

Art and Philosophy - My Thoughts on Reading *Philosophy of Art*

Yi Wang^{1*}, Chen Zhou¹

¹ Zhejiang Normal University, Jinhua, Zhejiang, China

Email Address

1104683507@qq.com (Yi Wang)

*Correspondence: 1104683507@qq.com

Received: 7 February 2023; Accepted: 22 March 2023; Published: 23 June 2023

Abstract:

The philosophy of art is a subject that is specialized in discussing the speculative and rational topic of artistic truth. The foundation of any discipline is inseparable from philosophy, in order to better promote the study and research of art theory. After reading the book *Philosophy of Art* by Professor Wang Defeng, I sorted and thought about it. This article will start with the two major issues discussed in the book: the relationship between aesthetics and philosophy of art, the difference between handicrafts and works of art, and put forward some new understandings and possibilities for some issues and ideas in a way similar to the combination of cognition and criticism, so as to explore the internal development law of philosophy of art.

Keywords:

Philosophy of Art, Truth, Artwork

1. Introduction

As an art student who has studied and explored the art world for more than ten years, in addition to exploring the basic techniques of painting and learning the basic art knowledge of Chinese and foreign art history, i seldom explore the relationship between art and other disciplines, and rarely considers the relationship between art and philosophy as the highest form of human rationality. Exploring the relationship between the two is more conducive to promoting the study and development of art theory research, and is more conducive to improving the pioneering between disciplines.

The book "Philosophy of Art" by Professor Wang Defeng mainly focuses on the relationship between aesthetics and philosophy of art, and the difference between artworks and handicrafts. After clarifying the relationship between aesthetics and philosophy of art and understanding the difference between handicrafts and artworks, there are some issues that seem crucial: what is philosophy of art? What is the foundation of its establishment? What is the relationship between it and traditional aesthetics? I have a new understanding of these problems and i will express my thoughts and ideas in this article.

2. Aesthetics and Philosophy of Art

As the highest form of human reason, philosophy must pass through the intermediary of aesthetics if it wants to influence the art of the highest form of human sensibility. As a branch of philosophy, aesthetics studies perceptual knowledge in a rational way. In this sense, Hegel simply called aesthetics “philosophy of art”. Nowadays, we rarely argue about the subordination of “aesthetics” and “philosophy of art”, but Professor Wang Defeng believes that it is very important to distinguish “aesthetics” from “philosophy of art”.

2.1. *Beauty and art*

The study of the relationship between “aesthetics” and “philosophy of art” must first involve the relationship between beauty and art. Professor Wang Defeng, inspired by Marx and Heidegger's new ontology, proposed that art is the premise of beauty.

This view seems to break people's original understanding of “beauty” and “art”, that is, when you mention art, you will think that this is an activity to generate and appreciate beauty. However, “art” is not just an activity to provide people with a pleasant mood. Art never depends on beauty, just as art philosophy never belongs to aesthetics. Wang Defeng is not opposed to the inextricable connection between “beauty” and “art”, but this connection is not from “beauty” to “art”, but from “art” to “beauty”. We can understand that beauty is not an objective entity, it is a phenomenon, or it is a state. When we see a flower, that is, when we appreciate the beauty of nature, the beauty we feel is not objective, it is a work of art formed by the interaction between our subject and object. In Hegelian words, the reason why we can appreciate the beauty of nature is that we have become artists at the moment, and we have made nature into a work of art in our hearts. A few words from Anne Shepard can be used to explain the seemingly incredible “artistic creation” and “works of art”, She said: “We can choose a special angle to view a landscape, and we can also go to an observation position that can make the shape of the mountain seem particularly attractive”. It can be said that the process we do so is also the process of our 'design' this kind of landscape. We are watching it, as if it is a painting designed to accept our scrutiny. This also shows that beauty is not a physical existence, and it is not the appearance of art in the air, but the existence that can only be explained through art.

2.2. *The relationship between aesthetics and philosophy of art*

Hegel actually put forward two basic principles for the philosophy of art. First, all problems of aesthetics, in the final analysis, are problems of art; The discussion of “the essence of beauty” can only be solved in accordance with its nature if it is put into the field of artistic problems. Secondly, the problem of art is not simply about the interest of beauty and its production and appreciation. Art works are the manifestation of truth, so the study of art philosophy is the cause of elucidating truth. However, these two principles can only remain abstract in Hegel, and cannot be truly realized, because the base on which he is based is modern rational metaphysics. Therefore, only by finding a new base for Hegel's principles can the true philosophy of art be established.

Obviously, Professor Wang Defeng raised an objection to Hegel's idea in his book, saying: “Hegel's aesthetics is obviously also on the path of epistemology, so it cannot understand the original occurrence of truth in art.” Hegel did not see that the truth of art, which he dismissed as a low-level stage, is actually the “original occurrence” of

truth, and is the source of all truth. Compared with the truth of art, the truth of science and philosophy, the truth of concept and the truth of logic are all secondary and derivative truths.

Professor Wang Defeng also believes that Hegel's view that aesthetics is called philosophy of art is mistaken into the ranks of western metaphysics. Hegel assumed that beauty existed before art, and under this setting, he expounded the principles of art, which made the philosophy of art a vassal of aesthetics. Wang Defeng believes that what really plays a role in the works is the way of truth appearing, rather than the "form of beauty" itself, which is divorced from beauty, which is also the basis of artistic philosophy. If this problem is not clarified, the philosophy of art will eventually succumb to traditional aesthetics, and more people will not pay attention to this problem.

3. Handicrafts and Artworks

Since aesthetics should be the philosophy of art, the first question about the philosophy of art is no longer the old "what is beauty", and under this question, "the metaphysical discussion of the essence of beauty" should become "what is art". However, Wang Defeng followed Heidegger's footsteps here and followed the direction of *The Origin of Works of Art*, not from "art", but from "works of art" to explore this issue. "The first thing it must discuss is the existence of works of art, that is, what is the way in which works exist as works?" Since Duchamp created the urinal event in 1917, artistic criticism and artistic philosophy have been forced to focus on works of art. The fundamental question of art philosophers has become "what is art" and "what is art".

3.1. The relationship between handicrafts and artworks

Before discussing the relationship between arts and crafts, the first thing we need to discuss is the existence of art. Roman Ingarden, a phenomenological aesthetician, holds that artistic works are purely intentional objects, which are different from real objects, conceptual objects and objects of psychological experience. In other words, it exists in a special way and is distinguished from the real object. This special way of existence means that it mixes a series of complex things, which may include the artist's life experience, rich emotions, philosophical thoughts, specific concepts of dealing with things, and so on, which are not available in the fixed format and routine assembly line products.

It is easy for people to call the works created by artists as works of art, but in fact they ignore the "beauty" in art, thus confusing the two concepts of "art" and "handicraft". We generally try to define art in various ways, and try to draw the boundary of the concept of art, so that we can distinguish and separate art from other objects. Here, Wang Defeng, the problem is rooted in the philosophy of art on the one hand, and the current situation of contemporary art practice on the other. He emphasized that the essence of art is a question raised to us by art practice. This "practice" includes not only artists' creative activities, but also our spontaneous or potential art criticism. However, no matter where it comes from, Wang Defeng has the same origin. However, his way of questioning is a little special. When Wang Defeng expounded the question of works of art, he always accompanied the reference object of arts and crafts, comparing arts and crafts, distinguishing between arts and crafts, so as to better explain the question of "What is a work of art?".

3.2. The difference between handicrafts and artworks

Wang Defeng stressed: “It is necessary to distinguish between works of art and handicrafts. Good handicrafts are the product of exquisite skills, and its aesthetic value lies in the satisfaction of specific aesthetic interests. However, the satisfaction of this aesthetic interest alone is not enough to prove the existence of an artistic work. This difference is the starting point for the study of philosophy of art to be established. Philosophy of art is not “technology”, Just like an artist is not a “craftsman”.

The obvious difference between art and handicraft is “mystery” and “charm”. And “mystery” and “charm” are basically said from the perspective of the receiver, because it is the receiver who is feeling mystery and receiving charm. From the point of view of the creator or artist, the situation is similar. The difference between artists and craftsmen is the difference between art and handicrafts reflected in artistic creation. Who are artists? “He must first be a craftsman”, because he must first have the skills or skills to make handicrafts such as color mixing and stone carving. However, the artist is obviously an extraordinary and special craftsman. As the writer Fang Long said, artistic genius is “exquisite skill+something else”. As for what else, it may be the “soul” in the work, just like Rodin's sculpture Balzac. What we feel is not only Rodin's exquisite craftsmanship, but also his emotions and thoughts. No matter how skillful the craftsman creates, it is always a handicraft. Just like “searching all the peaks to make a draft” and “bamboo in the chest”, art needs a great deal of painstaking efforts and hard work of artists to create a lasting art.

A work of art is not an object that provides us with the satisfaction of aesthetic taste. The existence of a work lies in that it provides “space” for the formation of aesthetic images with its internal vision, which also provides the possibility for the occurrence of truth. This also once again reflects Wang Defeng's main points in the book, and also explains the foundation for the establishment of artistic philosophy.

4. Conclusions

There are no perfect answers to some basic questions of philosophy since they were put forward. In terms of form, philosophy has not made obvious progress, but human thinking has enriched its content step by step. The philosophy of art is the same. The world explored by the philosophy of art should be broad, not limited, and should be free to speak and have unlimited possibilities, rather than silent and isolated from exploration and discovery. Philosophy and thinking are the origin of human nature, as Kant said: “Man is the ultimate goal of creation in the world, because man is the only unique existence in the world. It is the concept that can form a goal, and it is a system that can build a goal from a lot of things formed with a goal, with the help of his rationality”, Just like the world constructed in the Athens Institute created by Raphael, students should have extremely inclusive, free and open ideas, break the boundaries of time and space, bring together ideas and cultures from different disciplines and constantly pursue the source of wisdom and truth.

This is also a basic spirit that Professor Wang Defeng insisted in his book “Philosophy of Art”, that is, the philosophy of art is a practical task. Philosophy is a very unique ideological effort of human beings. It is learning, but it does not have a ready-made and recognized knowledge system and research methods like other learning; She shows the realm that her thoughts have reached so far, but these realms also require further ideological exploration.

Conflicts of Interest

The author declares that there is no conflict of interest regarding the publication of this article.

Funding

This research received no specific grant from any funding agency in the public, commercial or not-for-profit sectors.

References

- [1] C.J. Ducas, Wang, K.P. New Theory of Art Philosophy. *Research on Literary Theory*, 2022, 42(01), 144.
- [2] Zhou, H. A book that makes people think -- Read Mr. Wang Defeng's Introduction to Philosophy. *Quality Education Reference (Version A)*, 2013, 11, 56.
- [3] Guo, Y.J. Art and Truth - A Review of Wang Defeng's Philosophy of Art. *Yiyuan*, 2011, 03, 17-26.
- [4] Wang Defeng. *Philosophy of Art*, 1st ed.; Fudan University Press, 2015.
- [5] Shen, Y.B. What is the philosophy of art - Our Vision and Plan. *Shanghai Culture*, 2022, 08, 44-52+100.
- [6] Di, Q.C.; Tan, H.Z. The revolution of artistic philosophy -- On the systematic characteristics and aesthetic ideals of Marx and Engels' artistic philosophy. *Literature Review*, 1991, 03, 48-55.
- [7] Sun, X.L. On the Philosophical Art of Aesthetics. *Tomorrow's Fashion*, 2021, 08, 166-167.
- [8] Zhang, Y. "Being" - Thinking about contemporary art philosophy with Heidegger as an example. *China National Expo*, 2020, 10, 208-209.



© 2023 by the author(s); licensee International Technology and Science Publications (ITS), this work for open access publication is under the Creative Commons Attribution International License (CC BY 4.0). (<http://creativecommons.org/licenses/by/4.0/>)