

Exploring the Scientific Factors in Cai Yuanpei's Thought of "Aesthetic Education "

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Abstract: Cai Yuanpei is a famous educator in modern Chinese history, whose ideological concepts have had a significant impact on the development of modern Chinese society. Among them, "aesthetic education" is an important theory proposed by Cai Yuanpei in the early 20th century. This theory advocates aesthetics, science, and freedom, advocates using science to break free from the shackles of ancient ideas on people, and elevates aesthetic education to the level of national spirit. It has certain significance in the social context of that time.

Keywords: Freedom; Aesthetic Education; Science

1. Interpretation of Aesthetic Education

With the development of the times, Cai Yuanpei has a different interpretation of how to accurately define "aesthetic education", which is a constantly improving process.

Cai Yuanpei's initial understanding of aesthetic education was relatively simple, believing that it was only an emotional application education conducted by aesthetic educators. With the enrichment of experience and the deepening of understanding of aesthetic education, Cai Yuanpei further defined aesthetic education in his 1930 article "Aesthetic Education":

Aesthetic educators apply the theory of aesthetics to education with the aim of nurturing emotions. Life is nothing more than willpower, and the relationship between people is largely based on behavior. Therefore, the purpose of education is to enable everyone to have appropriate behavior, which is centered around moral education. Therefore, in order to seek appropriate behavior, there must be two preparations: on the one hand, to consider interests, examine causality, and judge it with a calm mind; The virtue of safeguarding oneself and the country belongs to this category, relying on the help of intellectual education.

On the other hand, disregarding misfortune and fortune, disregarding life and death, rushing towards it with passionate emotions. The virtue of sharing happiness with others and sacrificing oneself for the sake of the group belongs to this category. Relying on the help of aesthetic education. So aesthetic educators, in conjunction with intellectual education, strive to achieve moral education.

At this point, Cai Yuanpei's understanding of aesthetic education is no longer limited to simply emotional education, but has been supplemented with richer explanations. Aesthetic education is a sensory education supported by aesthetic theory. On the theoretical level, aesthetic education belongs to emotions, while on the practical level, aesthetic education belongs to education. Therefore, aesthetic education achieves the goal of cultivating sentiments by combining aesthetic theory with educational practice and working together with the two.

In "Aesthetic Education and Life", Cai Yuanpei believes that the object of beauty has two characteristics: one is universality, and the other is transcendence. He has a further understanding of the connotation of aesthetic education:

Everyone has emotions, not all have great and noble behaviors, due to the weak driving force of emotions. To turn from weak to strong, from thin to thick, requires nurturing with pottery. The tool of pottery cultivation is the object of beauty, and the role of pottery cultivation is called aesthetic education.

Here is an explanation of the purpose and methods of aesthetic education, which is achieved through the cultivation of pottery to promote the generation of noble ideas in humanity. The development of aesthetic education requires both external and internal conditions. External conditions include objective things such as calligraphy and painting, music, architecture, etc., while internal conditions include the ability of

individuals to perceive beauty. When a person perceives an object of external beauty and generates emotions related to beauty, the effect of nurturing becomes effective.

Finally, Cai Yuanpei distinguished between aesthetic education and fine arts. In the early years, Western art mainly focused on subjects such as painting, architecture, and sculpture, while aesthetic education not only included these art subjects, but also forms such as clay, origami, drama, and literature. In addition to academic fields, places containing aesthetic factors such as art museums and cinemas, as well as objects that can create beauty, are also included in aesthetic education. The scope of art is relatively small, while the scope of aesthetic education is very broad.

2. Art Education and Science Complement Each Other

The progress of science and technology is a major driving force for the development of ideas. Science and aesthetic education have developed and progressed together in history, and aesthetic education and science are complementary.

Cai Yuanpei believes that the reason why foolish ideas can penetrate the human soul is due to the lack of scientific development. In the past era, science did not mature and even did not emerge. The development of all things in the world cannot be reasonably explained, and at this time, science does not have the power to explain the development of things, and has not had a huge impact on human thought. Although things in the world are diverse and complex, "with the progress of social civilization and the development of science, scholars and ancient people have all explained them one by one through science. The phenomenon of the sun, the origin of the earth, the distribution of animals and plants, and the differences between human races can all be proved by science such as physics, natural history, human race, and antiquity." It can be seen that Cai Yuanpei advocates explaining the phenomena of things through science and aesthetics, With the gradual progress of human science, science can explain the operating principles of all things in the world.

Cai Yuanpei proposed that if scientific workers want to conduct in-depth research in selected fields, they must first cultivate a strong interest

in science, which comes from art. Although science is different from art, it is closely related to art. Cai Yuanpei mentioned in his article "The Relationship between Art and Science" that "kicking football is also a behavior, but it is necessary to study the method of kicking; knowing the method of kicking means having knowledge of kicking; if you are not happy to kick, you will never be able to play well. Therefore, if knowledge and emotions are not good or bad, it is science and art that cannot be neglected." This statement states that while learning the way of action is important, there is no motivation or interest to take action, We will never be able to take the first step of action, let alone reach our destination. Although science and art are very different, science is conceptual and art is intuitive. However, the relationship between science and art, as well as the relationship between knowledge and emotions, are similar. There are places where the perspective of art can be applied in various sciences. The role of aesthetic education is to unleash a person's personality. To learn science and technology, one should first cultivate their own innovative ability, and the spirit of innovation precisely comes from aesthetic education.

In addition, Cai Yuanpei believes that aesthetic education can supplement the missing fun and vitality for scientific research activities. Scientific researchers often view research from a single perspective, resulting in dull and tedious times. This is because "specializing in science is too conceptual, too analytical, and too mechanical." Engaging in unchanging research every day can easily overlook the beauty of emotions and make life lose its vitality. However, with the addition of aesthetic education, it is different, "Having an interest in art not only makes one feel that life is meaningful and valuable, but also adds a brave and lively spirit when it comes to studying science."

Therefore, if we want to enhance the ideological progress of the people, we should not only focus on scientific education, but also on art education. Science and art education can complement each other and develop together.

3. The Argument for the Establishment of Aesthetic Education

"The role of human spirit can be generally divided into three categories: knowledge, will,

and emotion." In his speech at the Beijing Shenzhou Society in 1917, Cai Yuanpei divided human spirit into three levels: knowledge, will, and emotion. In an era before the development of science, the most primitive ideas emerged from the influence of human spirit. Humans used myths to explain questions in the spiritual realm, and issues related to knowledge, will, and emotions did not exist independently.

The manifestation of knowledge attachment is that the initial scientific knowledge cannot answer all inexplicable questions. Faced with the difficult question of where humans were born and where they belong, it was difficult to find a perfect answer in the past. With the gradual progress of science and technology, as well as the development of disciplines such as astronomy, geography, and biology, the initial explanation can only be used as a relatively vague answer. Nowadays, most explanations can be made based on reliable experimental data and scientific theories. Due to the lack of scientific logic, the knowledge functions replaced by the original ideas continue to decrease.

The manifestation of will attachment to it is that in the era of lack of science and education, the initial belief has the function of replacing will, controlling human desires, and thus constraining human behavior. For example, some rules are called "determined by heaven", which not only remain unchanged, but can also regulate people's language and behavior. With the development of disciplines such as psychology and ethics, people have realized that the specific principles of morality are essentially tailored to local conditions and not static. According to the common examples of physiology, psychology, and sociology applied to ethics, modern scholars know that specific morality cannot change anytime and anywhere; and the principles of morality can be summarized and derived from various specific factors; while deductive methods are not applicable. At this time, their original function of replacing will is gradually denied by scholars, and the role of will becomes an independent existence.

After knowledge and will exist independently, only emotions are related to it. The expression of emotional belonging lies in some thinkers utilizing people's love for beauty, using beautiful natural environments and buildings

full of artistic colors to stimulate people's emotions in various artistic ways. Cai Yuanpei believes that in the long history of China, there are many cultural connections between architecture, sculpture, calligraphy and painting during the Northern and Southern Dynasties, while poetry and painting after the Tang and Song dynasties tend to depict the author's inner feelings and the natural scenery they see. The development of the times has gradually freed art from confinement, and the form and theme of artistic works are no longer solely based on ancient times, gradually becoming pure art.

With the progress of science and technology, both knowledge and will have been liberated, and in terms of emotions, art has gradually freed itself from confinement. Only aesthetic education has not been completely detached, but there are also some that are not dependent on aesthetic education. Those who are not completely detached from aesthetic education cannot effectively cultivate people's emotions. Only pure aesthetic education can break through personal opinions, eliminate gains and losses, and help people establish a noble and pure personality. The reason why pure aesthetic education can exist independently, according to Cai Yuanpei, is that aesthetic education is based on emotions. The two have had a strong correlation with each other in the development of history, and both have the function of providing psychological comfort to people. With the further development of future science, aesthetic education can ultimately exist independently, which can become a reality.

4. Conclusion

Cai Yuanpei integrated excellent Chinese and Western ideological and cultural traditions, constructed a relatively complete theory of modern Chinese aesthetic education, and proposed the idea of "aesthetic education". Aesthetic education advocates the pursuit of intellectual freedom by the public, which is progressive and authentic. Cai Yuanpei believes that students can feel the meaning of life under the influence of aesthetic education, and thus become individuals with sound personalities. At the same time, Cai Yuanpei placed equal emphasis on theory and practice, teaching aesthetic courses in universities, organizing art activities, and offering aesthetic

education courses in primary and secondary schools. This has played a positive role in maintaining social order and to some extent, enhancing the moral spirit of the people.

The question of whether the comprehensive implementation of aesthetic education is completely correct may be a scientific challenge that never has a correct answer, but it has always influenced the academic community's understanding of science education, constantly optimizing research ideas. From the connotation of promoting the ideological system of aesthetic education, it includes not only Cai Yuanpei's affirmation of actively developing science, but also his viewpoint of adhering to aesthetic innovation.

Since ancient times, the development of science and technology has often been considered to be somewhat independent of society, and thousands of years of historical changes have not hindered the progress of science and technology. However, the proposal of Cai Yuanpei's "aesthetic education thought" made people realize that although science and technology have their own unique development laws, their formation and development are closely related to various elements such as politics, culture, and art in human society. In fact, these elements also constantly influence the development direction and speed of China's science and technology. Analyzing and commenting on aesthetic education and science can further rationalize the answer to this difficult problem.

The development of science not only broadens human horizons, but also provides a medium and guarantee for humans to understand the world and the laws of all things in the world. The originally blurred natural phenomena can

be scientifically explained, from the sun, moon, stars, to rivers, lakes, and seas, and their operational patterns can gradually be independently proven. Promoting scientific rationality and valuing scientific knowledge are important characteristics of science education, and true knowledge is based on scientific principles. Science has played a positive role in enhancing national scientific rationality. Therefore, when analyzing the emergence and development of all things in the world from a scientific perspective, backward thinking is difficult to escape the inevitable fate of disappearance.

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