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Giora Hon, Bernard R. Goldstein

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Many literary critics seem to think that an hypothesis about obscure and remote questions of history can be refuted by a simple demand for the production of more evidence than in fact exists. The demand is as easy to make as it is impossible to satisfy. But the true test of an hypothesis, if it cannot be shown to conflict with known truths, is the number of facts that it correlates and explains. Francis M. Cornford [1914] 1934, 220. It was in the autumn of 1997 that the research project leading to this publication began. One of us [GH], while a visiting fellow at the Center for Philosophy of Science (University of Pittsburgh), gave a talk entitled, "Proportions and Identity: The Aesthetic Aspect of Symmetry". The presentation focused on a confusion surrounding the concept of symmetry: it exhibits unity, yet it is often claimed to reveal a form of beauty, namely, harmony, which requires a variety of elements. In the audience was the co-author of this book [BRG] who responded with enthusiasm, seeking to extend the discussion of this issue to historical sources in earlier periods.

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