

The Ethical Implications of Gadamer's Playful Concept

Zhang Yongzhen

School of Marxism, Shaanxi Xueqian Normal University, Xi'an, China

Abstract: *Gadamer gives the idea of "playfulness" particular emphasis. Playfulness, in his opinion, possesses the cognitive abilities of judgment and choice. Aesthetics and playfulness go hand in hand. It derives from an appreciation of beauty and can enliven the body. Games that can maximally promote living vitality can best display the acquisition of the fun interest. Playful engagement in games fosters the formation of genius. The goal of ethical playfulness is to nurture flawless people and create innovative people by preventing the degeneration of people's abilities and capabilities. Playfulness serves as a tool for education in this way. The meaning of nurturing is that people have a duty not to allow their talents to deteriorate. The finest expression of morality, playfulness describes the ideal human. Merely utilizing the law and morality to govern life frequently results in a lack of inventiveness. The traditional moral and legal judgments of society are supplemented with playfulness. A better society values playfulness. Gadamer's ethical levity has significant practical implications for developing creative abilities and enhancing personality.*

Keywords: *playfulness; aesthetics; moral*

1. Introduction

Gadamer's exploration in "Truth and Method" begins with a critique of aesthetic consciousness, exploring the experience of gaining truth through works of art as opposed to relying purely on science to gain the truth. In Gadamer's view, creativity is closely related to genius; genius is closely related to experience; experience is closely related to inner nature; inner nature is closely related to aesthetics; and aesthetics is closely related to playfulness. The link between aesthetic playfulness and the value of truth is emphasized. Playfulness is a key to unlocking the inner essence of the human spirit.

2. Playfulness is the most primitive inner feeling of human beings

The concept of playfulness was mentioned in Aristotle's "Nicomachean Ethics" and was referred to as pleasure. Kant paid special attention to playfulness and made extensive discussions on it. Gadamer believed that Kant's idea of playfulness implied an inherent factor in human experience, which was a surprising and exciting discovery. Playfulness serves as the basis for critical rationality and contains something truly innate in human beings. The concept of playfulness includes cognitive ways, allowing us to make acceptance, rejection, and more firm decisions. It functions like a judicial organization, making individuals discard their tendencies and establish universal social norms, freeing us from individual limitations.

Sensory playfulness has the most primitive inner nature, and it is the most basic clue to our advanced judgment of things in our feelings. It combines sensory instincts and spiritual freedom, containing the rational foundation of human judgment, analysis, and choice, which comes from the most fundamental evolution of humans from animals. This foundation is the deepest inner essence of human beings, providing us with the most direct judgments of acceptance or rejection, enabling us to consciously and calmly analyze and make correct judgments, and coordinate with all aspects of society and life. As Gadamer said, "Sensory playfulness is the most animalistic and intrinsic feeling in our senses, and thus it already contains the basic clues we use to distinguish things in our advanced judgment. Therefore, the sensory differences in playfulness - acceptance and rejection enjoyed most directly - are not purely instinctive but something between sensory instinct and spiritual freedom. This reflects the characteristics of sensory playfulness, which have distance in choosing and judging what is most urgently needed in life."^[1] The foundation of playfulness is the emotional aspect of human life, an innate quality that combines both sensory and rational elements. Playfulness is a form of aesthetic judgment that lies

between sensory experience and rational rules, bridging the gap between sensory experience and the universality of rationalism. It is a spiritual and intrinsic quality that serves as an innate utility for human beings. "

In Kant's view, the aesthetic judgment itself is a rule. It is a problem about the innate utility of beauty, which arises from the combination of pure sensory experience and the universality of rationalist rules in things that please our taste. Of course, if we consider the relationship between playfulness and the emotional aspect of human life to be the only foundation of playfulness, then we cannot call playfulness a form of sensory knowledge". Playfulness is literally "reflection on playfulness".^[1] Playfulness is an intrinsic spiritual quality that involves both sensory and rational elements and has universality, serving as the foundation of aesthetics. Gadamer's concept of playfulness contains the basis for human rational judgment, involving the freedom to play with purposeful imagination and understanding. It embodies the deepest inner spiritual essence of human beings and has universality, serving as the basis of aesthetics and providing individuals with a sense of freedom and superiority.

The evaluative function of playfulness has universality. Kant believed that like judgment, playfulness can also make judgments about whether one thing is suitable for another.^[2] Aesthetics is established based on playful judgment, where there is pleasure in aesthetic judgment that is purposive and follows the free play of the imagination and understanding. This pleasure is universal, being the same for all people and therefore universally communicable. "Kant established aesthetics based on playful judgment, and in aesthetic judgment based on playful judgment, there is a pleasure that is purposive, by the free play of imagination and understanding. Playfulness is the source of our pleasure and has universal effectiveness, which means it is suitable for everyone."^[1] Kant's playful judgment is based on the universal requirement of experience.

According to Kant, the subject's pleasure is innately in line with objects that are considered beautiful. Kant established this pleasure on purposiveness, which is a kind of free play between the imagination and understanding, corresponding fundamentally to the relationship between the subject and object of cognition.^[1] The pleasure brought by playfulness is the same for everyone, making it universally communicable and effective.

The universality of playful judgment comes from the sense of community. The joy of life has a sense of community. The community feeling is a natural compound of instincts, a natural desire for what true happiness in life depends on. Aesthetic judgment is an inner judgment, which is playfulness. Playful judgment is the complete sensory judgment, and the whole range of human sensory judgment is playful judgment. Aesthetic playful judgment does not rely on concepts and has universality, thus having a genuine sense of community. Kant said, "A complete sensory judgment is a playfulness."^[1] The entire range of sensory judgment is filled with playful judgment, and aesthetic playfulness has universality, thus belonging to a sense of community. For Kant, the entire range of human sensory judgment can be reduced to aesthetic playful judgment, which has universal rules. Kant said that a true sense of community is playfulness. "For Kant, the entire range of human sensory judgment has been reduced to aesthetic playful judgment, which has universal rules. Kant said that true sense of community is playful judgment."^[1]

3. Playfulness leads to moral education

Playfulness was originally a moral concept, describing the true human ideal. It is something that exists between sensory instincts and spiritual freedom, having a moral education function, and can serve as a starting point for social moral education to cultivate cultured, ideal, and perfect individuals. The concept of playfulness has a long history before Kant used it as the basis of his Critique of Judgment, and this history clearly shows that the concept of playfulness was originally moral. "The concept of playfulness describes a truly human ideal."^[1] The starting point for social moral education should be playfulness, which contains the function of moral education. Only by establishing values based on playfulness can an ideal social moral education be formed, and such social moral education can cultivate perfect individuals. "Therefore, Gracian saw in playfulness an 'animalistic spiritual activity,' correctly pointing out that not only in the spiritual realm but also in playfulness there exists moral education. The concept of playfulness is the starting point for Gracian's ideal social education, and his ideal for cultured individuals is that they have the freedom to maintain the correct distance from everything in life and society, thus enabling them to consciously and calmly analyze and choose."^[1]

Gadamer believed that playfulness belongs to the category of moral education. He cited Kant's view that a person's cultivation should not allow their innate aesthetic taste to degenerate, but rather cultivate their abilities or talents, which is self-cultivation and the proper function of education. As Gadamer said,

"Kant spoke of the cultivation of abilities or 'talents,' a kind of free activity for the agent. Therefore, when he speaks of a person's obligation not to let their talent degenerate, he only calls it cultivation, rather than using the word 'education.'"^[1]

Cultivation is closely linked to interest, and the separation of cultivation from interest is a division within ourselves. In this world, there exists a starting point and clue for us to return to our essential nature, which is interest. The most important aspect of human ethics should be the nurturing and cultivation of our essential personality. The portal through which we can enter into our essential personality is through playfulness, which is intimately connected to our self-essential personality. Each person's essential personality is the source of their individual and collective creative power, the source of all spiritual and material wealth, and the necessary path for achieving human happiness. It is the crown jewel of the human value chain, representing the complete unity of factuality and value. Ethics strengthen our moral cultivation, which is the nurturing and cultivation of our innate abilities and talents - self-cultivation.

Education is about teaching people from a societal and educational standpoint the importance of protecting and cultivating their innate abilities and talents, how to protect and cultivate those abilities and how to become self-aware, aware of the need to protect and cultivate their innate abilities and talents. This leads to the formation of an environment, consensus, system, and concept of protecting and cultivating each person's innate abilities and talents by society as a whole. This is the true essence of human ethics and the ultimate happiness of humanity. Therefore, let us focus our ethical spotlight on playfulness and open up a new direction for our ethics and moral code. "All learning gained from education includes the development of theoretical interest," but "this world also contains all starting points and clues for returning to oneself, being friendly to oneself, and rediscovering oneself." (Gadamer, 1975) Education should be closely linked with the cultivation of interests and the development of human abilities or innate talents.

Starting from playfulness to studying human ethics and establishing our etiquette will make our society more harmonious, perfect, and vibrant. It is insufficient to regulate life solely through legal and moral rules. Regulating life solely through legal and moral rules often leads to a lack of creativity in life. "Playfulness is by no means limited to the natural and artistic beauty determined by its decorative nature but includes the entire domain of morality and etiquette. To be precise, regulating life solely through legal and moral rules is insufficient, and such regulation requires creative supplementation. This requires judgment to correctly evaluate specific situations."^[1]

The concept of playfulness contains a social ideal that can measure the goodness or badness of society. Playfulness has a judicial evaluative function, with the power to make judgments that go beyond individual selfishness. It is not something belonging solely to individuals but rather naturally points towards society and humanity, possessing the most general universality. A society that is nurtured by ethical playfulness is one in which everyone becomes a genius, developing their aesthetic talent, cultivating their creative potential, and enhancing their creativity. "Playfulness is not only an ideal proposed by a new society, but it is also what people later named as the 'good society' based on this idea of good taste. The reason why a good society can be recognized and legitimized is that it generally knows how to make judgments that exceed the narrowness and selfishness of its interests and preferences."^[1]

4. Conclusions

In conclusion, from Gadamer's concept of playfulness, we can see something innate in human beings. He linked interest with aesthetics, and through the experience of aesthetic taste, people can feel the vitality of life. Games are the carriers for experiencing aesthetic tastes. In games, people gain aesthetic tastes, stimulate their creative power, and showcase their talents and abilities. The moral value of playfulness lies in not allowing people's talents and abilities to degenerate, which is the essence of Gadamer's moral education. Playfulness is the highest realization of ethics, a supplement to traditional social morality and legal judgments, making society more reasonable and enabling people to achieve a better realization of their values.

References

- [1] Gadamer H. G. *Truth and Method* [M]. New York: The Continuum Publishing Co., 1975.
[2] Kant Immanuel. *Critique of Pure Reason*. Translated and edited by Paul Guyer and Allen W. Wood [M]. Cambridge University Press, 1998.