

The Connotation of Aesthetic Education and the Implementation Paths of Aesthetic Education in Universities in the New Era of China

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Abstract: This paper adopts the method of combining historical vision and contemporary vision, on the one hand, objectively points out that since the concept of Aesthetic Education was proposed in China in the early 20th century, its connotation has not been arts education in a narrow sense, but has a richer sense of beauty education; On the other hand, based on the present, it explores the implementation paths and development direction of Aesthetic Education in the new era, and points out that Aesthetic Education in colleges and universities should be reformed from the aspects of teaching methods, teaching content, and evaluation mechanisms. Elevate the traditional emphasis on sensory pleasure of Aesthetic Education to a more reflective appreciative Aesthetic Education, so as to create a higher level of Aesthetic Education that integrates faith, culture, creativity, expression and aesthetics.

1. Introduction

“Beauty” is a more complex and multi-meaning existence, it can be pleasing to the eye, it can also be a sublime that can be sung and cried, it can be a realistic depiction and reproduction, and it can also be an abstract emotional expression. However, no matter what appearance it presents, Aesthetic Education is very closely related to other social and cultural life--Aesthetic Education is related to craft technology, material media, formal expression, and more importantly, ideological feelings and spiritual awareness. Therefore, we should not only stop at the level of Sensual surface forms and themes, but also scientifically examine the meaning of the beauty in different historical periods and social relations and the reasons for its emergence through appearances.

What is the essence of the Beauty? Historical aesthetes and art theorists have never stopped asking this question: some people think that it is the expression of emotions, the expression of the heart, the explosion of instinctive desires, or games and self-entertainment; Some people think that it is the meaningful forms or emotional symbols. All these have formed a situation in which a hundred schools of thought are contending. However, although the above views have their rational side, they are only developed from a single angle or a single level, and cannot fully explain the nature of the Beauty. Only Marxist expositions on the nature of the Beauty can uphold the methodology of historical materialism and dialectical materialism and discuss them from multiple angles and levels.

On the one hand, this paper adopts a historical perspective to objectively introduce the connotation of Aesthetic Education when it was first introduced to China; On the other hand, based on the present, explore the implementation paths and development direction of Aesthetic Education in the New Era of China.

2. Not Fine Arts Education, it's Aesthetic Education

In 1917, Yuanpei Cai (1868-1940), president of Peking University, published an article in *New Youth* entitled *Replacing Religion with Aesthetic Education*, which is considered to be the starting point of the Aesthetic Education in China's modern sense. Under the guidance of this idea, the Beijing Art School, China's first national art school, was established, with Jin Zheng (1883-1959), who returned from studying at Kyoto Municipal Painting College in Japan, as the principal. In the spring of 1918, the Beijing Daily published the Beijing Art School' admissions brochure on the front page, and set up examination centers outside Beijing in Shanghai and Wuchang to expand its social influence. By the beginning of the semester on April 15, although the original plan of 50 students in the painting department and the pattern department each did not meet, the model of promoting painting skills among the general public to spread the concept of Aesthetic Education was started. [1]

At the same time that Yuanpei Cai appointed Jin Zheng to prepare for the establishment of the Beijing Art School, and initiated the “Peking University Painting Research Association” at Peking University by himself, which was the first new type of painting art research organization in modern Chinese history, and the tutor team gathered Shizeng Chen (1876-1923), Peiheng Hu (1892-1962), Beihong Xu (1895-1953) and other emerging artists who penetrated the east and the west. Obviously, Mr. Yuanpei Cai's intention is not only to establish a special art school, but also to increase the share of art in comprehensive schools.

As early as 1917, before Yuanpei Cai formally proposed the theory of “Replacing Religion with Aesthetic Education”, he envisioned the status of Aesthetic Education in the new education system. In 1912, when he was the director of the Ministry of Education, he clarified his new proposition on education and proposed a new “five isms” in line with the republican era--military nationalism, materialism, moral education, Aesthetic Education, and world view education, of which the first three were subordinate to political education, while Aesthetic Education and world outlook were more related to the cultivation of temperament and spirit than politics. Aesthetic Education accounts for 25%, second only to materialism at 40%, while other moral education accounts for 20%, military nationalism accounts for 10%, and worldview accounts for 5%. It can be seen that Yuanpei Cai attaches great importance to Aesthetic Education. [2]This point also resonated with progressive intellectuals headed by Xun Lu, who in 1913 published *the Opinion on the Proposed Broadcast of Art*, which discussed in detail “what is fine art”, “the category of fine art”, “the purpose of fine art” and other related issues, and advocated the new printmaking movement in the 1930s, making painting a weapon of battle like literature. The expansion of art academies and art activities established the important position of art education in the new education system in the early 20th century.

Mr. Yuanpei Cai has devoted a lot of effort to China's art education, not only writing many articles advocating “cultural movements should not forget Aesthetic Education”, but also sending his eldest daughter William Cai (1904-1939) to Europe to study oil painting, and Ms. William Cai has become the first generation of painters engaged in Western painting education in China. In France, Yuanpei Cai met the young painter Fengmian Lin (1900-1991) and the aesthetic theorist and critic Wenzheng Lin (1902-1989). It was also under the infection of Yuanpei Cai's thought that Fengmian Lin returned to China and worked with Yuanpei Cai to prepare for the establishment of

the Hangzhou National Academy of Arts, the predecessor of today's China Academy of Art, with Fengmian Lin as the president. At the same time, Wenzheng Lin and William Cai got married, and the couple also joined the teaching staff of the Hangzhou National Academy of Arts, dedicating their lives to building the prototype of Chinese art education in the 20th century.

However, in the context of the new education advocated by Yuanpei Cai, Aesthetic Education is not completely equivalent to arts education, and Yuanpei Cai's Aesthetic Education actually comes from the aesthetic ideas of Schiller (1759-1805), which he came into contact with in Germany, which is a kind of Aesthetic Education at a deeper spiritual level, which refers to utilitarian and irrelevant. Many art forms that evoke noble emotions and aesthetic feelings. This is reflected in his 1931 essay *Aesthetic Education in China in the Past Twenty-five Years* and *Religion in Aesthetic Education* published in 1932. On the one hand, Mr. Yuanpei Cai has seen the achievements of Chinese Aesthetic Education in the past 25 years, especially in the establishment of specialized art schools, the cultivation of art talents, and the social function of fine arts, but he is also aware of the misunderstanding of Aesthetic Education and Replacing Religion with Aesthetic Education in the general public. Yuanpei Cai has reiterated many times not to confuse Aesthetic Education with arts education.

In Yuanpei Cai's view, "all the courses in the school have nothing to do with Aesthetic Education." Not only that, "Aesthetic Education" cannot be limited to college education. In his article "Implementation Methods of Aesthetic Education" published in the *Journal of Education* in 1922, he pointed out that Aesthetic Education should be carried out simultaneously from the three levels of family education, school education and social education, and in addition to receiving special education in schools, visual experience in art galleries and social public environments is also particularly important. [3]

This is a concept of Aesthetic Education that pays more attention to abstract spirituality and aesthetic emotions, which can be manifested in painting, sculpture, architecture, music, clothing, everyday objects and everything else. This concept also has the forward-looking nature of national Aesthetic Education, although the conditions are not yet mature in terms of the social situation at that time, but from the current perspective, this concept is undoubtedly advanced and scientific.

3. Update the Implementation Path of Aesthetic Education in Colleges and Universities in the Context of the New Era of China

The 21st century is an era of rapid development of science and technology, and the drastic changes in social life have brought new thinking and new possibilities to the development of Aesthetic Education. Since the second half of the 20th century, the intervention of new materials and new media has further broken the barriers of category theory, installation art, land art, performance art, a series of new terms have sprung up, painting, sculpture, architecture, design, photography, video, music, dance, performance and other majors. The lines are blurring. [4] Therefore, Aesthetic Education, especially in Chinese universities in the context of the new era, should be based on multidisciplinary knowledge background and integrate faith, culture, creativity, expression and aesthetics at a higher level of Aesthetic Education. [5]

In line with the background of the new era of China, the implementation paths of Aesthetic Education in colleges and universities has also changed.

First of all, from the level of faith power and cultural power. Aesthetic Education is not ideological and political education, but the foundation and goal of Aesthetic Education must stress politics, and stressing politics is not only ideological and political study, but should be organically combined with specific professional knowledge to form a spiritual joint force with aesthetic consciousness and integrating faith and cultural power. From the level of creativity and expression.

Aesthetic Education is neither simple theoretical learning nor simple skill training, but inseparable from theoretical learning and cannot be separated from skill training, so theory and practice should be combined to form a practical synergy with aesthetic consciousness and integrating creativity and expression.

Secondly, from the specific implementation level. The concept of Aesthetic Education in the context of the new era of China puts forward more requirements for the main body of teaching, but in terms of actual conditions, it is difficult to complete the training of talents with a certain scale in a short period of time. Therefore, it is a very good choice to use the existing social Aesthetic Education platform. Taking the “university + museum” model as an example, it can effectively realize the benefits of space expansion, faculty drainage and information interaction. [6]This model has been adopted by some colleges and universities for Aesthetic Education, such as the special construction course of Aesthetic Education of Northern Transportation University “University Aesthetic Education Practice”, through the APP to set up check-in places and learning packages, on the one hand, the class location has become a number of different museums and lecture halls, so that the classroom is not limited by the limitation of space and location and has mobility; On the other hand, the teaching content of the same course has been expanded, and the teaching resources have become richer and more diverse, so that the transmission of knowledge is not limited by the limitations of teachers but diverse. In addition, the teaching method of combining online and offline, classroom teaching and field research makes the teaching form more flexible, which greatly enhances students' enthusiasm and autonomy for learning.

Moreover, from the perspective of the evaluation mechanism. Because Aesthetic Education involves many factors such as faith, culture, creativity, expression and aesthetics, and integrates ideological and political education and professional education, theoretical learning and skill training, the evaluation mechanism of the curriculum should also integrate the evaluation indicators of ideological and political education and professional education, theoretical learning and skill training. Of course, this process is not a simple combination of $1+1=2$, just as the teaching forms are diversified, the assessment methods should also be three-dimensional and diversified, and the proportion of process assessment should be increased to achieve the integration between faith, culture, creativity, expression and aesthetics, so as to achieve moisturizing and silent Cultivate like this.

To this end, the starting point of Aesthetic Education in colleges and universities should be raised from the sensual level to the appreciative level. To enjoy the beautiful things emphasizing sensory pleasure, while “appreciation” strengthens the role and value of “reflection” on the basis of the sensual level. “Appreciation” in Chinese is “Jian”. The original meaning of “Jian” is the metal container containing water in ancient times, and by extension, “using water as a mirror to reflect on oneself”. Its meaning is not “seeing” on the surface, but in the rational “reflection” behind “watching”.

“Enjoy” and “appreciation” belong to different ways of receiving aesthetics, but the former is a relatively popular receiving activity, a person does not need to receive too much professional training, does not need to have too much knowledge structure can be carried out receiving activities; The latter has higher requirements, requiring the recipient to be more active in communicating with the phenomenon of the beauty, and this initiative not only refers to the attitude of acceptance, but also requires the recipient to take the initiative to master relevant knowledge, understand the law of beauty behind the phenomenon of beauty, and then use rational thinking to analyze, judge and evaluate the work of beauty, so as to establish the consciousness of beauty in line with the core values of socialism and create an expression of beauty that conforms to the core values of socialism.

4. Conclusion

To sum up, by restoring the historical context of Aesthetic Education in China in the early 20th century, we will find that Aesthetic Education has never been arts education in a narrow sense, but has a richer senses. In the 21st century, on the one hand, with the progress of science and technology and the continuous differentiation and integration of subjects, on the other hand, as China enters a new era, Aesthetic Education in colleges and universities should explore implementation paths from teaching methods, teaching content, assessment mechanisms, and so on, so that the Aesthetic Education in colleges and universities can be upgraded from the level of appreciation to the level of appreciation, and create Aesthetic Education that integrates faith, culture, creativity, expression and aesthetics, and adapts to the characteristics of the new era. Therefor the audience can establish a sense of beauty that conforms to the core values of socialism, and create an expression of beauty that conforms to the core values of socialism.

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