

The Philosophical Evaluation of Aristotle's Music Aesthetics Thought

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Abstract: Aristotle, as a master of ancient Greek philosophy, aesthetics and music, has made important contributions to the aesthetic thought of music. His thoughts on music aesthetics not only deeply revealed the essence and function of music, but also provided an important theoretical basis for the later music theory and practice. Starting from Aristotle's musical aesthetics, this paper will discuss the abstract narration and philosophical evaluation of his musical expression. Aristotle believed that music can directly imitate human emotions and personalities through rhythm, melody and harmony, which is not only an artistic expression, but also a kind of shaping of the soul. He emphasized the educational function of music, believing that music can regulate people's emotions through the "purification" effect, so that it is in a moderate state. This thought not only reveals the important role of music in expressing thoughts, edifying people, deepening cognition and philosophical thinking, but also provides positive enlightenment for contemporary music expression. Through the in-depth analysis of Aristotle's music aesthetics thoughts, this paper aims to put forward the profound influence of Aristotle's music aesthetics thoughts and its positive influence on contemporary music expression.

Keywords: Aristotle, Music Aesthetic Thought, Philosophical Evaluation, Artistic Imitation.

1. Introduction

Aristotle (384-322 BC) is a great thinker, philosopher and esthetician in ancient Greece, whose aesthetic thought occupies an important position in the history of Western philosophy. He inherited and developed Plato's idea, and created the realistic emotion theory of aesthetics, that art is the imitation of reality, music is the imitation of human emotions. However, although the literature theory of Aristotle has been widely discussed in domestic academic circles, the research on his music aesthetics is relatively insufficient. Music aesthetics is an important part of Aristotle's aesthetic system, whose research not only involves the analysis of the characteristics of music itself, but also touches on the profound significance of music education (Algouneh Jonaqani, 2022). Aristotle mentioned music many times in his works such as Politics and Poetics, believing that music can adjust people's emotions and make them in a moderate state. He divided music into ethical, practical and fanatical tones, corresponding to the three functions of education, purification

and spiritual enjoyment. In addition, he also emphasized "edutainment", advocating that through the entertainment function of music to meet people's entertainment needs, while realizing moral education. Aristotle's music education thought is the essence of his music aesthetics thought. He advocated that music education should run through all stages of children's growth, cultivate sentiment and freedom spirit through music. His idea of music education emphasizes the principle of "the mean" and advocates the choice of musical tones within the possible and appropriate range. This educational thought reflects not only a deep understanding of the art of music, but also a unique insight into the entire aesthetic system (Sutterlin & Yu, 2021). However, the domestic research on Aristotle's music aesthetics is still in the initial stage, mostly concentrated on literature and art theory, and the systematic research on music aesthetics is less. This limits the comprehensive and profound understanding of its aesthetic system. Therefore, it is necessary to investigate Aristotle's music education thought in the whole aesthetic system, in order to fill the research gap and promote the in-depth study of Aristotle's aesthetic thought.

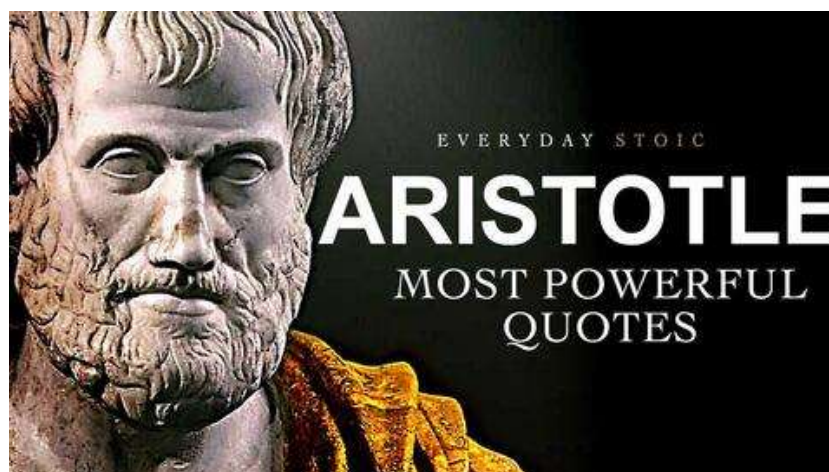


Figure 1. The image of Aristotle

2. Overview of Aristotle's Musical Aesthetics

Aristotle's music aesthetics thought is an important part of his rich philosophical system, which has deeply influenced the understanding and research of music in later generations. He believes that music is an important means of expression that can clearly convey ideas, emotions and emotions. Music is not only a combination of sounds, but also an art form that can penetrate deep into the human heart. Through its unique expressive force, music can stimulate people's emotional resonance, and then enhance knowledge and ideas, so that people can better express themselves. Aristotle also pointed out that the expression of music has the characteristics of abstract narrative. Music uses elements such as melody, rhythm and harmony to construct an abstract narrative structure, which is not a specific story plot, but a transmission of emotions and ideas. The abstract nature of music enables it to transcend the limitations of language and express common human emotions and experiences in a more direct and universal way. This kind of abstract narrative is natural and an artistic way for human to express thoughts and emotions (Strobach, 2024).

In addition, Aristotle emphasized the philosophical function of music. He believes that music is not only a pleasure for the senses, but also an art form that can cause people to think deeply. By appreciating music, people can gain knowledge and enlightenment and understand the profound connotation behind music. This kind of philosophical thinking helps people to study music continuously and deeply, so as to achieve a complete artistic feeling. This characteristic of music makes it an important educational tool that can develop people's character and aesthetic ability.

Aristotle's music aesthetics not only pays attention to the form and expression of music, but also emphasizes its profound influence on the human mind. His views laid a solid foundation for the development of music theory in later generations, and also provided a powerful demonstration for the important position of music in human culture.

3. The Philosophical Basis of Aristotle's Music Aesthetics

3.1. Theory of Artistic Imitation

Aristotle's music aesthetics has a profound philosophical foundation, the core of which is the theory of artistic imitation, which is embodied in his work *Poetics*. He believes that art is the imitation of real objects, and different types of art are produced due to different objects, media and ways of imitation. Moreover, imitation is human nature, and imitation art can bring pleasure and help people "seek knowledge". This view runs through his understanding of all kinds of art, and music is no exception (Marsh, 2024).

Aristotle pointed out that the main object of artistic imitation is "people in action", covering the dimensions of human action, life and happiness. Music mimics people's emotions, character and life scenes through melody, rhythm and other elements, such as passionate melody mimics bravery in battle, and soothing rhythm shows the tranquility and peace of life.

The theory of artistic imitation provided the key theoretical support for Aristotle's music aesthetics, which transformed

music from a simple sound combination into an art form with the function of expressing and reflecting the real world. This theory reflects his profound thinking on the relationship between the real world and art, and he firmly believes that art can uniquely present reality and is a distillation and sublimation of reality.

Based on this, Aristotle further explored the aesthetic value and social function of music. Music not only brings sensory pleasure, but also can arouse emotional resonance by imitating human life, achieve spiritual purification and moral enlightenment, so in ancient Greek society, music played an important role in education, religion and social activities.

3.2. Emotional Narration of Music

The core of Aristotle's music aesthetics is the theory of imitation. He firmly believes that music can build a unique narrative mode by imitating people's emotions and thoughts. This imitation is not a mechanical reproduction of natural forms, but a deep reproduction of human emotions, personalities and behaviors. In his book *Poetics*, Aristotle argued that poetry and music, as key forms of human expression of emotions and ideas, like other arts, represent the world through imitation. However, poetry and music are more focused on the direct expression of emotions (Sobh et al., 2022).

In terms of the narrative function of music, Aristotle believes that music can imitate the logical pattern in reality through the relationship between sounds, so as to show the essence of musical beauty. The narrative of music is not only reflected in the imitation of emotions, but also in its ability to tell an emotional story or convey a certain idea through a specific combination of tones and rhythms. For example, different musical tones can trigger different emotional responses, such as the Doria mode, which is considered the most suitable mode for education because it can cultivate noble qualities in people.

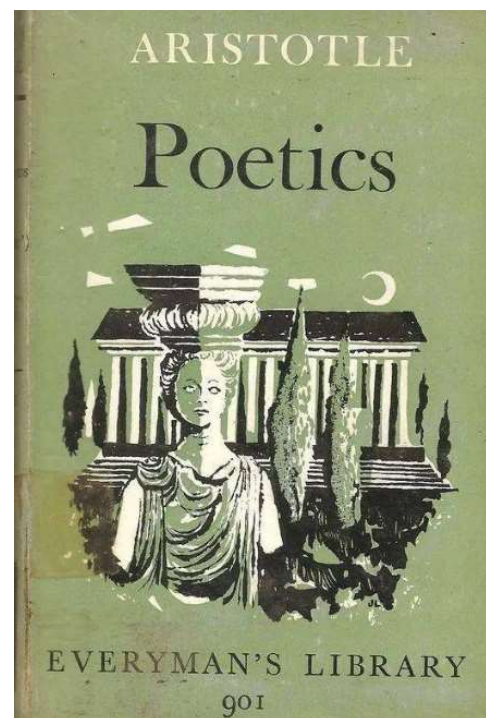


Figure 2. Aristotle's Poetics

3.3. Harmony and Purification of Music

Aristotle believes that music is the harmony of forms, which not only reflects the harmony of nature, but also reflects the harmony of society. The harmony of music is embodied in the orderly combination of its rhythms and melodies, which can fit in with the harmony of the human mind and thus have a positive impact on people's emotions and morals.

Aristotle also emphasized the purifying effect of music. He believes that music can arouse people's deep emotions, such as pity, fear, etc., and through the catharsis and release of these emotions, people's spirits are purified. This cleansing effect not only provides a sense of spiritual satisfaction, but also helps people adjust their emotions to a more balanced and healthy state (Cahid,2023). For example, when people are in a tense or anxious mood, listening to some soothing music can help them relax and relieve pressure. Aristotle's theory of tragedy and purification has exerted an important influence on Western drama. From ancient Greek tragedies to modern dramas, many playwrights have sought to elicit emotional resonance and purification from their audiences through their works, and this theory has also had an impact on psychology and psychotherapy. Modern psychodrama, for example, is inspired by Aristotle's theory of purification and seeks to achieve psychological healing by having participants re-enact situations from their lives.

In addition, Aristotle also emphasized the educational function of music, believing that music can purify people's soul by imitating emotions, so that emotions can be properly vented and adjusted. This "cleansing" effect not only contributes to an individual's emotional balance, but also has a positive impact on social morality. Therefore, the imitative and narrative function of music is not only a form of artistic expression, but also an important means to achieve emotional education and social harmony.

4. Philosophical Evaluation of Aristotle's Music Aesthetics

4.1. Transformation of Music and Ideas

Aristotle believed that music is not only the expression of emotion, but also the carrier of thought, which can reveal the essence of thought and promote its transformation. In *Politics*, he pointed out that music, through its melody and rhythm, can affect the human soul, which in turn affects thought and behavior. For example, some tunes can inspire courage and temperance, while others may provoke anger or gentleness. The function of this kind of thought transformation is not only reflected in the individual level, but also has a positive impact on the moral atmosphere of the society and the quality of citizens. Aristotle further proposed that this influence of music can be channeled through education, making it an important tool for shaping good character and thought (Little,2022). Through music education, people can better understand the connotation of ideas, so as to translate them into practical actions. This view not only affirms the artistry of music, but also emphasizes its important role in ideological education.

4.2. Limitations of Times and Classes

Although Aristotle's music aesthetic thought has profound theoretical value, it is also limited by The Times and classes. His ideas reflected the specific context of ancient Greek

society, many of which were based on the social structure and cultural traditions of the time. For example, he closely linked the function of music with the moral education of citizens, emphasizing the role of music in cultivating civic morality. However, this view is somewhat narrow in contemporary society, because the function of music in modern society is more diversified, including not only moral education, but also entertainment, expression of personality and other aspects. Therefore, we need to critically examine Aristotle's music aesthetics thought, combined with the actual situation of contemporary society to develop and innovate. Through this critical inheritance, we can better understand the multiple values of music in modern society.

4.3. Cultivation of Music and Emotion

Aristotle emphasized the influence of music on emotions and believed that music can enhance people's feelings and emotions. He pointed out that the melody and rhythm of music can reflect emotional states such as anger, gentleness, courage and temperance, and listeners will have corresponding emotional resonance as the mood of music changes when they enjoy music. This emotional resonance and experience helps to cultivate a moderate emotional response, so that people can maintain balance and moderation in the face of various emotional challenges in real life. In addition, Aristotle also proposed the "purification" theory, which believes that music can help people achieve psychological balance and purification through emotional catharsis and regulation. Through the appreciation and creation of music, people can cultivate positive and healthy emotions and improve emotional quality. This view not only affirms the important role of music in emotional education, but also provides a theoretical basis for modern music therapy.

4.4. Integration of Music and Philosophy

Aristotle combined music with philosophy and believed that music was a way of philosophical thinking. He pointed out that music, through its abstract expression, can reveal the deep structure of human emotions and thoughts. Through appreciating and understanding music, people can get philosophical enlightenment and perception, and improve philosophical literacy. For example, the melody and rhythm of music can trigger deep thinking about humanity, emotions and morality. In addition, Aristotle's "imitation theory" also reflects the integration of music and philosophy. He believes that music can reveal the nature of emotions by imitating human emotions, and then trigger people's reflection on human behavior and morality. This fusion not only enriches the artistic connotation of music, but also expands the scope of philosophical thinking, making music an important object of philosophical research. Through this fusion, music and philosophy reinforce each other, and together they promote humanity's deep understanding of itself and the world.

5. The Enlightenment of Aristotle's Music Aesthetics to Contemporary Music Expression

5.1. The Directness of Music and Emotional Expression

Aristotle believed that music could directly imitate and express emotions, stating that "rhythm and tone are the closest imitation of reality, reflecting anger and gentleness, courage and temperance, and all the opposing qualities and other

temperaments." This view emphasizes the close connection between music and human emotions, suggesting that music can directly evoke emotional resonance in the listener through elements such as melody, rhythm, and harmony.

The inspiration for the expression of contemporary music lies in the fact that music creators should pay more attention to the emotional transmission function of music. With carefully designed melodies and rhythms, music can be a powerful tool for expressing complex emotional states such as joy, sadness, anger, or serenity. For example, in film and television scores, music is often used to strengthen the emotional tension in the plot and help the audience better understand and feel the inner world of the characters. This directness of emotional expression also reminds contemporary musicians that music is not only a display of skills, but also a bridge of emotional communication.

5.2. Education and Purification Functions of Music

Aristotle maintains that music has the function of education and purification, and believes that music can adjust people's emotions and make them in a moderate state. He proposed that music could balance emotions through proper catharsis, rather than simply repressing them. This "cleansing" effect not only contributes to an individual's emotional well-being, but can also have a positive impact on societal values (Ratzlaff, 2020). In contemporary musical expression, this idea has inspired music creators and educators to pay attention to the social function of music. Music can help people better understand and manage their emotions through positive emotional guidance. For example, some modern music therapies are based on this idea, using specific music to help people relieve stress, anxiety, or depression. In addition, the application of music in education should also be more extensive, through music education to cultivate young people's aesthetic ability and emotional literacy, to help them form healthy values.

5.3. Mass and Social Nature of Music

Aristotle believed that music is an entertainment that can be enjoyed by "mortals" and has a broad mass character. He emphasized that music appeals to people of all personalities and ages, and can promote social harmony through the appreciation and participation of music. This view reflects the inclusive and universal nature of music as an art form. The inspiration for the expression of contemporary music lies in that music creators should pay attention to the universality and sociality of music. Music should not be confined to the elite or professionals, but should be accessible to a wider audience. For example, modern pop music spreads through many channels and becomes an important part of popular culture. At the same time, musical events such as music festivals and community concerts can also promote social cohesion and cultural diversity. By creating works with broad appeal, music creators can allow more people to participate in the appreciation and creation of music, thus giving play to the positive role of music in society.

6. Conclusion

Aristotle's music aesthetics, with its profound philosophical foundation and precise cognition of the essence of music, has laid a solid foundation for western music aesthetics. He sees music as an art form that directly mimics human emotions, emphasizing the critical role of music in emotional expression, education, and spiritual purification. In Aristotle's view, music triggers the emotional resonance of the audience through melody and rhythm, and helps people regulate their emotions with the help of "purification" to achieve psychological balance and harmony. This thought is of great significance in ancient society, and also provides theoretical support for contemporary music education and music therapy. At the same time, he highlighted the social function of music, firmly believed that music could promote social harmony and stability, and advocated the integration of music in education to cultivate young people's character and aesthetic ability, which had a profound influence on the music education theory of later generations. Although Aristotle's thought was limited by time and class, his profound insight into the nature and function of music remains a valuable theoretical source of contemporary musical expression. His theory not only reveals the important significance of music in expressing thoughts, cultivating sentiments and deepening cognition, but also brings positive enlightenment to the fields of contemporary music creation, education and therapy, occupying a position that cannot be ignored in philosophy and music practice, and continuously promoting the development and progress of the field of music

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