

Postgraduate Assignment coversheet & feedback form

THIS SHEET MUST BE THE FIRST PAGE OF THE ASSIGNMENT YOU ARE SUBMITTING
(DO NOT SEND AS A SEPARATE FILE)

For completion by the student:		
Student Name: Kehan Dong		
Module code: SICH7019 Module title: : Readings from The Compilation of Books and Writings on the Important Governing Principles	Student ID number: 2016148	Educational support needs: Yes / No
Module tutor: Dr. Sufan Chen Assignment due date: 03/08/2026		
If your module has multiple submissions please indicate which piece of work this is. 1 st ☒ 2 nd ☐ 3 rd ☐ 4 th ☐ 5 th ☐ 6 th ☐		
Word count: 3423		
I confirm that this is my original work and that I have adhered to the University policy on plagiarism. Signed <u>Dong Kehan</u>		
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Assignment Mark	
1st Marker's Provisional mark	
2nd Marker's/Moderator's provisional mark	
Agreed Internal Mark:	
External Examiner's mark (if relevant)	

Final Mark	
NB. All marks are provisional until confirmed by the Final Examination Board.	

For completion by Marker 1:	
Comments:	
Marker's signature:	Date:
For completion by Marker 2/Moderator:	
Comments:	
Marker's Signature:	Date:
AGREED INTERNAL MARK (where necessary): Comment on process on arriving at agreed mark:	

External Examiner's comments (if relevant)	
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☒ **I have not used AI in my assignment**

I confirm that I have not used any AI tools in the research and creation of this assignment. I confirm that I have not presented any AI generated materials as my own work. I confirm I have copies of my drafts, notes, and other resources I used, which I may be asked to provide in evidence.

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Zhuang Zi, the Cure for Appearance Anxiety

Module code: SICH7019

Module tutor: Dr. Sufan Chen

Student name: Kehan Dong

Student ID: 2016148

Date: 31 July 2026



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1. The Current State of Appearance Anxiety in Modern Society
2. Zhuangzi's Perspective on Beauty and Ugliness
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1. The Current State of Appearance Anxiety in Modern Society

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Appearance Anxiety

Appearance anxiety is a form of social evaluative anxiety prevalent in the era of influencer culture. It specifically pertains to an individual's preoccupation with their physical appearance and the possibility of negative social evaluations based on it, leading to persistent negative emotions such as worry, distress, fear, and dissatisfaction.

Moderate Appearance Anxiety

Boys:  37.14%

Girls:

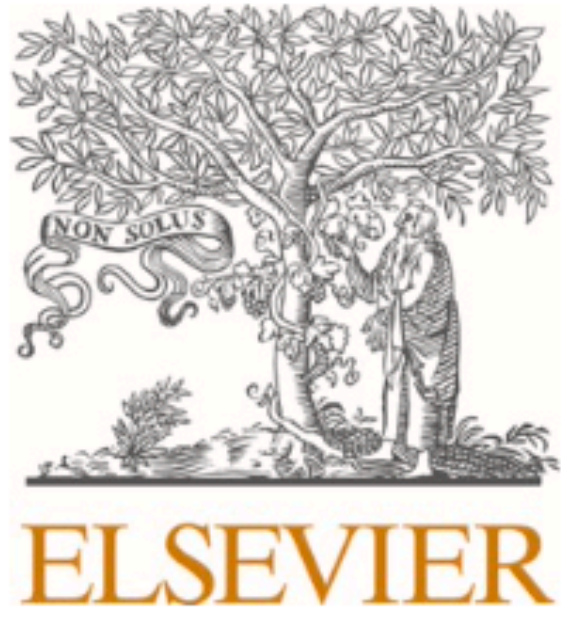


Severe Appearance Anxiety

Boys:  9.09%

Girls:  3.94%

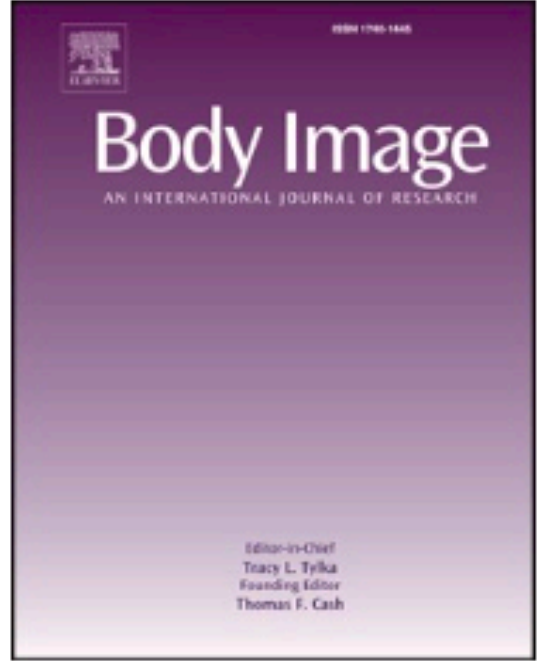
Source: [https : //s.cyoul.com/articles/2021-02/25/content_Dgj9eKCz.html](https://s.cyoul.com/articles/2021-02/25/content_Dgj9eKCz.html)



Contents lists available at [ScienceDirect](https://www.sciencedirect.com)

Body Image

journal homepage: www.journals.elsevier.com/body-image



When social media becomes a mirror: A serial mediation path from social appearance anxiety to social media fatigue among young adults

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The rise of social media platforms has significantly changed how individuals evaluate their physical appearance (Vandenbosch et al., 2022). Visually-focused social networks may facilitate social comparison by displaying idealized representations of bodies and faces (Boursier et al., 2020). Emerging adults, in particular, may internalize these ideals and develop dissatisfaction and feelings of inadequacy about their bodies (de Valle et al., 2021). Research shows that increased interaction with social media is closely related to negative body image (Holland & Tiggemann, 2016). Negative body image is defined as a self-evaluation that includes feelings of dissatisfaction, discomfort, and shame toward one's body or specific body features (Cash & Fleming, 2002). As an outward manifestation of negative body image, social appearance anxiety emerges (Doğan, 2010).

A critical repercussion of being viewed by others in sexually objectifying ways is that, over time, individuals may be coaxed to internalize an observer's perspective on self, an effect we term **self-objectification**.

Fredrickson, B. L., & Roberts, T.–A. (1997). *Objectification theory: Toward understanding women's lived experiences and mental health risks*

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HALL OF FAME

2025

1

7th Year

ROSÉ

THE NUMBER ONE GIRL IN OUR EYES



HALL OF FAME

2

4th Year

SYDNEY SWEENEY

DOMINANT HOUSEKEEPING JEANS



3

2nd Year

PHARITA

EVER DREAM THIS GIRL?



HALL OF FAME

2025



1

ZHANG ZHEHAN

4th Year

ELEGANCE... GRACE... CLASS... TALENT

HALL OF FAME



2

JACOB ELORDI

5h Year

ASCENDING TO WUTHERING HEIGHTS

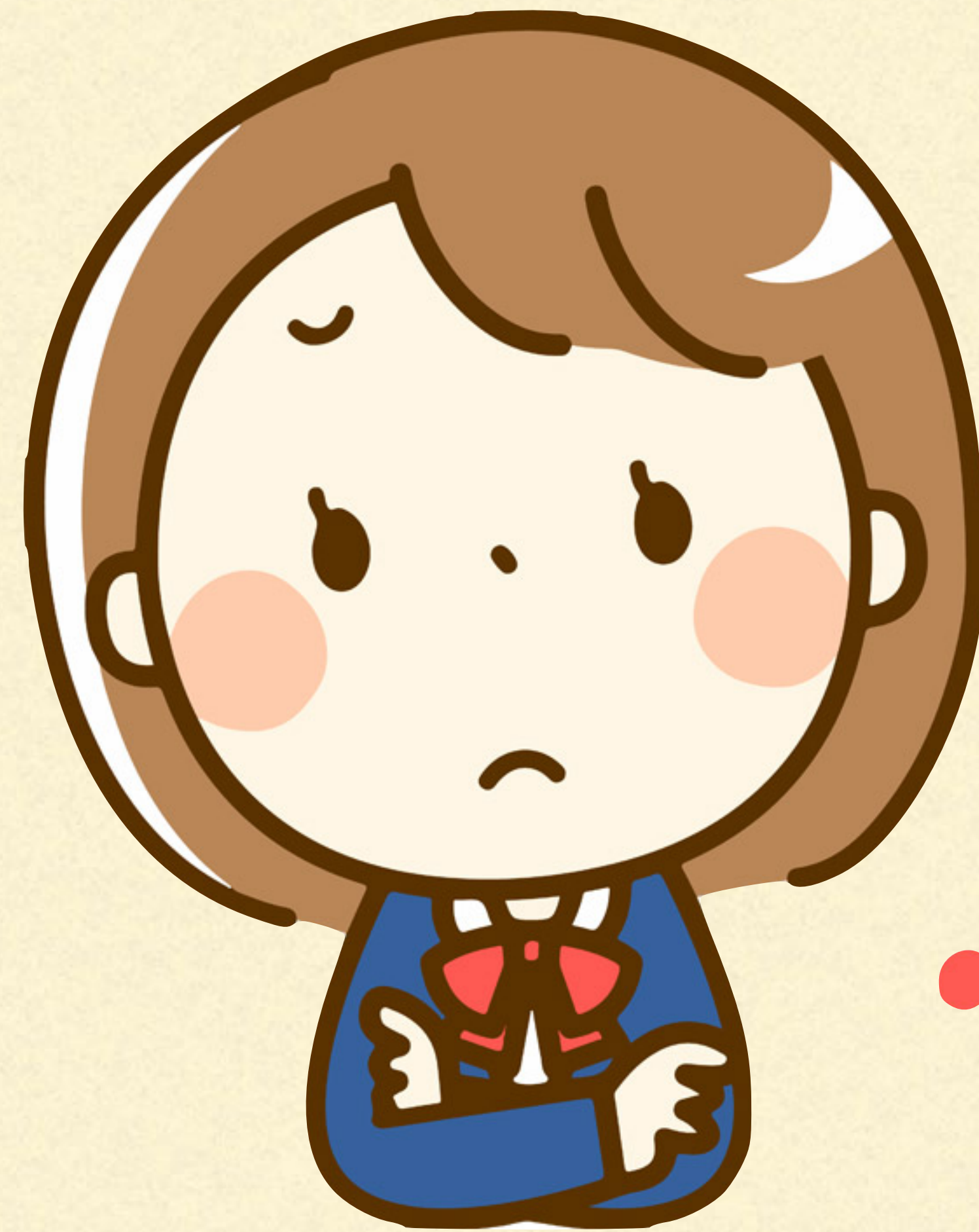


3

AYDEN SNG

3rd Year

INTROSPECTION and MAGIC



What is beauty?

When the people of the world all **know beauty**
as beauty, there arises the recognition of ugliness
天下皆知美之為美，斯惡已。

Daode jing 道德經 (Trans. D. C. Lau)

2.1 THE RELATIVITY OF BEAUTY

2.1.1 The Relativity of Beauty: Defined by Contrast

秋水時至，百川灌河，涇流之大，兩涘渚崖之間，不辯牛馬。於是焉河伯欣然自喜，以天下之美為盡在己。順流而東行，至於北海，東面而視，不見水端，於是焉河伯始旋其面目，望洋向若而歎，曰：「野語有之曰『聞道百，以為莫己若』者，我之謂也。且夫我嘗聞少仲尼之聞而輕伯夷之義者，始吾弗信，今我睹子之難窮也，吾非至於子之門則殆矣，吾長見笑於大方之家。」

《莊子·秋水》

2.1.1 The Relativity of Beauty: Defined by Contrast

The time of autumn waters had come, and all the streams were pouring into the Yellow River. The expanse of its unobstructed flow was so great that a horse on the other bank could not be distinguished from a cow. The River God was overjoyed, delighting in his own powers, believing all the world's beauty now to be encompassed within himself. Flowing eastward, he arrived at the Northern Sea. Casting his gaze toward the east, he saw no end to the waters. It was then that his face began twisting and turning, a whirlpool of features, in his attempt to take the sea in his sights.

Zhuangzi, Autumn Waters (Trans. Brook Ziporyn)

2.1.1 The Relativity of Beauty: Defined by Contrast

He then addressed Ruo of the Northern Sea with a sigh: “There is a saying in the outlands: ‘He who hears the Course a mere hundred times believes no one can compare with him.’ This describes me perfectly. When I first heard that there are those who belittle the erudition of Confucius and the righteousness of Bo Yi, I didn’t believe it. But now I have seen your vastness with my own eyes. If I had never come here to your gate, I might have become a laughingstock to the masters of the Great Purview!”

Zhuangzi, Autumn Waters (Trans. Brook Ziporyn)

2.1.2 The Relativity of Beauty: Subject to Individual Perception

While humans regard Mao Qiang and Lady Li as great beauties—but when fish see them they dart into the depths, when birds see them they soar into the skies, when deer see them they bolt away without looking back. Which of these four ‘knows’ what is rightly alluring?

毛嬙、麗姬，人之所美也，魚見之深入，鳥見之高飛，麋鹿見之決驟。四者孰知天下之正色哉？

Zhuangzi, Equalizing Assessments of Things (Trans. Brook Ziporyn)

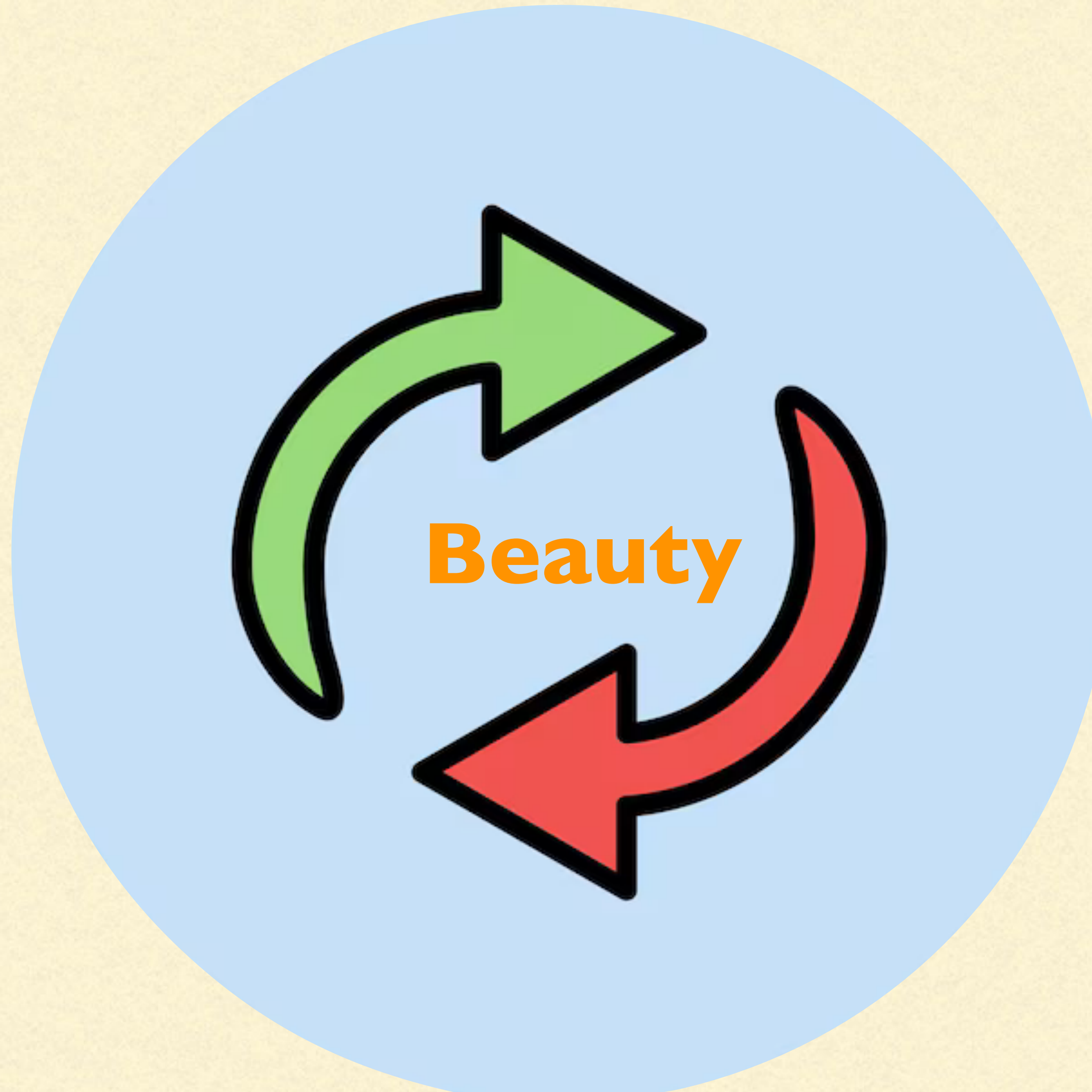
2.2 BEAUTY EVOLVES OVER TIME

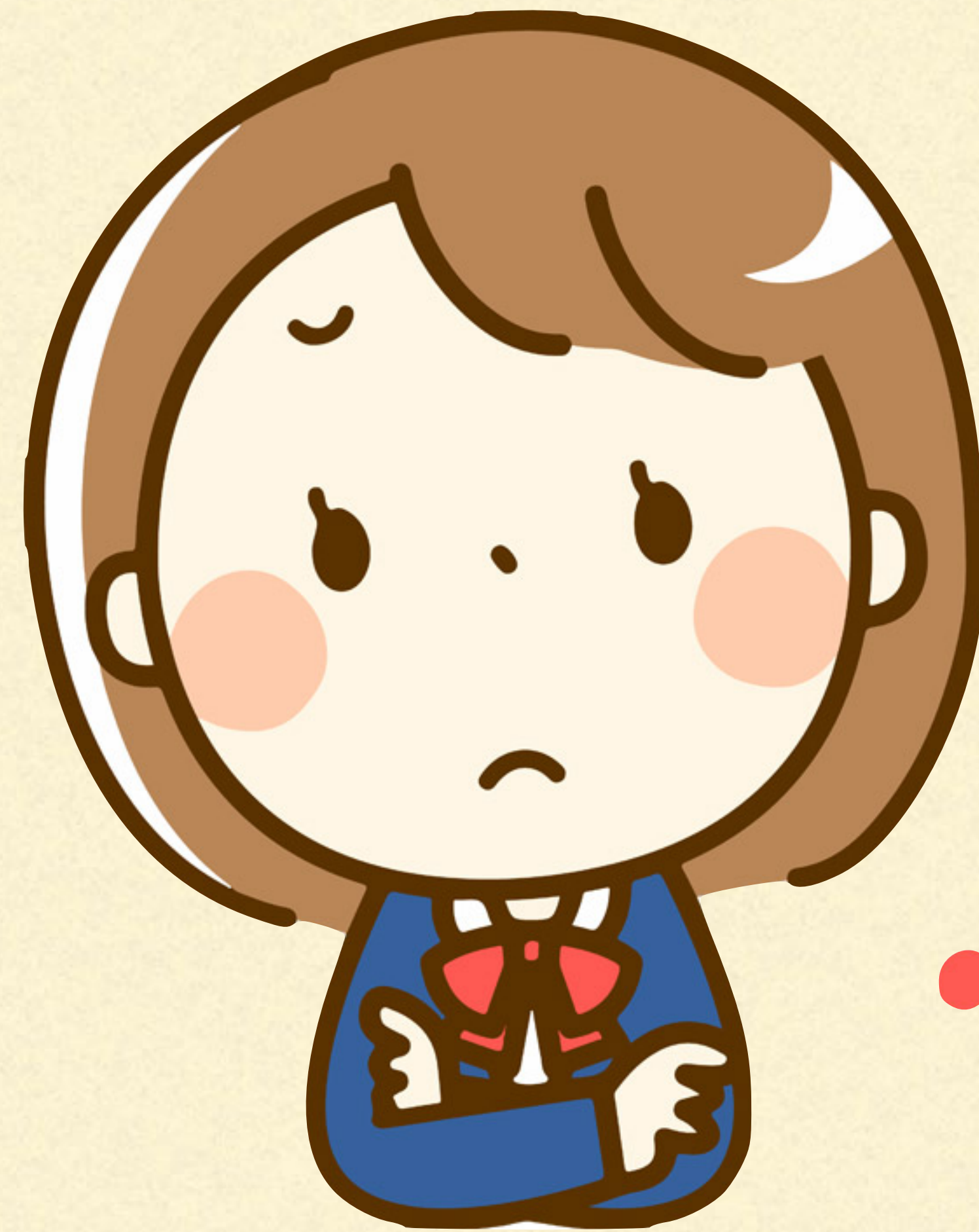
Yangzi was traveling to Song and lodging at a roadside inn. There were two concubines there, one beautiful and the other ugly, but the ugly one was honored while the beautiful one was disparaged. Yangzi asked why. The little innkeeper told him, “The beautiful one thinks herself beautiful, but I do not think of her as beautiful. The ugly one thinks herself ugly, but I do not think of her as ugly.”

陽子之宋，宿於逆旅。逆旅有妾二人，其一人美，其一人惡，惡者貴而美者賤。陽子問其故，逆旅小子對曰：「其美者自美，吾不知其美也；其惡者自惡，吾不知其惡也。」

-
- Cheng Xuanying's commentary: Those who are beautiful **drink on their beauty**, causing others to forget it. Those who are considered ugly **remain humble**, causing others to overlook their ugliness.
 - 成玄英疏：美者恃其美，故人忘其美而不知也；惡者謙下自惡，故人忘其惡而不知也。

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- The Relativity of Beauty
 - Beauty Is Defined by Contrast
 - Beauty Depends on the Subject to Individual Perception
 - Beauty Evolves Over Time





What is beauty?

What is beauty?!



For whatever we may define as a beam as opposed to a pillar, as a leper as opposed to the great beauty Xishi, or whatever might be from some perspective strange, grotesque, uncanny, or deceptive, there is the *Dao* that opens them into one another, connecting them to form a oneness.

故為是舉莛與楹，厲與西施，恢恠憭怪，道通為一。

Zhuangzi, Equalizing Assessments of Things (Trans. Brook Ziporyn, with modifications)

2.3 THE CONCEPT OF ABSOLUTE BEAUTY IN *ZHUANGZI*

2.3.1.Rejecting Conventional Beauty

- Alas! This age takes shapes, forms, names, and sounds as sufficient to attain the reality of that something else. **But** shapes, forms, names and sounds are ultimately not sufficient to get at what is real there.
- 悲夫！世人以形色名聲為足以得彼之情！夫形色名聲果不足以得彼之情。

Zhuangzi, Equalizing Assessments of Things (Trans.Brook Ziporyn)

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Thus where the **intrinsic virtuosities** excel, the physical form is forgotten.

德有所長，而形有所忘。

Zhuangzi, Fragmentations I Betokening Full Virtuosity (Trans. Brook Ziporyn)

2.3.1. Rejecting Conventional Beauty

Here you and I have been wandering together
on the inner side of the corporeal—is it not
wrong of you to seek me on its outer side?

今子與我遊於形骸之內，而子索我於形骸
之外，不亦過乎！



申徒嘉 Shentujia

Zhuangzi, Fragmentations I Betokening Full Virtuosity (Trans. Brook Ziporyn)

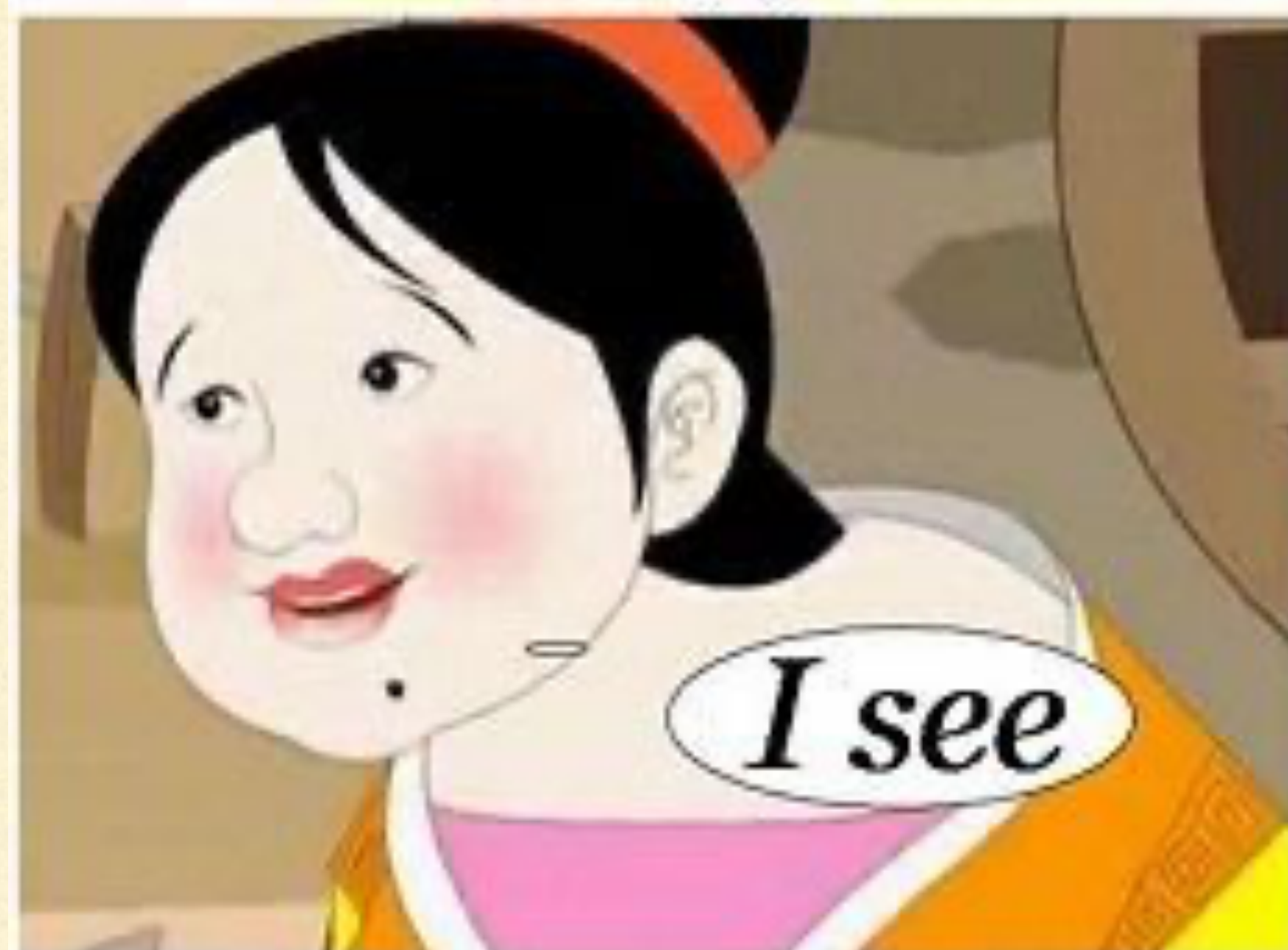
2.3.2 Pursuing Metaphysical and Natural Beauty

- *Dao* gives him a certain demeanor. Heaven gives him a certain physical form.
- 道與之貌，天與之形。

2.3.2 Pursuing Metaphysical and Natural Beauty

- Unhewn and unadorned, there is yet no one in the world who can compete with such beauty.
- 樸素而天下莫能與之爭美。

Zhuangzi, Heaven's Course (Trans. Brook Ziporyn)



2.3.2 Pursuing Metaphysical and Natural Beauty

- This ugly neighbor knew that Xishi frowning was beautiful but she did not know what made it beautiful.
- 彼知瞋美而不知瞋之所以美。

Zhuangzi, The Spinning of the Heaven (Trans. Brook Ziporyn, with modification)



2.2.2 Pursuing Metaphysical and Natural Beauty

- The men of olden times **changed externally** but **not internally**.
- 古之人**外化**而**內不化**。

Zhuangzi, Knowinghood Journeyed North (Trans. Brook Ziporyn)

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Thank you for listening♥♥

