

Similarities and Differences between Leisure and Aesthetics through the Analysis of Experience

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Abstract

Leisure experience is composed of pleasant sensation, the refreshing feeling and aesthetic feeling, while aesthetic experience is composed of pleasant sensation and aesthetic feeling. Since there is nearly no difference in obtaining both pleasant sensation and aesthetic feeling either from leisure activities or from aesthetic experience, it is worth discussing the similarity and differences between the two kinds of experience. The refreshing feeling and aesthetic feeling are same in regard to pleasant sensation as basic and content, including thinking involved and peak experience. The difference is that, although thinking exists in both, thinking in the refreshing feeling is "general cognition" while aesthetic thinking is "intuitive cognition"; the refreshing feeling is gained from dynamic participation in recreational activities while the aesthetic feeling is obtained from the static aesthetic activities.

Keywords: Experience, Leisure, Aesthetic Experience, Pleasant Sensation, Refreshing Feeling, Aesthetic Feeling

Researches have linked leisure with aesthetics for investigation, thinking they are "intrinsically related," for the reason that both leisure experience and aesthetic experience bring people the pleasure and sense of freedom. If this is considered reasonable, the question arises; whether the two kinds of experience are the same? If not, what is the similarity and difference between them? One can clarify the similarities and differences between them through subjective experience, which might provide certain foundation for linking leisure and aesthetic experience. If a discipline of "Casual Aesthetics" is expected to be established, then, the answer to this question will be one cornerstone for the discipline.

Both leisure experience and aesthetic experience can bring people pleasure and a sense of freedom. There is the experience of subjects, which is "personal experience" and also "understanding about the things around through practice", however, it poses more emphasis on the understanding, perception and feelings of the subject on these leisure or aesthetic experience (practice). From a psychological perspective, the leisure experience and aesthetic experience are emotional reactions built on the basis of intra-individual perception, with particular emphasis on the subjective feelings of emotional processes. Regardless of leisure and aesthetic or other things, a way of life, a social construction, and from the perspective of the subject, leisure is the relaxation or leisure that one can feel, and aesthetic is the sense of beauty or aesthetic experience the subject can perceive. People's feelings, emotions, and experience will determine people's leisure and aesthetic understanding and evaluation. Starting from the perspective of experience to analyze leisure and aesthetic can be seen as an important dimension for leisure and aesthetic studies, which is of great significance and value.

Leisure experience and aesthetic experience are not the same but there is some overlapping. Here leisure experience refers to the obtained experience of the subjects during leisure activities, mainly including pleasure, refreshing feeling and aesthetic feeling, while aesthetic experience refers to the experience of the subject generated when appreciating beautiful things, including pleasure and aesthetic feeling.

Because a lot of leisure activities itself are aesthetic activities, and a lot of aesthetic activities befall in leisure activities, so there is leisure experience in aesthetic experience. The similarities and differences of leisure experience and of aesthetic experience in this research will focus on the comparison analysis between aesthetic feeling and refreshing feeling.

Pleasure sensation is one emotional response of pleasure, comfort, and excitement when one's physiological needs are met, generally to be met by the substance. External stimuli arousing human sensory organs, causes pleasure sensation in skin, vision, hearing, taste, smell and so on. One cannot ignore the value of pleasure to obtain perfection of the spirit, ignoring instinctive needs will move towards an extreme displeasure, only with a balance and harmony between sensory satisfaction and spiritual pursuit; one can be physically and mentally healthy person. Pleasure sensation plays a role of power and compensation in people's activities, which is the foundation of refreshing feeling and aesthetic feeling.

Life is filled with a tremendous force called Entropy, which can guide the human beings in avoiding disadvantages and death to draw on advantages and life. When the organism is out of balance (some kind of physiological need is generated), the entropy forces organisms to make a response to the demand, restoring the internal self-balancing of the organism, feeling the sense of relaxing and getting pleasure. This is a basic human instinct to seek for physiological and psychological pleasure, it is a kind of compensation one makes to maintain the living of the organism by making the sensory organs relax and avoid tension.

"Physical evolution is an adventure, so pleasure is served as an encourage, otherwise animals, and human beings cannot survive and win in this competition" [Pan, Zhichang, 1997] This comes from the needs of the most instinctive experience and also is the most common psychological experience, having a power to transcend race, nation, gender, class, and occupation which might be instinctive activities and physiological responses shared by all humans and animals. Physical pleasure as a kind of compensation for the person seeking survival and development is the driving force for survival and development in human life, the driving force for developing refreshing feeling and aesthetic feeling, and the original power for both the processes.

The pleasure sensation also constitutes the important content of the refreshing feeling and aesthetic feeling. In the relevant study of refreshing feeling, researchers have reportedly pointed out the need to obtain high quality leisure experience-"not just simply by stimulating the sensory organs," [Zhao, Ran 2008] However, a negative way of emphasizing the refreshing feeling certainly exists in physiological sexual pleasure ingredients. As for the aesthetics, there are numerous physical pleasure discussions going on.

Nietzsche considered the aesthetic feeling inevitably related to the brutal aesthetic function or animal, emphasizing the role of desire in animal sexual pleasure. "From Rome to Babylon, we are able to present evidence of Mingdiaoni Naxos festival. The core of all these festivals lies in a passionate sexual indulgence ... here, just the most natural wild animal has released... "In comparison, the Greek Dionysus carnival is a day of salvation festival and deified meaning. Only these days, the natural artistic talent won its cheers ..." [Sun, Zhouxing 2012] In Kant's aesthetics, beauty can be combined with the senses, which is called "charm." Kant allowed the beauty in sensual pleasure, which is a hierarchy in beauty, although the level should rise, it should enhance toward the pure beauty, the dignity and goodness. "Visual and auditory sensory stimulation itself can cause both desirable sensory pleasure, so this can also become conscious sensory thrill of pleasure in activities and constitute part of aesthetic pleasure, the other by the visual image can cause relevant experience in other sensory pleasure imagination, also causing aesthetic feeling. "[Xu, Bingquan 2006] In this sense, the pleasure is not only an important part of beauty, it even leads to the aesthetic feeling. This reminds us of the words of Epicurus: "Everything happy waked up by concept of aesthetic ideas are animal, meaning they are physically feeling" [Deng, Xiaomang 2002]

Characteristic of refreshing feeling

Refreshing feeling is an involuntary emotional response of the individual when conducting various leisure or art activities or even work, which is so deeply immersed in them because of the certain challenge to forget the passage of time and be unaware of their existent emotional reactions. The concept of refreshing ("Chang" in Chinese) is now widely used in leisure areas to express the peak experience in it. Csikszentmihalyi first used "refreshing" to conclude this kind of pleasant experience, to explain why players, rock climbers, dancers and composers would spend hours every day on their own favorite things although they will not get money or fame on them, just because of the joy, even this process is accompanied by dangers and difficulties. The feeling of refreshing does not appear in their relaxing times, drug addiction, alcoholism and even enjoying the privileges of wealth. Csikszentmihalyi explained the reason that these activities enable them to play their potentials, and includes a discovery or innovation factor.

Csikszentmihalyi summed up nine factors of "refreshing", he concluded that when describing a pleasant experience (how people feel) the following nine major factors were repeatedly referred to.

- Every step has clear goals.
- There is a rapid feedback for the action.
- There is a balance between skills and challenges.
- There is an integration of action and awareness.
- Discard distractions.
- Do not worry about failure.
- Self-consciousness disappears.
- Sense of time has been distorted.
- The action has its own purpose. "[Csikszentmihalyi, 2011]

Analyzing the listed nine factors, the characteristic of "refreshing" can be summarized. First, refreshing feeling is not only the participation of the senses but also the thinking activities and awareness are engaged throughout. Secondly, in a way it is dynamic with a participatory role, relying on activities with certain challenges, while the subject possesses the skills for the challenges. In addition, for the experience of the subject, he or she can feel extreme joy, excitement, and enrichment, which comes from the realization of creation and self-development, and without any utilitarian factor. Finally, the experience itself shows the distorted characteristics of the sense of time distortion and disappearance of self-awareness. During the activities, the subject successfully overcomes skill challenge by virtue of their skills, and smoothly carries forward the activities; everything is handy, and contentment, which makes the subject feel the joy of creating and producing a strong self-identity, and thus acutely is aware of their own as an independent existence and value of the individual, resulting in a sense of fulfillment and a sense of self-assurance. Many vivid fables documented in Zhuangzi's "health master", "understanding of Life" and other articles, describe some craftsmen, artisans, boatmen, archery experts, and highly skilled swimmers reach a high degree in the art and then get sense of self-assurance or fulfillment of self-identity.

Dismemberment of ox by Paoding, "nineteen years and the blade seems new from the whetstone," accomplish a task with ease. Paoding obtained the pleasure from the solution of bovine, not to eat beef or receive wages or other rewards, but because he enjoyed the fun of creating so-called "put a knife standing, watch around, and be smug", which is a sense of fulfillment because of the creation.

When we get refreshing feeling from engaging in creative activities, it will make us feel full more than any other time in life, which is the key to understanding refreshing feeling. People may be suffering from hunger, cold, sadness or even the threat of injury or death, but he or she can try to find a sense of accomplishment and a sense of self-realization through refreshing experience, which bring people joy and freedom.

Aesthetic feeling is the emotional response which is fast, joyful, and gives a sense of freedom, beyond the utilitarian purpose, as a direct object of beauty. Aesthetic feeling is not only an emotion, and emotion itself is not pure sensuality. It is a kind of composite state, so the aesthetic feeling has the participation of higher cognitive activity as well. Kant had explicitly illustrated beauty is the harmony game of imagination and intellectual (intangible concept), but Benedetto Croce thinks it is the aesthetic that makes intuition and rationality combined. With the deepening of the study, researchers increasingly converge aesthetics are both affective and advanced cognitive. "Aesthetic activity is a kind of advanced form of consciousness activity, involving our perception, emotion, imagination, and memory" (Ding, Zhou, 2006). While First of all, Professor Zhao(2003) explored aesthetic logic from the logic level, thinking that aesthetic is usually considered hazy, blur, but the aesthetic activities is also regular, and it is multi-valued logic. As a logical basis, she was the first in China to develop the perspective of aesthetic cognition concept to make scientific explanation and empirical studies for the cognition of aesthetic concept (Zhao, 2004).

In order to better understand the characteristics of aesthetic feeling, we emphasize that cognition participates in the aesthetic. Aesthetic has no utilitarian purpose or joy, and does not bring the greatest sense of freedom. These are familiar, but what are the characteristics of cognitive in beauty?

Why aesthetic feeling can bring a person the greatest sense of freedom? Without doubt, the cognition of aesthetic feeling is a kind of rational knowledge as well; however, the rational knowledge is less clear than the joyful conscious activity. Furthermore, it is different from general cognitive activity which is the knowledge acquisition for the purpose. Intuitive cognition can summarize the characteristics of the cognitive activity of aesthetic feeling as well. Intuitive cognition is a kind of cognition or cognitive approach which could see the image instead of concept and concept works on behalf of the meaning. And it is different from all the cognitive styles of epistemology, such as science, philosophy and so on. Kant had deeply discussed the view that intellectuality participates in the aesthetic activities, pointing out that the beauty is the agreement of imagination and intellectuality, advocating that if happiness could be transmitted, it is the knowledge and representation belonging to knowledge. And if the surface force makes the given appearance related to the general knowledge, the terms of appreciation judgment are the inner states which have widespread transmission. Croce put it that knowledge has two forms- one that comes from the intuition and the other which comes from the logic. Knowledge that comes from intuition can be mixed with concepts, but there is not any trace of mix in most knowledge, which is therefore not necessary to mix. We can tentatively acknowledge that most knowledge that comes from intuition includes concepts, but we have a more important and definite thing, that is concepts that mix with knowledge from intuition are not concepts any more for that they lose independence and autonomy. They now become the pure element of knowledge from intuition although they are concepts instinctively. Though Croce also emphasized the participation of soul when explaining intuition of which the object represents the soul creation of authors, he definitely expressed the "Hybridization" of definite concepts in aesthetic cognition. Zhu also pointed out that in the aesthetic experience, it is the intuition not the cognition or concept that can be accepted by heart. What can be left deep in heart is the image itself not the other factors such as essence, cause, function and value. These discussions reveal that the characteristics of intuitive cognition are different from those of general cognition. Even if it is cognition, the relevant concept is unclear intellectual concept (Kant). It is the characteristic that determines that the image is the source of aesthetic feeling, the access to aesthetic feeling is intuition, the occurrences of aesthetic feeling is uncertain, and aesthetic feeling could bring people the greatest sense of freedom. Faced with beautiful things, will images cause disinterested pleasure? Facing the same beautiful mountains and rivers, why do some people get strong aesthetic feeling, while some people have little feeling or are ignorant? Why "the beauty lies in eyes of the beholder" happen? The deep reasons lies in the aesthetic feeling that uncertainty must be explored from the intuitive cognition of aesthetic feeling. Although we could see the image of Intuitive cognition, we can't see the concept of the image and its explicit meaning. But instead of vision to see, the audio to hear, is resonance sought by the vitality of subject and values on the aesthetic object. The image which has been seen as a way of cognition, is not

only the objective physical image, but also contains the image of the emotion, life, and spirit of subject. Subject is not only the seen-image, it is looking for the image of me and the communication between nature, society, universe and me, looking for the meaning of the image. So it could often get the most freedom from the aesthetic feeling. Gadamer pointed out that the aesthetic experience is not only a kind of experience paralleled with other experience, it represents the general experience type. The deep reasons for the uncertainty of the beauty lie in this special way of thinking.

Comparison between refreshing feeling and aesthetic feeling

There are three similarities between refreshing feeling and aesthetic feeling: both are based on pleasure, thinking involved, and the peak experience.

Refreshing feeling and aesthetic feeling are both based on pleasure. There is no cognitive evaluation in pleasure, which is a purely stimulus-response process, while refreshing feeling and aesthetic feeling are composed by the associated factors, which are psychological phenomenon accompanied with the perceived result, regarding the knowledge evaluation as the pilot. In refreshing feeling, the cognitive evaluation of the subjects are goal-oriented and process clear, with no difference with general cognition, while in aesthetic feeling, the cognitive evaluation is intuitive, with no clear goal, could not find the trajectory of thinking, the concept used is ambiguous (Kant said). Getting refreshing feeling requires perfect skill and strong interest in the object; getting aesthetic feeling needs plenty susceptible mind and a good cultural awareness, which is a human emotional grasp of the world, accessing such exchanges and contacts with intuition, imagination, therefore, we often encounter unexpected beauty but fleeting easily. Both the two feelings of peak experience as Maslow said refers to "ecstatic, mesmerized, and feeling extremely happy. At those brief moments, they are immersed in a pure and perfect happiness, getting rid of all suspicion, fear, depression, and tension. Their self-consciousness feels slipping away. They no longer feel any distance and isolation existing between themselves and the world; on the contrary, they have been closely linked with the world. They feel that they really belong to the world, rather than standing in the world outside as bystanders. In this type of experience, they feel a glimpse of the ultimate truth, the essence of things and the mysteries of life, as if uncovering the curtain of the knowledge suddenly. "[11] For the individual, he may not be able to differentiate the peak experience as refreshing feeling and aesthetic feeling, but simply feel joy and freedom, despite of the different sources, conditions, and characteristics.

There are two differences between refreshing feeling and aesthetic feeling, namely different thinking characteristics, process and getting in different ways. The former has been discussed above, with regard to "get in different ways," mainly refers to the refreshing feeling which comes from the dynamic type of leisure activities involved, and the aesthetic feeling gets from the meditation of aesthetic activities. For leisure experience and aesthetic experience, there are many related issues waiting for further study. For instance, what is the "intuitive cognition" in the grip of aesthetic experience? Again, although the composition and characteristics of leisure experience and aesthetic experience have been analyzed, but the two self-perception impression formation, attitude and attitude formation in the two main experiences also need to be explored further.

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