

## “Beauty” and “Art” concepts in the books on philosophy for children

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### Abstract

The philosophy for children is to philosophize with the children. Many children’s books have been written in order to philosophy with the children. The books of philosophy for children should contain the philosophical questions or problems, and provide them with examples by concretizing. In this study, five books of the philosophy for children discussing the concept of art and beauty have been examined and it has been analyzed how the books discussed the philosophical concepts. It has been determined that the books have mostly given place to the views of the subjectivist theories, and the different questions and opinions in this area have not been sufficiently reflected to the books. In the books of philosophy for children, it can be stated that the books should involve various philosophical questions and problems related to the concepts of beauty and art, and should not take into consideration the subject by a single point in order to ensure children think more about it from different angles.

Keywords: philosophy for children; beauty concept; art concept

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## 1. Introduction

Philosophizing with children is that the adults make discussions with the children in the context of the philosophical questions and problems based on their experiences. As philosophizing with children is different from philosophizing with adults, it may be appropriate to call these debates as "philosophy for children". According to Direk (2008), the philosophy for children is that the children establish the concepts through having dialogue and discussing about existing event by starting from an appropriate text, a story, a newspaper article, or the daily life experiences, and make assessments by combining their own experiences and the world that they live with what they've read.

According to Lipman (2003), the children try to understand the concepts such as real and true like the philosophers. In the philosophy for children, the concepts under the topics such as the objective reality and the facts, me and others, other assets, and the computer can be also considered (Karakaya, 2006). Although there is no education which the philosophy is taught, the philosophical knowledge is an important resource to be used in the discussions.

The stories that will be used in the philosophy for children may include the elements such as the imagination, characters from everyday life, joy and humor. The philosophical questions and problems should secretly complete each page of the story, but it should be noted that children will be bored with abstract and technical concepts. The stories should encourage the children's natural curiosity, and direct them to the discussions (Saaed, 2003).

In the philosophy for children, the concepts such as freedom, rights, justice, happiness, true, accurate, and beauty should be taken into consideration, but these concepts should be concretized with the examples of children's daily life, texts or stories. The books that will lead children to think deeply, in a word, to philosophize shouldn't have a didactic feature, should be supported by the questions and activities with the philosophical content.

### 1.1. Aesthetics and philosophy for children

In the philosophy for children, the concepts of art and beauty can be taken into consideration. Indeed, the philosophy has also the aesthetic dimension which the concepts of beauty and art are considered, as the ethical dimension discussing the concepts such as the epistemology, justice and rights, which the questions about the knowledge and the science are considered. Children can be interested in art by philosophy for children, can develop art culture, think how they will direct to a work of art, and approach the concept of beauty from different angles.

Also, the topics of the aesthetic can be listed as the aesthetic object, the aesthetic subject, the aesthetic value, the concepts of attitude and justice, the situation if there is the common aesthetic judgment, the theories of art, the discrimination of the natural beauty and the artistic beauty, the objective and subjective dimensions of the beauty, the relationship of nice and good in a work of art, and the factors affecting the art (Cevizci, 2010).

### 1.2. Books on philosophy for children

The books of philosophy for children are the books asking children the questions with the philosophical content such as "what is the justice?", "what is the beauty?", "are we free?", and giving examples about this questions, and aiming at directing them to philosophize. There are many books for philosophy for children on the market and these books reach to thousands of children. In recent times, especially the books of philosophy for children have been the focus of attention of the parents, teachers and children. Well, what is the relation between these books and the philosophy? Although the philosophy for children is a pedagogical approach, it must also have some qualifications from a philosophical perspective.

The purpose of this study is to demonstrate how the books of philosophy for children philosophically discuss the concepts of beauty and art. This determination may give us an idea about the suitability of the books to philosophize with children.

## 2. Method

In this study, the screening model has been used. Screening model is a research model having the purpose of describing a situation in the past or currently existing, and trying to identify an event, a subject or an object in their circumstances or without having the purpose of influence (Karasar, 2007). During the collection and analysis of data, the document review has been used. The document review includes the analysis of the written materials containing information about the case or the cases targeted to be investigated (Yildirim & Simsek, 2013). In this study, the written materials examined are five books of philosophy for children in the market. The books that handled the concepts of art and beauty have been selected among all these books. Information on the books is given in Table 1:

Table 1. Information on the books examined

Book name	Author
Philosophy Lollipops/ Beauty and Ugliness	Brigitte Labbe and Michel
LES GUTERS PHILO Philo/La beaute et la laideur	Puech
Think about it Philosophical Questions for Children 1	Gwenaelle Boulet and Anne Sophie Chilard
Pense Pas Bete 1	
Think about it Philosophical Questions for Children 2	Anne Sophie Chilard
Pense Pas Bete 1	
What is Beautiful?	Etan Boritzer
Little Philosopher: Beauty and Art- What is Beauty and Art?	Oscar Brenifier
Le beau et l'art, c'est quoi?	

## 3. Findings

### 3.1. Findings for book called "Beauty and Ugliness"

In the book called "Beauty and Ugliness", the philosophical problems have been discussed under the titles such as "Ugliness Flying Away", "Real Ugliness", and "Who knows everything?" with the short case studies and the thumbnails have been included time to time. The book is the one of the books in the series called "Philosophy Lollipops".

The one of the concept discussed in the aesthetic is the beauty. The concept of beauty is divided into two in terms of natural beauty and artistic beauty. The natural beauty is based on the things which people don't put forward and exist in the nature; the artistic beauty is based on the artistic structure emerging from the human creativity. In this book, the concept of beauty has been discussed in the framework of "natural beauty". In this regard, the examples are as follows:

*"Anabel and Toni are climbing up to the highest point of the dune overlooking the sea to watch the sunset. When reaching to the hill, Anabel is gasping for breath. The sky is red, orange and purple; the sun is huge, the colorful shadows are dancing on the water's surface. Everything is perfect...!"* page: 37

*"I'm sick of my nose, my acnes, my thin hair, my glasses, my crooked teeth, and my big head, I'm sick and tired. I find myself very ugly..."* page: 5

For the concept of the beauty, the examples have been given based on the children's daily life. These examples are mostly related to the children's jurisdiction for their own or other's appearance. However, it has been expressed that the beauty is a relative concept, in other

words, it is associated with the person's feelings, perspective, admiration and so on. The relevant examples are listed below:

*"Love, which we feel for people or objects, gives these people or objects a beauty. It seems as if our feelings provide us to see a beauty that can not be seen with the naked eye."* page: 5"

*"The Beauty creates a bond, a real bond of love between the thing seen and the person who sees it."* page: 21

The beauty is not only relative, but also the thing giving person a charge. In the book, the one of the statements supporting this view is as follows:

*"The Beauty makes us something. We say that the beauty affects us, our body, our heart, even our skin."* page:33

Another issue discussed in the aesthetic is that a common aesthetic judgment is possible, or not. At this point, the opinions are generally gathered around the subjectivism saying that a common judgment is impossible, and the objectivism saying that a common judgment is possible. In the book called "Beauty and Ugliness", it is stated that a common judgment is not possible. The statements related to this view are as follows:

*"No one knows the definition of the beauty. Therefore, we can not separate ones that are beautiful for everyone from the ones that are ugly for everyone. More than six and a half billion people live in the world; that is to say, there are more than thirteen billion eyes and more than thirteen billion ears, which can not equally see and equally hear."* page:14

*"A blue chair is blue for everyone. No one say "this is red" by looking at a blue chair, it would be wrong... The beauty and ugliness are neither right nor wrong. They are not from the properties of the objects such as color, shape, or size. The beauty does not belong to the chair; it belongs to person seeing it..."* page: 32

Based on the above statements, it can be concluded that the aesthetic judgment may change from person to person, also there is no benefit to try to agree on a common definition of the beauty. Therefore, talking on the aesthetic value of a work of art won't be meaningful and the education, art culture of the person who directed to art will lose its significance. The following example seems to support these views:

*"Learning to find beautiful- That's a strange idea! If the beauty causes happiness, joy or pleasure, how can we learn it? We either feel it, or we don't."* page:34

Another issue discussed in the books is the relationship between the concepts of the beauty and goodness. Here, it is underlined that it should not be confused the concept of the beauty with the concept of the goodness. Indeed, there are the philosophers who argue that the goodness is associated with the morality in the philosophy, and the beauty is not associated with the morality. The following examples are for the relationship between beauty and goodness in the book:

*"Of course, we know there is no relationship between ugliness and evil..."* page:15

*"... There is something like real ugliness; but it is not about the body, the face or the external appearance. The real ugliness of people is an ugliness of behavior, the ugliness of morality..."* page: 19

In the book, it has been indicated that the things which we had a judgment by saying "beautiful" would not also mean nice or good morally, likewise, the things that we described as "ugly" would not mean bad.

### 3.2. Findings for book called "Think about it, Philosophical Questions for Children 1"

This series has two books. There are philosophical questions such as "What does 'being brave' mean?", "Why does human exist?", "What is money for?", "What is the time?", "How to become happy?" in the books. About three pages have been dedicated for each question, the concepts related to a variety of pictures, questions and descriptions have been discussed.

In the book called "Think about it Philosophical Questions for Children 1", the answer of the question; "Is the beauty important?" has been sought. It has been mentioned about the impossibility of a common definition of the beauty, and stated that it has been associated with historical and cultural differences. The samples on that are as follows:

*"In the 17<sup>th</sup> century, as seen in Rubens's table, women who were not chubby would not be called beautiful."* page:120

*"Some women in Asia have a tattoo done on their faces..."* page: 120

In this book, it has been mostly mentioned the beauty of nature and stated that the judgments for the beauty had been associated with the person's emotions. An example is given below:

*"If you love someone, he/she is good for you."* page: 121

In this book, the concept of beauty has been discussed under the title called "Is that beautiful or not?". It has been expressed that the concept of the beauty may vary according to the culture, the emotions, the countries lived, time, and personal liking, like the other book of this series.

### 3.3. Findings for book called "Think about it Philosophical Questions for Children 2"

In the book called "Think about it Philosophical Questions for Children 2", the answer of the question; "What is the art for?" has been sought. The answers have been given for this question based on the art movement trying to define the art. The one of the theories of art is the sense of art as a game. According to this understanding, the art saves us from everyday troubles; people forget many things when dealing with the art. The following example in the book evokes the sense of art as a game:

*"The art is sometimes for savoring the momentary beauty of life..."* page:34

Another theory of art is the sense of art as an expression. This theory says that the art is a means of expression of the artist's feelings and thoughts by focusing on the artist. The following example reminds this theory:

*"The art provides to refer deep emotions that can never be expressed in a different way. ..."* page:35

In the philosophy, one of the issue discussed is that the art is means or ends. At this point, there are the philosophers who say that each work of art is an end in itself, as well as there are those who say the art must serve as a benefit such as social, moral, personal, etc. The following two statements also represent these opposite views:

*"The art brings people who are in the same culture or nationality together."* page:34

*"The art is not necessarily something that is useful, like our legs that allows us to walk or an umbrella that protects us to get wet."* page:35

### 3.4. Finding for book called "What is Beautiful?"

In this book, the discussion for the meaning of the beauty has been considered in a poetic way. The questions are included in the book rather than texts such as descriptions or case studies and these questions are accompanied by the color pictures.

In the book called "What is Beautiful?"; various questions for the concept of beautiful have been examined for an answer. The book has largely moved on with the questions. Some of the questions discussed are "Does everything being natural mean beautiful?", "Is everything that you love beautiful?", "Is everything which people say beautiful really beautiful?", "Is something beautiful because we need it?", "Who decides that something is beautiful?", "Can we say beautiful for something that we don't understand?", and "how can it be decided if a person is beautiful?". It can be said that these are the questions which the philosophers have sought about the aesthetics throughout history. It is expressed that the definition of the beauty-concept is associated with the person liking, person's pleasure, or emotions, so it may be relative. The following expressions are the examples of this view:

*"Maybe the thing that is beautiful is not associated with the thing that others find something beautiful. The thing that is beautiful may be associated with the thing that you find something beautiful."* page:17

*"While thinking that the sound of pots and pans that collide with each other hurt our ears, the great music sounds nice and happy. Bitter and spicy taste in our mouth may burn our tongue and it is hard to swallow, but creamy and nice taste has a very soft flavor..."* page:10

The above statements have the traces of the thought that a common sense of beauty can not be accepted. In contrast to this subjectivist view, Kant says that it can not be said beautiful to everything that is likable, this can not be an objective criterion to determine the beauty, because providing benefit would change from person to person. According to him, the thing that is beautiful is beautiful separately from person evaluating it and it is accepted by everyone.

In the book, different and opposite views on what the beauty could be identified, in other words, what the criteria of beauty could be have been introduced with the questions. After the questioning, it has been concluded that the identification of beauty had been quite difficult. It has been stated that we should consider finding the answer to the question, "What is the beautiful?", the answer of this question has been a part of our daily life, and we could find the meaning of it with the help of the books, the adults, or on our own.

### 3.5. Finding for book called "What is Beauty and Art?"

In the framework of the philosophical questions in the book called "What is the Beauty and Art?", main titles related to the concepts of the beauty and the art are included, and many philosophical questions are mentioned under these titles. These questions are accompanied by the pictures; a description takes place for the relevant questions at the end of each section.

In this book, various questions for the concepts of beauty and art have been examined for an answer. Main questions that are discussed in the book and the information related to the questions are given in Table 2:

Table 2. The questions in book called "What is Beauty and Art"?

Main questions	Sub-questions
	<i>Are the things which you don't like ugly?</i>

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<i>Do we all have the same sense of beauty?</i>	<i>Does a work of art have to imitate the reality in order to be considered as beautiful? Does not a work of art need to be original and unique in order to be considered as beautiful?? Can something become beautiful for only one person?</i>
<i>What is Beautiful?</i>	<i>Can you find something that doesn't interest you beautiful? Can we find something that we find difficult to perceive beautiful? Would you find it beautiful, if a very fashionable dress was worn by everyone? Could you find a movie beautiful, even if you don't understand?</i>
<i>Do you have to understand what the beautiful is?</i>	<i>Can not you appreciate something, even if you understand that it is beautiful? Do artists want to mean something all the time? Do you have the right to interpret and understand a work of art differently from an artist? Are the artists always talented in all matters?</i>
<i>Are we all artists?</i>	<i>Do we become an artist without creating? Do the artists have a very strong imagination, or do they perceive the world more differently than we do? Couldn't a great artist be recognized by anyone?</i>
<i>Is the artist free to create?</i>	<i>Doesn't an artist choose something that he/she created? Do the effects of others restrict or enrich us? Is an actor free while playing a play written by the author? Does a famous artist lose his/her freedom?</i>
<i>What is the art for?</i>	<i>Is the art for creating a reality or for adding meaning to it? Does not a book or a movie force us to face up with the reality? Does not the art teach us to love the life much more? Do not people discuss to defend their artistic tastes?</i>

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Based on the above examples, it can be expressed that it is approached from a different angle the concept of the beauty and the art in the book called "What is the Beauty and the Art?" than the other books. Unlike other books, it has been given place to the statements giving the idea that the characteristics of the aesthetic objects have been also effective in the formation of the aesthetic judgment. The question; "*Does not a work of art become original and unique in order to be considered beautiful?*" can be given as an example. In the books previously examined, it has been stated that the aesthetic subject made valuable the aesthetic subject and it has been focused on the appreciation, the feelings and the pleasure of the aesthetic subject. However, here not only the subject, but also the aesthetic object and the artists have been included in the discussion area. The author has given place to the perspectives of both objectivist and subjectivist for having a common aesthetic judgment, or not, and has underlined that reaching a conclusion is quite difficult. After the question related to this subject, an example from the texts at the end of each section is given below:

*"Everything is not beautiful. A person, an object or a landscape must comply with certain criteria in order to deserve these words or must have some features. So, what are these criteria and features? In general, we think that only flawless, compatible or unlimited things are beautiful. But we find the things that we love beautiful, even if they don't have these features, because the beauty generally arises from the feeling which a person or a work of art activates. Doesn't it show that the beauty is depending on our perception of the people or the objects?..."*  
page:31

Again, unlike the other books; in this book, it can be said that the concept of beauty has been discussed in the context of the art, not in the format which we used for many object or situation in daily life. It can be stated that this approach have made it much closer to the philosophy.

#### 4. Conclusions and Recommendations

In this study, beauty concept in the books "Beauty and Ugliness", "Think about it Philosophical Questions for Children 1 and 2" and "What is Beauty?" is discussed by associating with natural beauty, and mostly beauty towards human beings rather than artistic beauty. Also in these books, beauty is highlighted as a relative concept and it is not possible to have any common aesthetic judgment. A subjective point of view is adopted that claims aesthetic judgments change according to individual's emotions, education, culture and period of time lived in. Rather than characteristics of an aesthetic subject, characteristics of the subject seeking it is discussed. On the other hand, in the book named "What is Beauty and Art?" questions related with both subjective and objective perspectives are included, and also beauty concept is discussed in the context of artwork. Besides, by drawing attention to the case what makes the artwork valuable is not only the subject seeking it, it is stated that the artwork may need to have some criteria. Therefore, "What is Beauty and Art?" book can be said to reflect philosophical discussions, wealth and different approaches on aesthetic space better. To add more, it can be said that this book approaches art, artist, artwork and the concept of beauty in a more philosophical aspect. Starting from this point of view, it is statable that books with philosophical wealth can lead children to look from a different standpoint and think more and this is more consistent with philosophical thinking, i.e. critical thinking. Thus, it can be said that philosophy books for children should bring children with examples and questions of diverse philosophical perspectives rather than reflecting a single philosophical point of view.

With all that, it is expressible that philosophy questions and problems regarding aesthetics can be talked over with children, and these questions or problems can be presented as objectified by associating with texts, examples and pictures. In this manner, it can be stated that philosophy books for children can be used as a tool for meeting children with philosophy and get them to make philosophy.

Philosophy for children has an educational aspect as well as philosophical extent. Therefore, it must possess some important principles in education other than including philosophic subjects. Some of these are embodying concepts by associating them with children's daily life, making use of example texts and cases and presenting questions in a way from special to general and from abstract to concrete. It can also be said that philosophic questions or problems in philosophy books for children should be prepared by taking these principals into account.

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