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NATIONAL COLLEGE OF ART AND DESIGN

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**BEAUTY: CULTURAL CONSTRUCTION OR
UNIVERSAL IDEAL.**

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INTRODUCTION

This thesis concerns the theory of universality of beauty as proposed by Kant in the *Critique of Judgement*. I believe that there is a cross-cultural universalism in regard to beauty and aim to substantiate this claim using psychological and sociological research. The psychological research examines two main areas "symmetry" and "averageness" in regard to the human face. I will investigate the theory of the universality of beauty concentrating on the perceived attractiveness of the human face.

Kant proposes that there are certain criteria that need to be exercised in order for a true cross-cultural universalism to exist. Chapter One deals with two of these criteria. I propose to address these issues in the form of two questions. Firstly, Kant argues that there is no property or quality of a beautiful object. I contest this notion and support this by way of psychological research. Dr. Stephen Marquardt proposes that symmetry (a quality of an object) is causally related to perceived attractiveness in the human face, therefore, contradicting Kant in this regard.

Secondly, Kant proposes that a "disinterested" stance is necessary when judging a beautiful object. The notion of necessary universal assent is based on this claim. I propose that it is not always possible to achieve a disinterested stance, but a claim to universalism is not undermined by the absence of disinterestedness. Therefore, I contest the notion that disinterestedness is a necessary criterion for universality. This is supported by the psychological research of Astrid Jütté.

Chapter Two questions the notion that aesthetic judgements rest on a posteriori bases (derived from or dependent on experience). I propose that we know a priori (known independently of experience) that beauty is present and will attempt to justify this claim through the research of Judith Langlois and Lori. A.

Roggman of the University of Texas and The Utah State University, respectively. The second question addresses whether there is a causal relation between averageness and perceived attractiveness. Kant proposes that the "average" shape (of a person or a face) is the ideal beauty of a population. This research of St. Andrew's university perception laboratory contests Kant in this regard. I concur with these claims.

Chapter Three addresses contemporary notions that beauty is culturally constructed, which contest Kant's notion of universality. I will focus on these claims, incorporating the issues and conclusions of Chapters One and Two. I argue that beauty is not culturally constructed and there is a universality of beauty. I will support these claims by way of the research of St. Andrew's University, Langlois and Roggman, and van der Berghe and Frost.

Using an interdisciplinary approach (a philosophical and psychological research) I propose to confirm Kant's notion of universality, albeit not entirely on his terms and to examine the political ramifications of such a claim.

CHAPTER ONE.

INVESTIGATING KANT'S CRITERIA FOR THE UNIVERSALITY OF BEAUTY.

The issue of universality is expounded in the *Critique of Judgement* by way of four moments: "quality", "quantity", "relation" and "modality". This chapter deals with the moments quality and relation with regard to the beautiful. This section concerns a comparative study of psychological research and is highlighted by the philosophical issues raised by Kant. The objective of this chapter is to ascertain the veracity of claims that beauty is not a property of an object, and the notion of disinterestedness, with regard to the beautiful object.

The first and third moments (quality and relation respectively) refer to experience i.e.: when it qualifies for being an experience of something beautiful. The point Kant makes in the first moment is that of 'disinterestedness'. In order to judge an object beautiful, Kant asserts that the judgement must be devoid of all interest, i.e. self-interest: "Interest is what we call the liking we connect with the presentation of the object's existence" (Pluhar [Ed.], 1987, p. 45). Essentially what Kant is stating is that the judgement must be impartial. The most lucid way of explicating disinterestedness is by way of contrast with 'interested pleasure', following the train of thought of Eva Schaper (Schaper, 1992, p. 374). Kant contrasts the pleasure in the agreeable and the pleasure that is related to the beautiful. The pleasure in the agreeable is related to the liking of an object and also to a liking for the existence of the object as well (Pluhar

[Ed.], 1987, p. 51). The concern is not with the actual existence of the object and hence the pleasure is deemed to be disinterested and free. This defines the 'quality' of the object that is being judged.

The notion of disinterestedness poses two questions: 1. Should the concern be with the actual existence of the object? 2. Is a purely 'disinterested' stance possible? These questions are highlighted by psychological research to be described later.

THE FIRST QUESTION

Let us deal with the first question. The words 'is beautiful' function as a predicate, grammatically speaking, in the sentence: e.g. "That rose is beautiful". This implies that beauty is an attribute or property of the rose. The notion that beauty is somehow an intrinsic part of an object is highly contested by Kant. The issue is raised when Kant defines 'determinant' and 'reflective' judgements. A determinant judgement is the subsumption of particulars under some given concept. They determine objects, e.g. "This is a dog" determines the dog (by appearance, by having the imagination make a matching empirical intuition under the concept of a 'dog'). Reflective judgements, which include aesthetic judgements, do not give attributes to objects. They are not determinant; i.e. they do not determine objects. Beauty, in Kant's terms, is not an attribute or property of an object. This explains the need to clarify the type of judgement used in judging beautiful objects. Kant is clearly stating that beauty is not a property of a beautiful object.

This notion is contested by recent theories. One of them proposes that symmetry is closely related to beauty, and this would arguably negate the theory that beauty is not an attribute of an object. The Greeks believed that beauty resulted from ideal or 'golden' proportions. Plato implied that the essence of beauty lay in the 'golden section'. The golden section is a special way of subdividing an object so that the ratio of the smaller part to the greater is the same as the ratio of the greater part to the whole. As regards the face, the smaller part is the distance from the top of the forehead to the centre of the eyes and the greater part is the distance from the centre of the eyes to the chin. (Liggett, 1974, p. 140) - (Fig. 1). Pre-Raphaelite artists also believed that symmetry and proportion are the key to beauty. They believed that the face could be neatly divided into sevenths (Fig. 2).

Dr. Stephen Marquardt further investigates the notion of mathematically defined beauty. He has invented a mask that is based on mathematical symmetry, derived from the golden ratio. Marquardt's research stems from the Greeks' notion of beauty. He divided the face into a series of interlocking pentagons. The result was a mask that divides the face through a set of lines with specific set distances between all the features and outside shape of the face. The mask, Marquardt claims, shows the proportions of the ideally beautiful face (Fig. 3).

In addition, Marquardt claims that the mask 'works' for all ethnic groups:

There is an archetypal facial pattern which all of us find attractive. People may have individual preferences, but almost nobody in the world finds Cindy Crawford ugly. And almost everybody would agree that the

elephant man who doesn't even begin to fit the mask - is ugly (Unsworth, 1996, p. 20)

To prove his point Marquardt lays the mask over photographs of African and Asian models - it fits all the faces.

This seems to go against Kant's notion denying the objectivity of beauty but seem to support his notion of the universality of beauty (to be dealt with later). The problem with Marquardt's claims is that they are based, almost exclusively, on models in the fashion industry. The issue here is that most models of different ethnic backgrounds conform loosely to Caucasian ideals. The Caucasian bias calls in question conclusions of universality. Marquardt has invented a mask that conforms only to Caucasian ideals and consequently cannot be considered as realistic evidence of cross-cultural universality with regard to beauty. However, other research to be considered supports a theory of universality.

The notion that beauty is not a characteristic of a beautiful object is contested by research by Pierre van den Berghe and Peter Frost of the University of Washington and the Université Laval respectively. Their research concerns cross-cultural preferences for lighter skin pigmentation. Fig. 5 shows data collected showing preference for lighter skin across different cultural backgrounds.

Of the 51 societies investigated, 47 state a preference for the lighter end of the locally represented spectrum, though not necessarily for the lightest possible skin colour. The preference for lighter skin was found to be an indigenous criterion of beauty or

attractiveness.

This research is extremely significant and important as it is psychological research that investigates indigenous criteria of beauty within different cultural areas. The research partly supports the theory of universality in Kant's terms, in that it supports the notion of cross-cultural universality but challenges his rejection of the notion of object-rootedness in regard to beauty. It indicates that there is a characteristic of beauty that is universal within each society and, overall in general terms, is universal also. (It does not claim that white skin is preferable to all races, but that lighter skin is preferable within different ethnic groups.)

The entire notion of subjectivity and aesthetic judgements is contentious. How can a judgement of taste be subjective and yet universally valid? This is investigated by van den Berghe and Frost. They investigated a 'non-theory' explanation for refuting the cross-cultural preference findings. The 'non-theory' explanation is based on the notion that aesthetic preferences are capricious and therefore require no explanation. To test the 'capricious' nature of the finding van den Berghe & Frost work out the probability (mathematically) of obtaining a 47-4 outcome by chance. The probability is less than 1 in 100 million. (Van der Berghe & Frost, 1986, p. 95).

This shows that the findings are not based on whimsical judgements of taste. The sheer numbers of people who agree (based on their subjective judgements) supports

the theory of universality across different cultural backgrounds.

Van den Berghe and Frost also investigate the theory that white dominance is an influence on aesthetic judgements of skin colour.

The conquest theory argues that preferences for lightness followed the flag of the European colonial powers, and other light skinned conquerors like the Arabs. Light skin became desirable because it was associated with power, wealth and privilege. (Van der Berghe & Frost, 1986, p. 98)

Van den Berghe & Frost suggest evidence to the contrary:

a) Preference for lightness often antedates European contact:

This was clearly the case, for example for the Aztecs, the Japanese and the ancient Egyptians. (Van der Berghe & Frost, 1986, p. 98)

b) A strong preference for lightness is found in societies that were never colonised by the west (e.g. Japan) or in societies where the ruling classes were darker than the indigenes (e.g. Moorish Spain).

c) In areas colonised by Europe, preference for skin lightness is often accompanied by explicit rejection of European phenotypes, e.g. Garo (Assam) (Van der Berghe & Frost, 1986, p. 94)

These explanations refute the hypothesis that there is a Caucasian bias influence in the preference for lighter skin.

The questions raised by the moments of 'quality' and 'relation' in Kant's explanation of the beautiful were: 1. Is beauty a quality of a beautiful object, 2. Is

disinterestedness necessary and possible in a judgement of taste?

The notion that there is no quality of a beautiful object is partly negated by Marquardt's mask - it also suggested an aesthetic universality within western society. However, it does not support a theory of cross-cultural universality. Symmetry (a quality of an object) is shown to have some causal relation to perceived attractiveness by Langlois and Roggman (Langlois & Roggman, 1994, p. 217) in some instances but not all. In general, symmetry improved the facial configuration of an asymmetrical face and yielded a higher rating of attractiveness. This, I believe, supports the theory that beauty is a quality of a beautiful object, which negates Kant's theory in this regard.

The preference for lighter skin across different cultural backgrounds, I believe, shows not only that beauty is a quality of the object but also supports Kant's theory of the universality of aesthetic judgement. Therefore, Kant is partly right and partly wrong.

Langlois and Roggman, psychologists at the University of Texas and the Utah State University, respectively, have conducted research investigating whether symmetry is causally related to perceived attractiveness. To test whether symmetry meets this criterion they produced perfectly symmetrical faces by dividing each face down the centre, forming two perfectly symmetrical faces from the halves.

74 judges rated the left faces (images) and 55 judges rated the right faces (images). The attractiveness ratings were then compared with a previous study relating to symmetry (St. Andrews, 1995, p. 1) where unaltered images were used.

The analyses of these ratings revealed that the original faces were perceived as more attractive than either the perfectly symmetrical left faces or the perfectly symmetrical right faces. (Langlois & Roggman, 1994, p. 217)

Langlois and Roggman also state however,

that perfect symmetry does not improve the attractiveness of most normal faces, but some faces did, indeed, receive higher attractiveness ratings in their symmetrical than in their original versions. (Langlois & Roggman 1994, p. 21)

From this, Langlois and Roggman deduce that although symmetry is important to attractiveness, it does not determine perceived attractiveness.

The implications of their research indicate that symmetry does not necessarily have a causal relation to beauty. However, it is a factor - some faces can be improved by symmetry. The question under consideration is whether the concern should be with the actual existence of the object. The results of the experiments show that symmetry is not absolutely necessary but does have some relation to beauty. It would appear that absolute mathematical proportions are not necessarily constituents of a beautiful face, however, there does at times seem to be a relationship between symmetry and perceived attractiveness. This counters Kant's proposal that beauty is not a quality of an object.

THE SECOND QUESTION

The second question asked - whether a disinterested stance is always possible - will be investigated. Firstly, the entire notion that disinterestedness is possible is contested by the fact that unconscious influences are nearly always present, affecting aesthetic judgements. Simon Andreae, author of *Anatomy of Desire*, cites an interesting experiment to this end. In the experiment, Astrid Jütté investigated the influence of female odours on perceived attractiveness. She synthesised the vaginal secretions of women at different stages of their menstrual cycle using various chemicals. They were stored in stainless steel pots that were then sniffed by selected male raters (Fig. 4). As each man smelled one of the mixtures (dubbed copulines), he was asked to look at and note photographs of different women, evaluating their attractiveness. There were four different mixtures: one contained the odours of a menstruating woman: one was more like an ovulating woman, one resembled a pre-menstrual woman, and the fourth was just water.

The most interesting point of this experiment was that the male's testosterone levels rose after 20 minutes of inhaling copulines. The reactions of the males who inhaled this copulines, claims Andreae, had an unconscious effect on their judgements. Findings showed that men rendered as attractive, women who would not have been normally attractive to their eyes. This was in the context of a comparative study with men who did not inhale any ovulating copulines. The conclusion that Andreae makes is that there are unconscious sensory elements that influence the judgement made of the men involved in the experiment.

It is obvious that this type of sensory influence would not occur ordinarily. However, it does suggest that there may be unconscious elements in everybody affecting our judgements - this negates any theory of pure disinterestedness. Despite our most diligent efforts, a disinterested stance is not always possible when judging an object. This answers the question previously posed - whether disinterestedness is possible always and whether the concern should be with the actual existence (properties) of the object.

The objective of this chapter was to ascertain whether the criteria cited by Kant, support the theory of a universality of beauty.

Kant proposes that in order for a universality of beauty to exist, there are certain criteria that need to be applied. The first criterion is that beauty is not a quality of an object. Marquardt's research shows that there is a causal relationship between symmetry and beauty. This negates Kant's notion that there is no discernible quality of a beautiful object.

However, Kant proposes that this is a criterion of the universality of beauty. Marquardt's mask does not support a cross-cultural universality because of the Caucasian bias. Therefore the conclusion is that there is a quality of a beautiful object, i.e. symmetry.

The Human Relations Area Files investigated by van der Berghe and Frost also showed that there was a causal relationship between lighter skin pigmentation (in females) and perceived attractiveness. This again negates Kant's notion that there is no quality of a beautiful object. However, overall the question is of universality.

The assent of cross-cultural observers supports the theory of universality.

The question asked was whether the concern should be with the actual existence of the object. I deduce that there are qualities of a beautiful object, i.e. symmetry and lighter skin pigmentation. Therefore, Kant is erroneous in this regard. The concern should be with the actual existence of the object when investigating the universality of beauty.

The second question asked whether a disinterested stance is always possible. Kant proposes that there is a need to judge without any self-interest in order for a true universality to exist. The experiment conducted by Astrid Jütté yielded the conclusion that there are unconscious elements that exist, that may affect our judgements. The significance of this is that impartiality or disinterestedness is not always possible. Therefore, Kant is contested on the point that disinterestedness is a necessary criterion for the universality of beauty on the grounds that disinterestedness is not always possible. However, Kant states that when disinterestedness is not present there is no experience of the beautiful. I propose that disinterestedness is not necessary for the experience of beauty.

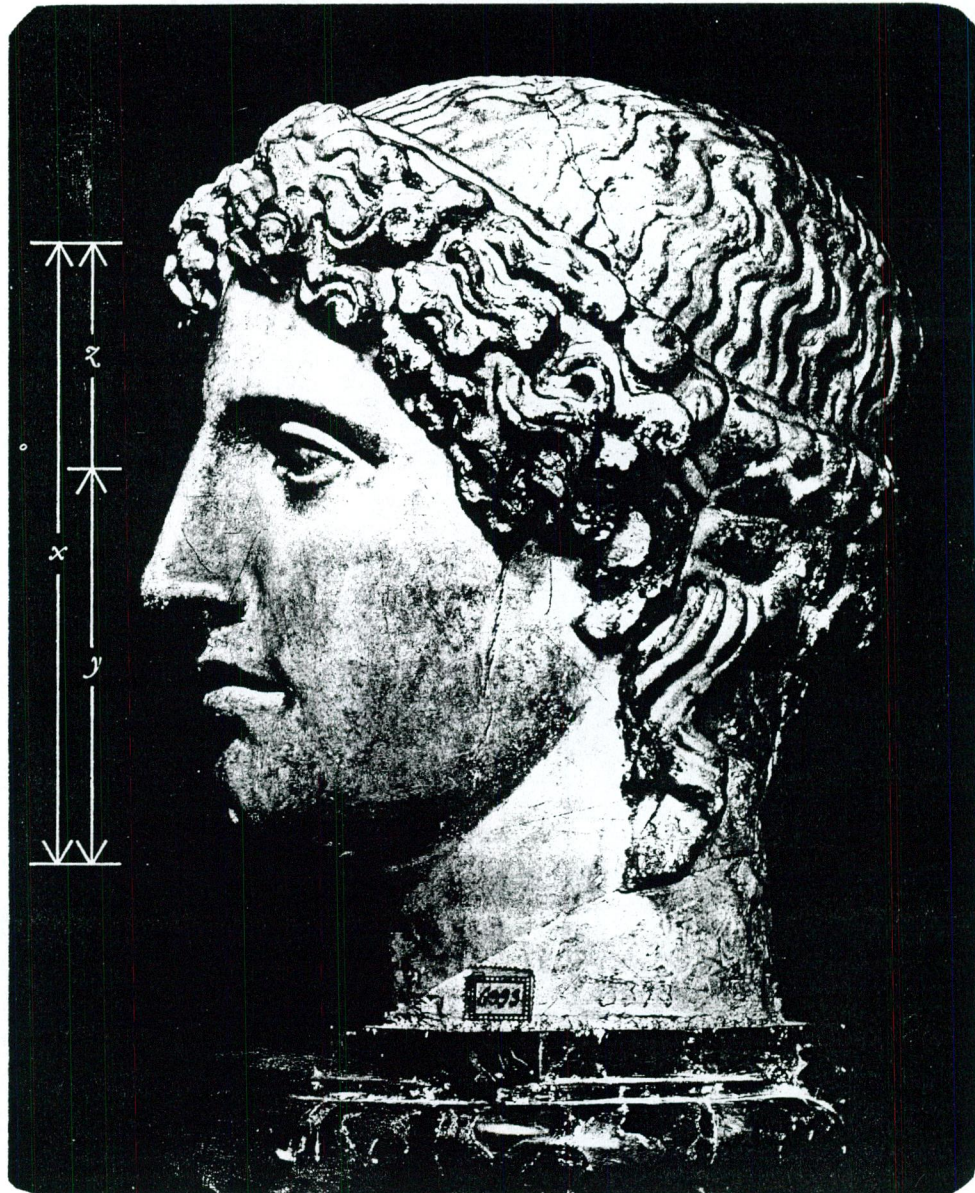


Fig. 1 The "ideal" proportions of the face as proposed by the Greeks.



Fig.2. The "ideal" proportions of the face as proposed by pre-Raphaelite artists.



Fig.3. Dr. Stephen Marquardt's "mask" showing the "ideal" proportions of a beautiful face.

Table 2. *Preference for lighter skin, by area*

Area	Number of societies	Number with relevant information	Number preferring lighter skin	Doubtful or negative cases
Sub-Saharan Africa	39	12	12	0
Europe and Soviet Union	40	2	2	0
Asia	63	10	9	1
Middle East and Muslim Africa	29	2	2	0
North America	57	5	5	0
South America and Caribbean	45	9	8	1
Insular Pacific	39	11	9	2
Total	312	51	47	4

Source: Category 832, Sexual Stimulation, Ideals of Erotic Beauty and Sexual Attraction, Human Relations Area Files.

Fig.4. Human Relations Area Files Table. Shows cross-cultural preferences for lighter skin in females.

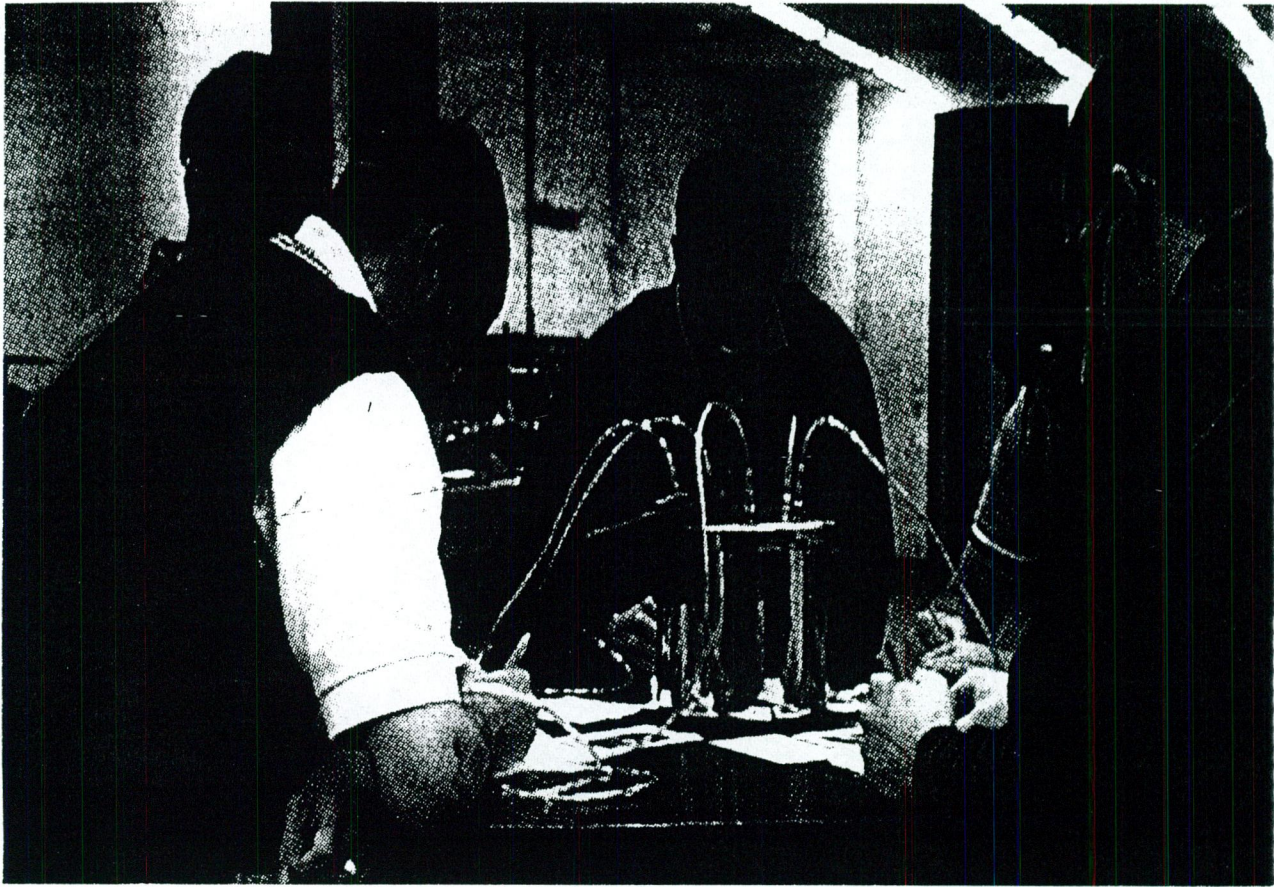
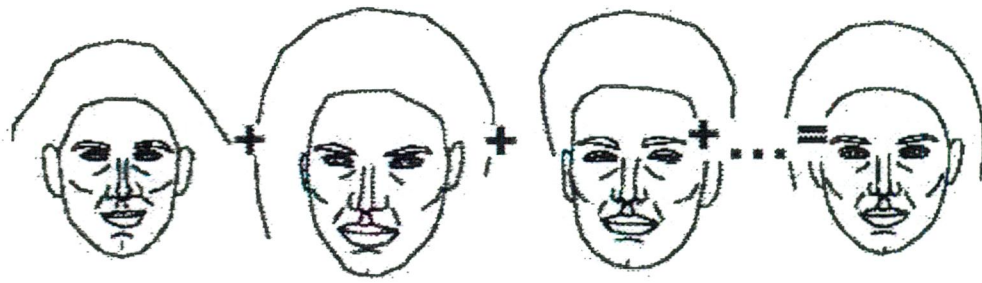


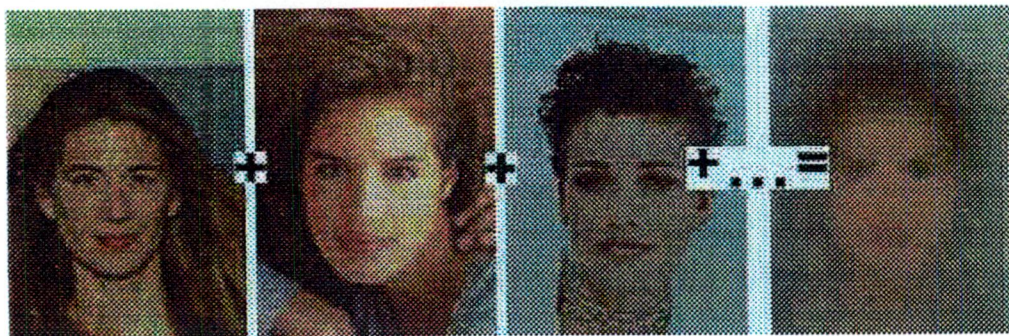
Fig. 5. Astrid Jütté's experiment showing male raters inhaling copulines.



The delineation data illustrated in line form showing the shape of 3 of the 60 faces that went into the average (right).

3. Warping the faces into the average face shape.

Images of faces can easily be superimposed and blended together:



Three of original 60 images which were superimposed to make the image on the right.

Warping the faces to the same average face shape before blending together produces a clear ir



The three example faces on the left have been warped so that their features are in the same position. They were then superimposed along with 57 other faces which had been warped into the same shape to produce the blend on the right.

Fig. 6. St. Andrew's University "Facial Prototyping" - creating the average female face.

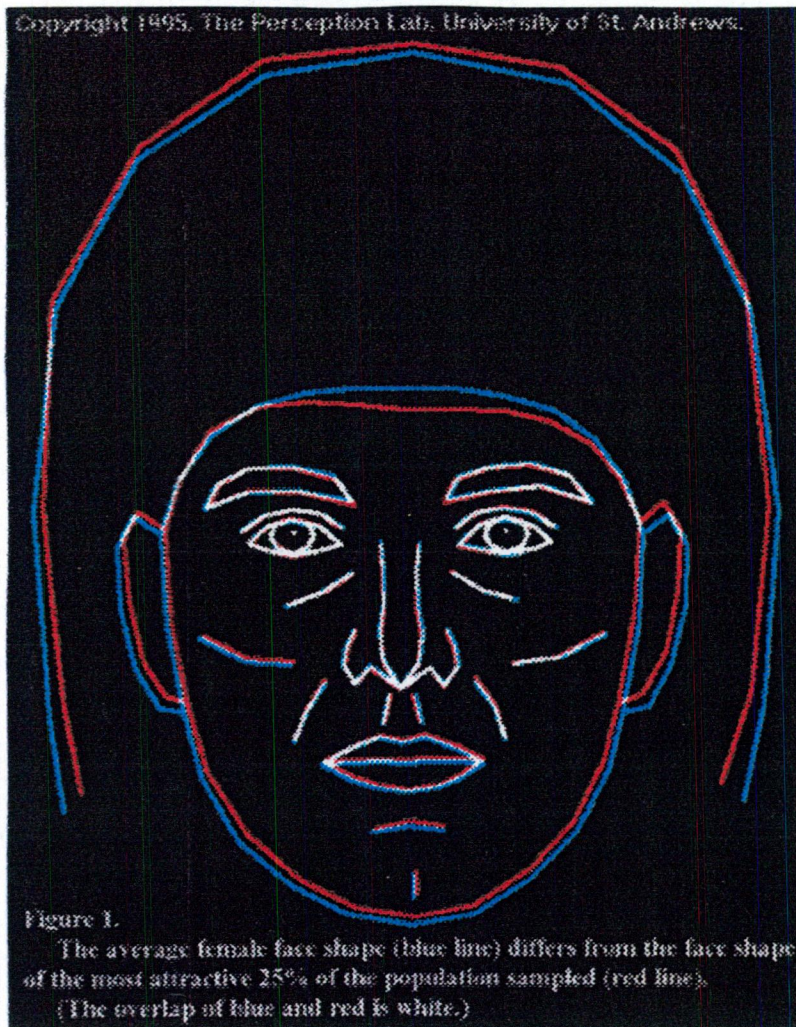


Fig.7. St.Andrew's University research showing differences between "average" and "high shape".



(A) Average shape, a prototype made from 60 female faces aged 20-30 without makeup. (B) High shape, the prototype reformed into the average shape of a subset of faces rated highly for attractiveness. (C) Enhanced shape difference, prototype reformed by enhancing the shape differences between image (A) and (B) by 50%.

Fig.8. Image B. St.Andrew's research "high shape".

CHAPTER TWO.

THE GENESIS OF AESTHETIC JUDGEMENTS AND THEIR RELATIONSHIP TO UNIVERSALITY.

This chapter will concentrate on two main contentions of Kant, both of which I contest. 1. The notion that aesthetic judgement rests on an a posteriori basis. 2. That the "average man" represents the ideal beauty.

In this section, the notion that aesthetic judgement postulates the possibility of universal assent appears, and is central to Kant's hypothesis-the universal standard of aesthetic judgement. The beautiful in this instance, is that which is inferred from the first moment- the object is beautiful, that is judged on a liking that is devoid of all interest. Kant argues that if someone likes an object, and is conscious that this arose from disinterested delight, then he cannot help but expect that his judgement must contain a basis that holds good for everybody. In effect, what Kant is saying is that subjective impartiality (when judging an object) is necessary to demand universal assent. "In other words, a judgement of taste, must involve a claim to subjective universality" (Pluhar, [Ed.] 1987, p. 54).

In "Explication of the Beautiful" Kant explains the beautiful in terms of "modality". Modality refers to propositions/theories made that can be true necessarily, actually, and possibly. In this context, Kant proposes that a judgement of taste is true necessarily. The conclusion of the explication of the beautiful infers that "the beautiful is what without a concept is cognised as the object of a necessary liking"(Pluhar [Ed], 1987,p. 90.) In discussing what the modality of a judgement of taste is, Kant argues, in relation to the liking (in an aesthetic judgement), that there is:

A necessity of the assent of everyone to a judgement that is regarded as an example of the universal rule that we are unable to state

(Pluhar [Ed], 1987, p. 85)

This refers to the difference between determinant and aesthetic judgement. Aesthetic judgements must find a universal rule under which to operate. The necessity of the assent is that rule.

To sum up what is meant by the four moments, Schaper states,

That is beautiful which is felt with disinterested pleasure (first moment). Calling something beautiful, we deem it an object of universal delight (second moment). We discern it in "the form of finality perceived without the presentation of a purpose"(third moment). And we claim not only that it pleases but it does so necessarily, and without concepts (fourth moment).

(Shaper, 1992, p. 373).

Feminist theorists usually contest the entire notion that subjective judgements can demand universal assent. The notion that historical time, place, social class, gender, nationality, and individual traits are irrelevant to the experience of aesthetic judgement is generally contested in feminist theory. (Brand / Korsmeyer [Eds.], 1995, p. 118).

Brand and Korsmeyer in "Feminism and Tradition in Aesthetics" cite the grounds for refuting the Kantian notion of disinterestedness. They speak of the "male gaze"

which they claim is a cultural construction of an "ideal" observer. The grounds for cultural construction are that the observer is biased because he occupies a masculine, culturally dominant position. In effect, what many feminists are proposing is that there are gendered judgements of taste -- intrinsic disparities between the feminine and masculine viewer.

The Human Relations Area Files investigated by van den Berghe and Frost I believe negate the notion of gendered judgements. The large-scale nature of the census coupled with the fact that both male and female yielded overwhelming agreement concerning skin tone preferences contests the notion of gendered judgements. Kant believes that beauty can only be known on an a posteriori basis. The research of Langlois and Roggman (1990), which concludes that the ideal of beauty is inborn, contests this notion. It also examines a situation that precedes cultural construction, thereby undermining the notion that beauty is culturally constructed.

The perception laboratory team conducted extensive research into perceived attractiveness of female facial images. The raters involved were both male and female. The results showed resounding agreement between both sexes. This conclusion, by itself, infers that both men and women agree as to what constitutes a beautiful face. Feminists here would argue that women are coerced into a masculinist manner of thinking. However, if the research findings of Langlois and Roggman's research on babies are taken into account a wholly different conclusion may be deduced. This conclusion is that perceptions of beauty are inborn rather than empirically manufactured or known. This then implies that we know a priori what beauty is. (Kant asserts that we cannot tell a priori that beauty causes a feeling of pleasure or displeasure independently of experience.)

We cannot possibly tell a priori that some presentation or other is connected, as cause, with the feeling of pleasure or displeasure as its effect

(Pluhar [Ed.], 1987, p. 67)

This is because Kant claims that this would be a causal relation and casual relations "can never be cognised otherwise than by means of experience itself" (Pluhar[Ed.], 1987,p. 67). Langlois and Roggman conducted research in 1990 to ascertain whether there was a causal relation between perceived attractiveness and averageness in the female face. They averaged together 32 facial images (of females) that produced a facial configuration that is close to the mean configuration of a population of faces. This average image was then rated against the others (unaltered images) the results showed that:

Both male and female computer generated facial images of 32 faces averaged together were judged as significantly more attractive than the sets of individual faces that yielded the averaged faces. (Langlois & Roggman, 1994, p. 214)

In addition, Langlois and Roggman deduce that: "Cross-cultural preferences for attractiveness are more similar than different." (Berstein, Lin, & Mc Clellan, 1982; Cunningham, 1986; Maret & Harling, 1985; Mc Arthur & Berry, 1987; Thakerar & Iwawaki, 1979.)

This research, coupled with the conclusions of the infant research (Langlois and Roggman), counter the notion that standards of facial attraction are learned gradually by exposure to media and that standards of beauty vary widely from one culture to another.

The same images used the 1990 Langlois and Roggman experiment were used in another experiment whereby babies' reactions to the images were investigated. The result was that there was agreement between both babies and adults as to what constituted facial attractiveness. Kant believes that beauty cannot be known otherwise than by a posteriori knowledge. However, this claim is refuted, explicitly by the research investigating the reaction of babies to facial images as rated by adult observers. Langlois states that, "contrary to popular belief, even young infants prefer attractive faces to unattractive faces "(Langlois & Roggman, 1994, p. 214). The cognitive faculties of the babies could not possibly be affected by exposure to media. This implies that we know a priori what beauty is.

The last statement is extraordinarily significant and is central to the argument of universality. The fact that we know a priori what beauty is negates notions of gender-biased judgements.

The Human Relations Area Files study also yields the conclusion that there is universal agreement spanning different cultures, again supporting the theory that we know a priori what beauty is. The universal agreement is based on the fact that beauty is known a priori (deduced from the research into babies' responses).

INVESTIGATING THE CAUSAL RELATION OF AVERAGENESS TO BEAUTY

St. Andrew's University (Scotland) perception laboratory team (Perrett D.I., May K., & Yoshikawa s.) have conducted research into facial attraction. Their research

entails a system of voting on photographs of female faces as to which is perceived to be the most attractive. The raters are both male and female.

In part 1 of their investigation the question is posed 'Is there a difference between the average and highly attractive face shape?' (Perrett D.I., May K., & Yoshikawa S., 1995, p. 2)

The facial prototyping consisted of mapping 60 female faces onto each other, thus creating an 'average' female face. (Fig 6) This is precisely the exercise Kant proposed in the ideal of beauty.

Having established the 'average' prototype for the population, they proceed then to form a prototype pertaining to that of the most attractive faces perceived in the investigation. The results formed a 'high shape' from 25% of female faces judged to be the most attractive. The result was that the high shape differed from that of the 'average' face shape (Fig 7)

Part II of their investigation poses the question, is there a difference between the average and highly attractive face shapes related to attractiveness? The 'average' prototype and the 'High Shape' prototype were then rated by both sexes for preference. The findings were that 90% of the subjects preferred the prototype on the High Shape (image B in Fig 8) to the prototype in the average shapes (image A).

This indicates that the High Shape was causally related to perceived attractiveness (Perrett D.I., May K., & Yoshikawa S., 1995, p. 3)

The significance of the St. Andrew's research is that it differs from the Kantian notion of the ideal beauty. Kant proposes a psychological exercise in order to establish the ideal beauty. In order to find the standard size of a thousand adult men,

Kant proposes that a number of images should be mapped onto each other, and where most of the images are united, an outline where the colour is applied most heavily, the average size emerges (Pluhar (Ed), 1987, p. 82). The shape that emerges underlies the standard idea of a beautiful man, the average size, and this is the stature for a beautiful man (Pluhar [Ed.], 1987, p. 82).

Kant is clearly stating that the ideal beauty is the "average man." The St. Andrew's conclusions are that averageness is not perceived to be the most attractive.

The St. Andrew's team also note that 'Japanese and Caucasian observers, showed the same direction of preferences for the same facial composites.' They deduce that aesthetic judgements of face shape are similar across different cultural backgrounds. (Perrett D.I., May K., & Yoshikawa S., 1995, p. 4)

The research of St. Andrews University contested Kant on the notion that the average is the "ideal beauty". However, the research of Langlois and Roggman (1990) investigated the possible causal relation between averageness and perceived attractiveness. As noted earlier, the results showed that the images where the faces were averaged together were judged as significantly more attractive than the original, individual, unaltered faces. (Langois and Roggman, 1990, p.214)

Since their 1990 research project, various alternative explanations have been offered to explain their conclusions. In "Psychological Science " Langlois and Roggman investigate the claims of these alternative explanations. They examine the effect of youthfulness and familiarity on the perceived attractiveness of the facial images.

To test whether youthfulness is causally related to perceived attractiveness, Langlois and Roggman asked raters to judge the age appearance of the individual faces used in the construction of one of the "average" female faces from the 1990 study. They also asked raters to judge the age appearance of the "average" female face (the combination of the individual faces) from the same study. The results showed that: "There was no overall relation between attractiveness and youthfulness in the sample"(Langlois and Roggman, 1994, p.216)

The significance of this result is that it undermines the notion that beauty is a cultural construction. (This issue will be dealt with in depth in Chapter Three.)

This Chapter aims to contest Kant's theory that: 1. Aesthetic judgements rest on a posteriori bases, and 2. That the "average man" represents the ideal beauty. The research of Langlois and Roggman (1990) investigated the reactions of young infants to facial images rated by both male and female adults, as attractive. The conclusions of this research show that this implies that we know a priori what beauty is. This then negates Kant in this regard but also supports the theory of universality.

The notion that the "average man" is the ideal beauty (proposed by Kant) is contested by the research of St. Andrews University. They created an average facial shape that was rated as more attractive than the original unaltered faces. However, in addition to this, they created the "High Shape" which differed to the average shape. This High Shape was preferred to the average face shape. The conclusions are that the average is not perceived as the ideal beauty (of the female face) of a population. Thereby, contesting Kant's notion.

The research of Langlois and Roggman (1990), that concluded that the average is not the ideal beauty supports Kant's theory in this regard. However, the St. Andrews' research is the research that supports the theory of universalism, rather than the research of Langlois and Roggman. The reason for this is that the St. Andrews' team created the "high shape", which was then preferred to the average shape of facial images. Langlois and Roggman did not provide any additional or alternative face shape (other than the average and original images) to rate against. Therefore, I conclude that St. Andrews have done a more searching experiment.

Therefore the average face (or man as Kant proposed) is not the ideal beauty of a population. In addition the results of these experiments shows that there was more agreement than not among different cultures as to what is the ideal beauty. The ideal beauty is not averageness.

CHAPTER THREE.

ADDRESSING THE POLITICAL RAMIFICATIONS OF THE UNIVERSALITY OF BEAUTY.

This chapter investigates further the political ramifications of the theory of universalism. Feminist notions that claim to refute the theory of the universality of beauty will be investigated. There is a very strong strand in feminism that advocates that: 1: There are gendered judgements. The notion of gendered judgements can be understood as judgements based on a posteriori knowledge. 2: This a posteriori knowledge is held to be culturally constructed by way of indoctrinated masculinist ways of thinking i.e., disinterestedness and theories of the "male-gaze". They argue that women are taught to think like men and conform to masculinist ideals of beauty. They then propose that there are male ways of thinking and female ways of thinking and that they are inherently different. Their "cultural construct theory" is based on these assumptions. I propose that these assumptions are fundamentally flawed and will attempt to offer a reason for this assumption citing psychological research.

The psychological research cited in Chapters 1 and 2 supports the theory of cross-cultural universalism and conflicts with feminist notions of cultural construction. An investigation of these Feminist notions is imperative to elucidate the theory of universalism.

THE NOTION OF BEAUTY AS A CULTURAL CONSTRUCTION

Firstly, the notion of gendered judgements, and the notion that there is epistemological thought that is exclusive to females is investigated.

Mary Devereaux in *Feminism and Tradition in Aesthetics* introduces the notion of the male gaze. The male gaze is centred on the premiss that "women judge themselves according to internalised standards of what is pleasing to men." (Brand/Korsmeyer [Eds.], 1995, p. 122). Sandra Bartky states that "adolescent girls learn to appraise themselves as they are shortly to be appraised." (Brand/Korsmeyer, [Eds.], 1995, p. 122) This amounts to the assumption that women see the world "through male eyes". This "gendered " viewing according to feminist thinking is constructed by the social situation of patriarchy. The patriarchal society is deemed oppressive to women and the male gaze is seen as conducive to patriarchy.

The key political issue here is one of gender-bias in judgements of taste. This theory of gender-bias is negated by the research of Langlois and Roggman (1990) into young infants' preference for "staring" at the " attractive" facial images chosen by male and female adults. The deduction made in Chapter Two is that we know a priori what beauty is. This challenges the feminist notion that beauty is socially constructed by way of " seeing the world through male eyes". These conclusions also contest the notion of empirically learned ways of thinking (in regard to beauty).

The Langlois & Roggman research poses a serious problem for feminist theories regarding aesthetics. The fundamental basis of the feminist argument for beauty as cultural construct is in the aforementioned gendered mind-set.

The St. Andrews' research into perceived attraction yielded the showed that Japanese and Caucasian observers showed the same direction of preferences for the same

facial composites. They deduce that this suggests that aesthetic judgements of face shapes are more similar than different across different cultural backgrounds.

Naomi Wolf's *The Beauty Myth* hypothesised the notion of beauty as a cultural construction. Wolf proposes that women are the victims of male dominated institutions that indoctrinate a masculinist manner of epistemological thought. One example cited by Wolf is that advertising companies compromise women's magazines. She claims that the advertisement:

Elicits in the reader a raving, itching product lust, and an abiding fantasy:
the longing for some fairy god mother, who will ... put her to sleep When
she awakens; her bathroom will be full of skin-care products...make-up

(Wolf, 1990, p. 70).

Wolf deduces that: "She will deliver herself into a world of female consumer apotheosis, beyond appetite." (Wolf, 1990, p. 70)

The preponderance of the obsession with beauty is, Wolf proposes, fuelled by the advertising companies in women's magazines. She claims that these companies compromise the editors because most of their income comes from advertising. Wolf states that: "What editors are obliged to appear to say that *men* want from women is actually what their *advertisers* want from women" (Wolf, 1990, p. 73)

The fashion industry is critical in the construction of the "ideally beautiful face" claims Wolf stating: "It is understood that some kinds of thinking about beauty would alienate advertisers." (Wolf, 1990, p. 77)

Susan Bordo in *Unbearable Weight* explains the notion of cultural relativism concerning standards of beauty. Bordo proposes that the media construct the ideals of beauty. These "ideals of beauty" are almost exclusively ideals of Western society. She argues that images of the white female are dominating standards of the ideal and that white culture is contributing to the emergence of "homogenous faces". The fashion industry, according to Bordo, is a culprit in this phenomenon. She argues that the representations of white females serve to "homogenise" popular culture. She states that "In our culture, this means that they will smooth out all racial, ethnic and sexual 'differences' "(Bordo, 1993, p. 24). The ramifications of this are largely seen in the fashion industry. The black model is often light-skinned and Anglo featured.

However, as already seen the results of the Human Relations Area Files yielded an extremely widespread preference for lighter skin in females. The societies researched included: Sub-Saharan Africa, Europe and the Soviet Union, Asia and Muslim Africa, North America, South America and the Caribbean, and finally the Insular Pacific area. Van der Berghe and Frost note that: "Even among the darker Muslims South of the Sahara, preference for lighter skin is widespread" (Van der Berghe & Frost, 1986, p. 89). They also state that: "there is no evidence of the unconscious projection of Western criteria onto native definitions of beauty." (Van der Berghe, 1986, p. 89)

This research provides an alternative explanation to contest Bordo's theory that Black or Asian models with light skin are used in the fashion industry, because they conform to the prevailing ideal of Western society.

Wolf strongly disputes the notion of beauty having universal assent. She claims that "the western ideal pretends that all ideals of female beauty stem from on Platonic Ideal Woman." (Wolf, 1990, p. 12)

However, the St. Andrew's University team have noted that 'Japanese and Caucasian observers showed the same direction of preferences from the same facial composites' (Perrett, D.I., May K., & Yoshikawa S., 1995, p. 4). This suggests that aesthetic judgements of face shapes are similar across different cultural backgrounds.

Victor Johnston, a psychologist at the New Mexico State University, has done research similar to that of the St. Andrew's research team. Like the St. Andrew's team, Johnston evaluates beauty by means of rating computer generated facial images. The person is asked to rate thirty images on a 1-9 beauty scale. The computer then "breeds" the top rated image with one of the others to create two more images that replace the lowest-rated faces in the group (Andreae, 1998, p. 172). By continually rating and breeding in this way, the group of images gets progressively more beautiful. Johnston then compares the 'average' image of the thirty images to the ideal image. He records a difference in face shape, in the case of the females "a small jaw being particularly prized, as well as a long flat upper face with prominent eyes and cheek bones' was the preferred shape" (Andreae, 1998, p. 172)

Johnston's conclusions support the theory that the ideal beauty is not 'average'. In addition, the theory of beauty-relativity within different cultures (as proposed by Wolf) is also challenged. The conclusion that Johnston draws from the research is that there is enormous agreement among people as to what is beautiful:

People from all over the world are amazingly consistent.
Beauty does not seem to be relative. It does seem that

there are universal proportions. (Unsworth, 1996, p. 21)

The notion of beauty as a cultural construction is contested by the psychological research cited in this chapter. Wolf proposes that beauty is culturally constructed by way of the "male -gaze". The research of Langlois and Roggman investigating the reactions of young infants to "attractive" facial images (as rated by adult observers), I believe, negates the theory that there are gendered ways of thinking. Wolf also disputes the theory that the theory of universal ideal of beauty. The psychological research of van der Berghe and Frost, Langlois and Roggman, Victor Johnston and St.Andrews' contest Wolf on this point.

CONCLUSION.

Chapter One addressed two criteria that Kant proposes is necessary for the universality of beauty to exist. Firstly, Kant proposes that there are no qualities or properties of a beautiful object. The research of Marquardt showed that there was significant a causal relation between perceived attractiveness and symmetry in the human face. The Human Relations Area Files also provided evidence to support this theory (i.e. preference for lighter skin pigmentation.). This contests the notion that there are no qualities of a beautiful object. Therefore, I conclude that Kant is erroneous in this regard. This conclusion, however, does not undermine the theory of universality. Although Marquardt's "mask" does have a Caucasian bias, it did seem to reflect a high level of perceived attractiveness as rated by different cultures and ethnic backgrounds.

However, the research of the Human Relations Area Files, is more relevant to the theory of universality. Lighter skin pigmentation in females was preferred cross- culturally. This indicates two results. Firstly, that there are qualities a beautiful object, and secondly, that there is resounding evidence supporting the theory of universality. I addressed the issue of disinterestedness, as a necessary stance in which to judge an object aesthetically. The research of Astrid Jütté supports the notion that a disinterested stance is not always possible. The question is that, if a disinterested stance is not always possible-does this negate the veracity of the judgement? (Moreover, thereby undermining the universality of beauty).

Chapter two questions Kant's notion that aesthetic judgements rest on a posteriori bases. The research of Langlois and Roggman, investigating infants' reactions to "attractive" faces, showed that we know a priori what beauty is. This negates Kant's position in this regard. This deduction also supports the theory of universality. The fact that we know a priori what beauty is implies that the ability to recognise a beautiful object (or face) is in born. If this innate knowing is presupposed in adults then this attests the universality of beauty.

The second issue that was addressed was the investigation the causal relation of averageness to perceived attractiveness. The conclusion of the St. Andrews' research is that facial beauty is not the "average" shape of a face. Kant proposed that the "ideal" beauty of a population is the "average". I believe that this is not the case, and the St. Andrews' research supports this issue. The research of Langlois and Roggman, the research of St. Andrews', Victor Johnston, van der Berghe and Frost all combined to support the theory of universality. The conclusion showed that there is widespread assent as to what constitutes a beautiful face, and this thereby, attests the theory of a cross cultural universalism.

Chapter three aimed to in assess the political ramifications of the theory of universality. The contemporary idea that beauty is culturally constructed is negated by the research outlined in Chapters One and Two. The notion of the male gaze proposed that women see the world through "male eyes" and conform to the prevailing ideal of beauty. However, the infant research of Langlois and Roggman contests this theory of gendered judgements. Their results showed

that both male and female infants "agreed", (by way of staring at the "attractive" images) as to what was attractive. In addition, there was an overall correlation of assent in adults and infants, implying firstly that beauty is not learned through gradual exposure to the media, secondly, that there is no such thing as a gendered judgement concerning beauty. These conclusions offer viable evidence that beauty is not a cultural construction.

This thesis aimed to investigate Kant's theory of the universality of beauty. I believe that I have provided significant psychological research that attests and also contests Kant's criteria for universalism. Therefore, I conclude that there is a cross cultural universalism concerning beauty, concurring with Kant, albeit not entirely on his terms.

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