


# A Study of Feng Youlan's Aesthetic Thought in the Perspective of "Vital Beauty"

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**Abstract:** **Background:** Feng Youlan is one of the prominent figures in 20th-century Chinese philosophy, renowned for his contributions not only in the field of philosophy but also as an important aesthete. His ideas span various domains including philosophy, aesthetics, and social ethics, and are considered to have had a significant impact on traditional Chinese thought. Feng Youlan's aesthetic philosophy has garnered widespread attention and discussion in Chinese academic circles, marking it as a crucial milestone in the development of Chinese aesthetics in the 20th century. **Purpose:** The purpose of this paper is to delve into Feng Youlan's aesthetic philosophy and to analyze its significance and influence in the realm of aesthetics. Through a systematic examination of Feng Youlan's aesthetic ideas, a better understanding of the evolution, core concepts, and characteristics of traditional Chinese aesthetics can be achieved. Furthermore, an interpretation of his ideas can offer new insights and directions for contemporary aesthetic research. **Methods:** This paper employs a methodological approach involving literature review and analysis. By collecting, organizing, and analyzing relevant literature, it delves deeply into the core content and main viewpoints of Feng Youlan's aesthetic philosophy. Drawing on the research findings of other scholars, a comprehensive and thorough analysis and evaluation of Feng Youlan's "Vital Beauty" aesthetic ideas are conducted to ensure a comprehensive understanding and accurate grasp of his philosophy. **Results:** Feng Youlan's aesthetic philosophy encompasses various aspects, including discussions on the essence of beauty, standards of beauty, and the relationship between beauty, morality, and society. He posits that beauty not only possesses objective material attributes but also embodies a spiritual realm and intrinsic values. Feng Youlan advocates for the integration of aesthetics with morality and social ethics, emphasizing the practicality and value orientation of beauty in achieving the perfection of human existence. **Conclusion:** Feng Youlan's aesthetic philosophy has exerted a profound influence on traditional Chinese aesthetics, providing subsequent scholars with an important theoretical foundation and inspiration. Through an in-depth study and understanding of his ideas, the enrichment and development of traditional Chinese aesthetics can be facilitated, offering valuable insights and guidance for contemporary aesthetic research. Feng Youlan's aesthetic philosophy holds significant relevance in advancing the development and flourishing of Chinese aesthetics, and his intellectual legacy warrants deep contemplation and exploration.

**Keywords:** Chinese Philosophy, Feng Youlan, Artistic Beauty, True Nature, "Vital Beauty" Aesthetics

## 1. Introduction

### 1.1 Research Background

Feng Youlan's contributions to philosophical aesthetics are remarkable, particularly in his profound exploration of "Vital Beauty." His insights at the intersection of philosophy and aesthetics have impacted the discourse surrounding appreciating art

and beauty. It is well situated against rich Chinese cultural and philosophical traditions. Feng Youlan's aesthetic thought has become a focal point of attention, urging scholars and enthusiasts to delve deeper into its nuances and implications. Feng Youlan's "Vital Beauty" exploration reflects a unique perspective that intertwines life, philosophy, and aesthetics. His work contributes to understanding aesthetic principles and enriches the broader discourse on the nature of beauty. As a philosopher deeply rooted in Chinese intellectual traditions, Feng Youlan's approach to aesthetics draws from classical philosophies, creating a synthesis that resonates with the cultural fabric of China. This paper aims to illuminate the intricacies of Feng Youlan's aesthetic thought, emphasizing the profound impact of "Vital Beauty" on the appreciation of art. By examining key writings and philosophical treatises, we seek to unravel the layers of meaning within Feng Youlan's conceptual framework. Through this exploration, we hope to provide valuable insights into the enduring legacy of Feng Youlan's ideas and their relevance in philosophical aesthetics.

### **1.2 Research Purpose**

This study explores the rich tapestry of Feng Youlan's aesthetic thought, particularly focusing on "Vital Beauty" perspective. The purpose is to unravel the layers of meaning embedded in this philosophical framework, shedding light on its relevance and applicability to appreciating art and aesthetics. By elucidating the core tenets of "Vital Beauty", the research aims to contribute a deeper understanding of Feng Youlan's unique philosophical stance within the broader context of Chinese aesthetics.

### **1.3 Research objective**

This paper's primary objective is to comprehensively analyze Feng Youlan's aesthetic thought, emphasizing the pivotal role played by the "Vital Beauty" concept. By unraveling the layers of this philosophical perspective, the study seeks to explore how Feng Youlan's ideas resonate with traditional Chinese aesthetics and their contemporary significance. Through meticulously examining key writings and texts, the research aims to provide valuable insights into the interplay between philosophy and aesthetics in Feng Youlan's works.

### **1.4 Research Methods**

A multifaceted approach will be employed to achieve the research objectives. A thorough review and analysis of Feng Youlan's key writings on aesthetics will serve as the foundation. Qualitative research methods will be applied to extract and interpret the essential components of "Vital Beauty" within the broader context of Chinese philosophical traditions. This research methodology aims to offer a nuanced exploration of Feng Youlan's aesthetic thought and its implications for the appreciation of beauty in various forms of artistic expression.

## **2. The Origin and Development of Feng Youlan's Aesthetic Thought**

Feng Youlan, while interpreting art through philosophy, considers art as a means to elucidate philosophical ideas, creating a mutually supportive and integrated relationship. Consequently, it is challenging to delineate the boundaries between his literary and artistic thoughts and philosophical assertions. However, in the essay "Li C.G. (2016) On Artistic Creation, Criticism, and Education from the Perspective of Philosophy", Feng Youlan proposes that "art can be viewed from many angles, and I am looking at it from the perspective of philosophy". This statement clarifies his position of "speaking about art from outside art", approaching art issues primarily from the philosophical viewpoint. This further confirms that his artistic perspective is entirely

encompassed within his philosophical framework of "New Rationalism", constituting the "New Rationalist view of art" (Peng, 2002).

Table 1: The Process of the Proposal of Feng Youlan's "Vital Beauty" Aesthetic Thought

Time	Book	Description
1945	The Complete Works of Sansong Studio, Volume 1	1945 Put forward the concept of "TianDao is life", emphasizing that TianDao creates and nurtures all things and is incessant in its creativity.
1965	The Complete Works of Sansong Studio, Volume 4	In the "Life" chapter of The Complete Works of Sansong Studio, Volume 4, the concept of "life" was further explained in combination with aesthetics.
1967	The Complete Works of Sansong Studio, Volume 6	In the "Life" chapter of The Complete Works of Sansong Studio, Volume 6, "Life aesthetics" concept was summarized, perfected, established, and matured.

"New Rationalism" constructs a logical framework based on four essential concepts: li (principle), qi (vital force), dao (way), and daquan (great whole)(Zhao, 2020). It follows the philosophical system presented by Cheng-Zhu Neo-Confucianism. It represents a new philosophical system interpreting Chinese philosophy using Western philosophical thoughts like new realism. (Table 1) It is described as "a brave and wise path" taken by traditional Chinese philosophy due to Western philosophy. Its approach is structurally different from traditional Chinese philosophy, and its artistic perspective is based on innovation and improvement within tradition. Feng Youlan advocates categorizing art into "practical art" and "non-practical art". "Practical art" is used to change things outside of humans, while 'non-practical art' acts on the spiritual level, making people balanced and moderate."This positioning of Feng Youlan's aesthetic thought is embedded in his interpretation of non-practical art.

"The purpose of beautiful art is to educate people" (Wang, 2002). It aims to improve life from a spiritual perspective. Philosophy and aesthetics have an inherent spiritual connection, like veins and water branching differently. Feng Youlan's analysis of Chinese aesthetics answers Hegel's "Question of Aesthetics". Hegel views Eastern art, including Chinese art, as a symbolic art in the "preparatory stage" without true art or reaching the height of rational speculation.

As a prominent figure in modern Neo-Confucianism, Feng Youlan draws nourishment from tradition. The concept of "shengsheng" as the lifeblood of Confucianism involuntarily permeates his aesthetic thought while questioning the ontology of aesthetics. The rich and extended connotations, including the "original appearance" of literary and artistic works, the advancement towards the dao, and the "fourfold realm", embodying the exposition of "shengsheng" aesthetics.

Feng Youlan, as a stronghold of modern Neo-Confucianism, derives nourishment from tradition. "Shengsheng,"as the lifeblood of Confucianism, becomes intricately woven into his exploration of the ontology of aesthetics(Li, 2010). Concepts such as the "natural state" of literary and artistic works, progression towards the dao, and the "fourfold realm" contain rich and extended meanings, fundamentally encompassing the exposition of "shengsheng" aesthetics.

Feng Youlan's aesthetic thought is positioned within a unique framework, combining traditional elements with innovative perspectives. The "New Rationalism" addresses cosmic origins and the realms of human existence and delves into aesthetic considerations. Core concepts within this philosophical system, such as taiji (supreme ultimate), tian dao (the way of heaven), xing (human nature), and xin (mind/heart) are also integral to aesthetics. His interpretation of artistic and literary ideas exhibits philosophical depth, giving distinctive "philosophical aesthetics."

The assertion that "the purpose of beautiful art is to educate people" highlights Feng Youlan's belief in the transformative power of art on the human spirit. Though distinct, philosophy and aesthetics share an intrinsic spiritual connection, a perspective that aligns with his "philosophical aesthetics."

Feng Youlan(Figure1)provides a robust response in the face of Hegel's critique of Eastern art as symbolic and in a preparatory stage. His analysis of Chinese aesthetics within the comprehensive and unique philosophical system of the "New Rationalism" challenges the perception of Eastern art, asserting its depth and relevance (Dai, 2017).



Figure1: Feng Youlan

In conclusion, Feng Youlan's contribution to aesthetics combines traditional Chinese thought with modern philosophical perspectives. The "shengsheng" and "philosophical" aesthetics within "New Rationalism" framework showcase the complexity and richness of his approach to the relationship between philosophy and art.

### 3. The Architectural Framework of Feng Youlan's Aesthetic System

Feng Youlan examines artistic issues through two dimensions: "Within Art" and "Beyond Art". He provides a three-dimensional interpretation of art from the lower to the higher forms.

#### 3.1 Interpreting Aesthetic Art Beyond Art

Feng Youlan posits, "The value of art lies in its ability to express the commonality of things"( Qiu, 2013). The pursuit of commonality cannot be achieved by exhaustively examining the superficial characteristics of things; instead, it requires probing the essence of things to find the "principle" of beauty.

The theory of commonality with "principle" constitutes the theoretical foundation of Feng Youlan's artistic perspective. Beautiful things have their "principle of beauty" as a basis, and not everything can be called beautiful. Only things following the "principle of beauty" are perceived as beautiful. In other words, only things that conform to the "principle of beauty" possess the "natural appearance" (Shang, 2007).

"Natural appearance exists naturally. One can perceive it due to its inherent stability". The "natural appearance" precedes art and exists in the world of principles. Apart from the "natural appearance", there is no other "principle of beauty". Art cannot exist without expressing the beauty derived from the "natural appearance". Therefore, Feng Youlan built his aesthetic ideology on the foundation of the "natural appearance", becoming an ultimate entity determining artistic beauty. Anything in line with the "principle of beauty" has a "natural appearance".

All things have their "natural appearance". Their conformance to the "natural appearance" determines whether they can be called "beautiful things". Pursuing the "natural appearance" is the only way to seek beauty in artistic works. It is the approach to interpreting all works of art. It is the sole criterion for judging the quality of art and the highest pursuit in creating beautiful works. However, no art pieces perfectly

represent "natural appearance". Artistic works inevitably deviate from the "natural appearance" due to using specific "tools" in the creative process. Therefore, art pieces embodying the "natural appearance" are often called "non-works of art."

People have different realms, and the height of one's realm determines whether the created work conforms to the "natural appearance" of things. The more it conforms, the more it can express the commonality of things and embody the "true reality" Han Q.Y and (Du, 2022). The artwork must be in a non-real but natural state to depict metaphysically the true reality of things. Such artworks typically aim to reveal certain common characteristics and express the "principle" of things through concrete and perceivable artistic images. Therefore, art that conforms to the "natural appearance" is the "path to the Dao". This art following the "path to the Dao" is beautiful(Figure 2).

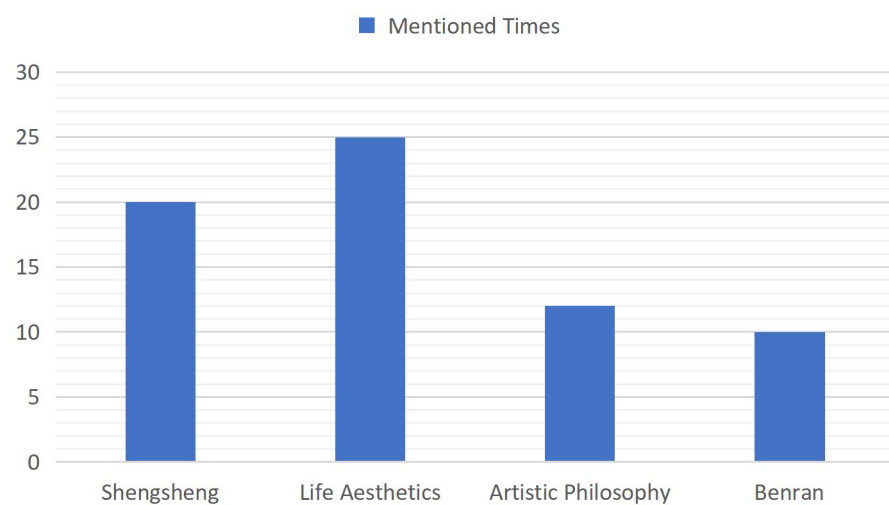


Figure 2: The Keywords Mentioned Times in Feng Youlan's "Vital Beauty" Aesthetic Thought

### 3.2 Exploring Aesthetic Art Within Art

From the perspective of creating beauty, the art that follows the "path to the Dao" uses a "negative method" to express the sense of beauty. The creation of artistic works relies on the senses to comprehend "natural appearance" of objects, and through conformity to natural appearance," it aims to express the true reality of things, placing higher demands on our methods of representing objects.

Feng Youlan points out, "Philosophical research employs positive methods, while in artistic creation, negative methods are needed to explore the ineffable beauty" (Wang, 2015). To express the art of beauty that conforms to the "natural appearance", it is essential to comprehend the "natural appearance" and represent the true reality of things. This places higher requirements on our methods of representing objects.

The negative method is inspired by the intuitive method in Chinese philosophy. It aligns with breaking attachments in Daoism and Zen Buddhism, making it more compatible with Chinese aesthetic aspirations. In artistic creation, the negative method is more convenient for expressing parts that cannot be analyzed linguistically and more accurately represents the "first meaning" that cannot be spoken (Wan, 2012). The negative method breaks attachments on the artistic level and expresses beauty. Breaking the attachment to the "natural appearance", establishing the beauty of the "natural appearance", and pursuing the manifestation of beauty can create works that follow the "path to the Dao."

For evaluating beauty, human perception of artistic beauty focuses on resonating. Beautiful works, through material commonality, apply works conforming to the "natural appearance" of individuals, allowing appreciators to experience a corresponding realm in the spirit.

The "natural appearance" standard serves as this standard while evaluating work as good or bad, or beautiful or not beautiful (Dong, 2010). The ability to move and provide enjoyment is due to work expressing "natural appearance". Such works act on people, creating a sense of "emotion", and allowing appreciators to perceive the beauty in artistic works. The extent of empathy correlates with the height of the realm created in the viewer's mind. Purely perceiving through senses places one in the realm of nature, influenced by desires, which confines one to the realm of utility. Pursuing moral goodness places one in the realm of morality, and comprehending the highest goodness leads to heaven and earth.

The creator and viewer must accurately obtain the experience of the "realm" starting from the heart. This is because "artistic activities involve appreciating or playing with things from the heart" (Ye, 2016). The "Heart appreciation" carries strong subjective emotions. It refers to pursuing "natural appearance" from one's heart. In artistic activities, the artists express their appreciation and play from their hearts using sound, color, images, or language. This expression becomes an artistic work that others can appreciate and play with. The art creates a realm that gives people a sense of beauty from the heart. To appreciate the beauty of things, one must appreciate them from the heart.

Table 2: The Chronology of the Major Events in the Life of Feng Youlan

Date	Event
December 4, 1895	Born in Qiyi Town, Tanghe County, Nanyang City, Henan Province
1915	Entered the Department of Chinese Philosophy at Peking University
1919	Studied in the United States
1924	Awarded the Ph.D. from Columbia University, under John Dewey
1924-1946	Served successively as a professor at Zhongzhou University, Guangdong University, and Yenching University, and as the Dean of the Department of Philosophy at Tsinghua University
1946	Served as a visiting professor in the United States
Late 1948 to early 1949	Served as the Chairman of the Tsinghua University's administrative meeting
1952 onwards	Serves as a professor at the Department of Philosophy at Peking University
November 26, 1990, at 20:45	He is passed away in the Beijing Friendship Hospital at the age of 95.

#### 4. Interpretation of Feng Youlan's Aesthetic Thought on "Vital Beauty"

Feng Youlan (Table 2), through the exploration of the ontology of "beauty," endows the interrelatedness of six relative categories: reality (nature) and transcendence (essential nature), tradition and innovation, the masses and the artist, subject and object, nation and world, and humans and nature. This interrelation is manifested in aspects that illuminate life, embody vitality, and demonstrate ecological concern.

##### 4.1 The Path of Caring for Life through the Pursuit of Beauty

Feng Youlan's aesthetic thought is rooted in the needs of humanity and the care for human life. The "creation of art" is a process and a value. Aesthetic appreciation is inherently a "vital" process as a form of "attentiveness" to art. This attentiveness follows the path of caring for life and is evident in the following points:

Firstly, Feng Youlan regards art as a human invention and creation, emphasizing the natural origin of humanity. He sees art as a continuation of nature and asserts that all artistic activities abide by the laws derived from human nature. Additionally, he

states that artistic beauty aims to educate and improve human nature, fostering harmony among individuals. In his aesthetic system, artistic beauty aims to harmonize relationships among people, contributing to the nourishment of life from a spiritual perspective.

Secondly, Feng Youlan contrasts philosophy and art by asserting that philosophy communicates through reasoning and helps people understand. On the other hand, art, devoid of reasoning, makes people feel emotions. He emphasizes the tangible and perceptible nature of actual things, suggesting that art can use a method to make the imperceptible palpable. This "advancing into the Dao" signifies the highest art form. Pursuing beauty in art involves making the perceivable represent the imperceptible, underscoring the subjectivity of human perception. The highest praise for artistic works is the ability to feel what is imperceptible.

Lastly, Feng Youlan discusses creating "airy castles" when the world and things do not conform to human expectations. While these castles may seem elusive, they become more concrete and objective within the realm of possibility. This seemingly abstract process provides a form of solace for the human spirit. Art serves as a means to objectify fantasies, control desires, and protect one's life.

#### **4.2 Making Vital Beauty an Ultimate Ideal**

As creators and appreciators of beauty, humans, influenced by their life circumstances, ethnicity, and geographical location, perceive the inherent nature of art differently. This diversity determines the various facets of beauty presented in art across different regions. Feng Youlan believes these diverse beauties are living, interchangeable, and full of vitality.

Firstly, pursuing vitality in beauty becomes an inevitable choice for the inheritance of art. Various art forms like painting are not restricted by language. However, their transmission and development face cultural barriers. Feng Youlan uses an analogy to illustrate this point. Entering a room with electric lights allows immediate appreciation, whereas exposure to music or paintings from other regions may require familiarity and understanding. Despite the fewer constraints on art forms like music, dance, and painting, differences in ethnicity and region set thresholds for artistic appreciation. Feng Youlan stresses the importance of valuing one's cultural art while rejecting the notion of preserving art as if it were a lifeless object in a museum. He advocates nurturing and cultivating art as a growing and developing living entity.

Secondly, the inheritance of tradition determines beauty's vitality. Feng Youlan suggests that classical works like the "Book of Songs", "Chu Ci", "Song Ci", and "Yuan Qu" can move the masses, highlighting the essence of artistic beauty. He asserts that great writers excel in capturing the essence of common people's literature and art. For him, the works of these artists represent living art that aligns with the needs of the masses. Feng Youlan contends that clinging to one's cultural art is essential, but living cultural art must be rooted in that culture. Only art emerging from Chinese history and life can be considered alive and relevant to the Chinese people.

Lastly, the modernization of life necessitates the vitality of art. As life modernizes, Chinese literature and art must also undergo modernization. Feng Youlan emphasizes that modernization involves allowing beauty factors to flourish in the current environment. While beauty can be created, it is impossible without the soil beneath one's feet. Artistic beauty grows from traditional art. Thus, pursuing beauty grounded in cultural heritage is an ongoing and generational process.

The quote "Heaven and Earth possess great beauty without speaking" reflects a Chinese aesthetic perspective. It is exemplified by Feng Youlan, who focuses on seeking the unseen behind the visible, exploring the presence of the invisible in the visible, and finding beauty in places where it is not evident. The idea of "The Tao is the interplay of

yin and yang" suggests a pursuit of the deeper "Dao" behind the generation of yin and yang, aiming to "advance towards the Dao" in art.

The cyclical process of generation and decline of yin and yang's is a lively and vital. Feng Youlan's aesthetic thought revolves around pursuing dynamic and vibrant beauty as the ultimate ideal. In this context, the concept of yin and yang serves as a metaphor for the continuous and lively life process. Feng Youlan's aesthetics seek to capture and embody this vitality in art.

In summary, the quote captures the essence of a Chinese aesthetic system represented by Feng Youlan. It emphasizes exploring the unseen aspects behind visible beauty and the pursuit of vitality and dynamism in art. The reference to the interplay of yin and yang underscores the quest for a deeper understanding of the Dao in the artistic realm.

#### 4.3 Fostering Ecological Concern by Starting from Natural Beauty

The "essential nature" is the most critical ontology in constructing Feng Youlan's artistic system. Creating beautiful art is inseparable from exploring "essential nature". Beauty is inherently human-centric and each thing has its corresponding "essential nature". The process of "attentiveness" determines that the creation of beauty is inseparable from the objective ecological environment.

Feng Youlan's philosophical system is built upon the distinction between the "actual" (nature) and the "essential" (essential nature). He asserts that the relationship between the two is similar to the relationship between actual things. The essential is greater than the actual, just as animals are larger than humans, yet both coexist on the same plane. This illustrates that the essential encompasses the actual, meaning that the essential nature includes nature itself. From an artistic perspective, the understanding of the essential nature is imbued with feelings for the natural form. For instance, a distant mountain in the natural world is a mountain in nature. However, the representation of a distant mountain in a painting is an artistic creation. Feng Youlan emphasizes that the best portrayal of a subject, based on its essential form, is a result of profound contemplation on the natural state of that subject.

Furthermore, Feng Youlan argues that the "principle of beauty" contains potential subjective elements for judging artistic works' subjective or objective quality. However, these subjective elements are rooted in the objective basis of perception. Therefore, examples on aesthetic or philosophical thoughts often focus on poetry, painting, and other forms of appreciating nature. Pursuing the idealized form reflects Feng Youlan's ecological concern, demonstrating that his aesthetic thought is intricately connected to the appreciation of the natural environment.

In summary, Feng Youlan's aesthetic thought, epitomized by the Chinese aesthetic system, focuses on exploring the unseen behind the visible, delving into the deeper "Dao" behind the interplay of Yin and Yang. Pursuing vitality in beauty is the ultimate ideal, and his aesthetic thought is rooted in a care for nature and ecology. Feng Youlan's aesthetic philosophy begins with the comprehension of natural beauty, a profound understanding of the environment, and a commitment to fostering ecological concern.

### 5. Contemporary Significance of Feng Youlan's "Living Beauty" Aesthetic Thought

As mentioned earlier, Feng Youlan's aesthetic thought is a theoretical system that has grown from the fertile soil of traditional Chinese philosophy. (Figure3)Interwoven



Figure3: The professional teaching photos of Mr. Feng Youlan



with the "true spirit" of Chinese philosophy, it imparts the "living" factor to his aesthetic thought. While having a wide-ranging influence, it is also beneficial for the inheritance of thought, providing practical guidance for the contemporary development and application of aesthetics.

### **5.1 Advancing the Modernization Transformation of Chinese Aesthetics**

Like philosophy, art enlightens the deepest truths of life and the world. Using the power of illusion to appeal to humanity's intuitive mind and emotional realms, "beauty" is a product of the illusory realm acting on individuals. Feng Youlan's aesthetic system demonstrates the profound utility of art. The art may not provide specific practical assistance to human life. However, it enriches human thought invisibly, elevates spiritual realms, enables individuals to transcend reality's limitations, and elucidates the essence of the human spirit. Therefore, in the contemporary context, art still possesses an unparalleled value, serving as a metaphysical force in human life and interpersonal relationships.

Art cannot detach itself from traditions; innovation should inherit artistic experiences. Additionally, the development of art should be dynamic and open, with diverse forms evolving in tandem with societal progress. While inheriting ancient cultural heritage, it is crucial to adapt to the times. In developing aesthetics, innovation should be based on the homeland's cultural heritage. Only in this way can genuinely novel artistic works be created. Feng Youlan's "living" aesthetic thought indicates that art's development and inheritance must be based on revitalizing traditions, considering them as "alive and precious", thereby promoting aesthetic systems' transformation.

Although the inherent nature of things varies, pursuing beauty involves seeking aesthetic experiences by pursuing inherent qualities. Human emotions are universal, and art serves as the expression of the human emotional world. Despite differences in art forms, themes, stages, and regions, they all manifest concern for humanity. Artistic exchanges among nations are possible. Learning from shared aspects of advanced art types is essential in the exchange process. Also, absorbing and drawing inspiration from the "distinctive aspects" are important. This absorption does not diminish the national characteristics of our art but injects vitality into its development. Feng Youlan proposes that art should nurture and cultivate, integrating and learning from the beauty of different regions to infuse vitality into it. Thereby promoting the modernization transformation of aesthetics.

### **5.2 Revealing the Fundamental Task of Contemporary Aesthetic Development**

Feng Youlan's "living" aesthetic thought advocates starting from an individual level to comprehend "natural appearance". While beauty is inherent, it needs to manifest through individuals. The pursuit of beauty ultimately needs to return to the heart for appreciation. Aesthetic experience is a human practice, and beauty is a realm of human life, placing humans in the central position of creating and appreciating beauty. In the contemporary context, as people construct aesthetic systems, they must focus on the practical aspects while developing, exploring, and emphasizing human care. Nourishing the body to round out life and nurturing morality to enrich the spirit is crucial to effecting practical improvements in life. Pursuing beauty is inherently concerned with the survival and development of humans. It directs the "living beauty" towards becoming a directed value for the masses. Through the influence of "living" beauty on individuals, people can address real-world problems. It enables an increasing number of individuals to recognize the utility of aesthetics. This is the main path for the further exploration of aesthetic thought.

"Living" aesthetics is an interpretation of Eastern aesthetic spirit. Pursuing "living beauty" can promote harmony among individuals from a spiritual perspective. "Living

is coexistence, and coexistence is living". Pursuing a harmonious coexistence can improve interpersonal relationships, seek a balanced coexistence method among countries, resolve disputes of nations, and contribute to improving the world order. Pursuing beauty in harmonious coexistence is a potent "remedy" for improving the world order. The current initiative of China to build a "community of shared future for humanity" is the pursuit of "living" grand goodness and beauty of the common prosperity for the people worldwide. Therefore, actively using "living" aesthetics to improve relationships among individuals and nations is crucial in the current development of aesthetics.

Feng Youlan's "living" aesthetic thought is a humanistic aesthetics developed in the exploration of the relationship between the "inherent" and "nature". While emphasizing the subjectivity of individuals, it advocates their self-consciousness and rights in nature. It appreciates the inherent nature of things with the heart. It seeks to align with the "natural appearance" and pursues the great aesthetic realm of achieving harmony among people. Reverence and awe for all things "inherent appearance" are fundamental. It establishes inner connections among all things in the human-nature relationship, enabling them to communicate and resonate. The existence of all things supports ecological sustainability, and ecological aesthetics can ensure the perpetual existence of all things. This also determines that the exploration should start from the perspective of the beauty of nature, emphasizing ecological care. Prioritizing the aesthetic thought of "living beauty" to address current environmental issues is also fundamental.

## 6. Conclusion

In tracing the contours of Feng Youlan's aesthetic thought through the lens of "Vital Beauty", our exploration illuminated a rich tapestry woven with profound insights at the intersection of philosophy and aesthetics. As we navigate the philosophical foundations, delve into the manifestation of life's vital force in art, and assess the enduring influence on Chinese aesthetic traditions, a nuanced portrait emerges of Feng Youlan's lasting legacy. Philosophical Foundations: Feng Youlan's synthesis of Chinese metaphysical concepts, rooted in Dao, Taiji, and the dynamic interplay of Yin and Yang, forms the philosophical bedrock of "Vital Beauty". This unique integration transcends the boundaries between life, metaphysics, and aesthetics, offering a holistic understanding that resonates with the essence of existence. Life's Vital Force in Art: At the heart of Feng Youlan's aesthetic philosophy lies the conviction that art is a profound expression of life's vital force. This perspective underscores the dynamic nature of authentic art, capturing the ever-evolving essence of the living experience in strokes of painting and verses of poetry.

Harmony and Balance: The recurring themes of harmony and balance in Feng Youlan's exploration echo traditional Chinese aesthetic principles. They emphasize equilibrium in artistic expression. His philosophy aligns with the broader cultural ethos of seeking balance within the natural order—a timeless pursuit reflected in the artistry of generations. Influence on Chinese Aesthetic Traditions: Feng Youlan's ideas on "Vital Beauty" have permeated the fabric of Chinese aesthetic traditions. Our exploration has unveiled specific instances where his concepts resonate in classical Chinese artworks, showcasing the enduring influence that extends beyond his lifetime and shapes the creativity of subsequent generations.

As we conclude this inquiry, the enduring legacy of Feng Youlan's ideas on "Vital Beauty" is a testament to the profound interplay between philosophy and aesthetics within Chinese cultural heritage. This study contributes to a nuanced understanding of Feng Youlan's aesthetic thought and invites future scholars to continue unraveling the intricate threads of this enduring legacy, ensuring that the vibrant tapestry of "Vital Beauty" continues to enrich the discourse on art, philosophy, and life.

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