiently. It suggests that individuals shouldn't waste their lives by obsessively pursuing their various sensory desires. In fact, Lao Tzu does not seek to eliminate all desires; instead, he seeks to eliminate only those that are excessive, harmful to life, and unconstrained by things outside of it, so as to preserve the freedom and harmony of human existence. Therefore, Lao Tzu's aesthetics is based on the essential premise of valuing human freedom and naturalness. According to philosopher Li Zehou (1984) in History of Chinese Aesthetics, he said, "Lao Tzu believes that true beauty can only be the affirmation of the freedom of human life, not the pursuit of sensual pleasure, nor the pursuit of prosperity."

The director of the Research Center for Aesthetics and Aesthetic Education of Peking University Zhu Liangzhi (2006) summarized in his book Fifteen Lectures on Chinese Aesthetics: "Chinese philosophy is a philosophy about life. It regards the cosmos and all of life as a wonderful, harmonious unity. The central theme of Chinese philosophy is life transcendence. The importance that life experience and transcendence are given in the aesthetics that are produced on this basis is a salient characteristic. Chinese aesthetics stress returning to the heart, from learning to experiencing everything, connecting to heaven and earth, and integrating oneself with everything to achieve the comfort of the soul rather than emphasizing the understanding of exterior beauty. Chinese aesthetics is a way of settling life". Lao Tzu's aesthetics is related to life. Lao Tzu had a strong concern for people's survival in his works. He considers human civilization, deeply understands the crisis that occurs when individuals lose sight of who they are as a result of societal desire's allure and is committed to pursuing the reality of life and the natural state of living.

Fourthly, Lao Tzu advocates the combination of being and nothingness. Lao Tzu (2010) said in Tao Te Ching in chapter 40: "The things of this world come from being, and being (comes) from non-being". All things in the cosmos must be created from the initial, formless, unseen Tao to the material reality. Evidently, Lao Tzu believed that nothingness was more significant than being. According to Lao Tzu, Tao is the union of being and nothingness and is the noumenon of all things. Lao Tzu said in Tao Te Ching in chapter 21 that: "The thing that is called Tao, is elusive, evasive. Evasive, elusive, yet latent in it are forms. Elusive, evasive, yet latent in it are objects. Dark and dim, yet latent in it is the life force. The life force being very true, latent in it are evidences".

Tao's noumenon nature is evasive and elusive. However, this hidden and unformed universe of life includes form, objects, life force, and truth. As the origin of the life of the

universe, Tao possesses both the quality of being and the quality of nothingness. There are numerous and infinite shapes and things in the invisible Tao. Tao is a unity of being and nothingness rather than an absolute existence of things. The factors of nothingness and reality, in Lao Tzu's view, are interdependent and mutually beneficial in a dialectical system. Lao Tzu's most important ideological contribution to the relationship between nothingness and being in chapter 41 is that he proposed "great music is faintly heard, great form has no contour". Great music transcends feelings and originates from the experience of sound, which may be dimly heard. It is brought on by sound, but in addition to hearing, other elements like as association and imagination can also bring it about. Sound is a particular reality that serves as the physical medium or carrier for great music. It is the only way that the virtual and the real may coexist, stimulating endless imagination and allowing one to transcend the finite and enter the infinite.

The being is the specific and discernible creative representation of the author's thoughts, emotions, and aspirations that can be seen in the works. Nothingness is the omission or blank space of art, which is something that is explicitly stated in the piece. Tao has understood its mystery in terms of emptiness and void. In art, it is the emptiness that gives the viewer a great deal of space to taste, inspiring them to use their imagination and sentiments in endless ways and resulting in profound aesthetic satisfaction. The objective of art is to portray an artistic space that blends truth with imagination and sentiments in order to accomplish the realm of not a word, as romantic.

Fifthly, pursue the truth. Lao Tzu (2010) said in Tao Te Ching in chapter 62: "Beautiful saying can be sold at the market; noble conduct can be presented as a gift". In Chapter 81: "True words are not fine-sounding, fine-sounding words are not true". From the perspective of beauty, beauty has its attraction and influence. Beauty has its uniqueness, superiority, and deception. Compared with beauty, Lao Tzu advocates truth and requires that beauty must be based on truth. Lao Tzu opposes the reckless pursuit of physical and sensory desire as beauty. He emphasizes the unity of truth and beauty. Lao Tzu had the view that all things, including art, eventually attained a natural state of union with the Tao, which is the highest realm, devoid of artificial ornamentation. Any man-made intrusion will diminish its innate attractiveness.

In the Outline of the History of Chinese Aesthetics, the Professor of Philosophy at Peking University Ye Lang (2005) gave Lao Tzu's aesthetics a very high position. In the book, he discussed the Tao, being, and nothingness in Lao Tzu's aesthetics, revealing the influence of Lao Tzu's philosophy on Chinese classical aesthetics. Then he revealed the impact of Lao Tzu's philosophy on Chinese classical aesthetics by discussing the Tao, being, and emptiness in Lao Tzu's aesthetics in the book. He then went over some of Lao Tzu's other ideas and provided a more in-depth artistic interpretation of his ideas. He does not, however, clearly address the question of truth in Lao Tzu's ideas. Li Tiandao thoroughly examined Lao Tzu's conception of beauty from a philosophical standpoint in the book The Contemporary Significance of Lao Tzu's Aesthetic Thought (2008) and made an in-depth analysis of Lao Tzu's ideas in relation to the framework of modern aesthetic theory. The book's ninth chapter, which discusses the return to simplicity, provides a new perspective on Lao Tzu's ideas on truth. He makes the argument that Tao, because of its perfection and abundance, generates everything in the universe, but that because of its limitation, everything in the universe requires returning to the original Tao as the composition of life, which is the process of returning to simplicity and truth. These articles examine the aesthetic qualities of truth as well as the aesthetic characteristics. The conceptual ambiguity between truth and its related

concepts, however, is a clear problem. Therefore, it is essential to consider the aesthetic value of truth.

Sixthly, transcendence. All living things, including humans, have a finite lifespan. The beginning of life also signals the start of death, and the development of life also signals the approach of death. This is both the tragedy and the allure of life. According to the standpoint of life, death is the transition from existence to nonexistence as well as the destruction and extinction of all living things. In this sense, there is no end to life. From the perspective of death, the end of life is when life transitions from being a life to being a death and when it exists in the way of death. Tao, in Lao Tzu's opinion, is life's final dwelling place. Life's source and final destination are both Tao. In Tao Te Ching in chapter 16, Lao Tzu (2010) said: "The myriad things take shape and rise to activity, but I watch them fall back to their repose. Like vegetation that luxuriantly grows, but returns to the root from which it springs. To return to the root is repose which is called going back to one's destiny". Lao Tzu used the idea of going back to the source to show his deepest concern for human life. He anticipated that people would approach the subject of human life and death with calm rather than fear. The infinite universal life contains the infinite human existence so that the human being might escape the grief and suffering brought on by the passing of life. This is also a spiritual transcendence. Returning to its root is to find infinity for life and provide spiritual comfort for life.

The Significant Elements of Lao Tzu's Philosophy of Beauty

From the above review, it could be concluded that there are four significant elements of Lao Tzu's philosophy of beauty. These are:

- **Firstly, human life.** Lao Tzu is credited with being the first person in Chinese aesthetic history to seriously and in-depth investigate the mysteries of cosmic life. Lao Tzu elevated life's and society's issues to the level of cosmology, beginning with the creation of cosmic life, in order to fundamentally resolve them. Lao Tzu doesn't regard the universe, nature, and social life as fully independent fields, as do Western philosophers, when discussing the relationship between them. According to Lao Tzu, life and society are merely a stage in the evolution of the cosmos, and as a result, problems with the natural cosmos necessarily involve problems with life and society (Li, 2008). Lao Tzu's philosophy of beauty, which promotes the beauty of the worth of individual survival, particularly reflects the opposition to human alienation, the quest for individual freedom, and group harmony.

Lao Tzu's philosophy of beauty most effectively conveys the emphasis on life in Chinese aesthetics. It can be said that Lao Tzu's aesthetic philosophy is a hymn to the beauty and vigor of life. According to Zhu Liangzhi (2010), he summarized in his introduction of *Fifteen Lectures on Chinese Aesthetics*: Chinese philosophy emphasizes life. Chinese aesthetics values life. In terms of the relationship between humans and nature, as well as between the mind and things, Chinese people often view themselves as a part of all things in nature, viewing heaven, earth, and nature as a whole of life. This has influenced the formation of Chinese aesthetics, which emphasizes the importance of life. They believe that the Tao, as the natural source of life in the universe, is not only the foundation of life, but also the fundamental foundation of beauty.

- **Secondly, natural beauty.** The natural view of Lao Tzu's aesthetics is a kind of aesthetic ideology that regards nature as beauty, expressing an aesthetic consciousness that mainly conforms to nature and is supplemented by human adjustment, pursuing a natural realm of beauty that transcends artificial carving. Lao Tzu's depiction of nature can be divided into two

categories: first, it relates to the actual presence and condition of change, which might refer to the whole of the natural world or specific items therein. This is the state of existence as a fact; Second, the natural state, which includes the original state of human nature and material nature. As a category of aesthetics, the core connotation of nature is to follow its natural course. As an essential principle of Lao Tzu's aesthetics, "The Tao Follows Nature" asserts that the highest aesthetic standards and realm must conform to the Tao of nature, and that the most natural is the most beautiful. This is the high-level realm pursued by art. Nature is a traditional aesthetic ideal with a lengthy history and strong origins in ancient Chinese aesthetics. According to Lao Tzu's Aesthetics of Nature, all things in the cosmos must be respected for what they actually are: natural. The enigmatic and magnificent nature cannot be measured arbitrarily to the utilitarian value of humans. It requires that human beings should experience nature truly so that nature can show its true value in the universe. For post-modern philosophy and aesthetics, particularly ecological philosophy, environmental philosophy, and aesthetics, Lao Tzu's conception of natural beauty offers significant theoretical enlightenment (Chen & Shi, 2012).

- **Thirdly, pursue the truth.** From the perspective of beauty itself, beauty has its own charm, influence, superiority, and misleading qualities. Lao Tzu demands that beauty must be founded on truth and promotes truth more than beauty. Lao Tzu strongly objects to the excessive pursuit of physical pleasure in the name of beauty and holds that beauty and truth are inseparable. Lao Tzu advocates for distinct, profound, and genuine beauty in contrast to secular and conventional beauty. Lao Tzu affirms and embraces internal, fundamental, lasting, and spiritual beauty rather than external, superficial, temporary, or sensual pleasure. His critique of conventional aesthetics is primarily exhibited by his denial of the concepts of pleasure as beauty, and goodness as beauty, and emphasizes the unity of truth and beauty. In traditional Chinese philosophy, truth is actually a category commonly used in the fields of cognition, value, and aesthetics. Truth in the aesthetics field includes not only sincerity and specificity of emotions, but also literary and artistic works or individuals reflecting the spirit from the appearance, the essence from the phenomenon, the infinite from the limited expression, and the transcendence from reality. Chinese philosophers believed that the most truthful depiction of the world was when it was directly presented to individuals. The world may be limited or even distorted if we continue to infer it through concepts and logic. Chinese philosophers believed that while both philosophy and art sought to understand the world as it is immediately presented to us, art was the most effective means of doing so. According to classical Chinese aesthetics, there is no difference between beauty and truth, both referring to the initial appearance of the world directly presented to us (Peng, 2011).

- **Fourth, transcendence.** There are two elements: firstly, to see the infinite world with limited expression. Lao Tzu advocates the combination of being and nothingness. Lao Tzu's philosophical thought of the being and nothingness has actually inspired the theory of ancient Chinese aesthetic conception. In Lao Tzu's view, the unity of being and nothingness is the fundamental factor in the functioning of all things in the universe. This idea is fully applicable to art and reveals the basic methods of artistic creation and the basic characteristics of artistic works. For creation, the combination of nihility and reality is an extremely important method. This method requires the author not to accurately depict the external appearance of the object when creating, but to select the most prominent features and use concise language and lines and summarize typical images; When combining some images together in a painting,

the painter purposefully removes some images to present some blank spaces in the artwork as a whole, which will make it appear to have more space, allowing viewers to generate unlimited imagination, making the content of the painting appear richer (Li, 2011). Secondly, pursue the fullness of life which is a spiritual transcendence. Lao Tzu advocates returning to its root to find infinity for life and provide spiritual comfort for life. The image of the world in Chinese aesthetics depicts the truth, which is the return to this natural state of unity between man and nature. The universe of imagery is a creation of humanity, transcending both the finiteness of human individual existence and the materiality of things. It is a return to nature at the same time.

Heidegger 's Philosophy of Beauty

According to the contemporary Chinese philosopher Zhang Xianglong's book entitled *Biography of Heidegger* (2022b), we know that Heidegger is recognized as one of the most influential philosophers of the 20th century. Heidegger (1927) advocated existentialism in *Being and Time*, he proposed the name of existentialism and promoted existentialist theory systematically and explicitly. Zhang Xianglong clearly portrays the significant impact that Heidegger's upbringing, family history, and boyhood had on him. Zhang Xianglong emphasizes that Heidegger spent his entire life attempting to heed the call of the field roads and school bells of his youth. The author has conducted a thorough analysis of the contentious topics, such as Heidegger's changing religious beliefs, his interactions with the Nazis, and his relationship with Taoism. It is important to note that the author visited some of Heidegger's former homes, got to meet many of Heidegger's family members and friends, and obtained some little-known facts first-hand.

Peng Fuchun (2012), a Doctor of Philosophy, divided Heidegger's aesthetic thought into three periods: the early, middle, and late stages in his book entitled *On Heidegger*. Theoretically, these three time periods correlate to Heidegger's three stages of thought: the exploration of existence's meaning, the exploration of truth, and the exploration of language. Heidegger's analysis of being inquiries into the basic structure of the state of existence first and then inquiries into the nature of existence. For aesthetics, existence is the foundation of art, because the beauty of art can be explained only through existence.

In the early period, Heidegger's theory was mainly elaborated in *Being and Time* (1927). Heidegger discusses the meaning of existence in this book. On Heidegger's *Being and Time*, Steven Levine (2008) edited "existence" as the guiding idea for the analysis indicating the movement from the particular (experience) to the whole of *Dasein*'s structures. The methodological expression of this direction given to the analysis is the thesis of neutrality, of non-commitment. It is the direction earlier called the "return", which is from phenomena to their origin, springing - forth into the whole of *Dasein*. It is balanced, or complemented, by another direction taken later in the book, which follows the "arising", is an unfolding of the so-called existential determinations, such as care, dread, being-towards-death, etc., out of their originaive source. To constantly tie these determinations back to their source, to the "formal idea of existence" is to understand them in their unity: "The existential characteristics are not pieces belonging to something composite, one of which might sometimes be missing; but there is woven together in them an originaive context."

Heidegger takes the relationship between being and time as the central topic and believes that existence itself is temporal. He tries to question existence on timeliness and focuses on analyzing the existential state of people. Time can be seen as the foundation for

comprehending existence. Talking about time without being is meaningless. Humans are thinking and intentional, can plan current activities in accordance with future objectives, ideals, and development prospects, and can take opportunities during critical periods to attain future goals. This is one of the main distinctions between humans and other animals. Heidegger used the traditional concepts of time—the future, the past, and the present—to create a new notion of time and provide the foundation for time theory. Time no longer flows in a straight path. The past, present, and future are all interconnected. It is a dynamic whole. Their unity makes the whole existence possible. In existential time, the future is of special significance. The future has antecedent decisive significance. Physical time holds that individuals are always moving from the past to the future; the best they can do is renovate an old prototype. In the original sense, the future does not exist in the future, the future exists in the present, and is to exist as a possibility. The future has precedence over the past and present. The past is also a way for existence to return to itself. The past originates from the future in a certain way. The future and the past share a common goal. The past is a recurrence of the potential of death, or what is known as always returning to oneself, which makes individuals more and more true instead of their genuine existence becoming more and more obscured if we can comprehend the true possibility of death in the future. The present is undoubtedly about revealing oneself. Its direction is the same as that of the future and the past, and it moves toward the true existence of death. Therefore, the present does not exist in an instant but rather maintains its openness.

Additionally, nothingness is included in the question of being. This use of nothing to highlight the disclosure of beings is a development of a theme already existing in Heidegger's thought at least as early as 1919. As a term, the nothing is successful in unsettling the logical positivists for the very reason that it cannot be included in a positivist account. According to the book *Heidegger and Nietzsche* (Blond, 2010), Heidegger asserts that he is explicating the essence of the nothing (and hence being) owing to it being a condition for the emergence of beings. The essence of the nothing comprises of transcendence. Consequently, nihilation is the transcendence of the nothing, and the essence of the nothing - that which separates it from all other entities or nonentities - consists in revealing its existence through transcendence. The nothing is required to indicate its presence through the activity of nihilation. Therefore, the word nothing becomes an essential tool for the thinking of being that exceeds metaphysical accounts. According to the book *Heidegger and Nietzsche* (2010), Heidegger's position on transcendence states: "Holding itself out into the nothing, Dasein is in each case already beyond the beings as a whole. Such being are beyond beings we call transcendence. If in the ground of its essence, Dasein were not transcending, which now means, if it were not in advance holding itself out into the nothing, then it could never adopt a stance towards beings or even toward itself."

For Heidegger, in *Being and Time*, beings, entities, and presence itself require time. The noun is replaced by a verb-based definition of an entity that is known through its effects: being beings, essence essences, a thing things. It is this form of essence that Heidegger hopes to describe when expounding statements such as the nothing nihilates. Furthermore, Heidegger's notion of transcendence is also consistent with this definition of essence. The fact that the nothing transcends conveys the nothing as a function of its activity or, to be more precise, activity is the essence of the nothing. As the activity in question is transcendence, then so too is transcendence the essence of the nothing. A relation opens up whereby nothing communicates itself to us through the disclosure (one could almost say through the use of) its essence: the activity of nihilation as transcendence, the transcendence of the activity of

nihilation. The elements of Heidegger's analysis merge into one transcending-nihilating activity

Furthermore, Heidegger's concentrated discourse on truth is presented in section 44 of *Being and Time* (1927) and in his thesis *On the Essence of Truth* (1930). In fact, the subject of existence and truth was a recurring one in all of his writings. In the development of Western philosophy, Heidegger's idea of truth holds a significant place. *On the Essence of Truth* (1930) opens with a general understanding of truth; the truth is to be in accordance with something. To be in accordance with proposes that a relation of some kind exists between the intellect and the thing. Heidegger defines two basic categories of truth - material truth (accordance of thing to intellect) and propositional truth (accordance of intellect to thing). Owing to the primacy of material substance (beings) over thought (consciousness of beings), Heidegger states that propositional truth is possible only because of material truth. These truths move in seemingly opposite directions and yet both definitions are dominated by the idea of correct relations. Heidegger takes the common characteristic that these definitions share to be an undeveloped notion of accordance or correctness (Blond, 2010). His view of truth overturned the traditional understanding of the view of truth, closely linking existing problems with the truth, and exploring the inner meaning of truth in depth, thus achieving a transcendence of truth. The truth according to Heidegger is the deeper primitive truth. Truth is a real presence in this sense. It is removed from the cover of all logic, rationality, and knowledge, and places itself in the process of clarity.

In the middle period, Heidegger's aesthetic thoughts were mainly expressed in books such as *Road in the Forest* (2004). He started applying his philosophical principles to the study of beauty and art during this time, and he used aesthetic analysis to explain his existential beliefs. First of all, Heidegger addressed the issue of works of art and their origins. In Heidegger's analysis of works of art, he believed that before determining what a work of art is, we must first understand what a work of art is not, and then determine it after excluding it. Heidegger believed that: first, works of art are not imitations of ready-made things. For instance, Van Gogh painted a pair of shoes that were incredibly lifelike, yet they did not turn out to be works of art. From ancient Greece to the present, the theory of artistic imitation has failed to adequately capture the essence of works of art. Secondly, works of art are not replicas of the common essence of things, and they are not the rational content of aesthetic value or aesthetic feeling attached to materials. Thirdly, works of art are not a cultural pastime because they are not primarily intended to help people appreciate or develop their temperament. If artworks are created solely for viewers' entertainment, then art has degenerated. Heidegger (1991) said in his book entitled *Poetry, Language and Thought*: "Works are the offspring of artists, and artists are the offspring of works. They are necessary and complete one another. But neither side is the other's complete foundation. Artists and the works depend on the existence of a third party that comes preceding them, whether in terms of themselves or how they are related. The third-party names the creators and the pieces of art. It's art".

Therefore, Heidegger (1991) believes that "art is the source of artistic creations and artists". The true existence is in art. The origin of works of art refers to the truth of the being that places itself into works of art. In the second place, Heidegger discussed the nature of art and its relationship with the truth. Since art is the source of works of art and artists, and the natural basis for the existence of beings, what is the nature of art? How does it relate to truth? Heidegger believes that people usually regard works of art as objects, such as a painting hung on the wall displayed in an art museum, which can be transported, stored, and packaged.

However, since artworks are not only confined to physical materials but must have more, which properly defines the essence of a work of art, these physical elements as works of art are not factors that comprise the essence. For example, the shoes in Van Gogh's paintings really reveal the truth about the instrumental nature of the shoe. Therefore, Heidegger said that Van Gogh's paintings reveal what utensils and a pair of shoes really are. This being is highlighted by its existence. Shoes, as a piece of art, make existence appear and express the truth in art. Truth is the manifestation of existence itself, and it is the automatic manifestation of existence itself. Art shows the nature of truth. He said that the nature of art is to reveal the truth of existence and make it appear (2004). In Heidegger's view, there are many ways of expressing truth, and that art is the best medium for doing so. Beauty is the embodiment of the nature of art. Beauty belongs to the spontaneous occurrence of truth.

In the late period, Heidegger (2015) expounded his aesthetic thoughts *On the Road to Language*. Heidegger made a distinction between artistic language and technical language and expounded the significance of this distinction. Heidegger (2010) believes that artistic language is poetic in nature. He said in the article entitled *Origin of Works of Art*: "Architecture, painting, sculpture, and music must all return to this poetic quality if all art is poetic in nature." Heidegger regards poetic quality as the essence of all arts, and even believes that "language itself is poetry in the fundamental sense". In Heidegger's view, poems are written in the language of art. Art can most typically show the characteristics of language, and make language exist, while still retaining the original language. Compared with art, modern technology does not allow things to play a role in the essence of things, but instead turns things into objects which for processing and ruling, so as to exhaust these things for the benefit of the unending expansion of human desire and absolute needs. In this way, there is only one measurement of production, and it is the technical need. "For the people of the new era, the only way to conquer and govern the globe, dominate all beings is through this monopoly, and technical staff who can complete the subjectivity" (Heidegger, 2010). That is to say, the autocracy of technology in today's world will inevitably increase the popularity and acceptance of technical language. As a result, technical or informational language has great control over people, causing them to experience hardship that is difficult to escape. Technical language has evolved into a tool that restricts people's freedom. Heidegger believes that the development of modern science and technology makes the language formalized, symbolized and digitized, which makes language have the characteristics of a single meaning, accuracy, and uniformity, and leads to the exhaustion of language.

Therefore, Heidegger (2015) said that language is rapidly applied everywhere, which not only damages aesthetic and moral responsibilities, but also harms human nature. Limiting the unjustified application and abuse of technical language has emerged as the most crucial task of language preservation in today's society in light of the trend of rapid technological progress. The most effective way to accomplish this mission is to maintain the purity of artistic language and maintain the nature of language as a home of existence. In a highly technologically advanced modern society, it is everyone's responsibility to prevent technology from further stifling human psychology's dominance and representation, language from becoming less lyrical, and individuals from feeling like they belong nowhere. Heidegger has consistently emphasized that language is the place where existence takes up residence, and he rejects the assumption that language is merely a means of exchanging ideas. The poetic language used in the arts has elements of transcendence, fuzziness, and polysemy. The language has lost its vibrancy as a result of modern technology's simplification. In a technologically advanced society, people lack a sense of belonging due to the technical

language's loss of poetic flavor and the language's original role as the place of being. Technical language is a major truth violation that needs to be controlled.

Furthermore, Steven Levine (2008) discussed Heidegger's transcendence in his book *On Heidegger's Being and Time*. Heidegger says that Being is the transcendent pure and simple. In a short essay, *On the Essence of Ground*, written in 1928, Heidegger articulates the sense in which fundamental ontology is "transcendental": "Transcendence means stepping beyond (surpassing). One has to call "transcendent" or "transcending" that which so "steps beyond". This stepping beyond, understood as a happening, belongs properly to one being. Formally, this stepping-beyond can be construed as a "relationship" that stretches "from" something "to" something. Furthermore, to step-ping-beyond belongs that towards which this stepping-beyond leads, and which is usually, but improperly, called "the transcendent". And finally, "something" is always gone beyond (surpassed) in such stepping-beyond.". It should be quite clear in what sense Heidegger's transcendentalism is novel: the very Being of Dasein is to step beyond itself, to project itself into what will be called its world. Every disclosure of Being as the transcendent is transcendental knowledge. Transcendental still means stepping back towards an original condition of possibility or from everyday life.

Meanwhile, Heidegger's interpretation of death. Heidegger characterizes the main traits of Being-towards-the-end by saying: "With death, Dasein stands before itself in its own most potentiality-for-Being. This is a possibility in which the issue is nothing less than Dasein's Being-in-the-world. When Dasein stands before itself as such a possibility, it has been fully assigned to its own most potentiality for Being. When it stands before itself in this way, all its relations to any other Dasein have been undone. This ownmost, non-relational, possibility is at the same time the uttermost one. As potentiality-for-being, Dasein cannot outstrip the possibility of death. Death is the possibility of the absolute impossibility of Dasein. Thus, death reveals itself as that possibility which is one's own most, which is non-relational, and which is not to be outstripped" (Levine, 2008).

Death is my own most possibility, that is to say, it is always mine. In death, at least, I cannot do as everyone else, as they do. One cannot die as they all die. Thus, death is also a non-relational possibility in Being-towards-the-end. In death. I am not related to others; I am always thrown back upon myself. Death is the initial breach from the everyday realm of common sense. It is a transcending movement, but not towards the everyday world; rather it is, as my own most possibility, a transcendence that pulls me towards my own self, it is a transcending movement of self-appropriation, of self-authentication. It cannot be outstripped. But the highest possibility is always ahead of us: the possibility of becoming total in the form of total negation, death. The heuristic, or revelatory function of Being-towards-the-end, demonstrates, in a first approximation, that death reveals our temporality; and does so in such a way that the main trait of time is what is not yet, what lies ahead, the future.

Death is the future state of being and the end of existence. Heidegger (2006) believed that experiencing life through death is vital to unveil human beings in their entirety. "Death itself is unpredictable and transcendental, but the end of it is the most unique, unrelated, and certain possibility of being". In Heidegger's view, when we truly understand death and face death, we have the ability to break free from all of the restrictions in the world, put our desires and problems in the past, engage in business emotionlessly, and move toward freedom. As a result, death becomes the threshold into real existence. In order to encourage individuals to show the many possibilities of life and return to their true state, Heidegger urged them to face death and endure it deliberately. This mindset is simply a profound understanding of death, which prevents individuals from experiencing tremendous panic and stress due to their

fear of dying. Instead, they face death calmly, view it as a necessary stage of life, and plan a valuable lifetime actively.

The Significant Elements of Heidegger's Philosophy of Beauty

From the above review, it could be concluded that there are three significant elements of Beauty in the Modern Western Philosophy of Beauty. These are:

- **Firstly, pursue the truth.** Heidegger (1971) pointed out that "beauty is a way for truth to occur as enlightenment". Beauty, like truth and goodness, originates from the existence of ontology. It is merely a means to reveal reality and direct existence, a means by which various aestheticians approach their domains. It is a language that tells us the truth while simultaneously revealing itself. The overall trait of Western modern aesthetics is that it is subjective, intrinsic, non-utilitarian, and dynamic. People frequently connect their internal will, intuition, life impulses, subconscious instincts, emotions, experiences, existence, and other things when they investigate beauty. Isolate beauty from the supposedly external universality and commonality of social politics, morality, and history, deny the social and political role, moral education role, or the joyous role of beauty's image, and do not seek the reasons for beauty from external objective things or the objective world, and consider beauty to be the result of pure personal emotions and experiences. Modern people focus on defining beauty from the subjective feelings within themselves, and this subjective feeling is often a pure and irrational instantaneous intuitive feeling and experience of an individual. They view each unique individual's unique feelings and experiences as beautiful and refuse to accept a certain eternal and objective standard of beauty, making modern people's aesthetic concepts more subjective, irrational, and complex, presenting a non-ordered characteristic. The value orientation of modern aesthetics is not an order, harmony, and unity, but rather a destruction of order and unity. It is no longer a static harmony, but a dynamic beauty with obvious anti-traditional characteristics. This beauty is a reflection of the rapid pace of change and life experienced by modern people, as well as of their living circumstances following the loss of some shared ideals and the strain that technology has placed on them. The battle and resistance to conventional pressure is also a manifestation of contemporary, deeply conscious individual consciousness. It is a true manifestation of people's spiritual survival status and represents the contradiction and suffering in people's inner spiritual world under the conditions of extraordinarily wealthy material affluence and advanced technological civilization in modern times (Lin & Kou, 2004).

- **Secondly, existence.** The basic spirit of Heidegger's literary and artistic aesthetics is humanistic care, which should pay attention to humanity and also face the problem of harmonious coexistence between humans and nature. Heidegger's aesthetic thought has completely broken free from the constraints of traditional Western metaphysics, mainly focusing on the overall survival situation of humanity. In Heidegger's view, traditional Western metaphysics has disguised the true essence of science and technology, and what is even more terrifying is that we humans have not yet realized this dangerous situation. Science and technology have two sides to them. On the one hand, they can be applied to enhance material well-being and advance production. The phenomenal growth of modern industry and technology has demonstrated and encouraged the development of human subjectivity, advanced higher standards for human development and the expression of human creative spirit, and opened up enormous possibilities, causing the significance of human subjectivity and subjective factors to rapidly increase in social development; On the other hand, with the

tremendous growth of modern technology since the 18th century, the excess of scientific knowledge and the excessive use of scientific methods has resulted in a number of negative effects. It is also agreed by Andrew Feenberg (2005), in his book *Heidegger and Marcuse*, he stated new dilemmas emerge in a society reconstructed around these new technical means. Particular technical achievements and failures are unimportant since our very dependence on technology gives rise to general catastrophe. Heidegger has reflected most deeply on this situation. The true state of a person is concealed, so their true existence should be a continuous process of removing this obscurity and moving toward clarity. So, art and beauty are the revelation, illumination, and opening up of the true and clear state of human existence. Heidegger's aesthetic concept closely links beauty with human existence, while existentialists often view human existence as a lonely, absurd, and painful existence. Therefore, beauty and art have become the revelation of human suffering, absurdity, and lonely existence.

In addition, many contemporary aestheticians no longer see beauty or art as directly educating or providing pleasure to people. According to Russian formalist Shklovsky, the purpose of beauty or art is to reawaken people's emotions because modern society leaves them feeling emotionally detached. The process of creating beauty involves using defamiliarization strategies to purposefully change, alter, and invert things that people are used to seeing. This leaves people astonished. Uncomfortable and unfamiliar in order to grab attention, keep people focused, and achieve the objective of restoring people's acute awareness. Modern people find it challenging to pay attention to things of beauty if they are still just close, consistent, and in line with expectations. The German philosopher Marcuse believed that due to the alienation of human beings in modern society into numb one-sided individuals completely dominated by material desires and deprived of their instincts, art is to cultivate new feelings in the form of astonishing beauty to liberate people, save people, and save society (Lin & Kou, 2004).

• **Thirdly, transcendence.** There are three elements: first, nothingness. According to the book *Heidegger and Nietzsche* (Blond, 2010), Heidegger asserts that he is explicating the essence of the nothing (and hence being) owing to it being a condition for the emergence of beings. The essence of the nothing comprises of transcendence. Consequently, nihilation is the transcendence of the nothing, and the essence of the nothing - that which separates it from all other entities or nonentities - consists in revealing its existence through transcendence. The nothing is required to indicate its presence through the activity of nihilation. Second, to find an ideal spiritual homeland. After addressing the meaning of existence, Heidegger raised a question: why is human existence concealed? His response is that technological advances and industrial civilization have concealed and even make people lose their existence. Of course, he does not fully reject technology and oppose it; rather, he supports its reasonable and restrained usage. Only by utilizing technology in harmony can one poetically reside on the earth and return to their spiritual homeland. Returning to the spiritual home places more emphasis on the preservation and restoration of the natural environment than on unending conquest and control. Heidegger believed that poetic dwelling—which included returning everything to its natural state and reuniting humans with nature—was a real existence. Heidegger incorporated art into philosophy because he thought that only via poetry and art would human poetic dwelling be made possible and might return to a person's spiritual homeland. Third, about death. Death is the ultimate state of existence, according to Heidegger. The heuristic function of Being-towards-the-end is to reveal Dasein's temporality.

It is also agreed by Steven Levine (2008), in this impending character of death, it is present, present as my ownmost possibility. Hence, death is not understood existentially if I understand it simply as the ending of Dasein, some day, some place, due to some cause. The ending which we have in view when we speak of death does not signify Dasein's Being-at-an-end but a Being-towards-the-end. Thus, death is a structural determinant of Dasein wherever and however it exists. The fear of mortality drives the average person to immerse oneself in daily life to escape death. Death permits humans to truly exist, and only when people gaze directly at their own death can they reveal their own possibilities. It forces us to view people as physical beings with finite chances of surviving and existing. Some people also believe that such survival beliefs and ways can make people have a sense of urgency in life, so as to avoid human beings in the state of survival, dilute the end of life, imaginary death, and finally sad to go to the end of life in self-comfort. According to Heidegger's dialectical analysis, only by comprehending death can one comprehend life; only by clearly recognizing the limits of existence can one clearly comprehend its limitless growth. The so-called infinity of one's own development is contained within the limitations of one's own existence.

Method

Comparative analysis is used in analyzing the similarities and differences between Lao Tzu's and Heidegger's philosophies of beauty. In the literature review, the significant elements of Lao Tzu's and Heidegger's philosophies of beauty were summarized. There are two steps for data analysis: first, juxtapose the significant elements of Lao Tzu's and Heidegger's philosophies of beauty, and get the common significant elements. Second, juxtapose the data about common significant elements of Lao Tzu's and Heidegger's philosophies of beauty, and analyze their similarities and differences.

Comparative analysis can be understood as an intellectual activity in which you examine the differences and the similarities between two or more related things, in order to come to new insights and conclusions according to certain standards. In the book entitled *Comparative Method in Education* (1964), the American comparative educator George Bereday divided the comparative research method into four stages: firstly, description. Comparative research starts with a detailed description of the objects, that is, to describe as carefully, completely and objectively as possible. Therefore, it is necessary to collect relevant data and literature. Secondly, interpretation. Researchers use various social scientific theories and methods to analyze the collected data on the basis of description, so as to explain these facts, and evaluate the causes and interrelations of the facts. Thirdly, juxtaposition. After collecting and analyzing the data through the above two stages, we must systematize the data, determine certain comparative standards, and then classify and juxtapose the data, analyze their similarities and differences, and form the hypothesis of comparative analysis. Fourthly, comparison. In the comparative stage, we should find out the differences and the similarities of the research, verify the hypothesis in the stage of juxtaposition, and then make a certain conclusion (George, 1964).

Results and Discussions

From the above analysis, the common significant elements of Lao Tzu's and Heidegger's philosophies of beauty are pursuing the truth, existence, and transcendence.

There are three common significant elements between Lao Tzu's philosophy of beauty and Heidegger's philosophy of beauty:

• **Firstly, pursue the truth.** Similarities: Lao Tzu and Heidegger both expressed a strong concern for human survival in their philosophy. They carefully analyze human civilization while being acutely aware of the crisis that lies behind it. In order to discover a way to resolve the problem and come back to the true nature of human existence, they draw on their respective wisdom. Differences: Lao Tzu requires people to transcend the boundless pursuit of knowledge and return to the innocent and pure state of infants through cultivation. Heidegger's truth plays an important role in elucidating the truth of Lao Tzu's aesthetics. In the development of Western philosophy, Heidegger's idea of truth holds a significant place. His idea of truth challenged Western conventional wisdom by intimately connecting current issues to reality, delving deeply into truth's inherent meaning, and ultimately achieving transcendence of truth. In Heidegger's later period, he mainly explored the truth from the perspective of works of art, and he concluded that existence can be divided into two basic types: invisibility and visibility. That is to say, the origin of a work of art is when an existing person uses the artwork to reveal the truth about their own existence, making the truth visible and bringing it out of its invisible state.

• **Secondly, confirm the existence.** Similarities: The two philosophers have actively explored the issue of human survival, full of ultimate care for the freedom and development of individual life. Differences: Lao Tzu seeks the domain of natural inaction and prevents utilitarianism, human factors, and other departures from human nature and the material world. To emphasize a natural domain of survival, which is the realm of unity between man and nature, Lao Tzu promotes the idea of naturalness and inaction rather than the idea of returning humanity to its primitive state. Heidegger performed a thorough investigation of the technological age because he thought it was one in which science and technology had advanced quickly, were highly appreciated, and were being used to their fullest potential. People only act in accordance with technology's objectives until things lose their true appearance and become nothing more than human-useable objects. At the same time, people themselves turn into the slaves of technology, defenseless and unjustified. Disasters are brought about by technology, which also stifles spirituality in people. People live in a false condition where their survival instinct is not expressed in the daily pursuit of material goals, unaware of their true existence. Heidegger's critique of modern technology does not negate science, technology, or modern society. His main goal is to remind people that advancing technology shouldn't go against the laws of nature and that civilization shouldn't destroy nature in the name of progress.

• **Thirdly, transcendence.** Similarities: The two philosophers are eager to find an ideal spiritual homeland, and freedom. Differences: according to Lao Tzu, the Tao is the destination where life begins and serves as its final resting place. All living things on earth and in heaven have a finite lifespan that is marked by life and death. Both the occurrence of life and the commencement of death are accompanied by life's progression. This is both the tragedy and the attraction of life. According to the standpoint of life, death is the end of existence. From the perspective of death, life does not end for all forms of it; rather, it only comes to its final home and destination when it has fully completed its journey back to the Tao. Consequently, the Tao is not only the source of life, but also its end. This is what Lao Tzu stated to return to its roots, and only by returning to its roots can life have its final home and destination. According to Heidegger, humans live poetically on the earth. Human beings, as physical beings, have restrictions in time and space, while as social beings, they are bound by varied

interests and aspirations. And death is a transcending movement of self-appropriation, of self-authentication. They must find their own home or destination in order to transcend the inherent constraints and express the true vitality of life through efforts. Through reflection on time, history, nature, and life, people can come to an understanding of their place in the world and develop into free and poetic beings. The objective of people's intellectual and literary research is precisely to break free from the numerous restraints on their souls and gain the freedom and emancipation of spiritual life.

Discussions

In this study, the researcher explored Lao Tzu's philosophy of beauty represented the traditional Chinese's, and Heidegger's philosophy of beauty represented modern Western's, and got their significant elements. These findings suggest that beauty is a complicated phenomenon that cannot be approached from a single perspective. The definition of beauty and the question of what it truly is are challenging. We can find several methods of examining the essence of beauty throughout the history of aesthetics. Some aestheticians look at beauty from the viewpoint of the aesthetic subject, others from the viewpoint of the object, and yet others from the interaction between the subject and object in order to discover the essence of beauty. Western aestheticians began to doubt various theories of beauty. First, they discovered that beautiful things are diverse, and no definition of beauty can encompass such a rich and diverse phenomenon of beauty. Second, they found that people's aesthetic judgments are often related to aesthetic attitudes. Without an aesthetic attitude, even the most beautiful things will not become the object of people's aesthetic appreciation, and people will not make aesthetic judgments about them. With an aesthetic attitude, some unattractive things, such as lofty or even ugly things, can also have aesthetic value. However, everyone has different feelings for beauty. Seeking beauty in life is what makes sense.

Things with aesthetic value are evolving together with the constant expansion of people's aesthetic appreciation scope and changes in aesthetic ideas. Things that once had aesthetic value might no longer have it, whereas those that previously lacked aesthetic value might now have it. For instance, when people's aesthetic appreciation of nature grows, previously despised natural settings like deserts, marshes, and polar regions are now seen as beautiful. Beauty and ugliness coexist in the complex, diversified, and essentially rich world of perception. Simply studying beauty images, one of the many categories of perception, while neglecting ugly images in art, is a one-sided approach. People hold the opinion that, whether it be a natural object or a work of art, what matters most is how it expresses the life force of the universe, not whether it appears beautiful or ugly. People can accept and admire ugly things, whether they be people, natural objects, or works of art, as long as they fully show vitality. Likewise, ugly images also be beautiful images. In this context, ugly is actually a transcendence of ugly in ordinary life. It creates imagery as a result of its manifestation of the sublimity, the strength of the inner spirit, and the artist's grief and indignation toward the world, giving it a sense of completeness. In addition to correcting the prejudice of ignoring ugliness in traditional aesthetic study and extending the diverse orientation of beauty, the rise of ugly images in contemporary academic viewpoints also prompted the discipline to develop towards an open and dynamic modern cultural form.

Conclusion

In conclusion, this study analyzed the significant elements of Lao Tzu's and Heidegger's philosophies of beauty which were organized systematically, and got the similarities and

differences according to a comparative analysis. From the above analysis, it can be seen that there is a huge difference in the thinking of Lao Tzu and Heidegger due to the historical context and the vast differences in the periods. They deal with the issue of human existence differently. Nevertheless, their philosophies of beauty still have striking similarities, which are to pursue the truth, solve the fundamental problem of human existence, and transcendence. They are also the deep historical reasons why people quite often think that Heidegger's aesthetic thought can be connected with Lao Tzu. Further, the significant elements of Lao Tzu's and Heidegger's philosophies of beauty could be applied to artistic disciplines which serve as a guide to deepen understanding of the diverse phenomena of beauty, and help people to understand the general characteristics and laws of beauty, and improve people's ability for aesthetic appreciation. The comparative study is beneficial to cultural communication, and one can also learn more about the possibilities of the world.

In my study, Lao Tzu and Heidegger hold similar opinions on certain basic issues regarding the philosophy of beauty, despite their differences in language, history, philosophy, and society. These findings touch on the core of human aesthetic consciousness and transcend cultural distinctions. Consequently, it is more important to seek similarities, which are directly related to the significance of comparative study. With the rapid development of science and technology and the rapid change of culture nowadays, the comparison, exchange, and integration of the cultures of all nations have become a trend of the times. The interaction and influence between China and the West in this vast system of world culture will unavoidably continue and deepen.

References

- Blond, L. P. (2010). *Heidegger and Nietzsche: Overcoming Metaphysics*. Continuum, 51.
- Cao, S. Q., & Han, Z. K. (2017). *Heidegger and Lao Tzu: Factual Connection, Intersection and Common Concerns*. Journal of Anhui University (Philosophy and Social Sciences Edition). 41(03), 50-58.
- Chen, W. H. (2007). *Twenty-One Lectures on Chinese Classical Aesthetics*. Hunan Education Press.
- Chen, G. X., & Shi J. C. (2012). *The Aesthetic Interpretation of Lao Tzu's Thought on Taoism Following Nature*. Jiang Xi Social Sciences, 40.
- Ding Weiwei. (2013). *Beauty and ugliness in Chinese painting theory*. Shanghai Ancient Books Publishing House.
- Feenberg, A. (2005). *Heidegger and Marcuse: The Catastrophe and Redemption of History*. Routledge, Cop, 1.
- George. (1964). *Comparative Method in Education* [by] George Z.F. Bereday.
- Heidegger, M. (2015). *Heidegger's Anthology: Holzwege (1st ed.)*. Commercial Press
- Heidegger, M. (2018). *Being and Time (Chinese revised version 2) (refined)*. The Commercial Press.
- Heidegger. (1996). *The Selected Works of Heidegger. Volume I and Volume II*. Translated by Sun Zhouxing. Shanghai San Lian Bookstore.
- Heidegger. (2004). *Road in the Forest*. Translated by Sun Zhouxing. Shanghai Translation Publishing House
- Heidegger. (2010). *The Origin of Artistic Works*. Translated by Sun Zhouxing. Chinese Academy of Fine Arts Press.
- Heidegger. (2015). *Heidegger's collected works: Nietzsche*. Translated by Sun Zhouxing. Commercial Press.

- Jian, B. Z. (1988). *Pre-Qin History*. Peking University Press.
- Lao Tzu. (2010). *Tao Te Ching*. Inner Mongolia People's Publishing House.
- Lao Tzu. (2022). *Tao Te Ching (English-Chinese Bilingual)*. Zhong Zhou Ancient Books Publishing House.
- Li, T. D. (2008). *The Contemporary Significance of Lao Tzu's Aesthetic Thought*. China Social Sciences Press.
- Li, T. D. (2011). *The Origin and Characteristics of the Category of Charm in Chinese Aesthetics*. Journal of Shenyang Institute of Engineering (Social Sciences Edition), 2011 (3), 310-316.
- Li, Z. H., & Liu, G. J. (1984). *The History of Chinese Aesthetics*. China Social Sciences Press.
- Li, Z. H. (1986). *On the History of Ancient Chinese Thought*. People's Publishing House, 92.
- Lin, D. G., & Kou, P. C. (2004). *The Characteristics of Western Modern Aesthetics*. Journal of Southwest University (Social Sciences Edition), (030) 005,151.
- Liu, G. J. (1989). *the Outline of Lao Tzu's Thoughts*. Jiangxi Social Sciences, (06), 63-68.
- Liu, G. S. (2000). *The Outline of Lao Tzu's Aesthetic Thought*. Social Science Trends.
- Plato. (2018). *Plato's Literary Dialogue (essence) / Zhu Guangqian's Translation (1st ed.)*. Foreign Language Teaching and Research Press.
- Peng, F. (2011). *Introduction to Aesthetics*. Fudan University Press.
- Peng, F. C. (2021). *Aesthetic principles (revised edition of national planning textbook for the Eleventh Five Year Plan of general higher education)*. People's Publishing House.
- Qi, Z. X. (2008). *General History of Chinese Aesthetics*. People's Publishing House.
- Sartwell, C. (2012). Beauty. Plato. Stanford.edu.
<https://plato.stanford.edu/archives/sum2022/entries/beauty/>
- Levine, S. (2008). *On Heidegger's Being and Time*. Routledge (1st ed.), 77.
- Sisti, A., Aryan, N., & Sadeghi, P. (2021). What is Beauty? Aesthetic Plastic Surgery, 45(5), 2163–2176. <https://doi.org/10.1007/s00266-021-02288-2>
- Wang, Z. F. (2004). *A Course of Chinese Aesthetics History*. Fudan University Press.
- Xiao, Y. (2003). "Beauty" in Human Context -- Reinterpretation of the Concept of "Beauty". Journal of Tsinghua University (Philosophy and social sciences edition), (01) Vol 18, 27-33.
- Xu, F. G. (2020). *Chinese Artistic Spirit (large character version of Mr. Xu Fuguan's works)*. Jiu Zhou Press.
- Ye, L. (2005). *The Outline of Chinese Aesthetic History*. Shang Hai People's Publishing House.
- Ye, L. (2009). *Foundations of Aesthetics*. Peking University Press.
- Yu, K. L. (2011). *Problem Consciousness in the Comparison of Chinese and Western Aesthetics -- Reading Zhang Fa's Chinese and Western Aesthetics and Cultural Spirit*. Literary and artistic contending. 2011(15), 91-93.
- Zhang, F. (1994). *The Chinese and Western Aesthetics and Cultural Spirit*. Peking University Press.
- Zhang, F. (2000). *The History of Chinese Aesthetics*. Shang Hai People's Publishing House.
- Zhang, F. (2008). *A Comparative Study on the System of Aesthetic Principles Between China and the West in the 20th Century*. School of Philosophy, Ren Min University of China, 2008(05), 5-12.
- Zhang, F. (2022b). *The Globalization of Contemporary Western Aesthetics (since 1960) (1st ed.)*. Ren Min University of China Press.
- Zhang, S. Y. (1996). *The Confusion and Choice of Chinese and Western Philosophy in the Context of Heaven and Man*. Beijing Book Co., Ltd, 115-117.
- Zhang, S. Y. (2004). *Lecture on New Philosophy*. Guangxi Normal University Press.

- Zhang, S. Y. (2016). *Collected Works of Zhang Shiyong/1, On Hegelian Philosophy*. Peking University Press.
- Zhang, X. L. (1996). *Comparison between Heidegger's thought and the Chinese way of Tao: the opening and blending of the ultimate horizon*. Life, reading and Xinzhi San Lian Bookstore.
- Zhang, X. L. (2022b). *Biography of Heidegger (phenomenological Library)*. Commercial Press.
- Zhang, Y. B., & Li, Q. K. (2015). *Heidegger's Autobiography*. Nanjing University Press.
- Zhu, L. Z. (2006). *Fifteen Lectures on Chinese Aesthetics*. Peking University Press.