



# COMMENT ON “THEORETICAL EVALUATION OF ART EDUCATION FROM THE PERSPECTIVE OF TRADITIONAL CHINESE PHILOSOPHY”

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## COMMENT ON “THEORETICAL EVALUATION OF ART EDUCATION FROM THE PERSPECTIVE OF TRADITIONAL CHINESE PHILOSOPHY”

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Aesthetic education, also known as aesthetic training or the education of the sense of beauty is an interdisciplinary science between aesthetics and pedagogy. Aesthetics theoretically guides it but is educational in its concrete practice. Therefore, aesthetic education is a science that applies aesthetic theories to educational practice, cultivates people’s correct aesthetic perspectives and abilities to appreciate and create beauty, and guides individuals to shape their souls according to the laws of beauty, thereby perfecting their personalities. In essence, aesthetic education is also a science of self-beautification for humanity.

Since the pre-Qin era in China, the foundation of Chinese aesthetic education thought has been established, especially the aesthetic education ideas of Confucianism and Taoism, which have had a significant impact on later generations.

China is one of the earliest countries to have schools and also one of the earliest to have aesthetic education. The renowned ancient Chinese thinker and educator Confucius, as the founder of the Confucian school, laid the groundwork for the development of Confucian aesthetic education throughout the feudal society in China. Confucius advocated for “poetry education” and “music education,” believing that only those who understand rites and music can be considered complete individuals (Yao, 2010, p. 5). The harmonic synthesis of goodness and beauty was another point he highlighted. He saw “perfect beauty” and “perfect goodness” as high ideals for aesthetic education and as

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criteria for judging art. Confucius had a full understanding of the emotional characteristics and social functions of art, as the saying goes, “poetry can inspire, observe, gather, and complain,” which means that artistic images can subtly influence and cultivate people’s emotions, thereby grasping social ethical and moral norms, and achieving harmony between individuals and between individuals and the community.

After the pre-Qin period, the development of aesthetic education in China went through a tortuous process. In the long feudal society of China, the aesthetic education ideas of Confucianism and Taoism were not well inherited and developed.

Cai Yuanpei, who served as the Minister of Education of the provisional government of the Republic of China in 1912, had already realized the importance of art education. Therefore, he began to vigorously advocate for school aesthetic education, proposed “replacing religion with aesthetic education,” and included it in the modern education system (Wang, 2021, p. 3).

In modern times, Western enlightening scholars have always regarded aesthetic education as an important part of enlightening education. The playwright, poet, and aesthetician Schiller (1759-1805) first created the term “aesthetic education” and was the first to propose a relatively complete aesthetic education theory in the history of aesthetics (Yao, 2010, p. 4). He believed that the significance of aesthetic education lies in improving people’s social moral standards, transforming “biological people” into “social people,” that is, rational people. The idea of “four educations”—morality, intelligence, physical education, and aesthetics—was also something he openly put out.

After the mid-19th century, modern Western aesthetic education ideas became richer and deeper. The aesthetic education ideas of Soviet educator Suhomlinsky (1918-1970) were particularly prominent.

Suhomlinsky believed that a unified and complete educational process should reflect the mutual penetration and unity of morality, intelligence, physical education, aesthetics, and labour “five educations,” and that aesthetic education can promote the development of moral education, intellectual education, and physical education. He also believed that aesthetic education has a direct effect on enriching and cultivating people’s emotions (Yao, 2010, p. 4).

The development of Chinese art education over the past few decades has been deeply influenced by Western modernist thought, in the context of the current revival of Chinese culture, the education system led by Western philosophical thought needs to be transformed into one with Chinese characteristics, led by Chinese philosophical thought in art education. Zheng (2024), applies traditional Chinese philosophical thoughts, organically connects the connotation of traditional Chinese philosophy with the

characteristics of art education, and attempts to guide the development of art education theory from the perspective of traditional Chinese philosophy.

Confucian thought in Chinese traditional culture is an extremely important part. After thousands of years of development in China, Confucian culture is both the oldest cultural thought in China and a cultural system containing many concepts. How to find representative views from it and guide Chinese art education is a very key issue.

Zheng (2024) believes that one of the goals of art education is to cultivate creativity and aesthetic ability, but in the process of pursuing artistic skills and expressiveness, the cultivation of moral ethics is sometimes neglected. Confucian and Taoist aesthetics focus on human beings, demonstrating a concern for individual life. Therefore, Chinese philosophy is about life, not knowledge; it is essentially a philosophy of life. “This philosophy of life is particularly reflected in the concept of “the unity of heaven and man,” which is generally the case for both Confucianism and Taoism” (Song, 2024, p. 45). However, Confucianism emphasizes more on human beings, while Taoism focuses more on heaven, thus forming the aesthetic and educational thoughts of “moderation and harmony” in ancient China. Confucian philosophy has always placed a strong emphasis on morality, to complete people’s education through moral influence. For this reason, the author has chosen a few essential concepts to inform modern educational theory. This is beneficial to the development of contemporary Chinese art education.

However, the article’s references to Western modern philosophical concepts are somewhat redundant. Although contemporary Western philosophical thoughts, such as the philosophical thoughts of Max Horkheimer, Herbert Marcuse, Martin Heidegger, and other philosophers, have a very profound influence on the contemporary era, they are still within the Western thinking system. In-depth exploration of traditional Chinese art education theory is the top priority. Only in this way can we sort out the system of Chinese art education theory and choose educational concepts suitable for the contemporary era on this basis.

In addition, Zheng (2024) has conducted a large number of practical investigations, aiming to deeply understand the current situation and challenges of contemporary art education. These practical investigations include interviews with art education institutions, educators, and students, as well as analyses of art education courses and practices. These investigations and analyses are not reflected in the article, which is very important data. The essay will be more persuasive if it includes facts and investigative findings to back up its assertions.

In general, traditional Chinese philosophical thought is the guidance of art education methodology and a guide for teachers to carry out art education. Starting from the perspective of traditional Chinese philosophy, especially from the Confucian concept,

to make up for the moral issues in art education can better promote the development of art education theory, make up for the shortcomings of art education theory, and ultimately help to improve people's cultural literacy, aesthetic ability, and moral quality.

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