

The Antidote to Emotions—the "Katharsis" in Art

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Abstract: Aristotle believed that the poet's creation was conducive to edification, and that the katharsis was a bridge between completion and realization. Aristotle believed that the poet's creation was conducive to edification, and that the katharsis was the bridge between completion and realization, and that the katharsis was an important part of Aristotle's theory of tragedy, in which the individual tragedy transiently emerges from the self to form a godlike being. At the same time, the katharsis also plays a cathartic and purifying role in the field of art. It is clear that there is an inseparable link between katharsis and art. By examining the various meanings of "katharsis" and synthesizing the various interpretations in the Western academic world, this paper takes Edvard Munch's work "The Scream" as an example to analyze the healing function of "katharsis" in art for people's emotions and the important role of enhancing moral realm.

1. Introduction

Today, with the popularization of art, people have more or less unique opinions about art works, and more and more scholars are looking for traces of human emotions in the field of art, and art works have become the emotional carriers of authors, viewers, and scholars, and the edifying role of art is also emerging, and Aristotle's "katharsis" mentioned in the human response to tragedy and self-contemplation can more clearly explain the principle of such emotional changes.

"Originally used in medicine as a term to describe an agent to expel excess bodily fluids or waste products that have accumulated in the body over time, the term "katharsis" was derived from an important part of Aristotle's theory of tragedy in his Poetics. Later, the German philosopher Jacob Bernays extended it to a form of emotional "catharsis," which he saw as a way to cure the sick feelings of pity and fear by attacking them with poison, and to satisfy the strong desire to feel pity and fear by watching theater [1]. After satisfying the pleasure in venting and reigniting the emotions of pity and fear, the power of these two feelings in the audience's mind is diminished, thus leading to psychological serenity. From an ethical point of view, katharsis is also interpreted as "purification," and these scholars believe that the role of katharsis is to purify pity and fear from the bad elements of suffering, and that it advocates the cleansing of pity and fear to restore psychological health, which is also presented in theatrical performances as the purification of the murderous acts and sins of the characters. Aristotle's theory of tragedy refers to the important concept of pity and fear, and Lessing once made a good discussion of the relationship between the two: "Pity and fear are interrelated, they are two separate but interrelated emotions, whatever can cause pity, must also cause fear, and conversely, what can cause fear must also cause pity." Pity and fear both contain "pain", and katharsis is like a medicine to relieve pain [2].

In this paper, we will explore the role of katharsis in artworks from Edvard Munch's famous work "The Scream", "My art is a kind of confession", as the representative of Expressionism, Munch fully used the medium of art to formalize his inner feelings objectively. And we learn that beauty lies in being fit for purpose, that "what is fit for purpose is fit for purpose", that beauty of things depends on their function, and that beautiful things must be fit for a certain purpose and satisfy a certain need. Socrates' theory is also well expressed in Munch's work, which is beautiful because it reflects the author's inner state well. "It is a way to improve and soothe people's psychological state, which shows the inherent unity of katharsis and art [3].

2. Edvard Munch's famous work

The BBC has called The Scream the second most famous painting in the world after Leonardo da Vinci's Mona Lisa, which shows that this painting has a wide influence and status all over the world. In addition to The Scream, Munch's works such as Despair, Adolescence and The Sick Child seem to revolve around the theme of Love and Anxiety, which is an objective response to Munch's own psychological state and distress. This is an objective reflection of Munch's own psychological state and distress. The main subject of "The Scream" is a man covering his cheek and screaming. While the landscape behind the figure is very abstract, with no obvious clear outline, but instead, eye-catching lines and colors. Munch uses different thicknesses of lines to depict the red sky, the deep blue fjord and the brown road, and it is said that the painting also depicts the church and the pedestrians in the distance. All the lines in the painting seem to converge on the person in the center of the picture who is crying out for help, and the distorted lines seem to be the constant fear and pain emanating from this person. The first impression of the whole painting gives a strong sense of turmoil and uneasiness, and Munch also says that he was walking with a friend in the Oslo Fjord area on that day, when suddenly he saw the blood-red sky and felt a scream pass by his ears, and he stopped and kept trembling, far behind his friend. In Chapter 6 of the Poetics, Aristotle describes the function of tragedy in this way, "To stir up pity and fear, and thus to bring these emotions to Katharsis" [4]. The painting "The Scream" was created in the 1890s, at a time when the New Thought in Europe was in full swing, and Munch, like most people, was filled with apprehension and fear about the end of the century. The Scream" was lonely at that time, and the main character in "The Scream" is also lonely. The deformed and distorted facial expressions resonate with countless viewers, as everyone lives in the social box, but is also infinitely free, but under the influence of the general social environment, our psychological environment also leaves a shadow of emotions.

From the perspective of "purification", "The Scream" is like a good medicine, it is a direct way for Munch to eliminate his own pity and fear, and it also gives Munch a psychological pleasure and relief, which also plays the role of washing negative emotions to the viewer, helping him to purify his mind and retain the pure part of his soul. From the perspective of "catharsis", people have been in a state of suppressing their desires and pains, which leads to imbalance in the psychological structure and even mutation of the emotional-psychological structure, which is extremely harmful to the psychological health of individuals, and "The Scream" is the silent vent of emotions. The exaggerated and distorted behavior in the painting greatly stimulates the inner turmoil and anxiety of individuals in the society, and people satisfy their strong feelings of pity and fear by viewing the silent and painful screams of the main character in the painting [5]. This way, the viewer will be able to feel less compassion and fear after viewing the painting, and will be able to breathe a sigh of relief and give his heart a chance to catch its breath. Modern psychology has provided a profound explanation of the process of emotional catharsis in terms of the relationship between mind and body. Research shows that the physiological changes of human organs are an integral part of

emotions, and we can understand that all human emotions are realized through changes in organ movements and muscular activities, such as "the activities of the limbs, breathing, blood circulation and glandular secretion changes, etc." As in behavioral psychology, it is important to explore people's emotions and mental changes at the level of human behavior and physiology, and such physiological changes are generally called "manifestations" of emotions in the psychological sense. There is no doubt that Munch is a typical representative of Expressionism, both on the artistic and psychological level, and the world-famous painting "The Scream" is the jewel of Expressionism, while "expression" can be seen as the formalization of pity and fear [6].

3. The role of katharsis in artworks

Artistic katharsis is an emotional effect, tragic katharsis is not only a catharsis of human emotions, but through the artistic means of tragedy. These emotions are directed to a "sense of vitality and a sense of striving for upward mobility. Man is the only creature capable of receiving emotional suggestion, in the artistic stage of tragedy, people's repressed emotions will be unshackled and broken free. People's repressed emotions will be released from their chains and will be lost through their physiological activities, such as muscular and glandular activities, and finally achieve emotional reprieve [7]. In the final aesthetic stage, people will gradually calm down and have a certain state of relaxation. After all, katharsis is an energy-consuming activity process, and at this time, people will compare their own life with the life of the hero. With the deepening of the heroic role in the tragedy, people gradually understand that the great and noble people will eventually pass away, but the great and noble human is eternal existence. In this noble character with the invocation of the noble virtue, people will be inspired by an unprecedented sense of honor and willingness to move upward, and then get rid of the paralysis of life entangled by the feeling of suffering, and revive to meet the next challenges. So it can be seen that, in addition to helping people to emanate pity and fear, katharsis also enables people to achieve a new state of self-transcendence, which plays a huge role in personal ability, and the improvement of the realm.

We also delve into the "healing" effects of katharsis, which in medicine is the process of intervening in a specific state of health to promote physical or spiritual healing, and katharsis has a natural healing effect. Samuel H. Butcher, a leading exponent of the "purification theory," suggested that "artificially provoked compassion and fear can drive away the underlying compassion and fear that we bring into our lives, or at least the unhealthy elements of it." Plato, for his part, spoke several times about the metaphorical significance of katharsis speaking of the mind in terms of the body from a medical perspective, for example in the *Wise Men*, where he explores the necessity of identifying prejudices and removing them for the intellectual purification of the mind. Aristotle's long study with Plato and his long experience of the relationship between katharsis and spiritual healing also laid the roots for the elaboration of tragedy, but Aristotle's understanding of katharsis was mostly in the context of tragedy, while as time progressed, more and more scholars explored the therapeutic role of katharsis in psychology and art [8].

In the twentieth century, with the use of psychoanalysis in clinical medicine, the katharsis became more and more important to psychiatrists, and Blois and Freud, in their co-authored "*Studies in Hysteria*", pioneered the "psychic relief therapy", in which the patient is guided by hypnosis, free association, examination of dreams, etc. to The therapist identifies the root cause of the trauma and starts the follow-up treatment [9]. However, both hypnosis and free-association methods only lead the patient to give a single verbal description of the traumatic event, and this one-time catharsis is not enough for the patient to produce effective emotional transformation. We can make reference to the katharsis of tragedy, and create a comedy to help people face the traumatic event again in a deluded state of consciousness, and make the patient release emotionally in the process of reliving the event through certain new correlations, and the difference between this approach and Freud's treatment is the "comedy"[10]. In sociological perception, people will always

choose the path of least obstruction, and who will actively torture a second time for an event that has left a traumatic impact to this day? Obviously, ignoring and avoiding is the least obstructive choice for people, but this does not solve the fundamental problem, and even triggers a series of unbalanced psychological distortion. While the advantage of the excuse of comedy is that people can always tell themselves that this is just a performance, even if they have to face the once painful event during the performance. They can convince themselves to examine this difficulty through comedy and be satisfied beforehand, when pre-determined comic scenario is fulfilled, the blocked psychological energy is relieved, giving the patient a feeling of relief and pleasure. The therapeutic approach of psychodrama is similar to that of comedy, but psychodrama adopts a group therapy approach, in which the therapist usually designs a script based on the client's traumatic experience and encourages the main character to perform in interaction with other group therapy support personnel. The resulting healing approach can weaken the vigilance of self-scrutiny and is a well-intentioned excuse to separate the person's real self. In the context of spiritual healing, psychoanalytic and dramaturgical counselors metaphorically borrow from Catharsis' method of "healing" to channel the instinctual impulses that have been pent up in the patient as a result of the traumatic experience along normal channels.

4. Conclusion

Aristotle was the first to suggest that the sensual pleasure and beauty of art had a moral and social role in itself. In talking about music, he proposed three main purposes of art: education, purification, and spiritual pleasure. Purification is especially emphasized in the discussion of poetry and tragedy, and in tragedy it is the katharsis that has a purifying effect. It is thus clear that there is an inseparable link between katharsis and art. Art therapy is a kind of psychotherapy. While most psychotherapies use language as the main medium of communication and treatment, art therapy is the most distinctive, mainly providing art materials and activities as a way of treatment. The Katasis is the most important component in the growth of the flower, and the Katasis is the most important element in the growth of the flower. It is in tragedy that katharsis gives vent to the rising instinctive impulses of people, so that they can adopt a new, free and expansive humanity to face life.

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