

Aesthetic Games and the Return of Perfect Humanity - Analysis of Schiller's Aesthetic Education Thought

Junmin Zhao^{1*}

¹ School of Marxism, Hainan University, Hainan, China

Email Address

2391810238@qq.com (Junmin Zhao)

*Correspondence: 2391810238@qq.com

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Abstract:

Exploring the essential function of aesthetic education from the perspective of human nature is an important value proposition of Schiller's aesthetic education thought. In the era where instrumental rationality and practical rationality prevail, bridging the division of human nature, restoring complete human nature, changing the state of alienation, and achieving a free and complete state of human nature are the true pursuits of aesthetic education. In Schiller's view, it is aesthetic games that can enable people to enter into free and creative activities, free them from constraints, achieve harmony and unity between sensibility and reason, between man and nature, and between man and society, and achieve the complete return of human nature. This directly points to the highest ideal goal of human freedom and comprehensive development.

Keywords:

Schiller, Aesthetic Games, Complete Human Nature, Aesthetic Education Ideology

1. Introduction

Friedrich Schiller's "Aesthetic Education Letters" (hereinafter referred to as the "Letters") first proposed the concept of aesthetic education, which is known as the "first manifesto of aesthetic education". The book gives a positive attitude towards the phenomenon and spirit of games, providing valuable support for the aesthetic interpretation of games. In a certain sense, Schiller's aesthetic system is the "humanistic aesthetic system", and "beauty and humanistic education" is the core of Schiller's aesthetic thought. Its purpose is to achieve perfect humanity and strive to build an aesthetic "ideal country", where individuals as gamers can achieve the perfection and transcendence of humanity. Although it carries an idealistic tone, his profound exploration of human freedom and happiness is of great significance.

2. The "Game" in Schiller's Aesthetic Context

Game "was once recognized as a" primary form of human social activity, often belonging to the category of children. However, this is not the only patent of children,

it only exists in specific categories (such as the scope of children's psychological development). In fact, it also derives from the category of adults. In the fields of philosophy or humanism, it is an advanced form of activity related to the "soundness of human spirit". In fact, games can promote the development of one's own potential, adjust the body and mind, and improve personality, especially advanced aesthetic games like "artistic creation", which can cultivate a person's aesthetic attitude, aesthetic literacy, and aesthetic spirit. Therefore, Schiller's "Letters" In all states of human existence, it is the game, and only the game, that makes a person fully human and unleashes their dual nature... Ultimately, only when a person is a fully meaningful person, can they play; only when they play, can they be fully human." [1] In fact, the definition of game "has been relatively consistent for a long time, and Schiller did not define its exact connotation. Kant proposed that" beauty is a symbol of morality, "linking beauty" with "human nature", emphasizing that aesthetic activities run through cognitive activities and moral practice, thus achieving the leap of "beauty". Schiller... On the basis of Kant's aesthetics, further deduction was made, proposing the "aesthetic impulse (i.e. aesthetic consciousness)", The activity that clearly expresses the impulse of gaming (i.e. aesthetics) can lead people out of primitive barbarism, towards a new civilization of humanity, and achieve perfect humanity. Schiller updated the cultural tradition of game aesthetics, thus forming a new value concept - "game life", which is widely prevalent. Later, Herbert Spencer also developed Schiller's "game theory", which believed that the impulse to play could only be carried out when surplus energy was abundant (energy surplus theory), hence it is called the "Schiller Spencer game theory" in the history of aesthetics.

In the "aesthetic intuition" (aesthetic game impulse), a living image (the essence of art) can be generated, which stimulates the spirit of free creation. It is in this interaction that human sensibility and rationality can achieve a perfect unity, thus realizing the ideal human nature. Therefore, the significance of aesthetic games is to make people realize that they are human, to make people become human, to find themselves and develop and create themselves in the survival game. Here, Schiller's concept of "perfect person" refers to the perfect harmony between sensibility and reason, therefore, "game" emphasizes "free activity", that is, the pursuit of beauty. As Schiller said, "In beautiful things, we feel free because the impulse of sensibility and the impulse of reason are in harmony. In noble things, we feel free because the impulse of sensibility has no influence on the legislation of reason, and because the spirit acts within it. The imitation of Buddhism is not governed by any other laws except its own." [1] Schiller's aesthetic context is endowed with a color of freedom, essentially clarifying the basic characteristics of aesthetic activities through "games", that is, freedom and freedom, a state of freedom without oppression and coercion, just like Kant's state of "purposeless conformity". Therefore, the "game behavior" is put on the label of "purposeless conformity". Under the guise of "high art," he achieved a "world of life" in which the meaning of games is derived from form to form Turning towards the metaphysical "art world", it can be seen that Schiller's aesthetic game has an idealistic color.

3. The Crisis of Individual Human Nature-"Alienation Phenomenon"

Schiller did not use the term "alienation" to clarify the crisis of human nature at that time, but it can be seen that Schiller's ideas have great foresight and a sense of the times. In Schiller's view, modern society is like a mechanical clock, composed of countless lifeless mechanical individuals. The disconnect between aesthetics and labor,

the disconnect between means and ends, the disconnect between law and morality, and various fatal conflicts have broken the harmony of human nature. People are forced to confine themselves to isolated clock fragments, with the noisy sound of machine wheels lingering in their ears. As a result, people are no longer complete individuals, but rather a collection of divided individuals. As a result, the artistic and creative spirits will be submerged, the scope of art will sharply shrink, the field of science will gradually expand, and a crisis of human alienation will emerge.

Firstly, the division of individual completeness. The starting point of Schiller's aesthetic system is precisely due to the fact that human nature is divided, and through this fact, he has conducted research and reflection on the aesthetics of human nature. Schiller keenly perceives the harm of this industrial civilization to human nature, and the perfect human nature is facing decline. Correspondingly, it should be the harmony of human nature in ancient Greek society. Schiller's desire to return to the perfect human nature was based on his imagination of ancient Greek culture and art, but this beauty gradually disappeared with the division of labor in modern society. In modern (capitalist) society, sensibility and rationality are separated, and some people (laboring masses) become particularly rough due to emotional impulses; The other group of people (upper class society) become empty and ethereal due to their one-sided pursuit of formal impulses, and their individual fulfillment loses its foundation here, which is abnormal, repressed, and pathological. Schiller attributed the evil of the capitalist mode of production to the corruption and division of human nature. Therefore, what Schiller called for was not the form of revolution, but rather to establish the foothold and starting point on the morality and personality of self-improvement. As described in the seventh letter, "Unless it is achieved that the human heart is no longer divided and the human nature is fully developed, so that he can become an artist himself and ensure that human reality becomes a rational political creation, we will still regard various attempts at national reform as untimely, and the hope built on this foundation as an illusion."

Secondly, the dimension of individual survival aesthetics is lacking. Schiller believed that "art" originated from "play" and pointed out that "one must have surplus rather than being satisfied with nature and what one desires." [2] Only with "surplus" can one play, but it does not mean that having "surplus" can one engage in "aesthetic play". "Aesthetic play" is a transformative game that rises to the height of human imagination. "Starting from this game, imagination finally leaps to aesthetic play in its pursuit of free forms." [2] However, in the state of nature, people are constrained and limited by material forces; In the moral state, people are suppressed and constrained by moral will. Here, they lose their "freedom" and the aesthetic dimension of individual survival through external forces. Human development is one-sided, abstract, and lacks creativity. As Schiller said, "If a person is forced by both feelings and ideas, then I call him a tense person." [2] This tension manifests in two different states, one is the "coercion of feelings" and the other is the "coercion of ideas," both of which are contradictory results of sensibility and rationality, and both are critical reflections on people in social reality. Schiller believed that only "integrated beauty" can restore the aesthetic dimension of individuals and provide an opportunity to break free from the constraints of natural laws. In other words, it is to give sensory individuals a sense of freedom, connect "sensibility" and "rationality", leave positive factors, and overcome negative factors.

Finally, the loss of individual life care. The "perfect humanity" is the "beauty of life", which is to enable the active subject's essence of life to fully unfold, and to

maximize the richness and diversity of life. Here, we can see the brilliance of Schiller's aesthetic education thought full of life wisdom. However, individual life care is lost to varying degrees in response to the current state of existence. Schiller saw that individual survival has multiple limitations. Firstly, isolated, one-sided, and mechanical activities disrupt the harmony and unity of human nature, leading to a tense state of life; Another type is the simultaneous depletion of two fundamental forces, namely sensory and spiritual, resulting in a relaxed state of life. This disharmonious state of life violates the meaning of ontology of life. Human life is not only a biological life, but also seeks spiritual and emotional satisfaction on this basis. When technological rationality controls human external life and its true existence, the fundamental meaning of human beings is defined as a "materialistic existence", which is the result of the dominance of human life sensibility. In the kingdom of aesthetics, various factors in life can coexist harmoniously and reach a coordinated state. Emotions and love on the emotional level, as well as rules on the rational level, are organically unified and interact with each other, so as to ultimately lead to a complete individual life. Therefore, this is the ultimate value of aesthetic education, which is to ignite the passion and desire for life in the aesthetic subject.

4. The Return of Perfect Human Nature - "Aesthetic Education"

Schiller did not agree with the path of the French Revolution, believing that it could not truly achieve the restoration of perfect humanity. He attributed the root of society to the corruption of the human heart. In this era, Schiller proposed a remedy for transforming people - "aesthetic education". Therefore, Schiller constructed a social landscape of "humanity → non humanity → humanity restoration" to shape perfect humanity. He said, "To make emotional people rational people, there is no other way except to first make them aesthetic people." [3] "It is through beauty that people can achieve freedom." [3] Although this has a utopian idealistic nature, the role of "aesthetic education" is affirmed here. This means that in the beautiful society of the future, not only external moral norms are needed, and it also requires a human's inherent awareness of beauty. Only in the process of aesthetic education can a healthy aesthetic taste and ideal be established, ultimately achieving a complete return to human nature.

One is from people who are divided to people who play games. The cultivation and restoration of human nature referred to by Schiller is essentially the rejection of inhumanity such as cruelty, decadence, and fury. The human nature referred to here encompasses the inherent impulses of sensibility and rationality. It is the division of sensibility and rationality that binds people to individual contradictions. The perfect person and the playful person aim to achieve harmony and unity between the two. However, the development of modern civilization has broken this unity between the two. So, the urgent task to address this division is to have a third impulse - the "gaming impulse" - in order to restore perfection. So, here we need to talk about the relationship between "gaming impulse" and "beauty". Schiller believed that as the subject, no matter which impulse is constrained by the former, humans are incomplete. Therefore, people should engage in activities according to their own will (in this case, only games are available). Here, there should not only be time for games, but also conditions for games. The conditions referred to here are the kind of state where one can break free from constraints and enter the game. Therefore, the "game impulse" has become an effective way to achieve human freedom. As he said, "people should

play with beauty”, and only when they are fully human can they play; Only when a person is playing games, is he a complete person [3]

The second is between aesthetic people and free people. In order to seek existence and become a free person, one must possess their own unique self-awareness - “aesthetic consciousness”. The process of forming aesthetic objects, that is, the process of “self realization”, can only achieve spiritual freedom through aesthetic education. Here, “aesthetics” and “games” are interconnected, both indicating the freedom of human subjectivity. In the ninth letter of the Book of Letters, it is stated that political improvement relies on the nobility of human character, and to achieve this nobility, it is necessary to use “art”. Artists purify their souls through aesthetic (gaming impulses) and ultimately achieve the nobility of their character, which is a rich form of noble and great spirit. Through the form of beauty, artists express their pursuit and love for truth. In Schiller’s eyes, the aesthetic person is a free person, and “aesthetics” is the necessary preparation for restoring humanity and obtaining freedom. Sensory individuals first become aesthetic people before they can develop into rational people. The development process of human beings goes through material, aesthetic, and moral states. Schiller firmly believed that “beauty” and “art” are the ways to achieve freedom. However, the artists described by Schiller are rooted in the kingdom of fantasy and did not grow up in the struggle of reality, filled with idealism and romanticism.

Thirdly, aesthetic ideals and aesthetic kingdoms. The ultimate goal of the kingdoms of nature, law, and aesthetics should be the freedom of aesthetics. The kingdom of nature represents the power of rights; The ‘Kingdom of Laws’ is a kingdom constrained by morality and the rule of law; The kingdom of aesthetics is a kingdom that can truly achieve freedom. The image of the “Third Kingdom” established through joyful “games” is manifested without utilitarianism, conflict, or alienation. Schiller expressed in his 27th letter to the Book of Letters the existence of the “Kingdom of Beauty” and acknowledged that it is still a “country of false beauty”. This aesthetic ideal and kingdom, which exists in the form of “false beauty”, has both “existence” and “non existence” qualities and requires a noble aesthetic soul. At the same time, it is not a real entity in reality. Such a combination is inevitably a country of beauty and illusion, which is Schiller’s “Utopia of Aesthetic Education”. In this stage, “aesthetics” served as a bridge from the material state to the moral state. Only the aesthetic taste of the aesthetic state can immerse people into a harmonious society. In other words, Schiller’s aesthetic ideals and kingdom gave important roles to artistic aesthetics. It can be said that this provided important theoretical support for the formation of the early Romantic poetic state in Germany. They all believed that “education on beauty and humanity can fundamentally solve the various disadvantages caused by the opposition and division between man and nature, man and society, and man and himself.” [4] However, Schiller’s aesthetic kingdom remained in the world of artistic aesthetics and did not ascend to the political height of reality.

5. Conclusions

Schiller’s humanistic aesthetic system and the fantasy of “aesthetic utopia”, although not realized in the future development of human society, still have a need for reflection for modern society, such as criticism of instrumental rationality, resistance to violent politics, the architecture of modern technology, and the sublimation of human qualities, all of which have important enlightening effects and deeply affect

the current education and development in China. Schiller's aesthetic education theory and game theory are closely related to China's ongoing "quality education" system project. The drawbacks of exam oriented education are not conducive to the cultivation and improvement of students' spiritual personality, personality realm, and poetic beauty. Therefore, quality education advocates stimulating human potential and development, overcoming one sidedness and limitations, which is internally consistent with Schiller's advocacy of using aesthetic education theory to overcome human division and restore human harmony.

Conflicts of Interest

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

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