

# Art “Purification” and Aesthetic Education

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**Abstract**—The essence of art purification is that the emotions produced artworks can satisfy people's basic need, because the process of purification is an emotional catharsis and compensation. Both artistic creation and artistic appreciation belong to an emotional release and “being assimilated”, achieving emotion release and transfer, so that the soul will become calm and clear, which is not only an aesthetic process, but also gives inspiration to aesthetic education.

**Keywords**—“Purification”; *Aesthetic empathy*; *Aesthetic education*

## I. INTRODUCTION

The Greek transliteration of the “purification” is “katharsis”. As a religious terminology, it means “purification” (“purgation”), and before and after the 7th century BC, the Greek Orphism (preached from Thrace) called the release of the soul from the fleshly imprisonment as “purification”, and they hoped to eliminate the fear arising from breaking the gods and being contaminated by redemption and purification. As a medical terminology, it used to be considered as “catharsis”. As the “purification” theory of art, it integrates these two meanings, which does not only mean a kind of moral “purification”, but also an emotional “catharsis”.

## II. MEANINGS OF PURIFICATION

In Chapter VI of Aristotle's *Poetics*, it mentions what is “tragedy”: “A tragedy is the imitation of an action that is serious and also, as having magnitude, complete in itself... in a dramatic rather than narrative form; with incidents arousing pity and fear, wherewith to accomplish a catharsis of these emotions” [1]. In addition, in the *Research on Music Education in Volume VIII of Politics*, it mentions “purification” and describes that “Some people are particularly vulnerable to certain emotions, they can also be excited and purified by music to varying degrees so that they will feel a sense of ease and comfort. Therefore, the song playing a purification role can produce a harmless pleasure”. Because the audiences have been influenced by the morality of the artworks and infected by the emotions and the harmless pleasure has been satisfied, under the guidance of rationality, it can cause moral and aesthetic effects and the emotions can be purified, thus the positive educational significance of the “purification” can be given.

Regarding the role of Aristotle's tragedy “Katharsis”, his original words are as follows: “Some people are easily dominated by religious madness, we can see that they have heard the tone that can excite the soul and been returned to normal state under the influence of the divine music, as if they

have received a medical treatment, that is, the role of Katharsis. Those who are easily dominated by pity, fear and other emotions should also receive similar medical treatment”. He believes that the medical role of tragedy should be explained from Aristotle's ethical thoughts, that is, people's emotions should be cultivated, exercised and transformed from weak to strong so that the emotions may tend to be moderate, therefore, later, when they encounter the same situation, they can accept it in a more patient and peaceful attitude and maintain a moderate feeling of pity and fear. We have two kinds of understandings about this matter, one is that the function of tragedy is moral purification, and purification can transform pity and fear into morality, therefore, a moral correction and treatment role can be played. Another is that the function of tragedy is the emotional catharsis, which can achieve mood peace, emotional balance and mental health. The former can be described as the purification theory, and the bad factors such as pain and self-interested factors in pity and fear can be purified; The latter is known as catharsis, and people's strong desire for pity and fear can be satisfied and released to get a sense of pleasure and to calm down. We believe that purification is applicable to aesthetic education, and it pursues the unity of education of adjusting affection and the education of truth, goodness and beauty, so that educators can get emotional purification and moral improvement in the search for knowledge.

## III. “PURIFICATION” OF ART

In our view, purification is not only the purification of unfavorable factors in emotions, but also the catharsis and expression of emotions, and for the objects whose emotions can be released and relieved by means of artistic works or artistic means, the unfavorable factors in the emotions can be released in creation or appreciation so that the emotions can be cultivated. Art plays a purification role, and simultaneously art also plays an aesthetic education role. Aristotle believes that art cannot only make people get the pleasure of seeking knowledge from imitation, but can also make them get the aesthetic pleasure. He believes that it is a manifestation of the transfer of aesthetic emotions. Emotion purification is also a kind of transfer of aesthetic emotions, which can help to improve the people's aesthetic sentiment and cultivate the healthy psychological state. Accompanied by the projection of artistic works, this aesthetic sense of art can also be mobilized and the expression of artistic works can be assimilated, through the perfect creative techniques, such as color processing, use of props, character portrayals, etc., the appreciator's aesthetic sense of art and the aesthetic consciousness transmitted by the

works can be resonated, so that the emotions can be released or transferred, thereby giving a feeling of beauty.

The essence of artistic purification lies in the fact that the emotional activities triggered by artistic works can satisfy people's basic demands, the process of purification is a kind of emotional catharsis and compensation, which is a catharsis process for the artist, and a compensation process for the appreciator, the art creation and appreciation activity is a process of interaction between the soul purification and the aesthetic empathy. In the artistic creation, after the accumulation of personal experience, the screening, processing, refining and finishing of the materials and the enlightenment of the inspiration, the artist can express the image (which has been accumulated in his or her heart for a long term) through certain materials, thus, the soul can be released, the long-repressed emotion can be relieved, and the pain can be dissolved, which is just a purification of the soul and a catharsis of emotion. Such catharsis is not only a physiological catharsis, but more importantly, a release of emotions accumulated and repressed in the heart. Similar to the appreciation of art, appreciation is a process of re-creation, and also a process of enlightenment and emotional purification. All of us have similar experiences, when we appreciate artworks, we always have an emotion or a feeling that we can't tell in our heart, then we will continue to experience it, and make our own understanding on the artworks in combination with our knowledge and experience, the predecessors' deconstruction, and the artist's own expression, etc., so that the confusion can be solved. It is also a kind of purification that the long-term emotions are released in an instant may after people suddenly see a work that makes people become fully enlightened when their emotions accumulated for a long term cannot be released. There is also the beauty that you can't understand when you see the artwork firstly, after repeated thoughts or accidental gains, you may become clear in your heart suddenly, at this moment, the purification of the former works will be ended, and the pre-purification of your creation will be formed, at this time, appreciation is not only just appreciation, but also an accumulation of emotions and a prelude to re-creation, the expression of such purified accumulation is a kind of advanced purification of the soul through the way of creation, so that the aesthetic education and empathy, the knowledge accumulation and the experience increase cannot be only achieved, but more importantly, it is the re-purification of the purified soul. Therefore, in the continuous continuation, the appreciation level of art has been improving constantly, but the compensation of emotions and the improvement of moral sentiment brought after purification are taught in aesthetic education.

#### IV. INTEGRATION OF ART "PURIFICATION" AND AESTHETICS

As an aesthetic empathy, purification has the universal function of edifying aesthetic sentiment. Poetics indicates that: "The tragedy should not be required to give us all kinds of pleasures, but give us the pleasure what it can give. Since this pleasure is produced through causing our pity and fear by the poet by means of imitation, it is obvious that this effect should be produced through plots" [2]. The structure arrangement of the tragedy, the composition of the plot, the design of the

characters, etc., can render the true sadness of the protagonist, the appreciator may be infected with pity and fear, and when the aesthetic factors of the work reach a resonance with the appreciator, such emotion is an end for the work, and for the appreciator, the aesthetic has just begun, so that the appreciator will further appreciate the work, in the process, those unfavorable factors may be purified so that people's character, morality and aesthetic style can be upgraded. The purification in the text presents as a kind of "satisfaction of psychological pleasure" firstly, which is beneficial to promoting the development of mental health in obtaining psychological pleasure. The purification of aesthetic education can produce the functions and effects of promoting ethics, benefitting self-cultivation, promoting the personality and permeating into the human soul, so that the educated people can pursue truth, goodness and beauty consciously, keep away from the ugliness and eliminate evil. This kind of purification discards the blunt rational preach, teaches people through lively activities and influences the educated people by the art and vivid image so that people can comprehend the true meaning of life and accept the moral education in the enjoyment of beauty and the joy of the spirit. The ideology and morality of the educated people can be purified and sublimated in the subtlest way, the process of education can be naturally completed, the existence ambit can be improved, the freedom and liberation of the soul can be obtained, and the "art of life" can be achieved.

The enjoyment of beauty and the artistic creation are the "good deeds" that our culture expects. This kind of pleasure is also among our peers, which can only be gained when people do their jobs that they are willing to do and enjoy something that they love. Dante's paradise always contains God and goodness. But even an angel has to do something, even if sing and sing [3]. The image of a perfect society is not the image of an aesthete in the museum, but the image of an artist who is engaged in artistic creation. The artistic function in today's culture is only a superficial escape for the appreciators, but for artists, they should be engrossed to achieve the purpose of escape. The delightful activities of the artist and the joys from the art appreciation show what a sound and happy social order can provide us most generously and universally. Work is art, and this meaning will be much broader than its current meaning, i.e., various senses can be applied most pleasantly in the process of creating products that may make us happy. Painting, poetry and music are no longer the privileges enjoyed by a few people, but become the ubiquitous wisdom that everyone can appreciate.

In terms of the role of art in aesthetic education, there is one more point worth mentioning that it can be called as the metaphysical revelation in aesthetic experience. Over thousands of years, philosophers have been paying attention to the nature and true essence of truth. Now, the nature of truth has become a logical exploration, and the exploration of the true nature is likely to eventually become an aesthetic issue. Truth is always a proposition. It is a description about the facts. But the fact refers to the data of instant experience, and it is just the special advantage of art: It can present the instant data in a clear, concentrated and pure way and promote these data to a true extent of special degree. The artist makes us observant and imaginative, the books, paintings or musicals that he writes,

draws or composes are more realistic for us than the environment in which we actually walk and breathe. The "things" expressed in the paintings are more real, more accurate and more concentrated than what we see with our eyes daily. The characters in the novel are closer and clearer than the people we occasionally meet in our daily life. Where we can search for the reality is not in some metaphysical formulas, but in the unquestioned reality in artworks.

#### V. CONCLUSION

In summary, the "purification" of art should be achieved by the catharsis of the aesthetic emotions, and there are reasonable factors in terms of the aesthetic empathy role of the artist. However, if the emotion is described as a simple psychological catharsis, and there is no specific analysis of the actual situation of a variety of educated people, once this catharsis is uncontrollable and no longer acts within the scope of rationality, it will become a pathological emotion, which is not conducive to the conduct of the education. Therefore, we should correctly understand the "purification" of art, and we should develop and utilize the aesthetic education function brought therefrom rationally. It can be said that art reveals a goal bit by bit, and all experience is moving toward this goal. Art reveals the external material world that is completely controlled by wisdom and the impulsive inner world, therefore, no matter what it does, it is a pleasure and the result is also pleasant. At the moment when art continues to bring happiness, the dream of Plato's dream philosopher is foretold. A well-written symphony, a logically rigorous tragedy, and an elegant and moving poem belong to an experience of this orderly world. Art is synonymous with wisdom. In the various beautiful works considered by us, art is playing its role cheerfully in the happy moments that we consider it as the enjoyment of beauty, similarly, it will dominate the world in a well-ordered society.

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