The Japanese Society for Aesthetics **Aesthetics** No.21 (2018): 23-34

Ruskin's Re-evaluation of the Concept of 'Æsthetic': Through Clues Found in his Art Lectures

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Introduction

In his earlier, most renowned publication *Modern Painters*, Victorian art critic John Ruskin (1819-1900) had disregarded the concept of 'æsthetic', as an inferior animalistic instinct or a sensual pleasure without any appreciation or reverence towards God. However, during a series of Slade lectures called 'The Æsthetic and Mathematic Schools of Art in Florence' at Oxford in 1874, Ruskin offered a more favourable evaluation for the aesthetic school, which prioritises impression rather than the accuracy of physical objects, in comparison to the mathematic school. According to Ruskin, the aesthetic school referred to those artists who wished to show things as perceived by themselves, not only as an outward imitation of nature but also in a way that is subjective and impressionable. As opposed to logical thinking stressed by the 'mathematic', Ruskin gave more weight to the concept of 'æsthetic' as an influencing factor of imagination, and this line of thought then evolved from ideas presented in his works *Pre-Raphaelitism* and *The Stones of Venice*.

This study aims to examine Ruskin's criticism of Renaissance intellectualism, which sought to dissect art without relying on 'perception', 'feeling' or even 'science of Essence', and his advocacy of 'science of Aspects', that is, the portrayal of an impression but with the same level of observation and attention for details demanded by science. The present study also attempts to reveal the truth behind Ruskin's theories in terms of the relationship between arts and science by comparing his critiques of both J.M.W. Turner, a master of 'science of Aspects', and John Everett Millais, a founding member of the Pre-Raphaelite Brotherhood. In particular, this study analyses how this change in Ruskin's evaluation of 'æsthetic' led to his diminished opinion of knowledge, which was gradually replaced by an emphasis on primitive senses in his writings during the 1850s.

1. The concept of 'æsthetic' as a physical sensation and the morality of recognising beauty

At the beginning of *Modern Painters* II (1846), Ruskin detached himself from the description and comparison of the works of the Old Masters and Turner and began exploring the form and perception of the beauty pursued by landscape painters. He described the capacity for recognising that beauty, as follows:

> Now the term "æsthesis" properly signifies mere sensual perception of the outward qualities and necessary effects of bodies; in which sense only, if we would arrive at any

> accurate conclusions on this difficult subject, it should always be used. But I wholly deny that the impressions of beauty are in any way sensual; they are neither sensual nor intellectual, but moral. (4:42)

The word 'æsthetic' is derived from the term 'æsthesis', which refers to the perception of the outside world through the sensory organs. Being 'the mere animal consciousness of the pleasantness' (4:47), it is also regarded as a physical sensation shared by creatures of lower ranks. As opposed to such animal instincts, 'morality' can only be achieved through a relationship with God attained through the following stages.

First, some physical sensations can be considered gifts bestowed by God. At the most primitive level, physical sensations should be 'subservient to life' (4:32); for instance, whereas an unpleasant feeling can be a warning of physical harm, an indulgence in pleasures could lead to the demise of the physical body. Although this type of sensual pleasantness is entirely different from the impression of beauty, it is possible to rejoice in a special form of sensual pleasure without risking self-destruction. In particular, this pleasure from beauty is obtained through the eyes and ears, which are considered superior sensory organs given to humans as a gift of life from God. However, according to Ruskin, the impression of beauty is much more than just a sense of pleasure for the eyes and ears.

> For, as it is necessary to the existence of an idea of beauty, that the sensual pleasure which may be its basis should be accompanied first with joy, then with love of the object, then with the perception of kindness in a superior intelligence, finally, with thankfulness and veneration towards that intelligence itself; and as no idea can be at all considered as in any way an idea of beauty, until it be made up of these emotions, [......] and as these emotions are in no way resultant from, nor obtainable by, any operation of the Intellect. (4:48-49)

In other words, in the second stage, beauty can only be conceived from the joy and love for the subject and as a declaration of reverence toward God, the highest intelligent being. More specifically, the perception of beauty is a 'moral' applause for God's grace that spans the natural world. This faculty, which 'is concerned with the moral perception and appreciation of ideas of beauty', is first palpable as 'Theoria' (4:35). Ruskin further divided the beauty perceived through the faculty of 'Theoria' into 'Typical Beauty' and 'Vital Beauty', the former symbolising the attributes of God found in animate and inanimate objects and the latter representing a ripening of the fruit of life or a continuity of the breath of life bestowed by God on living creatures (4:64).

Nonetheless, Ruskin's notion of 'morality' should not be confused with his notion of 'religiosity'. It is true that Ruskin once described beauty being perceived through 'Theoria' as 'the signature of God upon His works' (4:75), and he did not deny the existence of certain religious qualities in 'morality' for 'even the ordinary exercise of this faculty implies a condition of the whole moral being in some measure right and healthy, and to the entire exercise of it there is necessary the entire perfection of the Christian character' (4:148). However, besides a criticism of the ambiguity [1], the alternative meanings assigned to the word 'morality' by Ruskin following *Modern Painters* II should also be examined, as can be seen in the appendix of *The*

Stones of Venice I (1851), shown below.

> We may consider the entire man as made up of body, soul, and intellect [......]. Then, taking the word soul as a short expression of the moral and responsible part of being, each of these three parts has a passive and active power. The body has senses and muscles; the soul, feeling and resolution; the intellect, understanding and imagination. The scheme may be put into tabular form, thus:—
>
> | | Passive or Receptive Part. | Active or Motive Part. |
> |---|---|---|
> | Body | Senses. | Muscles. |
> | Soul | Feeling. | Resolution. |
> | Intellect | Understanding. | Imagination. |
>
> In this scheme I consider memory a part of understanding, and conscience I leave out, as being the voice of God in the heart, inseparable from the system, yet not an essential part of it. The sense of beauty I consider a mixture of the Senses of the body and soul. (9:445)

Here, 'feeling' is seen as the part of the human 'soul' that deals directly with 'morality'. Further, in the absence of 'conscience', or 'the voice of God in the heart', it could also be assumed that 'feeling' is not strictly associated with the notions of good and evil. Through these additional connotations expressed in 1851, Ruskin differentiated 'morality' from 'religiosity' and 'ethics', which had often caused misunderstandings by claiming morality to be the passive aspect of the soul moved by spiritual motivation or sentiment rather than by intellect. However, this is not the only section that should be noted. In the scheme above, Ruskin's perception of beauty also changed as he no longer referred to the faculty of 'Theoria'. In contrast to *Modern Painters* II, in which the faculty of 'Theoria' was defined as the sensory organ of beauty within the soul, the scheme shown here attributed the sense of beauty to a mixed sensation of the body and soul. In other words, Ruskin was beginning to acknowledge that physical sensation was a governing factor in the perception of beauty, whereas five years earlier in 1846, he had unequivocally denied its legitimacy by calling it 'æsthetic'.

Let us retrace Ruskin's arguments on the perception of beauty from *Modern Painters* II to *The Stones of Venice* I. First, the perception of beauty was seen to be a 'moral' sensation which incited reverence toward God through an object in the natural world. Second, such morality, while also innate in human beings, was distinguished from intellect and the body itself. Although the points mentioned above retained their basic framework even after Ruskin discarded the expression 'the faculty of Theoria', there were some intrinsic changes; for instance, in the initial snubbing of the physical sensations derived from the 'æsthetic'. The concept of 'æsthetic' was largely based on the sensations of lowly creatures; that is, a type of sensual pleasure not accompanied by an appreciation of or reverence for God. By this time, however, the importance of physical sensation was slowly gaining recognition. These newly emerging ideas appearing in Ruskin's works around 1850 were further revised again during the 1860s.

2. The significance of 'The Æsthetic and Mathematic Schools of Art in Florence'

After the completion of *Modern Painters* V in 1860, Ruskin's attention momentarily shifted from the arts to the study of social economics. As Ruskin never mentioned the word 'æsthetic' in his more famous works around this period, namely *Unto this Last* (1862) and *Sesame and Lilies* (1865), it is difficult to gauge his attitude toward the concept at this time. It was not until 1870, when he was appointed the very first Slade Professor of Fine Art at Oxford and began delivering lectures on the arts, when Ruskin again returned to the concept of 'æsthetic'. Most notable was a series of lectures that took place in November and December 1874 called 'The Æsthetic and Mathematic Schools of Art in Florence'.

These lectures focused on the history of arts in Florence from the 14th to 16th century, and a century-long transition from one school to another was explained through the works of artists. Ruskin claimed that the aesthetic school was reborn as Christian art from a revival of ancient Etruscan art which had been instigated by a meeting of 'Northern savage art' from Norman and Lombardy with 'Southern savage art' from the Byzantine region, stretching from Greece to Arabia.

> This blending of arts took place in the thirteenth century, and formed, about the year 1300, the perfect Christian school of art in Florence. That Christian school by its vivid virtue and exercised senses was enabled to discern right from wrong, and beautiful from base, with precision never before or since reached by the conscience or intellect of man. I have called it, in the references made to it in this course of lectures, the *Æsthetic School of Florence*, meaning that which had, by reason of use, its senses exercised to the discernment of good from evil. (23:185)

In contrast, when the mathematic school emerged in the 15th century, Ruskin claimed: 'now the mathematic mind, requiring demonstration and examination, necessarily refuses both its faith and its industry to visions of this nature, and therefore occupies itself necessarily with material objects only, or with abstract theorems' (23:212). Ruskin named the works of 16th century artist Michelangelo as the pinnacle of 'mathematic' representation, which was generally perceived as testable/verifiable scientific knowledge relying heavily on perspective and anatomy.

A 'perfect school' of thoughts ('Final Efforts of Æsthetic Art in Florence' [2]) was eventually formed to combine 'the indisputable accuracy' of the 'mathematic' and 'the inexplicable grasp' of the 'æsthetic' (23:213). However, under the growing dominance of the mathematic school, this group remained a minority until Florence was engulfed by the salacious art of paganism, or as described in *The Stones of Venice*, an era of corrupted Renaissance in the 17th century.

Let us examine the difference between mathematic and aesthetic expressions using 'The Deposition of Christ' (Duomo of Lucca), a sculpture by Nicola Pisano, who was considered a pioneer of the mathematic. Pisano's depiction of a person holding a flower basket was so meticulous that even the contents of the basket were accurately represented. Nonetheless, as the sculpture is situated above eye level, it is difficult for viewers to see such detail. In other words, 'not depending much upon sight themselves, they [sculptors of the mathematic school] don't

think the spectator should care about it either' (23:225). The mathematic school believed that as long as the sculpture was done correctly, no one would care if it was visible. On the contrary,

> Had a sculptor of the true Æsthetic school done it, he would have sloped the basket aside to let you see what was in it from below. That would have been mathematically wrong, but instinctively and naturally right. Such a naïve thing as this, however, could only occur in a boy's work. (23:225)

Therefore, to Ruskin, a true aesthetic artist was someone who prioritised a perceived impression of the world over physical or factual accuracy. Even earlier, Ruskin had once remarked that 'the thing appears, we said, to the æsthetic and perceptive person to be so and so' as opposed to the mathematic school (23:223). As far as Ruskin was concerned, the aesthetic school involved those who only sought to make things visible to others subjectively without any interest in imitating nature. However, he was not without criticism toward the mathematic school, which he deemed lacking in 'imagination' compared to its aesthetic counterpart that emphasised 'seeing' over 'thinking'. His feelings were quite evident, as demonstrated below.

> And so recognized, observe, just because, though apparently gifted with all faculty, they were wanting, at least weak, in one, the most precious—imagination; for that is wholly æsthetic. (23:214)

Returning to Ruskin's lectures, it can be understood that this lack of imagination enabled the mathematic school to dominate European art and gain an overpowering authority. More importantly, however, Ruskin's use of the word 'æsthetic' no longer had the negative nuances so evident in *Modern Painters* II. It is possible that his attitude toward the 'æsthetic' was already changing, for he even declared himself a member of the aesthetic school in a lecture saying, 'it was very important for me, belonging wholly to the Æsthetic school, to see as much as I could' (23:225). This change also marked Ruskin's renewed appreciation for the so-called primitive sensations, which he had already acknowledged in his earlier works, along with a noticeable comparative decline in his evaluation of knowledge. The next section discusses this point in greater detail, when examining the association between science and the arts.

3. Art as a 'science of Aspects'

Ruskin had already discussed the corruption of the High Renaissance in *The Stones of Venice.* He believed that such corruption had been instigated by the rise of immoral elements such as pride and impiety, and in particular, 'Pride of Science, Pride of State, and Pride of System' (11:46). Of these, he regarded 'Pride of Science' as the ultimate pursuit for mathematic minds. The science reflected in Renaissance art became a standard of excellence which required 'perspective, linear and aerial, perfect drawing and accurate light and shade in painting, and true anatomy in all representations of the human form, drawn or sculptured' (11:47). This so-called 'science', not unlike the principles proposed by the mathematic school, was further systematised

following the mastery displayed by Michelangelo and went on to become the dominant form of knowledge in Europe until the 19th century. Here, note the time differences between the emergence of Florence's mathematic school, which was during the 15th century, and the Renaissance era, which Ruskin placed around the 16th–17th century [3]. Further, from 'The Æsthetic and Mathematic Schools of Art in Florence', it was quite clear that although fully aware of the potential hazards, Ruskin still saw mathematic school knowledge as a precondition for perfecting the aesthetic school. In fact, of all his lectures on mathematic artists such as Filippo Brunelleschi, Jacopo della Quercia and Lorenzo Ghiberti, he only expressed disapproval towards Ghiberti's theory. This was in stark contrast to his views in *The Stones of Venice*, where, in most cases, science and the arts were seen as opposing disciplines. A good example of this can be found in *The Stones of Venice* III (1853), where science and the arts are clearly categorised as mutually exclusive concepts.

> But the grand mistake of the Renaissance schools lay in supposing that science and art were the same things, and that to advance in the one was necessarily to perfect the other. Whereas they are, in reality, things not only different, but so opposed that to advance in the one is, in ninety-nine cases out of the hundred, to retrograde in the other. (11:47)

Therefore, a person who wished to pursue the arts must do so by turning away from science. Yet, if the evil of science must be separated from the practice of the arts, would it have been possible for Ruskin to champion a painter such as Turner, who was fervently faithful to the natural world in a purely scientific sense? Further, Ruskin himself as a young man had also been deeply intrigued by the sciences in areas such as geology, and it was this fascination with the natural sciences that awoke his appreciation of landscapes, leading to the birth of *Modern Painters*, which was a great contribution to the development of the picturesque.

Even as Ruskin's 'anti-science' and 'anti-knowledge' sentiments became more pronounced in *The Stones of Venice*, a hint of conflicting emotions was still evident. In an attempt to defend Turner's position, Ruskin proposed two types of 'science' as a way to reconcile the inner conflict between his confidence in natural science and a fear of the subordination of the arts. As described in *Modern Painters* III (1856), these were the 'science of Essence' and the 'science of Aspects'. Ruskin even named Francis Bacon and Turner representative figures of the two sciences (5:387), despite the fact that three years before in *The Stones of Venice* III he had already defined the two domains as 'science' and 'arts'.

> Science deals exclusively with things as they are in themselves; and art exclusively with things as they affect the human sense and human soul. Her work is to portray the appearances of things, and to deepen the natural impressions which they produce upon living creatures. The work of science is to substitute facts for appearances, and demonstrations for impressions. Both, observe, are equally concerned with truth; the one with truth of aspect, the other with truth of essence. Art does not represent things falsely, but truly as they appear to mankind. Science studies the relations of things to each other: but art studies only their relations to man: and it requires of everything which is submitted

> to it imperatively this, and only this,—what that thing is to the human eyes and human heart, what it has to say to men, and what it can become to them: a field of question just as much vaster than that of science, as the soul is larger than the material creation. (11:47-48)

When stating 'what that thing is to the human eyes and human heart', Ruskin was making allowances for the pursuit of 'appearance' and 'impression' by the aesthetic school, deeming it just as instinctive as the pursuit of 'fact' and 'demonstration' by the mathematic school. Ruskin then went on to argue that the truth of the 'science of Aspects' can only be reached through 'moral' means, 'evidently, and only, by perception and feeling, never either by reasoning or report' (11:49). It should be noted that despite a difference in methodology, Ruskin continued to emphasise the existence of a common truth in both the 'science of Essence' and the 'science of Aspects'. In other words, he was of the opinion that it was perfectly acceptable for the arts to be practiced in a scientific manner. As both were seeking to reveal the truth of nature, this convergence was seen to transcend the limitations of any conventional rules. Further, while the truth of the 'science of Aspects' could be fathomed through 'perception' and 'feeling', it must also be the result of a well-channelled 'perception'.

In fact, after having evaluated the Pre-Raphaelites, who possessed a contrasting style to Turner, Ruskin concluded that this group of artists was adhering to the principle of 'never either by reasoning or report' by concentrating solely on the description of matters that could be seen. In *Pre-Raphaelitism* (1851), written around the same time as *The Stones of Venice* I, Ruskin noted similarities between John Everett Millais, a founding member of Pre-Raphaelitism who advocated a reversion to the more simplistic style before Raphael, and Turner. He stated that while they varied in their approaches, both artists were actually seeking one universal truth 'whose inner principles and final aims are exactly the same'. To highlight the differences between the two artists, Ruskin then attempted to identify the various shapes and forms within their works. Ruskin found that while 'one of them is quiet in temperament, has a feeble memory, no invention, and excessively keen sight', 'the other is impatient in temperament, has a memory which nothing escapes, an invention which never rests, and is comparatively near-sighted'. As such, Turner, the latter of the two, was seen to paint based on an overall impression further augmented by imagination, while Millais, 'abandoning at once all thoughts of seizing transient effects, or giving general impressions of that which his eyes present to him in microscopical dissection, chooses some small portion out of the infinite scene, and calculates with courage the number of weeks which must elapse before he can do justice to the intensity of his perceptions, or the fulness of matter in his subject' (12:359).

However, as Millais then began displaying shortfalls similar to that of Pisano, his style was inevitably condemned as being inferior to Turner's methodology of the 'science of Aspects' through 'feeling'. Ruskin's slight was quite apparent in *Modern Painters* III when he stated that 'Pre-Raphaelitism, as long as it confined itself to the simple copying of nature, could not take the character of the highest class of art' (5:188). In *Modern Painters* I (1843), Ruskin had even claimed that Turner was a truer portrayer of nature than Claude Lorrain or Gaspard Dughet as he was blessed with scientific eyes that sought the 'material truth'. Yet, that truthfulness of expression should not be confused with the closeness of imitation, because 'the painter who

really loves nature [......] will make you understand and feel that art cannot imitate nature; that where it appears to do so, it must malign her and mock her' (3:289). Thus, while mimicking nature through canvas and paint brushes was seen as important training for young artists, the truth of the 'impression' was often neglected or sacrificed for the lesser truth obtained through diligence. The true aspiration of the 'science of Aspects' should be to capture the impression of the 'human heart' with the same meticulousness that a scientist would apply to their subject. Curiously enough, during the Renaissance, the 'science of Essence' and the 'science of Aspects' not only began to be blended in most peculiar ways, they also downplayed the need to observe the subjects, an important principle shared by the two sciences. In other words, instead of looking to their own 'perception' and 'feeling', artists were now governed by a knowledge obtained through reasoning and reports—a methodology not endorsed by even the 'science of Essence'.

As described above, the 'science of Aspects' was not only Ruskin's attempt to level arts with science but also an endeavour to allow artists to borrow empiricism from science free from the influence of its purist idealism. Therefore, despite retaining the word 'science', the idea of art = the 'science of Aspects' actually referred to a reversion to the sensations and impressions before the birth of science whilst maintaining the spirit of natural science. According to a passage in *Modern Painters* III, while the primary benefit of science was turning 'inactive reverie' into 'useful thought', it could also desensitise the human heart and take away all the simple delights. Ruskin believed that the 'science of Aspects' could rejuvenate the heart with 'the love of beauty' (5:386-387). In this way, Ruskin's earlier works could be regarded as a sign of a return of a new aesthetic school after its initial brilliance had been eclipsed by the prolonged dominance of the mathematic school in this cycle of art history.

4. Return to child-like feelings

This cycle of sensation and knowledge, as seen in the history of Florence and modern Europe, could in fact be epitomised in its minimal form as a personal experience. For any individual, the very first things they experience are the primitive, instinctive sensations of a child. In *Modern Painters* II, this sensation was likened to the pure excitement a child may experience when seeing the horizon, with 'the most intense, superstitious, insatiable, and beatific perception of her splendours' (4:77). Nevertheless, although it had gained similar recognition to science and knowledge, such sensations were deemed no more than sentimental woes. As indicated by the passage below, it was not until *Modern Painters* IV (1856), after the introduction of the 'science of Aspects', that this child-like feeling finally attained a high place on the cognitive experience scale and was revived as a post-developmental stage of 'mathematic' knowledge.

> But, the longer I live, the more ground I see to hold in high honour a certain sort of childishness or innocent susceptibility. Generally speaking, I find that when we first look at a subject, we get a glimpse of some of the greatest truths about it: as we look longer, our vanity, and false reasoning, and half-knowledge, lead us into various wrong opinions; but as we look longer still, we gradually return to our first impressions, only with a full

> understanding of their mystical and innermost reasons; and of much beyond and beside them, not then known to us, now added (partly as a foundation, partly as a corollary) to what at first we felt or saw. (6:66)

Therefore, rather than the 'truth' obtained on a first impression, or the truth appealing 'to the human eyes', as practiced by the Pre-Raphaelites, it was the truth of aspects appealing 'to the human heart', that had the ability to navigate through misleading knowledge and false reasoning. Ruskin's assertion, which claimed that human sensations were heightened by stripping off the falsehood of science and knowledge and returning to a child-like state, was reminiscent of the concept of 'Imagination Contemplative' [4], or the recalling of emotions that had been bestowed on a familiar subject. To understand this idea better, it is necessary to understand the differences between a 'chiaroscurist' and a 'colourist' – both of whom were linked to the mathematic and aesthetic schools. The style of 'chiaroscurist' (Romans, Florentines) reduces everything to light and shadow, or black or white, regardless of the subject's local colour. This was practiced by many artists who, because it was an unnatural way, believed and therefore thought it to be a philosophical one. Some of the most renowned chiaroscurists were Raphael, Rembrandt and Leonardo da Vinci, who was not mentioned in Ruskin's lectures from the 1870s despite being the best-known among his peers (6:63-65). 'Colourists' (Venetians) were known for their faithful reproduction of colours which were applied like 'any child or simple person'. Veronese, Titian, and Turner all belonged to this group [5]. Having said that, 'you will find this, which seems a childish and simple way of going to work, requires verily a thousandfold more power to carry out than all the pseudo-scientific abstractions that ever were invented' (6:67).

In fact, there were two aspects to this child-like quality that were free from pseudo-science. First was the presumption that this sensation was only feasible for someone who had just entered into the world or was in a state of pure visual stimulation without any pre-knowledge of the world. The ability to organise colours without any preconception was the foundation of painting skills, especially in terms of colouring. While even Ruskin himself admitted that putting such a technique into practice was less than easy, he still valued the 'innocence of the eye' as the pinnacle of art technique in *The Elements of Drawing* (1857), written a year after *Modern Painters* IV.

> The whole technical power of painting depends on our recovery of what may be called the *innocence of the eye*; that is to say, of a sort of childish perception of these flat stains of colour, merely as such, without consciousness of what they signify,—as a blind man would see them if suddenly gifted with sight. (15:27)

In contrast to the first aspect, the ability to establish relationships through visual and physical means, the second aspect had more to do with internal activity. While the former was technique-related, the latter was described in *The Stones of Venice* III as a feature that separated a 'genius' from the rest, a unique interpretation of emotions aroused by encountering new visions.

> They look back to the days of childhood as of greatest happiness, because those were

> the days of greatest wonder, greatest simplicity, and most vigorous imagination. And the whole difference between a man of genius and other men, it has been said a thousand times, and most truly, is that the first remains in great part a child, seeing with the large eyes of children, in perpetual wonder, not conscious of much knowledge,—conscious, rather, of infinite ignorance, and yet infinite power; a fountain of eternal admiration, delight, and creative force within him, meeting the ocean of visible and governable things around him. (11:66)

It is through such fresh bewilderment toward the unknown and the awareness of an infinite power within ignorance that the 'most vigorous imagination' was conceived. Ruskin likened this 'imagination' to a 'fountain' which was not only a source of admiration or delight but also a stream of consciousness just like the 'running waters in the sweet wilderness of things unnumbered and unknown, conscious only of the living banks, on which they partly refresh and partly reflect the flowers, and so pass on'. Moreover, these 'running waters', while indeed a measure of ingenuity, were seen as a 'creative force' that should be acquired by all whether in 'rivulets or rivers' (11:66).

Conclusion

A review of Ruskin's works from 1850s revealed the position that an instinctive, 'æsthetic', and child-like feeling was essential to grasping the truth of aspects as long as it was 1) 'for the human eyes' with an innocent vision and 2) 'for the human heart' as a stream of consciousness and imagination. Examining these feelings as a form of vigorous imagination also led to the discovery of further clues from Ruskin's art lectures in 1874, in which 'imagination' was defined as a 'wholly æsthetic' quality. However, for the purpose of this study, such debate on imagination is not discussed any further. Instead, an excerpt from 'The Æsthetic and Mathematic Schools of Art in Florence' in which Ruskin again mentioned the word 'æsthetic' is presented here concluding the argument.

> To the school of Perception—that which depends on its instinctive sight and sense—belongs necessarily the foundational discovery of the existence and true nature of things; while to the demonstrative, instructive, or mathematic school belongs the comparison, discipline, arrangement, and correction of impressions received by the senses. I call the former school "Christian Faithful," because faith—the evidence of things not seen—is the highest æsthetic. [……] I call the second school "Christian Classic" as that which ascertains what is right, and determines it, by law.
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> It would be the most ludicrous, if it were not also the most terrible, error in the thoughts of modern days to raise this correction and tutorial function of the Reason above the princely dignity of the power which its duty is to defend and enthrone. Princely I have called it, observe, not in vague magnifying, but in close definition, of the functions of the Senses, bodily and moral. (23:249-250)

Here, Ruskin based the concept of 'æsthetic' on what he called the faculty of 'Theoria', in which the importance of the body senses overrides reason, when in fact he should have denied its relevance completely. The reason for such logic can be found in 'The Range of Intellectual Conception Proportioned to the Rank in Animated Life', a theorem published by Ruskin in 1871. In this critique of the idleness of the metaphysical 'concept', Ruskin argued that, as a common 'concept' applicable to other animals also, it would become meaningless once detached from the senses of concrete objects or forms; he had previously shared this view in *Modern Painters* II. So, if imagination is the effect of such a 'concept', then for any painter, 'the act of conception, or imagination, with him, therefore, is merely the memory, simple or combined, of things that he has seen or felt' [6].

Ruskin insisted that all living creatures were 'spiritual' beings brought to life by God with a rank affixed to each 'anima', with the boundary of 'conception' being set by such a ranking. By sarcastically referring to himself as a lesser 'anima' to metaphysicians, Ruskin was adamant that, unlike animals, humans were blessed with the ability to choose a 'salutary Vision'. This ability, in his own words, was the 'power of accepting some, refusing others, perfecting the outlines and colours of those we wish to keep, and arranging them in such relations as we choose', 'the plastic force of voluntary thought' [7]. In other words, the 1871 theorem testified to this 'plastic force of voluntary thought' that enabled people to choose a 'salutary Vision', and a perception that was the extension of animalistic qualities which should not be detached from concrete objects or imagination as a cognitive function. He then summarised these two abilities as 'æsthetic' three years later in 'The Æsthetic and Mathematic Schools of Art in Florence'. While 'imagination' belonged to the bodily senses, the 'plastic force of voluntary thought' was seen as a sense of 'Theoria', a moral feeling. Hence, the 'highest æsthetic' was what was commonly known as faith, the 'evidence of things not seen'. This was reminiscent of the explanation Ruskin offered on the naming of 'æsthetic school' in the 14th century which stated 'meaning that which had, by reason of use, its senses exercised to the discernment of good from evil' [8]. In addition, as faith itself cannot be verified by evidence, one can only seek its existence empirically through a God-given 'anima'.

Therefore, Ruskin's concept of 'æsthetic', as one concerning the human eyes and heart, was an aspect discerned through both bodily and moral senses as well as an imagination built on human experiences. However, unlike Ruskin's other lectures, 'The Æsthetic and Mathematic Schools of Art in Florence' was published only posthumously, and it is thus difficult to conclude whether such a definition was well-known by the general public at the time. The fact that Ruskin actually attributed imagination and faith to the concept of 'æsthetic' itself is more than fascinating even without considering whether he had been aware of the trends in aestheticism during 1870s. Further study shall be conducted to review the influence of Ruskin's theories on the aesthetes, along with a further evaluation of his concept of 'imagination'.

Notes

References to Ruskin's published works are taken from *The Works of John Ruskin*, Library Edition (1903-1912), ed. E. T. Cook and Alexander Wedderburn, 39 vols, George Allen, London and Longmans,

New York, unless otherwise stated. They are indicated by volume and page number in the text, thus: (4:42).

[1] Please refer to the following essay: John Unrau, “Ruskin’s Uses of the Adjective ‘Moral’”, *English Studies*, Vol. 52, No. 4 (1971), pp. 339-347.

[2] This expression was found exclusively in a lecture outline published by the campus paper on 16 October 1874 (23:183). When the lectures on this school commenced on 1 December, ‘æsthetic’ and ‘mathematic’ were then referred to as ‘the apparently affected, but the only accurate, expressions’, while the ‘æsthetic school’ and ‘mathematic school’ became known as ‘Christian Faithful’ and ‘Christian Classic’, respectively (23:249) (This has been mentioned again in the ‘Conclusion’). The lecture also referred to the school founded in the 16th century as ‘Christian Romantic’, an integration of ‘Faith’ and ‘Knowledge’ (23:252); while it was immersed in the interpretation and appreciation of religious truth found in a combination of accurate ‘knowledge’ and the ‘æsthetic’ works of painters of that period, reference to the ‘mathematic’ was comparatively scarce.

[3] In *The Stones of Venice* I, Ruskin named Giulio Romano (1492-1546) and Nicolas Poussin (1594-1665) for painting and Jacopo Sansovino (1486-1570) and Andrea Palladio (1508-1580) for architecture as the leading figures of ‘the art commonly called Renaissance’ (9:45). However, his definition of the ‘Renaissance’ can be quite obscure depending on the publication, sometimes even taking on characteristics of Mannerism and Classicism.

[4] Please refer to my paper for this particular concept: OGINO Hajime, ‘Rethinking John Ruskin’s “Imagination Contemplative”’, *Studies in the Science of Literary Art*, No. 9 (2005), pp. 23-39.

[5] However, chiaroscurists and colourists were further divided according to the practice of ‘Line’ in *Lectures on Art* (1870), and as a result, the members were reshuffled. The earliest schools of ‘Line’ were separated into Greek ‘Line and Light’ and Gothic ‘Line and Colour’, whose traditions were inherited respectively by Leonardo’s ‘Mass and Light’ and Giorgione’s ‘Mass and Colour’. These two schools later united to form ‘Mass, Light, and Colour’, to which Titian belonged (20:128). Turner’s work in mezzotint has been regarded as typical chiaroscurist, alongside Leonardo (20:155-156). On the contrary, the works of the Venetian school, which primarily relied on colours, has always been referred to as the ‘perfect art’.

[6] John Ruskin, “The Range of Intellectual Conception Proportioned to the Rank in Animated Life”, *The Contemporary Review*, Vol. 17 (1871), p. 425.

[7] *Ibid.*, p. 427.

[8] This expression, also found in Chapter 5, Verse 14 of ‘Letter to the Hebrews’ in the New Testament, is used to describe the quality of a matured Christian as opposed to an infant who could not discern Christ’s words of righteousness. The ‘mature’, as described in the chapter, is someone who has left the elementary doctrine of Christ, such as eternal judgment, and is now feeding on the ‘solid food’, a true understanding of the principles of God (Chapter 5, Verse 13—Chapter 6, Verse 2).

* This is the English version of my paper in *London: Art and Technology*, ed. YAMAGUCHI Eriko, Chikurinsha, Tokyo, 2014, pp. 107-122.