

A Study of Li Zehou's "Mathematical Equation of the Aesthetic Psychological Construction"

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Abstract—This paper studies the rationality of Li zehou's conjecture called "Mathematical Equation of the Aesthetic Psychological Construction". On the basis of "duality of aesthetic feeling", Li zehou proposed this conjecture, which consists of four elements: perception, understanding, imagination, emotion. Li zehou believes that the equation will be constructed when mental discipline and physical discipline develop to a very high level in the future. Li zehou proposed the equation in order to illustrate the complexity and richness of aesthetic feeling, but it cannot withstand scrutiny in many aspects. The number of the elements, the definition of the four elements and the relationship between each other are all difficult to give a clear explanation. More importantly, the aesthetic feeling occurs in the human mind and each individual's aesthetic sensibility is different, so it cannot be unified in an equation. In summary, no matter how the science develops in future, it is impossible to establish this "Mathematical Equation of the Aesthetic Psychological Construction".

Keywords—Li zehou; aesthetics; "Mathematical Equation of the Aesthetic Psychological Construction"; four factors

I. INTRODUCTION

Li zehou is a famous aesthetician in contemporary China. He founded "Practice Aesthetics", which had a far-reaching impact in Chinese society, even in the whole world. It was said that in the 1980s, in China "there are Li Zehou's books in each graduate dormitory" [1], even the textile women workers would put the book named "the path of beauty" wrote by Li zehou under their pillows.

Li zehou's theory of aesthetics is very profound and rich. His friend, Liu Zaifu, once divided his aesthetics into three large pieces, namely, philosophical aesthetics, aesthetic psychology and artistic sociology. At the same time, Mr. Liu thought, in the "philosophical aesthetics" piece Li zehou's greatest contribution was the explanation of the nature of beauty and the root of beauty while in the "aesthetic psychology" his greatest contribution was the foundation of "Mathematical Equation of the Aesthetic Psychological Construction" [2].

II. THE PROPOSAL OF "MATHEMATICAL EQUATION OF THE AESTHETIC PSYCHOLOGICAL CONSTRUCTION"

In 1956, at the age of 26, Li zehou published his article "On Aesthetic Feeling, Beauty and Art" in the magazine of "Philosophical Research" (no.5, 1956), in which he put

forward the theory of "duality of aesthetic feeling", that is, subjective intuition and objective utilitarianism. The subjective intuition of beauty was widely recognized, while the objective utilitarianism caused a lot of controversy. In his later years, he made constant adjustments and interpretations about the focus on objective utilitarianism. In 1981, when he was 51 years old, Li zehou explained "duality of aesthetic feeling" as "on the one hand it is emotional and intuitive, on the other hand it contains long-term humanized results in the emotional one".

However, the "duality of aesthetic feeling" cannot explain the richness and complexity of aesthetic feeling, so Li zehou proposed the theory of "aesthetic psychological mathematical equation" in the 1980s. In the book named "the path of beauty", Li zehou said, "In aesthetic psychology human nature is a mathematical structure equation waiting to be discovered". In the book of "Criticism of critical philosophy", Li zehou said, "The aesthetic feeling is the synthesis of various functions of psychology, such as perception, understanding, imagination, emotion, etc. Different organizations and cooperation among these various factors form different aesthetic feelings and artistic styles. The concrete form of the aesthetic feeling seems likely to be precisely expressed by chemical double helix or a mathematical equation and structure in the future [3]."

In 2002, Li zehou gave a detailed explanation of his theory of "Mathematical Equation of the Aesthetic Psychological Construction" in his speech at Soka Gakkai International of Hong Kong. He said,

"What is aesthetic feeling in the end... So far it has been a difficult question? I believe this question can be answered after at least fifty years or a hundred years, when physiology and psychology can be fully developed. Now we can only give a rough estimate, which I called as "the emotional mathematical equation", or "emotional logic" [4].

What is the mathematical equation that might be listed after a hundred years? There must be a lot of variables, so it will be very complicated. There are thousands of kinds and changes of aesthetic feelings... It is pleasant and satisfying to get the aesthetic feelings. These pleasures and satisfaction are not exactly the same. They are different in emotion. It's a complicated mathematical equation in which there are many variables and changes, making different aesthetic feelings. What are these variables? For example, there is perception, imagination, understanding, desire, expectation, and unconscious, etc. It's not only one factor. Numerous

psychological factors implicated in each other and grouped together.”

In this speech, Mr. Lee also said, “Art is the compound of a variety of psychology. If these psychological factors can be compounded well, there will be aesthetic feelings. Otherwise there will be no aesthetic feelings. The degree is all held by the artist and that is also the artistry and the mathematical equation.”

To sum up, there are the following six points about Li Zehou’s “Mathematical Equation of the Aesthetic Psychological Construction”:

There are four factors in “Mathematical Equation of the Aesthetic Psychological Construction”, that is perception, understanding, imagination and emotion. The different combinations of the four factors result in different aesthetic feelings.

There are overlapping parts in every two of the four factors. For instance, there is understanding in the factor of perception and there is emotion in the factor of imagination.

Aesthetic feelings are combinations of these four factors, plus a lot of variables.

The field of this equation can also be expanded, not only for aesthetic feelings, but also for the field of art.

“Mathematical Equation of the Aesthetic Psychological Construction” is just a guess and a prophecy. It will be fifty years or a hundred years for the equation to come out, when mental discipline and physical discipline was developed to a very high level in the future.

Li zehou's original intention and purpose of “Mathematical Equation of the Aesthetic Psychological Construction” is to prove and explain the richness and complexity of aesthetic feelings.

III. A FEW QUESTIONS CONCERNING LI ZEHOU'S "MATHEMATICAL EQUATION OF THE AESTHETIC PSYCHOLOGICAL CONSTRUCTION"

Objectively speaking, Li zehou had some truth to put forward this theory of “Mathematical Equation of the Aesthetic Psychological Construction”. He wanted to illustrate the richness and complexity of aesthetic feelings by this equation which was a prophecy based on a very high level development of mental discipline and physical discipline. Compared with the “aesthetic psychology”, He spent less time and less energy on “Mathematical Equation of the Aesthetic Psychological Construction”. Therefore, the theory of the equation is not very profound. Of course, it was only a prediction. He just made a positive judgment of the equation rather than a comprehensive demonstration of how to establish this equation. Li zehou thought the question whether this equation can exist was a philosophical consideration, while the question how it was established was a task of psychological discipline.

In my opinion, the theory of “Mathematical Equation of the Aesthetic Psychological Construction” cannot be established,

no matter what high level the discipline of physiology and psychology can reach in the future.

A. *Aesthetic feelings are so spiritual that an equation cannot specify the complication of it*

Aesthetic feelings are spiritual minds, which are endless and various, not exhausted. As a specified equation, the “Mathematical Equation of the Aesthetic Psychological Construction” can never specify the emergence, development and change of aesthetic feelings.

Regardless of which were chosen to describe aesthetic feelings, such as perception, understanding, imagination, emotion, or other factors, aesthetic feelings are spiritualized, which can't be used the equation to do a universal template specification. Because there will be a final rule pattern once the equation is constructed no matter how complicated the equation is. However, aesthetic feelings are so rich and complex that it cannot be prescribed and regulated. It is generated in the whole historical practice and in the vast life practice of individuals' spiritual world, endless, unpredictable.

If the aesthetic feeling can be defined by the equation, what we have to do is just meeting the numerous variables and conditions of the equation, and then aesthetic feelings can be produced with mass production at any time. Obviously, this idea is so absurd.

Moreover, as Li zehou said, “Mathematical Equation of the Aesthetic Psychological Construction” is also applicable to the field of art, “Art is the compound of a variety of psychology. If these psychological factors can be compounded well, there will be aesthetic feelings. Otherwise there will be no aesthetic feelings. The degree is all held by the artist and that is also the artistry and the mathematical equation.” So, if there is one such equation that everyone can learn and mater, then can anyone become a painter, musician? Can anyone create novels and movies?

B. *The specific problem of the equation itself*

Furthermore, there are some questions in “Mathematical Equation of the Aesthetic Psychological Construction” itself. The main questions are as follows:

1) *The number of factors of “Mathematical Equation of the Aesthetic Psychological Construction”*

Generally speaking, it was recognized that there were four factors in Li zehou’s “Mathematical Equation of the Aesthetic Psychological Construction”, that is perception, understanding, imagination and emotion. However, sometimes Li zehou gave a different expression. For example, once he said, “From the psychological point, aesthetic feeling is at least the synthesis of the four basic functions of perception, imagination, emotion and understanding.” “At least” means there will be not only four factors of the equation.

In 2002, in his speech at Soka Gakkai International of Hong Kong, Li zehou said more clearly that there were not only four factors of “Mathematical Equation of the Aesthetic Psychological Construction”:

“Because it is a complicated mathematical equation. There are a lot of variations and changes, making different kinds of aesthetic feelings. What factors does the equation include? For example, there is perception, imagination, understanding, desire, expectation, and unconsciousness, etc.”

In this paragraph said by Li zehou, the number of the factors of “Mathematical Equation of the Aesthetic Psychological Construction” is more than four. And the emotion which is one of the four factors is not listed.

In summary, how many factors does “Mathematical Equation of the Aesthetic Psychological Construction” have exactly? Li zehou has not completely unified. Then, how do we build on the equation? This problem can't be solved, no matter how high the discipline of physiology and psychology will be developed.

2) The definition of the four factors and the understanding of their mutual relations

There should be specific and qualitative definitions of each factor of “Mathematical Equation of the Aesthetic Psychological Construction”. Only in this way can the equation be established. However, we cannot scientifically define these factors, such as perception, imagination, understanding, emotion. What is imagination? What is understanding? What is emotion? Instead of defining them, what we can do is only to describe them. As is well known, weight can be measured by the unit of kilogram; height can be measured by the unit of meter; volume can be measured by the unit of cube. However, we cannot find a unit to measure perception, imagination, understanding, and emotion for ever. We can ask “how long” and “how many” of an object, but we have no idea to know “how beautiful”, “how sweet” and “how happy” of an object by measuring in a unit. Thus, the four factors of “Mathematical Equation of the Aesthetic Psychological Construction” cannot be defined scientifically.

Furthermore, there are a variety of sub-factors below the four factors of the equation which also cannot be defined. As Li zehou said, “there is feeling and consciousness in the factor of perception, and the factor imagination contains analogical imaginations, close associations and opposite associations, and the factor emotion is related to desires, demands, intentions, wishes.” Thus, every factor of “Mathematical Equation of the Aesthetic Psychological Construction” has a lot of content.” How can the equation establish since the four factors and their sub-factors cannot be defined?

Li Zehou attributed all these questions to the immaturity of the aesthetics discipline, and put everything in hope of the maturity of psychology 50 years or 100 years later. But, obviously, psychology is not omnipotent, as Li Zehou himself said, “Any scientific research of psychology and sociology can not replace the philosophical speculation of beauty” [5]. It is clear that physiology, psychology and other science has no idea about the establishment of “Mathematical Equation of the Aesthetic Psychological Construction”. No matter how these sciences will develop, perception, imagination, understanding, emotion will still be attributed to the human heart, which cannot use accurate scientific knowledge system to define and explain for ever. We can use scientific knowledge to solve the

structure of brain and body, but they can't do anything about our inner world and spiritual world.

Moreover, the proportion and relationship of the four factors are also problems that the “Mathematical Equation of the Aesthetic Psychological Construction” cannot solve. Li Zehou has also been aware of this problem, he said, “How do the four factors combine in the end? What is the proportion of each of them? How many different combinations do they have? Few of these questions have been studied.”

In the same way, Li zehou gave the question to the maturity of psychology in future. Similarly, the development of psychology is also unable to answer the proportion and relationship of the four factors of “Mathematical Equation of the Aesthetic Psychological Construction”.

3) The differences between sensual individuals

Once constructed, the equation will be applied to any individual at any time. However, as there are no two identical leaves in the world, there are no two identical people in the world. Especially, the inner worlds of the individuals are different from each other. As Wang Fuzhi who was a famous philosopher of ancient China said, “No one can borrow emotion from someone else” [6], no one can copy the inner world of others. Therefore, each individual's perception, understanding, imagination, emotion is different. Moreover, the perception, understanding, imagination and emotion of the same individual are different at different times and stages. So there is an infinite possibility of the equation. However, one of the biggest features of the equation is the invariable regularity. There is infinite possibility. Then how can we establish the equation?

IV. CONCLUSION

All in all, “Mathematical Equation of the Aesthetic Psychological Construction” cannot be established. No matter how high the sciences can develop, we still cannot climb trees to catch fish and still only cast copper by mountains. The original intention of Li zehou to propose “Mathematical Equation of the Aesthetic Psychological Construction” was to illustrate the complexity and richness of aesthetic feelings, while what he did was the opposite. Once the equation is established, the aesthetic feelings will become simplistic and stylized, which is contrary to his original intention. Of course, this equation cannot be established for ever.

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