

The Origin of Culture and Art and the Construction of Artistic Thinking

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Abstract: Culture comes into being along with human thinking activities, which reflect the deep essence of human beings. Its development is a long dialectical process of philosophy. Art, as the embodiment of cultural achievements, has a close relationship with culture, and the construction of artistic thinking based on culture is a more complex process, which is the process of individual re-cognition, re-thinking, and re-reasoning under the influence of culture. Therefore, this kind of artistic thinking constructs the basic structure of the cultural world and is also the basis of the existence of the world of human art phenomena, and together, they constitute an important part of human civilization.

Keywords: Culture; Art origin; Construction of artistic thinking

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1. Introduction

Culture is an important source of art, and the inheritance and development of culture provide excellent materials and inner motivation for art. Art, on the other hand, is an important embodiment of culture, a process of creation, and an expression and display of human emotions and thinking. It can be said that culture is the soil for the growth of art, and art is the reproduction of cultural achievements. Culture and art influence and promote each other to form an important part of human civilization. Usually, art shows people a variety of cultural connotations and spiritual cores through its different forms of expression, and the connection between culture and artistic thinking mode is a complex and in-depth field, whose transformation requires profound cultural accomplishment, keen observation, and unique artistic thinking. Because in the construction of artistic thinking, creators need to fully consider the role of culture in art and the constraints of social background and other factors, this kind of thinking construction is the result of the correlation, interdependence and common development of culture and art, and is a philosophical dialectical unity of human culture and thinking.

2. A preliminary analysis of “culture”

“Culture” is a word with high frequency, and it is also a common concept widely used. Because “culture” is so common, the cognition and definition of the word “culture” are very broad and varied. For example, 30 years ago, two anthropologists, Kroeber and Clark, collected and compiled more than 160 definitions of “culture.” Mr. Yu Yingshi, a well-known overseas cultural scholar, mentioned in his book *The Modern Meaning of Chinese Culture from the Perspective of Value System* that “there are many different views on the discussion of ‘culture’ by modern scholars.”^[1] Today, the concept of “culture” is still being used more and more frequently, and a series of new terms such as “network culture”, “cultural diagnostics”, “cultural framework”, and “cultural dimension” are emerging one after another. The appearance of these phenomena and concepts, on the surface, is a manifestation of “culture”, but in fact, it is a deep and urgent need or anxiety. Therefore, researchers must start from the essence of culture and carry on a deeper exploration of the term “culture” so that they can define it more accurately and completely^[2].

The word “Culture” in the West is “culture”, which comes from the ancient Latin “cult ra”, referring to the land cultivated and labor harvested. The earliest nominal use of Culture is in Middle English in Palladius’s *Lustica* (circa 1450). In modern times (1880s), Culture in *The Oxford English Dictionary* was defined as “The customs and beliefs, art, way of life and social organization of a particular country or group.” And since the introduction of modern Western “Culture”, “Culture” as a free translation of “culture” is quite appropriate. Since then, the Chinese word “Culture” has the same modern meaning as the Western word “culture.”

3. The reanalysis of the word “culture”

Edward Burnet Taylor was a famous British anthropologist who is called “the father of cultural science.” In the first chapter of his famous book *Primitive Culture*, Taylor defined the goal of “science” as “culture”: “In the broad anthropological sense, it encompasses all knowledge, beliefs, arts, morals, laws, customs, and all the gifts and customs of being a member of a society.” It can be seen that sociology is a more comprehensive and profound understanding of human culture and the key to understanding the laws of human thinking and behavior^[3]. Human behavior and thinking are constantly changing with social changes and cultural evolution. Hence, researchers need to look at the changes in culture and thinking from the perspective of history and development rather than viewing them as immutable. Culture at different stages is a distillation and reflection of past history and will also play an inherent role in creating future history^[4]. The integration of social environment, cultural norms, historical background, artistic form, and other factors further contributes to the diversity and complexity of culture, and the analysis and interpretation of it will better promote the construction of human’s artistic thinking.

Anthropologist B.K. Malinowski believes that “culture” must first have a functional analysis to explore evolution and transmission; when the function cannot be explained and the relationship between various elements is not clear, the form of culture cannot be understood.

It is the emergence of culture that turns animal man into a speaker, a thinker, a creator, and an organizer. Whatever the difference between the synchronic concept of culture, which refers to the deep intrinsic nature, and the diachronic concept of civilization, which refers to the form, the relationship between them is clear. Culture and civilization interact with each other and preserve human power in the same substance.

4. The dialectical relationship between art and culture

4.1. The origin of art

Although art has been around for tens of thousands of years, its origin has always been a subject of much debate. The reason for this is that the study of the origins of art is inevitably tinged with conjecture. As for the origin of art, it can be roughly divided into two categories: one is to speculate the origin of art according to people's experience in art practice. For example, Aristotle put forward the "imitation theory"; he believes that art originates from people's imitation instinct, which is due to people's happiness through imitation^[5]. The other is to deduce according to a certain ideology, such as the "labor theory" of Bicher and others, Shelley's "performance theory", and so on. However, mere conjecture is not enough, so some empirical methods have emerged. The other is to explore the origin of art based on scattered records in ancient books. For example, by quoting the legend about the music and dance of the Getian tribe in Lu's Spring and Autumn Annals, researchers can infer its artistic origin for this reason. Second, based on a large number of original art materials unearthed and existing original tribal art materials, the author makes a comprehensive and systematic investigation of them and finally draws a conclusion.

4.2. The historical investigation of the theory of the origin of art

In the history of aesthetics, the origin of art is often mixed with the origin of beauty, but they are not the same thing. First of all, beauty is the primary social objective existence, which is a special materialized labor, while art is the secondary objective existence, which is the materialized form of aesthetic feeling^[6]. Secondly, beauty and aesthetics precede art, but art is also the higher form and concentrated expression of beauty. Therefore, to clarify the origin of art, the understanding of beauty and aesthetic characteristics is also of great significance.

As to the origin of art, people have different opinions. Some believe that art comes from the simulation of the real world, which is the inherent nature of human beings. Heraclitus, a Greek philosopher, was the first person to raise this question. Later, Aristotle took the idea further, combining imitation with the biological instinct of man. In his Poetics, he pointed out that "poetry comes into being basically for two reasons, both arising out of human nature"^[7]. Since childhood, human beings have an imitative nature, and they like to imitate the works of others. This sentence is right because without imitation, the initial "art" of human beings is inseparable from imitation. One of the earliest ancient artifacts, such as the French statue of a naked woman with horns 30,000 years ago, was evolved from the simulation of the woman's body. The huge frescoes of Altamira, where the animals are lifelike. Although the originals themselves are not true works of art, but merely the product of another spiritual activity, they nevertheless possess the characteristics of an artistic activity, a necessary stage of a "pre-art." It can be said that without "imitation", there would be no "art."

Another, more appropriate view is that art is born out of play, and play is the source of human excess energy. Schiller was the main advocate of this idea. In his Books on Aesthetic Education, he wrote, "By what does the barbarian declare the human nature he has attained?" It is "the love of appearance, the love of adornment, the love of play" (Letter 26). In other words, the preoccupation with "appearance", "decoration", and "play" is a characteristic of man's liberation from bestiality. When a man is concerned only with the essence of things and not with the appearance of things, he can still only get the physical and physical needs, so he is still negative and free; Man can only get spiritual satisfaction if he focuses on the outside and not on the material, so that he is in a positive and free state^[8].

Plekhanov partially took this statement and adapted it. Play, he believed, had its utilitarian side, and its ultimate goal was to serve labor^[9]. "Play is a product of labor", he said. "The game of the beast also involves

hunting in disguise and fighting in disguise.” In other words, play is seen either as an exercise in preparation for work or as a recreation of the process of work. From this point of view, Marx’s equation of “labor-play-art” is tenable.

4.3. Rethinking the correlation between art and culture

Any cultural phenomenon has both implicit and explicit ones. External culture is beautiful, including the visible and the invisible: the visible things, such as houses, clothes, food, and so on; Intangible things, such as rules, institutions, laws, arts, and so on. It is clear here that art is an “implicit” culture. This relates to the relationship between art and culture. Culture arises when man’s labor reaches a certain level. From the point of view of its origin and nature, “beauty” and “beauty” run through the process of human culture development ^[10]. Therefore, the relationship between art and culture can be said to be a kind of unmediated inclusion, and art is born in this process and its objectified result. This is the fundamental meaning of what Marx called “production according to the aesthetic law.”

Here, art can be regarded as an expression of aesthetic consciousness, which, although essentially the result of human culture and labor practice, is constantly deepened and consolidated until it becomes a conscious consciousness of the subject and finally forms a continuous mental structure. Thus, in this sense, cultural activity promotes the sublimation of aesthetic consciousness and gradually separates it from concrete utilitarian objects, becoming a kind of human emotional value. In this process of sublimation, human appreciation of beauty and art is increasingly liberated, and a standardized materialized form is continuously obtained, especially the primitive form of poetry, dance, painting, or drama, which is not simply in the form of “art” but itself has a strong cultural color ^[11]. After a long history of accumulation, especially with the creation of the aesthetic consciousness formed by the establishment of the subject consciousness, people’s pursuit of spiritual freedom has gone beyond the utilitarian goal and obtained great happiness and satisfaction from it.

To sum up, there is a close relationship between culture and art ^[12]. On the one hand, culture is the soil for the growth of art, providing material and inspiration for artistic creation. On the other hand, art is the embodiment of cultural achievements, conveying specific cultural information and values through image, color, form and other means of expression. Therefore, the study believes that culture provides a standardized form for art and contributes to the birth and development of art.

5. The construction of artistic thinking based on culture

Culture makes the nature of things clear, and the thought method is a key link to finding their internal connections. If one considers an unrelated matter, then one will find that this is a cultural connection that one subconsciously ignored in the past. So, for a very active, very intelligent person, the advantage of cultural thinking is to be able to recall and compare many cultural experiences that have been well understood and to quickly see contradictions and breakthroughs in them so that one can think big ^[13]. This way of thinking can continuously excavate a person’s inner inspiration, which is often very mature and intriguing because it has been washed away by the cultural subconscious for a long time and also has a lot of changes and precipitation under a lot of external stimuli. Therefore, the excavation of this mode of thinking can often be done unconsciously to give full play to one’s own thinking.

It can be said that there is a close relationship between culture and artistic ways of thinking, influencing and

shaping each other. Culture has a profound influence on artistic thinking mode. Different cultural backgrounds shape people's world outlook, values, and artistic thinking mode. Eastern culture emphasizes holistic and comprehensive ways of thinking, focusing on the harmonious relationship between man and nature and man and society, while Western culture puts more emphasis on individualism and logical thinking^[14]. The artistic way of thinking in this cultural context can affect people's decision-making, judgment, and problem-solving abilities. At the same time, the way of artistic thinking will, in turn, affect the evolution and development of culture.

6. Conclusion

Raymond Williams, in his book *Culture and Society*, says, "When we recognize the solitary use of a part of nature, we make adjustments to our behavior based on experience. We slowly learn to pay attention to what is around us, to draw our values from the world as a whole rather than from the scattered pieces, and to draw valuable things from it that work quickly but can be wasted in the long run."^[15] Finally, with this research, people also come to realize that when the dominant environment extends to human beings, no matter how much they achieve in the moment, they will lose all opportunities, no matter how much they achieve in the present.

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