# The Aesthetics of Truth and Ecology: The World of Realistic Television Dramas

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**Abstract:** In the continuous dream-building process of China, the public has a broader interpretation of the concept of home and family wrapped around their daily lives. Family in their daily lives carries the love and care among individuals under the social attributes, while the unity of the country gives the public a firm foundation for life under the undertones of the growing scientific construction. Throughout the past two years, popular Chinese TV dramas, such as Age of Awakening, *Ren Shi Jian*, and Mountains and the Sea, have revealed the transformation in China's development under the common terminology of multi-dimensional performance, which embodied the country and family under the great historical changes and reform of the country. This paper takes human behavior as the main perspective and expands the research on the common construction of family and nation based on aesthetics. Real aesthetics advocate through the real-life encounters of ordinary people to reflect contemporary social phenomena. This can stimulate social identity in audiences with the constructed ecology aesthetics by the community.

**Keywords:** Television drama; Ecological aesthetics; Authentic aesthetics; Social identity

## 1. Introduction

The television production community in China has always been committed to making television dramas with aesthetics of Chinese characteristics. Such Chinese television drama with artistic and realistic literature has attracted a lot of attention since 2018, with audiences being captivated by the aesthetic aspects of the shows.

## 2. The real aesthetics of keeping things right and innovating

Goethe advocated that all works of literature and art should be based on the real world. The objective presentation of major historical changes and realities by screenwriters can portray the admiration and glorification of China's history of hard struggle. As real-life events can be a source of creative creations, media often take inspiration from history, showing the hard work of the older generation of people.

Realistic artworks use intrigued characters to reflect the depth of the three-dimensional state of society,

thus expressing real social phenomena and humanistic concern. Lu Xun uses the characters in his works, *Kong Yijie* and *Ah Q*, to express his feelings of pity for the tragic characters and his lament for society, reflecting on human nature and society.

The show *Ren Shi Jian* which centered on the community of Guangzi shows the family and friends of Zhou Bingkun accompanied by several major historical and economic developments and reforms in China from the 1950s onwards, with characters being both the outcasts and the beneficiaries. The director aims to shape the story characters with relatability in the television drama adaptation of the mainstream novel.

Shakespeare saw art as life as it was, and he not only chose actual life to depict but also sought to conform to objective reality in his representations [1–4]. In the television show Age of Awakening, conflicts occur from the lack of understanding of Chen Yannian and Chen Qiaonian of their father's Marxist worldview, the belief that one generation has the responsibility of the next generation which they perceive to be their father's desperation. The conflicts between the casting of such real-life characters and events in the show are precisely the reality theme aesthetics that Bazan focuses on. The success of China today is the result of the sacrifices and struggles of the common people of all classes in all generations after hundreds of battles and resistance against wars. These strong conflicts in the show add to the controversial and watchable nature of the drama.

Zhou Bingkun in *Ren Shi Jian* is honest and simple, generous and sincere to his friends, treats his family diligently without expecting anything in return, and spends his whole life trying to prove his ability to satisfy his father, Zhou Zhigang. Benevolence, one of the five constant virtues of Confucianism is the foundation of interpersonal relationships in the Confucian system of thought. This virtue is the social morality of doing good to others and believing that the purpose of moral cultivation is not only to do good to oneself but also to the whole world.

This cultivation is characterized by the inner aesthetic of life. This inner aesthetic has the characteristics of realistic possibility, self-transcendence, self-fulfillment, and mediocrity based on morality that maintains the necessary tension in the confrontation with sensual aesthetics and commercialized art. This is of great practical significance for the harmonious construction of life and the mind of contemporary people [5–8]. In Age of Awakening, Cai Yuanpei puts himself down and waits for Chen Duxiu to get up in the cold weather to work at Peking University, which shows his character of being loving and treating people with humility. As the saying goes, the rapid development of social and economic levels is directly proportional to the construction of civilized values, in which kindness is the ultimate pursuit of human beings and the standard for the recognition of others.

The ecological aesthetic is the study of earthly aesthetics, as in Hölderlin's words, "beauty loves to live on the earth". The earthly nature and the past theory of aesthetics is the research direction of ecological aesthetics [9–15]. Aesthetics is a vague and meaningless pseudo-study if it deviates from the natural aspect of human beings. When it comes to nature, whether it is human or animal, it is inseparable from emotion. Affection is greater than any other kind of emotion, as it is an innate emotion that comes from life and ethics.

Theatre based on real-life people can bring pain to the viewers, especially the pain caused by broken friendship or affection can often be more profound. Theatre can reproduce the identity of both good and evil in life. Chen Yannian did not yield to the torture by the enemies to betray his country. He was sure that the Chinese revolution would succeed under the right leadership, so he affirmed his self-judgment and gave up his own life at the price of protecting his motherland China from danger.

## 3. The ecological aesthetic of ordinary rigidity

The study of ecological aesthetics is a kind of research that advances from practical aesthetics to survival aesthetics. In a narrow definition, ecological aesthetics is the aesthetics of man and nature, however in the

broader context, ecological aesthetics can no longer be confined to man and nature. Society is a set of physical biology and cultural integration in one of the complex spaces with people and society. People and their harmonious ecological integration system are part of the aesthetic research.

The ontological ideology of Zhuangzi's ecological aesthetics is based on harmony. The idea of harmony is rooted in the real world, where people live in harmony and cooperation. The three basic forms of aesthetic phenomena are truth, kindness, and beauty in the foundation of human cognition. Hence, one striving to be a good person must perform good deeds and try to do things perfectly. In the context of the workplace, colleagues help each other to appreciate each other. In terms of society, people should not pursue personal interests to the detriment of the interests of their peers, otherwise it will cause dysfunction in society.

A good ecological environment requires individuals to play their social roles. The good conduct of an individual can shape the physical and mental health, personality, and aesthetic integrity of the person for the development of the community. The social-ecological aesthetic of benevolence is what Zhuangzi refers to as mutual benefit and mutual love which build an integrated society with the most ideal social ecology.

Taoist ideology advocates that all things in heaven and earth are attributed to *Tao*, which follows the unity of mankind with heaven and earth. One must be benevolent and obedient to the nature and laws of the community of life, and must not act in vain or in a presumptuous manner [16–20]. People must not force themselves to do anything, but instead follow the Way of Heaven, by abandoning their illusory desires to meditate in silence and be at peace with where they are with their strengths. People can be in a neutral, moderate, and fresh natural state by avoiding excessive negative behaviors and temptations toward the environment in which they live.

As shown in the theatre performance of Mountains and Seas, the balance of the ecological environment is important to get rid of delusional fantasy for the pursuit of unrealistic dreams, otherwise it will only result in the deviation from reality, thus unable to achieve unity of mankind with heaven and earth.

# 4. Conclusion

The development of aesthetics cannot be separated from human beings, nature, and society as the object of study. According to Li Zehou, the initiation of aesthetics in people is their innate ontological cognition, in which their judgment will improve with age. For ecological aesthetics to develop healthily, it should be based on kindness and produce physical relations in the spatial context of real aesthetics. Film and television works should cater to the perspective of contemporary people by using social words as the key output to construct the world with realistic narratives so that the aesthetic emotions of audiences are intertwined at the same time to satisfy the aesthetic expression of the work and adhering to the principle of ecological aesthetics. Hence, the interaction between ecological aesthetics and real aesthetics is worth exploring and pondering.

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