



Aesthetic Salvation in Contemporary Social Culture Based on Cultural Industry Theory of Frankfurt School

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Abstract. The cultural industry theory of Frankfurt school was born in the middle of the 20th century and came into being in the reflection of German Nazi totalitarianism and American cultural monopoly. In their view, the greatest characteristic of modernity at the ideological level is instrumental rationality. This is a special way of thinking: understanding the whole world as a tool. Instrumental rationality is a brief summary of the commercialization, standardization and vulgarization of mass culture. However, with the vigorous development of new cultural media, the theory of cultural industry also has its limitations. As consumers, the public has more initiative and selectivity, and can express their comments and views, which means that the public's subjective consciousness can be reflected. However, the Frankfurt School ignores people's subject status and subjective initiative. This paper mainly analyzes the current aesthetic trend and limitations of mass culture, and actively discusses the way of people-oriented in the current aesthetic redemption, thinking about the way of salvation from the dual perspective of cultural creator and cultural receiver. This paper will be beneficial to provide a new perspective for the current studies of mass culture.

Keywords: Social culture · Cultural industry theory · Frankfurt school

1 Introduction

With the rapid development of modern science and technology and the substantial improvement of productivity, industrial civilization has become the latest and most advanced direction of human civilization. In modern society, the expansion of production scale and the improvement of science and technology are inseparable from efficient, high-quality and frequent consumption. The reaction of consumption to production is becoming more and more important. Production and consumption affect each other and become two carriages driving economic development. Consumerism, which advocates the development of various industries driven by consumerism, also comes into being. As a human subjective activity, consumption is naturally inseparable from the participation of independent and subjective aesthetic process. The independent aesthetic process makes it a non mechanical activity, which is reflected in the diversification of consumption choice, consumption time, consumption frequency and so on. However,

for industrial civilization, the standardization and controllability of consumption choice, consumption time and consumption frequency are the necessary conditions to realize the ideal situation of supply-demand balance, and the independent aesthetic process has become a stumbling block. Popular aesthetics has existed since ancient times, but there is no one like today who has become like opening a can. Of course, the movement of aesthetic popularization can never be called an abnormal movement contrary to the law of historical development. It can even be said that it has great positive significance. For example, it enriches people's life and brings more pleasure and happiness to people. However, people should also note that the over developed aesthetic Popularization Movement will turn people's aesthetics into vulgarization and cause serious harm. How to curb vulgarization and find a balance between popularization and artistry in the downward movement of aesthetics is urgent in the current society [1].

Just as aesthetic popularization is the product of consumerism, mass culture itself is a commodity with strong commercial attributes. In other words, the production of mass culture is to serve the consumption of others. Under the control of the market, mass culture has fallen into the entertainment camp in order to obtain more profits. Specifically in the field of literature, the popularization of aesthetics links literature with profit, so that the aesthetic spirit of literature is materialized into the pleasure spirit of entertainment supremacy, so that the sublimity of literature is gradually lost in the materialization of aesthetics, and the spiritual freedom and value pursuit in literature are gradually lost [2]. Let literary and artistic works have entertainment and materiality like commodities, so as to better meet the needs of the market. Literary and artistic works become stereotyped and no longer have unique internal beauty. This is the "canned" aesthetics, that is, the formulaic characteristics of aesthetic popularization.

2 Several Cases of Aesthetic Popularization

2.1 TikTok

The short video TikTok represented is obviously standardized, and the format of the work is video + music. The homogeneous works limit the creativity. Although these videos have different styles and shooting methods, they have never been separated from the totality of the cultural industry, just as Adorno wrote "the unique innovation of the cultural industry is just a continuously improved mode of mass production" [3].

Moreover, TikTok has the characteristic of "full equality of falsehood". There are many students in the TikTok, and they have millions of fans. This gives users, especially the students, a false impression that they can also be famous just like them. Of course, students can become Internet Celebrities, and even everyone has the same opportunity. But this probability is very small, and only a few students are raised by the media. TikTok's confused ideology disturbs the value judgment of the masses.

3 Popcorn Movie

Driven by popular culture, consumers follow the cultural industry, and Popcorn movie is a typical representative of modern cultural industry. Popcorn movies are mostly famous

by stars. Although they have low-quality scripts and cultural connotation, they can rely on the fans of movie stars for marketing and benefit a lot. Obviously, this is the product of a cultural industry, with the entertainment and commodity of mass culture.

Popcorn movies achieve wider publicity through the influence of stars, and have commercial advantages such as wide audience and large profits. However, such films pay too much attention to commercial value, while cultural value is put at the bottom. More and more films follow this model, and the differences between films will become smaller and smaller. The homogenization of the cultural industry market begins to appear, and the cultural creativity of the film market will fade. Goods should have served people, but the public gave up their dominant position and was willing to become slaves of goods.

4 Online Variety Shows

Mass culture is a modern cultural form produced and copied in the form of cultural industry and characterized by commodity, image and leisure. Online variety shows also belong to a kind of mass culture. In the context of contemporary communication, online variety shows have evolved into a special cultural commodity. Their marketing and communication methods are no different from ordinary commodities. For the purpose of profit, they obtain a large amount of traffic through special publicity methods and realize profits through traffic. Online variety shows mostly adopt the way of traffic stars' entry to attract the attention of fans. They rely on the number of fans of stars to obtain traffic and provide a cash basis. The most important input source of online variety shows is still advertising. For example, the hot blood street dance troupe produced by iqiyi officially announced a total investment of 650 million. The basis for the high investment attraction of online variety shows is the consumption of the audience. These high advertising expenses are paid by the advertiser on the surface, but actually by the audience. The role of the audience of online variety shows has changed into consumers, and the media production structure has formed a consumption relationship with the audience.

In addition, The mass production of network variety shows and serious content homogenization have become a trend. By saving the user stock, the way of attracting new users with old users itself has its feasibility. The feasibility basis of this way is to attract the attention of the audience through continuous innovation. Obviously, the current development of online variety shows a poor state of insufficient innovation, resulting in the weak development of most old variety shows after several years [4].

5 Limitations of Mass Culture

5.1 Aesthetic Vulgarization of Mass Culture

Cultural industry objectively acts as a tool for the bourgeoisie to control ideology and often becomes the "conspirator" of the bourgeoisie. The cultural industry produces mass cultural products in large quantities, obtains economic benefits from them, and achieves its fundamental purpose of controlling the public at the same time. According to Adorno and others, as a control culture, the essence of mass culture is by no means a culture

serving the public as it literally means. The transformation of the form of social control brought about by the cultural industry makes cultural products completely become commodities, and the pursuit of profit maximization has become the most important and even the only principle of mass cultural production. It also makes consumers invisible under the control of ideology brought by the cultural industry. It can be seen that the cultural industry is actually helping the bourgeoisie accumulate capital from society and has become a tool for totalitarian rule of society [5].

Art has become a commodity with exchange value as the priority in the market and capitalist society, and has lost its spiritual independence had been in the classical era.

With the development of the cultural industry, technology enables the mass production of cultural products. The cultural works devoted to the author's efforts have disappeared and replaced by the contents produced in batch on the industrial assembly line. An article has changed from the spiritual carrier of the author's thought to the task of completing the nesting of a specific template. How to efficiently produce the number of words is more important than studying the depth of words in this technological era.

The content of mass culture is mostly monotonous, homogeneous, superficial and without depth. It is a kind of standard consumer goods. It can meet the needs of the audience's emotional vent by accurately grasping the audience's psychology. It is a kind of commodity that provides vent. The first mock exam is that mass culture a superb collection of beautiful things. It is actually a product of unified mode. The tedious and nutritious products are boring and empty.

Mass culture has become a force. Mass cultural products through a large number of production and research, so that people have nowhere to escape, no time to escape. When they open their eyes, a large number of products appear in their eyes, and when they close their eyes, a large number of products pour into their ears. It requires consumers to accept without any thinking [6].

5.2 Social Limitations of Mass Culture

There is no doubt that the theory of cultural industry can not be fully applicable to contemporary society. At that time, in the 1930s and 1940s, people didn't have much selectivity and were forced to accept the information of the media. Today's short video platform as an interactive media, the public as consumers have more initiative and selectivity, and can express their own comments and views, which means that the public's subjective consciousness can be reflected. Obviously, when Adorno and Horkheimer put forward their theories, they paid too much attention to the research on the characteristics and functions of mass culture and ignored the subjective consciousness of the public. This defect is particularly obvious now.

The main view of Frankfurt school is that technology is the ruler's ruling tool, and the works of art under mechanical reproduction are goods instilled with class ideology. These cultural products meet the needs of the ruling class and paralyze the public with entertainment and Carnival by means of mechanical reproduction. In the back and forth of repression and anti repression, the rulers enslaved the masses through the culture and lifestyle formed by such commodities and made contributions to the consolidation of their political power. This also leads to the entertainment and vulgarization of media popular culture, and diverts the public's own state and class attention.

In addition, considering from the bottom up, in the society of scientific and technological progress and high automation, these commodities meet people's living needs, and in the overall trend, people's living standards continue to improve. Therefore, the public are satisfied with the status quo in the control of the ruled culture, unconsciously continue to be enslaved, lose critical ability and negative consciousness, and only complain about phenomena or policies rather than resist the system, Voluntarily or forced to follow in its footsteps.

However, from the perspective of people, his view ignores the driving force of the public's independent choice on market operation as an active subject, and there is no in-depth discussion on the spontaneous high-level spiritual pursuit of the public. Moreover, they weaken people's sociality, treat the masses and rulers separately and put them in an opposite position. In reality, people participate in the roles of rulers, producers and the public at the same time [7].

In other words, the masses may become rulers, and the producers also come from the masses. The masses do not represent the proletariat and the working masses for a long time. They have increasingly become an inseparable whole in the promotion and development of society, rather than three things labeled. In the end, this is essentially a world ruled by one's own self, so the common interests they pursue should be consistent.

From the perspective of environment and history, although they pointed out various disadvantages of the bourgeoisie, they traced their roots and failed to put forward a solution to the contradiction between private means of production and socialized mass production. It ignores the inevitable trend of cultural marketization, and is in a radical position politically. It only sees that the culture under the command has created an ignorant public, but does not consider and evaluate the positive role of cultural industry in human progress and social development. This has inevitable historical limitations under the background of the times.

Therefore, the cultural industry theory of Frankfurt school has some enlightenment to the development of contemporary social culture. The guiding effect of cultural industry on public aesthetics can not be ignored. However, the existence of the public should be paid more attention. Cultural industry should not only meet the spiritual and cultural needs of the public, but also provide high-quality cultural and spiritual products. At the same time, the innovation of mass culture also needs the nourishment of multicultural products and the cultivation of innovation consciousness to avoid too much "suppression" of children's education [8].

6 People-Oriented: The Ultimate Goal of Aesthetic Salvation

Under the strong impact of commercialism and consumerism, the independent personality aesthetics, which was originally noble, educational and sacred, has been gradually entertained and materialized. The level of aesthetics is always determined by people's level. The vulgarization of aesthetics is essentially human vulgarization. Because both literary and artistic creation activities and literary and artistic consumption activities will eventually become human activities. The subject of literary and artistic creation is human, the purpose of literary and artistic creation is human, and the result of literary and artistic creation is also human. The ultimate value of literary and artistic works should

fall on the ultimate thinking of what is human, where people come from, where people go, and what people should do. Marx once mentioned in his manuscript of economics and philosophy: “man possesses his comprehensive essence in a comprehensive way, that is, as a complete man” [9]. In other words, only when people become independent, rational, complete, free, conscious and give full play to their subjective initiative can they be called a real person. Therefore, in today’s society where the popularization of aesthetics has gradually shifted to the vulgarization of aesthetics, we should shape independent, rational, complete, free, conscious and give full play to the subjective initiative in aesthetics, and hold high the banner of humanistic spirit, so as to realize the confirmation of aesthetic self subject.

From the perspective of social materialism, human beings can be summed up in the essence of society. Therefore, in the process of people’s independent, rational and free development and giving full play to people’s subjective initiative, the production of cultural products must be rooted in people’s life and based on the times and social reality. In other words, people’s dynamic development should be consistent with their social mission and the theme of the times. It is also an important connotation and way of people-oriented development [10].

From the micro perspective of the noumenon of literary and artistic aesthetic activities, as literary and artistic creators, they must not be brainwashed by the ideas of money worship, asceticism and the supremacy of interests. They should be based on the call of history and the times and create excellent literary and artistic works loved by the people, so as to realize the return of human nature and human nature in aesthetics and carry forward the noble aesthetic standard. Only by paying attention to the process of the times, answering the questions of the times, rooted in the people’s life and reflecting the people’s aesthetic needs, can literary and artistic creators create literary and artistic works worthy of the times and the people; For the audiences of literary and artistic works, although consumption diversification and aesthetic popularization have become the mainstream of the times, consumers must also be aware of the important role of aesthetics in liberating human nature and returning to rationality.

7 Conclusion

Based on the cultural industry theory of Frankfurt school, this paper analyzes the current aesthetic trend and limitations of mass culture. In the appreciation of literary and artistic works, consumers should never drift with the tide, consume blindly and pursue vulgar literary and artistic works. They should resolutely resist the aesthetic trend of excessive entertainment and materialization. The appreciation of literary and artistic works can not degenerate into an animal that blindly pursues animal desires, nor can they become a slave manipulated by the market and consumerism. Instead, they should consciously improve their sense of historical responsibility and sense of ownership in the aesthetic process, actively respond to the call of the times and shoulder the social responsibility of everyone. Only in this way can they be people-oriented in the trend of aesthetic popularization and establish people’s dominant position in aesthetic activities, Keep independent and rational thinking and keep the aesthetic level at a high level. This paper will be beneficial to enrich the thinking on the current mass culture.

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