

Three Evolutions of Western Time Art

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Abstract: Time passes on just like running stream, not ceasing day or night! Time is one of the oldest propositions, and it is also an entity full of mysterious power. The expression of time in art shows a splendid light. Since its beginning, the study of time art has gone through ancient civilizations and classic periods. The concepts of “time”, “intuition” and “during” by Henri Bergson bring about the turning of the art of time, which makes the ancient linear view of time not be affected obviously then. In the later period, Gilles Deleuze completed the visualization of time philosophy and released the life of time art. His theory about film art reversed the traditional positions of the creators and audience -- after the creator acts as a guide, he immediately makes the audience the master of the movie, extracting pure audiovisual images, which also becomes the extension of time itself.

1. Introduction

Zeno of Elea proposed the famous “Arrow Paradox”, which divides time while dividing material space, forming a standard for measuring time by space. The sense of time brought by this criterion is still a direct feeling of space, without a fulcrum that makes time itself manifest. The direct description of time is divided into three parts like space -- past, present, and future. This hard segmentation basically classifies time as a static scatter description, “Time and space are irretrievably locked together, forming a single dimension.”^[1] “if consciousness only provides us with the pure present-stage giving of the object, and if the stream of consciousness is a series of disconnected points of experience, like a string of pearls, then the perception of time objects (and the perception of inheritance and change) will be impossible.”^[2] Scattered points touch only the skin of time and cannot touch its essence. The dynamic changes of time itself are still so vague that it cannot be described. For thousands of years, the concept that human beings describe time by space is incomplete and too narrow. As a result, we only hold of a branch and think it is the whole tree. Just like replacing the person with a photo, the organic life is eliminated with the cross-section of inorganic matter, and seeing the photo is not the same as seeing the person.

Aesthetics has always provided support for sympathy-centric narratives. The common communication of mankind stems from the cherishment of life, and the embodiment of the essence of life is time. Immortality is the common aspiration of mankind throughout the ages, and therefore, mankind is extremely keen to describe the concept of time. The ancient Egyptians believed that the meaning of life is much slight than that of death, and that only death can truly enter the track of

time and make objects obtain eternity. They also made magnificent pyramids to resist the apparent passing of time. Although this approach still expresses the depth of time in space, it exposes secret desire of human beings for time itself. The Ancient Egyptian art is basically synonymous with this desire. Ancient Egyptian sculptures used dead bodies as specimens and discarded living bodies in the hope that they could remain unchanged in the face of eternally changing time. For thousands of years, the vigorous exploration in art is to a large extent to enter time. A large number of western myths describe the cycle of life, and a lot of painters and sculptors also show Christ's resurrection from the dead. Both Jung and Fry believed that mythology is the motif of artistic creation all over the world. The reason why myths are deified and put on a pedestal is precisely because they represent eternal life, and the apparent flow of time will not affect it. The statue of Venus which was created before 30,000 BC and found in Willingdorf is a typical example. This crude statue is revered as the eternal mother goddess because it highlights the ability to create life, and it is also a model of beauty. At the same time, artists were also eager to express eternity in their paintings, and tried their best to paint pictures to the extreme of beauty. They tried to bring this extreme closer to the essence of time, anchor the fixed paintings on the gear of time, which also makes the description of great works of art inexhaustible. Sontag opposed interpretation with a clear attitude, because she held the essence of artwork cannot be described in a constant space. Its mystery lies in its eternity, and the analysis of its content and form can only touch the surface of time. It is possible to experience the depth of consciousness and feel the real time just when it is not analyzed. The greatness of "Mona Lisa" is that it embodies eternity, which is used to directly feel and cannot be analyzed.

There is another approach to the study of time. On the one hand, human beings admire the freedom of time, but on the other hand, they hope that time can advance in accordance with human ideals, and they are not satisfied with unrestrained freedom. "It is manifested in the regulation of freedom. From an artistic point of view, it is embodied in the ethics of art or the detour from ethics to art. It implies a new method that combines ethical values with social welfare whose meaning has been amplified, including various interrelationships belonging to the personal realm or environment..."^[3] In the ancient Greek period, Plato built an ideal country with major premises wrapped in minor premises as a method, with justice as the general principle which can realize self-rights under the premise of ensuring the rights of the entire nation. Only under these conditions can one's own freedom and interests be guaranteed and can the country continue to develop in perpetuity. Kant proposed in *Practical Rational Criticism* that individuals feel free because of conscience, and that the fundamental freedom lies in the freedom of the entire mankind. He believed that freedom is the freedom created by "self" and others, and that it is the eternal moral order in the heart; human beings compromise because of freedom, and also are free because of compromise, which inevitably requires self-discipline. Kant pointed out that art is a symbol of morality and that the root of morality lies in the freedom of self-discipline because of conscience, which invisibly affirms the freedom of art. At the same time, Kant was critical of the analysis of art, because he thought it had already imposed restrictions on art. He advocated natural art, but art still follows certain laws after all. Therefore, Kant used "like to be" to describe art to ensure the freedom of art and at the same time get closer to free time. The romanticist Friedrich Schelling took this principle to the extreme. According to his viewpoint, human beings have experienced the sameness in art, witnessed the unity of sensibility and reason in art, and art is the top of the pyramid of the entire history of metaphysics. He pointed out in *Freiheitsschrift* that "there is no other principle to explain the world apart from the freedom of the gods, and it can only demonstrate and prove itself by itself." In addition, he also held that "the starting and ending point of the whole philosophy is freedom", and people's freedom can only be achieved in art. In the mind of Friedrich Schelling, freedom is arbitrary and also inevitable, and the entire history is the performance of freedom and

inevitable. Human beings have achieved absolute freedom of will in the process of identifying with art, thereby keeping their spirit in sync with time.

2. The Commencement of Henri Bergson

Bergson held a negative attitude towards the unified philosophical view. He believed that the description of time in traditional philosophy itself is a static view, and that this doctrine causes human thinking to come to an end and fall into a state of eternal passivity and rigidity. To overcome this model, it is needed to re-understand time and turn passiveness into activeness, so as to realize the artistic transformation under the subjective consciousness. He held that time itself is a continuation of two dimensions. “This is a kind of continuity, it changes all the time, in all its aspects.”^[4] It connects matter on the one hand, and communicates with life on the other. “The entire universe is a conflict of two opposite movements: life climbs upward, while matter falls downward.”^[5] Just as a bullet is inevitably subjected to resistance in the barrel when it is fired from the barrel, time is not an average segment for no reason.

Denying the linear view of time in *Time and Free Will*, he discarded the suppression of time by space in the past, and redefined the past and the future. At the same time, he also pointed out that the linear view of time has a great constraint on the will of human beings, and that getting rid of this view of time will liberate the fixed thinking mode. In *Matter and Memory* and *Creative Evolution*, he stated that free will is exactly memory, which is not a traditional memory model, but enters another kind of consciousness at the moment of intuition. This kind of consciousness corresponds to matter and is a state of incorporation. “The core foundation lies in the inherent infinity of the subject that can be created in the inherent infinity of the text.”^[6] Just as in *A la recherche du temps perdu*, Marcel Proust entered this state through Madeleine snacks, and then realized the criss-cross between the past and the future in a short period of time. This intuitive state of consciousness is usually suppressed by linear time, and it is difficult to experience under normal conditions, unless the spatialized time is decompressed and then the shackles of traditional time are lifted. This is a kind of “flowing time. We can call it a (mainly metaphor) movement inherent in the current theoretical model that promotes the continuous duplication and modification of social life.”^[7] Bergson also pointed out that conventional consciousness often produces this intuition when human beings are on the verge of extreme conditions. Drowning people often feel the rush of real time in an instant, which implies that a turbulent undercurrent of intuition is actually hidden under the general consciousness. Once a person enters this state of intuition, his consciousness will co-exist with time, and at this time his intuition can feel the real time.

Extension itself is creation. It continuously generates to both ends, and it is a whole. Because eternity is constantly changing and has no fixed form, it vanishes “present”. Intuition feels the overall strength through continuity, and at the same time becomes the possibility of all generations.

Bergson's discourse on art is also closely attached to his view of time. He suggested that art focuses on experience rather than rational analysis. Even if the painter, model and paint are all ready and people have understood the artist's style, analysis still cannot meet the needs of experience, just as the words which are used to describe experience cannot replace the experience itself. For Bergson, art is a big tree which would grow freely like time stretches, but logical analysis is to cut down the big tree and make it dead; this method of denying the growth of life denies the continuity of time, and thus continues the traditional rigid metaphysics, which inevitably cannot bring intuitive experience. Bergson admired the natural state of art, affirmed that art comes very naturally, and resolutely opposed the established rules in artistic creation.

The commencement of Bergson's view of time coincided with the prevalence of Russian formalism and structuralism. The structuralists' analysis of art was clear and directly linked to the

traditional metaphysical view of nature, which was naturally sought after by people then. On the other hand, Bergson's artistic view was full of obscurity, similar to images that were out of focus, and thus the feelings of viewers were also ambiguous and paradoxical. Bergson also held unconventional ideas to art creation, which is difficult to operate. What's more deadly is that although he denied rationality, he had to carry out rational analysis all the time. As a result, his series of theories and propositions did not receive enough attention at the time, and his expectation of expressing the duration of time with artistic intuition was delayed for a while.

3. The Rise of Gilles Deleuze

Deleuze highly praised Bergson's theory about time, calling his philosophy dynamic rather than static. He also discovered that Bergson's interpretation of art was incomplete. He made a new interpretation of his views and incorporated new ideas to make it more thoroughly persuasive.

Like Bergson, Deleuze opposed rationality and emphasized differences. Revisiting Spinoza's philosophy, he emphasized the physical sense to deny the traditional metaphysics' boasting of rationality. Unlike Bergson, Deleuze used reason to excavate sensibility instead of directly squeezing reason out of intuition like Bergson. Deleuze re-discovered the meaning with the help of the object-symbol-interpretation item by Peirce's *Philosophy of Communication*. A symbol corresponds to a certain interpretation item, and when the interpretation item changes, new symbols will produce to inspire his own creative inspiration. "Explanation items keep turning into new symbols, in such a continuous way that it is infinite."^[8] In Deleuze's view, meaning has no end and never changes. This formed his "salvage" idea, that is, the meaning is not created but discovered, and fishermen fish instead of raising fish. On the one hand, this concept did not exclude the use of reason, and on the other hand, it also circumvented the traditional metaphysical view of essence represented by Levi Strauss, which started with Saussure.

Later, in order to re-travel Bergson's view of continuous time and also overcome the binary opposition between matter and thought, Deleuze decided to replace philosophical thinking with an artistic way of thinking. He ingeniously discovered that film has the potential of continuity, and believed that the film itself is the philosophy of continuity. Subsequently, Deleuze's film ideas were put on a pedestal, and gradually penetrated into many other art forms. In order to deny the binary opposition and realize the unity of mind and matter, he first used Metz's Semiotics of the Cinema as the object of flogging, because his theory about cinema stipulates film as a predetermined combined segment mode, which also denies the life of film. Deleuze's actual end point of attack was structuralism and metaphysical essence view. However, Metz was unhappy because of this, which partly led to his suicide with a gun. Deleuze is particularly against the Hollywood pros and cons of playing Lens. He stated that this technique just passed through the low-level perception stage and that a new springboard must be found for the uprising in order to enter the time image. The production of new images inevitably stimulates new vitality towards the future. In *A Thousand Plateaus*, Deleuze proposed the concept of "molecules" and "gram molecule" and he believed that the closer to the low-end objects, the more likely it is to generate everything. Scenery shot has a strong attraction for Deleuze. He believed that audience slide into the image in an instant, and their brain and the screen are merged into one, opening up a radical liberation vision in which the subject relies on the original power to generate itself. From then on, the audience begin to take over the movie to be on to the continuity of time. The movie is therefore continuously created and generated, and finally becomes a time exhibition.

In order to illustrate more vividly, Deleuze used Bergson's inverted and rotating cone as an example. The image is constantly approaching the cusp in the process of movement, and thinking continues to emerge, and immediately enters a larger exhibition. At this moment, it is driving more

and more meanings and producing new possibilities. The so-called crystalline image by Deleuze finally escapes from physical time and moves towards true continuous time. Because this crystal is actually a multi-dimensional surface capable of expressing non-linear time series connections, it simultaneously preserves the memory of the past. It does not need to follow the linear time and space, and can gush out the accumulated vitality at any time. In this continuous process, audience become the true master of art and the creator of images. Just as the sugar in a cup of water melts, it is not the water that has changed, but the world has changed. Audience only need to gently correspond to an image to dance with the entire movie.

4. Conclusion

The above analysis is a combing of the three stages of time art. Western time art has different themes and characteristics in its different historical stages, presenting a complete and continuous evolution trajectory. "The difference between past, present, and future is only meaningful in each sequence, and therefore they cannot be considered to be ultimately true."^[9] Because of this, the research on the art of time has never stopped. So, what will happen in the future? It is an extremely difficult question to answer, but it is undeniable that it will be richer and more comprehensive.

It is undeniable that "with the obvious involvement of globalization in anthropological analysis, the concept of bounded culture has become more and more problematic. Social experience is a feeling of 'flowing' and it exists in a global capitalist system composed of capital, labor and other 'flows'. It has clearly become the dominant paradigm -- these propositions, in turn, are based on the concept of implied time trends or historical trends."^[10] It can be seen that the changes in world cultural communication are actually determined by the speed of implicit time flow.

The perception of time is extremely complicated. Husserl pointed out in *Phenomenology of Internal Time Consciousness* that there are two ways to perceive time: active understanding and primitive self-image. Our active understanding in reality can only represent one dimension of time, while the truly hidden time has more dimensions. "It is impossible for a temporal thing to manifest itself at once, and it is only a manifestation of the self-consciousness of a temporal object."^[11] The exploration of different aspects of time is an important task in the future.

According to big data on human cells by the Tencent Cloud Community, an adult human body weighing 60 to 80 kilograms has about 46 to 68 trillion cells, and an adult male loses approximately 960,000 cells per minute, while a similar number of cells are reborn. However, we who survive by "rational Rutger" are not aware of the constant change and rebirth. Similarly, time itself is constantly being produced. However, if we want to experience time itself at a glance, only by relying on art can we truly blend the ages in an instant. And thus, art is the key to the real time under the surface time.

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