

The Effects of Positive Art Ethics on Shaping Aesthetical Personality

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Keywords: Positive art ethics; Aesthetic personality; Aesthetic education

Abstract: Art is completely an inside job, and the taste of it is dependent on its creators' personality. For an artist, it's his artistic personality that promotes his artistic career. On the contrary, it's the enthusiasm of the artist for art that depicts his artistic personality. Therefore, the personality is an indispensable perquisite for art appreciation. And the positive art ethics indicate a perfect combination of the form and the content. Specifically, attractive art forms can purify people's mind. And then, people can create great works of art with their soul. So, the positive art ethics are more idealized than the ones in real life. And the aesthetic education of art is designed to help appreciators feel and experience the profound humanity spirit and humanity care.

Modern society is developing quickly with each passing day, and it requires an increasing number of advanced special talents who are not merely the good masters of knowledge and technology but also the perfect representatives of personality and aesthetics. For human, aesthetic practice is a way for them to better understand the world, and it suggested that human should understand the world physically and psychologically. As Schiller once put it, "For any nation, the peak and universality of its aesthetic culture are closely related to its political freedom and citizens' morals. In detail, good customs and morals are accompanied by glorious behaviors."^[1] Focusing on the unification of truth, virtue, and beauty, Schiller approved the impact of art and aesthetic education on combining sensibility with reason and bettering the personality of individuals. Indeed, except for the cultivation of aesthetic ability, it's more vital for aesthetic education to shape students with perfect personality. The perfect aesthetic personality will definitely lead to happiness in life. As what has been discovered in psychological science, the happiness index of a person is closely related to his personality. However, aesthetic personality is not totally based on the appreciation of beauty because it is not only about the personality to understand and appreciate the beauty but also the state of being developing positively. Taking full advantage of its self-healing and homeostatic functions, aesthetic personality keeps developing and upgrading.

After being deeply influenced by positive art ethics, the appreciators develop to be the ones with no utilitarianism, and they appreciate the art with their soul. Not merely should people toy with the works of art, but they should further seek ethics and morals contained in those works. The reason is that art activities can purify people's mind, boost their spirit, refine their personality, and make them achieve a harmonious inner development. It's said by Rodin, "It's possible for everyone to be an artist, as far as I'm concerned, 'artists' refer to all people who can find a calling." Indeed, "an excellent world would come into being"^[2] in this way.

1. Primarily, the Positive Art Ethics can Deepen Peoples' Recognition.

Art is a true reflection of real life, and it mainly relies on the vivid and unique images to reflect life. However, the images can't replace the positive art ethics and the charm of art. Unless combined together in a perfect way, the images and ethics can display the charm of art. And the positive art ethics will be reflected by art thereupon. Aesthetical recognition is an ability of people to appreciate the art, explore the nature, society, history, and life. And the works of art help the appreciators have a deeper insight into society and life through the vivid and typical artistic images. However, by no means do the images superficially reflect social life, but they contain profound meanings about society. For instance, in each of these literary masterpieces, including *Romance of the Three Kingdoms*, *A Dream in Red Mansions*, *The Resurrection*, *War and Peace*, *The Human Comedy*, etc.,

a whole picture of the life of the day is depicted with exquisite languages, so are the beginning and ending of the story and the ups and downs going through by characters and their mental courses. Meanwhile, the authors express their emotions about human nature and philosophical perception of life through those masterpieces. No matter in the form of films or TV series, those works share in profound idea for people to digest.

Art can not only describe the social life in-depth, but it also can arouse people to reflect on their spirits. Naturally, starting from the reality, people will reshape their personality and offer to become noble. For a piece of artwork, it's oriented to display the characters with rich personality and profound mind. And the idealized personality will always be shaped in it to inspire the audience. Because the works of art sublimate the real life into artistic reality and they demonstrate the general through individual, and the essence through phenomenon, the aesthetic recognition of art is endowed with deeper connotations. For example, observing *Riverside Scene at Qingming Festival* drawn by Zhang Zeduan, a famous painter in Song dynasty, people can profile the temporal situations in Bianliang (the capital of Song dynasty) and along the sides of Bianhe (a river), and they can know about what the people of all walks of life were doing during Qingming Festival at the time. As what truly reflected in the picture, there's a big gap between the rich and the poor in real life in Song dynasty. Meanwhile, there're other works, such as *Shiji (The History)*, *Diary of the Travels of Xu Xike*, *Compendium of Materia Medica*, and so forth.

The activities of artistic aesthetics can broaden appreciators' horizons as well. For example, CCTV-10 (a science and education channel in China) has host several programs, including *Approach to Science*, *Discovery*, *Science and Technology*, and *Lecture Room*. Owing to their abundant contents, superior quality, and positive role in spreading and popularizing science and technology, those programs have aroused a strong echo in all circles.

2. Additionally, the Positive Art Aesthetics can Inspire People'S Morality.

It is the personal emotion of the artist that makes the public feel touched. There's no exception for artists to pour their feelings into their works. Anyhow, the positive art aesthetics can cultivate, purify, and perfect a people's personality and prevents his bad idea, morality, and behavior from getting involved in art.

Poetry education belongs to aesthetic education. According to Chinese philosophy, the highest realm of life should be poetic, aesthetic, and artistic. As early as in pre-Qin period, Confucians regarded poetry and art as the important ways to shape people's ideology and personality. What they believed in is that writing delivers civilization and ethics. The rites mean goodness and the code of conduct, and they're of ethics. As a kind of emotional communication, the music is of art. In the system of rites and music, the authentic beauty can't exist against the code of ethics, and the true goodness can't exist without emotions. Therefore, esthetics and morals are of art, and the spirit of rites and music combine the beauty and morality together. As "vocal music can influence a people thoroughly and quickly" (*Yuelun*, Xunzi), it plays a vital part in constructing and shaping his personality. Obviously, in ancient China, ethics and aesthetics were linked to each other. At the time, to appreciate the beauty meant the appreciation of the concrete objects and abstract personality.

In tragedies, ethics are often the top priorities for people to approach the conflicts between truth and fake, goodness and evil, and beauty and ugliness. The tragic endings of the conflicts can always arouse people's intense reflection on ethics. Especially, when witnessing the tragic ending of just cause and main characters, the audience will be deeply shocked to take morality into account. Therefore, tragedies can profoundly influence moral education, and they can promote people's personality and motivate them. For instance, in the novel *Blessing*, Luxun describes a miserable female farmer, Xianglin's wife. As a typical image of female farmer in rural area of old China, she was laborious, kind-hearted, plain, and tough. However, against the backdrop of the miserable times, she had no choice but to accept the fate. Losing the elementary privileges enjoyed by everyone, Xianglin's wife was always despised and persecuted by others. At last, owing to the rotten feudal rites and superstitions, she was forced to be an outcast. Xianglin's wife is more miserable than the victims suffering savage torture. Learning from her experience, the readers will be shocked and

detest the deadly cruelty of feudal rites at the time. In *Prometheus Bound*, an ancient Greek tragedy, Prometheus was punished by Zeus (the master of the Gods) to be nailed to a cliff in Caucasus for his offering the fire to human secretly. Being exposed to rain, snow, wind, frost, and sun, Prometheus suffered a lot. Being inspired and moved by Prometheus, the public keep carrying forward the dauntless spirit of dedication and truth. From the perspective of positive art aesthetics, it's the good morality that inspires people's innermost feelings.

3. Furthermore, the Positive Art Aesthetics Can Purify People'S Feelings.

In artworks, the perfect art form is an indispensable. When the artists demonstrate the abstract feelings in the form of concrete objects, the unity of the form and content will be achieved. However, when people appreciate the works of the art, they prefer to explore the feelings and aesthetics contained in those works. And then their spirit will be nourished, their feelings will be sublimated, and their personality will be purified. For example, countless people have been being inspired by *The Thinker*, a famous sculpture, created by Rodin. The same as that deep thinker in solitude, many people start to reflect on their lives and have a deep insight into truth, virtue, and beauty. Meanwhile, the majority of people can feel a pleasant and serene beauty in *Mono Lisa* drawn by Da Vinci. In a word, it's free for people to be inspired by the works of art to purify their feelings and upgrade their personality consciously.

Art originates from real life, but it is with more intense and typical artistic appeal than the real life. While observing those vivid and life-like artworks, appreciators are often affected by the contained emotions in those works, and they tend to think about the life and the society. In the process of loving life and appreciating beauty, their feelings are reshaped, purified, and sublimated as well. For example, in Luo Lizhong's oil painting, *The Father*, a hard-working and tough old farmer is created. Throughout his life, the father overworked and went through ups and downs. However, he asked for little, so did he use. Indeed, the father means much more, and he represents thousands fathers like him in China. Thanks to those great fathers, the spirit of sacrifice and hardworking are passed down from generation to generation in China. If appreciators can put in the position of those fathers, they can truly understand the beauty of *The Father*, even though it describes a seemingly tragic father. Similarly, after carefully reading Luxun's *The True of Ah Q*, owing to whose strong artistic appeal, the readers will discover, self-examine, and eliminate the spirit of "An Q" they have.

It should be noted that ugliness in real life can also be transformed into artistic beauty through artistic creation. This is not an affirmation of ugliness, but to satisfy people's desire for goodness and beauty from another perspective. It reflects artists' concept of good and evil, and thus has ethical beauty. Leonardo Da Vinci's masterpieces, for example, the last supper, paint on the eve of the arrested Jesus and the twelve apostles last meal together. There were four groups of twelve sitting along the table, and Jesus sat in the middle of the table. He opened his hands in a sad gesture, signaling that one of the disciples had betrayed him. Most of the disciples jumped to their feet in excitement, but Judas, the traitor, sitting on the right side of Jesus (fourth from the left), leaned back in panic, clutching a moneybag with one hand, his face darkening. The typical figure of Judas depicted by the artist is ugly, and this typical figure also has the beauty of artistic ethics. There is also Rodin's sculpture "Omiere", which depicts an image of a prostitute destroyed by time. In this old and ugly prostitute, the pain in her inner world and the sadness in her soul are reflected. Up to now, "Omiere" is still widely regarded as a masterpiece that "turns ugliness into beauty" in art.

Hegel said, "aesthetics has a liberating quality."^[3] Aesthetic activities are not only people's spiritual and cultural activities, but also increasingly become the content of People's Daily life. Personality is a comprehensive expression of a person's social behavior, and aesthetic personality cannot be separated from beauty. Because people's psychological behavior mode has aesthetic characteristics, its externalization shows people's aesthetic creation activities. The essence of human aesthetic practice is to constantly display the essential power of human beings. According to Shiller, "Aesthetic education can bring harmony to society because it builds harmony in the individual".

^[4] Shiller always regards the spiritual liberation and perfect personality as the purpose of aesthetic

education. Aesthetic personality is the comprehensive outpouring of the human nature and virtue of beauty and the organic integration of the sentiment of beauty. Aesthetic personality not only refers to the personality that knows and is good at appreciating beauty, but also refers to a positive growth state of people, which is manifested as a healthy and positive personality. It plays a decisive role in promoting the development of society and individuals.

All in all, the lofty and holy humanitarian spirit contained in the positive art aesthetics enables art to help people positively shape their personality and morality. And it can maximize the opportunity for people to express their feelings and wishes and satisfy their needs. Finally, it can help people spiritually free themselves and lead a pleasant and euphoric life. With the impact of positive art aesthetics, people will unconsciously better their thoughts, behaviors, emotions, and hobbies and perfect them at last. Schiller once said, "because the moral man can only develop from the aesthetic man, not from the state of nature" ^[5]

From the above analysis, it could be found that aesthetic activities can virtue, beauty, and life together. Aesthetics can not only motivate an earthly people to be with much more good morality, but it can develop a people complying with ethics with better aesthetic taste. The artistic culture is the best way for a people to improve his aesthetic judgment. In this was can he more precisely understand the beauty of nature and society. If a person has been cultivated with specific artistic culture and aesthetic taste, he'll naturally find that his life has been deeply influenced by and his personality perfected by the positive art aesthetics.

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