

Dialectics of Judgment in Music Education Philosophy: A Comparative Study and Educational Insights on Arendt and Kant's Theories

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Abstract: This paper explores the application and relationship between Arendt's political judgment and Kant's aesthetic judgment in music education. Arendt's theory emphasizes the agency and sense of responsibility of individuals in socio-political contexts, while Kant's theory elucidates how individuals experience and evaluate beauty from an aesthetic perspective. The paper first separately elaborates on these two theories and their educational implications, then discusses their potential applications and challenges in music education. A comparative analysis reveals the complementarity and synergistic effects of both in music education, proposing an integrative educational model to facilitate students' comprehensive development. This study enriches the theoretical foundation of music education and provides new teaching strategies. It is of significant importance for constructing a harmonious, just, and vibrant society, and also offers new perspectives and insights for the development of music education philosophy.

Keywords: music education philosophy, Arendt's political judgment, Kant's aesthetic judgment, comparative study

1. Introduction

As a comprehensive educational practice, music education not only focuses on the cultivation of artistic skills and aesthetic sensibility but also carries the significant mission of shaping individual citizenship and promoting social engagement. In this field, the functions of political and aesthetic education not only are unique in their own right but also interact with each other at a profound level, collectively shaping individuals' values and worldviews. Political education concerns the cultivation of individuals' critical thinking, civic consciousness, and social responsibility, while aesthetic education aims to enhance individuals' aesthetic appreciation, creativity, and cultural literacy. However, finding effective points of integration between these two realms to maximize the benefits of music education is an important topic in current educational research.

Hannah Arendt's theory of political judgment provides a theoretical foundation for understanding and cultivating individuals' participation and judgment in the public sphere. Her theory emphasizes the agency and sense of responsibility of individuals in social and political life, suggesting that through open discussion and action, individuals can articulate their unique viewpoints and positively

influence society. On the other hand, Immanuel Kant's theory of aesthetic judgment starts from an aesthetic perspective, proposing a theory of pleasure based on universality and subjectivity. This theory not only explains how individuals experience and evaluate beauty but also explores the relationship between aesthetic experience and common human values.

This paper will conduct an in-depth analysis of Arendt and Kant's theories of judgment, exploring their application and mutual relationship in music education. The paper will first elucidate the core viewpoints of these two theories and their theoretical significance in the field of education, then discuss their potential applications and challenges in music education practice. Through comparative analysis, this paper aims to reveal the complementarity and synergistic effects of political judgment and aesthetic judgment in music education, thereby proposing an integrative educational model to promote students' comprehensive development in both aesthetic and political dimensions.

The academic value of this study lies in its enrichment of the theoretical foundation of music education and its provision of new teaching strategies and methods for music education practitioners. By integrating the educational resources of political and aesthetic judgment, educators can cultivate students who possess both a high level of aesthetic literacy and a strong sense of social responsibility, which is of great significance for constructing a more harmonious, just, and vibrant society. At the same time, this study will also provide new perspectives and insights for the future development of music education philosophy, driving researchers and practitioners in the field to conduct deeper exploration and discussion.

2. Arendt's Theory of Political Judgment and Its Educational Significance

Arendt's political philosophy, distinct from Kant's theory of aesthetic judgment, provides a theoretical framework for understanding and cultivating judgment in the field of music education. From her perspective, judgment transcends mere individual cognitive functions and becomes a crucial political capacity for public expression and decision-making in multicultural societies. This capacity requires individuals, when forming opinions and participating in public discussions, to consider the diversity of social cultures and the multiplicity of values, ensuring the responsibility and inclusiveness of their opinions and decisions.

Arendt believes that education should not aim to train and mold individuals to fit into an idealized future because this would mean "robbing the newcomers of their own new chances." [1] This indicates Arendt's conservative stance towards education. However, in current music education practice, individuals should not tend towards conservatism. Instead, the question of how individuals can establish connections with society through musical activities, cultivate ethical concepts, and shape and strengthen their awareness and capacity for social and political participation remains unresolved. Arendt's concept of political judgment provides valuable guidance in this regard, especially in the critical listening aspect of music education. Critical listening not only requires students to appreciate the aesthetic qualities of music but also demands that they identify and analyze the moral and ethical issues embedded in musical works through practice, and how these issues interact with the socio-cultural background. Furthermore, Arendt's theory emphasizes the importance of deep understanding of music within diverse historical contexts. By teaching music within its historical context, students can more comprehensively understand the socio-cultural significance of music, thus forming a more profound and comprehensive understanding of music based on critical thinking. This approach not only promotes students' recognition of the intrinsic value of musical works but also enhances their critical and reflective abilities when facing current socio-political issues.

2.1. The Theoretical Foundation and Practical Relationship of Political Judgment

Arendt's understanding of "judgment" is not directly inherited from Kant's concept of "aesthetic

judgment” but rather, based on an in-depth study of Kantian theory, she excavates and develops elements more aligned with her own theoretical framework. This relationship is not merely one of inheritance or imitation but rather a creative absorption and recreation. Arendt believes: “Arendtian judgment is a political activity because it considers the world’s diversity when expressing opinions. Through this ability, the world itself gains its publicness.” [2] This can be understood as Arendt’s concept of “judgment” transcending the scope of individual cognition and being endowed with profound political and social implications. In other words, judgment is not only the individual’s exploration and judgment of the truth of things but also a capacity for public expression and decision-making in a multicultural society. When individuals express opinions, if they can fully consider the diversity of social cultures, values, and knowledge systems, their judgment evolves into a political activity. At the same time, “In maintaining the human common world necessary for judgment, it does not refer to an existing ethical whole, but rather to an idea with regulatory characteristics. Only when self-disciplined judgment breaks free from conventional concepts and universal constraints, in those rare moments, does common sense truly manifest its practical existence.” [3] Political judgment plays a core role in dynamic interaction in the public sphere, urging individuals to surpass traditional notions and demonstrate common sense through disciplined judgment. This process not only reshapes social reality but also promotes the continuous development of individual identity while maintaining the vitality of the public sphere, fostering harmonious progress between individuals and society.

In the philosophy of music education, achieving comprehensive personal development through musical practice revolves around exercising prudent thinking and action to promote holistic growth of individuals. This notion of comprehensive development encompasses the integrated enhancement and flourishing of individuals across multiple dimensions including musical literacy, cognitive-emotional coordination, social adaptation, cultural participation, ethical cognition, and educational achievement. This comprehensive developmental concept aligns complementarily with Arendt’s emphasis on the role of political judgment. According to Arendt, political activity of judgment is not merely the individual’s cognition and evaluation of things; rather, this capacity is a skill for public expression and decision-making through action in a diverse social environment. It requires individuals, when acting, to fully consider the diversity and complexity of society, to engage in effective communication and decision-making with a more inclusive, understanding, and respectful attitude. The process must take into account the diversity of social cultures and the differences in values, thus making responsible judgments and decisions in the public sphere. Such a process not only solidifies the publicness of society but also promotes the continuous evolution of individual positioning and identity in society. Meanwhile, through critical listening and critical moral perspectives in music education, understanding of multiculturalism is articulated and expressed through action.

2.2. Application of Political Judgment in Music Education

Judgment serves as a pathway for cultivating political consciousness and critical thinking, and its role in music education is reflected in several aspects. Firstly, the practice of critical listening not only requires students to appreciate the aesthetic qualities of music but also demands that they deeply analyze the social and political implications or other messages conveyed by musical works. This analytical process directly corresponds to Arendt’s multidimensional nature of judgment, namely the ability to form and express viewpoints in the public sphere. This approach in music education involves engaging with both actual sonic texts and symbolic musical notation. To effectively conduct music appreciation activities, a thorough interpretation of the musical work’s text is necessary. [4] This process resembles text interpretation from a hermeneutic perspective, where the relationship between individuals and musical texts is closely intertwined and mutually nurtured through critical listening, whether in the initial stage of sensory understanding during music appreciation or in the deeper

reflection and rational interpretation stage. Only when listeners can articulate and critique the content expressed in musical texts in their own language does genuine understanding and the effects of critical judgment begin to manifest. This understanding not only reflects listeners' perception and comprehension of music through critical judgment but also entails a deep exploration and expression of the content within the musical text as well as other forms of criticism.

Secondly, the exploration of morality and ethics in musical works prompts students to reflect on and judge complex moral dilemmas, which aligns with Arendt's emphasis on the importance of thinking from the perspective of others. Through cross-cultural music learning and comparison, students can develop a profound understanding and respect for diversity, which is crucial for making fair judgments in a globalized context. Music composition activities provide students with a platform to express their insights into social and political issues, requiring them to use judgment to balance artistic expression and social commentary during the creative process. This reflects the viewpoint of judgment regarding political action and individual responsibility. Practices such as public discussion and music criticism require students to apply judgment in the public sphere to form persuasive arguments and learn to seek consensus from diverse perspectives. Finally, judgment emphasizes historicity and temporality. If the methods of judgment are applied to teaching in other historical periods and social contexts, it not only enhances students' understanding of the deeper meanings of musical works but also cultivates their ability to engage in critical thinking in the current political and social context and gain a deeper understanding of music. Just as Arendt regards the diagonal as a "superb metaphor for the life of the mind," believing it demonstrates the essence of thinking: originating from an ever-changing "eternal present." At this unique intersection of time and space, "he" – the individual who embodies both future possibilities ("not yet") and past memories ("already") – can start anew every time he engages in critical thinking. In the realm of thought, the boundaries between past and future become blurred, as they blend and merge in the tumult of thought, creating a lasting and profound sense of reality and an intrinsic and eternal spiritual experience. [5] Arendt's proposed metaphor of the "diagonal line" depicts the essence of judgment and thought, that is, to think in the ever-changing "eternal present." At this intersection of time and space, individuals carry both past experiences and memories and future possibilities. Critical thinking begins anew in this process, blurring the boundaries between past and future as they intermingle in the tumult of thought, creating a lasting and profound sense of reality and an intrinsic and eternal spiritual experience. In the philosophy of music education, this concept is closely related to the attitude of musical aesthetics. If this critical thinking is applied to the phenomenology of music, it can constructively engage with the yet-to-be-revealed aspects of music by "suspending" past experiences. However, all these perceptions and experiences occur in that "eternal present," allowing individuals to deeply appreciate the beauty of music. This educational approach promotes students' in-depth understanding of music as a culture, enabling them to participate in discussions on social and political issues in specific public spheres and historical contexts in a more mature and responsible manner. Through these scholarly educational practices, music education becomes an important pathway to cultivate citizens with critical thinking skills.

3. Kant's Theory of Aesthetic Judgment and Its Educational Significance

Kant's theory of aesthetic judgment provides profound insights into understanding the essence of beauty and holds significant implications for education. Kant believes that free art is the production of arbitrary action based on rational action, which can be divided into mechanical and sensuous art. Sensuous art further divides into agreeable and beautiful art, with the former providing immediate sensory enjoyment and the latter pursuing deeper aesthetic satisfaction by stimulating the viewer's or listener's reflection and cognition through the work itself. In the field of education, Kant views education as a bridge between human natural attributes and moral freedom, emphasizing that the

purpose of education is to cultivate individuals with moral freedom. The cultivation of aesthetic judgment becomes a key link between nature and freedom. In music education, teachers can guide students to understand how music in the art of beauty imitates the expression of nature and human emotions, enhancing students' deep understanding and perception of musical expressiveness. This process is not only the impartation of musical skills but also an educational approach centered on achieving individual freedom and morality. Therefore, the application of Kant's theory of aesthetic judgment in music education emphasizes that music, as an art form, can surpass mere sensory enjoyment and inspire students' imagination and creativity. Music education should focus on cultivating students' aesthetic abilities and moral senses, enabling them to freely appreciate and create beauty, which is also one of the goals of arts education.

3.1. The Theoretical Foundation of Aesthetic Judgment and Music Aesthetics

In Kant's aesthetic theory framework, the classification of art is based on the concept of its freedom. Free art is defined as "the production through freedom, that is, the production through a certain arbitrariness based on rational action, is called art." [6] Free art can be divided into mechanical and sensuous art. Mechanical art mainly covers today's tools, machinery, and technology, with its core being practical purposes. These achievements provide practical benefits to individuals, thus bringing about a sense of satisfaction and pleasure associated with them. People derive pleasure from using these artistic achievements to gain practical benefits. On the other hand, sensuous art focuses on directly inducing pleasure in the viewer. It is divided into agreeable and beautiful art. Agreeable art emphasizes providing immediate joy through direct sensory enjoyment, such as entertainment activities, aiming to offer people a brief experience of happiness. Similarly, musical works intended to please the audience also fall under the category of agreeable art. In contrast to agreeable art, beautiful art pursues a deeper aesthetic satisfaction. This type of art stimulates the viewer's or listener's reflection and cognition through the work itself, leading them to a deeper aesthetic pleasure. Beautiful art is not merely for direct sensory enjoyment but rather aims to evoke deeper emotions and thoughts through its intrinsic value and meaning.

In this regard, Kant's views on music were greatly influenced by Batteux. Batteux advocated that all art is essentially an imitation of nature, a view with which Kant agreed. In Kant's work "Critique of Judgment," his deep gratitude to Batteux's inspiration is evident. Kant delves into the essence of fine art in this book, embodying Batteux's influence on his thinking: "Fine art can be called art precisely because it seems to be nature at the same time." [7] He further explains, "Art can only be considered beautiful when individuals know it is art while also appearing as natural." He emphasizes later, "Although people are clearly aware that some art is created by humans, beautiful art must make people feel that it is natural." Kant explains why certain things are considered beautiful and the universality of this sense of beauty. He believes that aesthetics is based on a disinterested pleasure, stemming from a pure appreciation of form, devoid of personal desires. The beauty of music lies in its structure, form, and resonance with the audience, capable of stimulating the imagination and providing a pure aesthetic experience. Due to human psychological universality, this experience is universal. Kant also believes that beauty can enhance morality and spirituality, suggesting that music is not only art but also has a positive influence. This lays the groundwork for his educational views.

3.2. The Application of Aesthetic Judgment in Music Education

Before discussing the application of aesthetic judgment in music education, it is essential to understand Kant's educational perspective. Kant believed that one of the purposes and significances of education lies in bridging the gap between human nature and human freedom, thereby enabling individuals to become complete beings [8]. Here, nature and freedom refer to human biological

instincts and moral reasoning. Kant divides education into natural education of the individual and practical (or moral) education, where natural education points towards freedom, and practical education aims to cultivate individual autonomy. Moreover, Kant posited that education, as perceived by people, encompasses conservation (nurturing and maintenance), discipline (including admonition), and instructive guidance involving formative functions. Within this framework, individuals progress through different stages of growth in a sequential order, starting from infancy to childhood and then to studenthood. [9] Thus, in the order of education, natural education precedes practical education. However, from the perspective of purpose, the ultimate goal of education is to cultivate individuals into morally autonomous beings. Therefore, aesthetic judgment provides certain insights into music education. In Kant's "Critique of Judgment," he proposed that aesthetic judgment is a disinterested appreciation devoid of self-interest, reflecting human free will. "Judgment will also bring about a transition from the territory of pure cognitive abilities, that is, natural concepts, to the territory of free concepts, just as he made it possible to transition from intellect to reason in the application of logic." [6] This indicates that aesthetic judgment is a form of judgment that transcends mere sensory perception, guiding individuals from a natural state to a state of freedom. Aesthetic judgment becomes an essential means from freedom to morality. In Kant's theory, music is a form of imitative art with the ability to convey specific meanings. He believed, "The beautiful art of music is to some extent a natural art." [10] "The art of music... puts its own power into practice as the language of emotion, thus, in accordance with the law of association, universally conveys aesthetic ideas associated with nature." [10] In summary, in music education, teachers can enhance students' deep understanding and perception of musical expressiveness by guiding them to understand how music precisely imitates expressions of nature and human emotions. This process not only involves imparting musical skills but also constitutes an educational approach with the core goal of realizing individual moral autonomy. Through training in aesthetic judgment using music, students can gain a deeper understanding and appreciation of natural beauty and artistic beauty through the aesthetic experiences of music. This experience possesses a transcendent nature, independent of material interests, relying more on individual free will and intrinsic appreciation of beauty. Therefore, this approach to music education effectively promotes the transition of students from a natural state to a state of freedom, enabling them to achieve spiritual elevation and free development of personality through the influence of music.

4. Comparison and Integration of Arendt's and Kant's Theories of Judgment: Insights for Music Education

Based on Kant's theory, it can be inferred that aesthetic judgment, as a means, although pivotal in music education for individuals, should start with natural education, making aesthetic judgment central to the core cultivation methods. Individuals gradually transition from the role of aesthetic judgment in natural education to the field of practical education. However, its limitations are also evident. Kant believed that aesthetic judgment should be *a priori*, purely concerning form. Therefore, when evaluating aesthetic objects, the subject primarily relies on the formal characteristics of the object. This necessitates educators to discard all personal emotions or subjective feelings that aesthetic objects may trigger in the process of cultivating aesthetic judgment in music education to ensure the objectivity and purity of evaluation. [11] However, in reality, aesthetics is a complex process involving not only the formal characteristics of objects but also multiple factors such as content, culture, and social background. At the same time, aesthetic judgment inevitably carries subjectivity and personal emotions, which are the sources of its richness and diversity. Emphasizing objectivity and purity may overlook the comprehensiveness and historicity of aesthetics, thus limiting learners' comprehensive understanding of aesthetic phenomena. Therefore, although Kant's aesthetic judgment highlights the importance of form in music education, it fails to fully reflect the complexity and diversity of aesthetic educational activities.

Hannah Arendt, in constructing her political philosophy, deeply absorbed and extended Kant's theory of aesthetic judgment, particularly emphasizing the role of the spectator in aesthetics. She achieved a transition from aesthetic judgment to social participation and individual political identity. Arendt believed that political judgment should not be confined to the realm of aesthetics but should seek consensus and common understanding in the public domain to achieve practical action and social effectiveness. In the field of music education, it can be concluded from the above conclusions that promoting comprehensive growth of individuals through the cornerstone of practical action. Advocating for "wonder" experiences through interaction and communication not only enriches the emotional dimension of individuals but also provides impetus for the development of their cognition and creativity. Furthermore, Arendt's concept of "worldly love" further elucidates how practical action guided by judgment promotes the comprehensive development of individuals at the social, cultural, and political levels. This series of ideas not only provides theoretical support for music education but also points the way for the diverse development of individuals in society. In this way, Arendt's political philosophy not only transcends Kant's theory of aesthetic judgment theoretically but also provides new perspectives and methodologies for the active participation and comprehensive development of individuals in society at the practical level. Her insights are of great significance for the development of music education and provide profound insights for understanding and promoting the harmonious development of individuals and society.

4.1. Arendt's Personalized Expansion of Kant's Judgment and Its Application in Music Education

Arendt's most significant departure from Kant's aesthetic judgment lies in the transition from "inspiration and identification" to "reconstruction and expansion" and further to "reflection and correction." Firstly, inspired by Kant's aesthetic judgment, Arendt points out that Kant's practical reason deals with singular individuals, whereas only the third critique deals with plural individuals. Arendt criticizes Kant for limiting aesthetic judgment to the individual viewpoint and proposes that political judgment should be based on the interaction of plural subjects. Consequently, in music education, this implies that educators should emphasize interaction and collaboration among students, encouraging them to participate in music practice and performance collectively, thus fostering their intersubjectivity within the group. This interaction not only involves the exchange of musical skills but also includes the joint exploration and understanding of musical meaning. Secondly, reconstruction and expansion can be manifested in the transformation from actors to spectators. Arendt believes that in terms of the importance of judgment, spectators have a more significant position compared to actors. This is because actors are often deeply involved in the events' center, making it difficult to perceive the overall meaning of the events. In contrast, spectators can transcend events, using their imagination to compare their own judgments with possible judgments of others, and can empathetically consider others' perspectives. This ability gives spectators a unique advantage in understanding the overall significance of events. [12] The concept of spectators is endowed with profound philosophical significance and professional value in music education. Its transcendent perspective enables students to transition from subjective experience to objective analysis, deepening their understanding of the essence of music. Moreover, the role of spectators emphasizes the moral and cultural consciousness in musical behavior, promoting students to respect social diversity and uphold originality. Additionally, it fosters students' objective and comprehensive evaluation of music, cultivating cross-cultural understanding and critical and creative thinking, thereby showcasing unique personalities and innovative spirit in music composition and performance. Lastly, reflection and correction reflect its practical thinking foundation, as Arendt believes that judgment can serve as a conveyor belt connecting the spiritual world with the real world, establishing a link between practice and thought activities. This also provides a target for judgment as an important means in music

education, affirming what Elliott said: “The essence of music lies in practice, it is not only a form of action, but also an indispensable presence in practice.” [13]

This implies that music education is a process of practice, where individuals demonstrate uniqueness through critical listening and practice, and collectively influence social political views and decisions through practice and debate. This process also generates “wonder” during communication. Wonder is essentially the attention and focus of a problem-oriented group open to the world: it is a dynamic force that, in an open manner, identifies and shares mutual perplexities. [14] This result elevates the public domain as an open platform, allowing individuals to freely express and communicate their viewpoints, while reflecting on judgment with past experiences and future possibilities. It involves thinking and communicating in the constantly changing “eternal present,” thus forming and correcting political and social judgments, enabling comprehensive individual development. Arendt, based on judgment, proposes “Amo: Volo ut sis” (I love you: I wish you to exist), expressing care for others and responsibility for the world. This attitude is an extension of love for the world, not only for others but also for the world itself. It is a commitment to the world, a commitment to its continued existence and prosperity. Arendt also seeks to find common values among subjects through judgment activities in the spiritual life or contemplative domain. [15] This largely echoes Elliott’s emphasis that the ultimate goal of music education is to explore and pursue the highest values of humanity, namely, the noble ideal of “the good equals happiness.” These two ideals not only encompass the cultivation of beneficial moral qualities for humanity and society but also reflect the joyful and fulfilling life built on goodwill and care between individuals and society.

5. Conclusion

The in-depth comparative study and discussion on the application of Hannah Arendt’s political judgment and Immanuel Kant’s aesthetic judgment in the field of music education have been summarized above. Through analysis, it is concluded that these two theories have significant complementarity in music education, jointly promoting the holistic development of students. Arendt’s theory provides a theoretical basis for nurturing critical thinking and social participation awareness in music education by emphasizing the individual’s initiative and sense of responsibility in social and political participation. Kant’s theory enhances students’ aesthetic appreciation and creativity by explaining the universality and subjectivity of the experience and evaluation of beauty. By integrating these two theories, conducting comparative studies, and learning from each other’s strengths, the purpose is to promote students’ moral cognition, social responsibility, and cross-cultural understanding through music activities. This aim not only enriches students’ aesthetic experiences but also enhances their participation and expression abilities in multicultural societies. Ultimately, the implementation of this research is expected to cultivate individuals who can actively participate in and contribute to the globalized context, thereby contributing to the construction of a harmonious and just society.

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