

A New Strategy for Culture, Economy, and Art Education: Introducing Advent of an Aesthetic Society, by Sin-Huang Siao and Wei-Gong Liu

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Abstract

Economy and culture are the two closest matters related to human beings in the social world. Today, “culture industry” is not only a mainstream concept, but has become an economic strategy and goal pursued by many countries around the globe. Entrepreneurs hope to increase products’ additional value by incorporating cultural elements; meanwhile, while cultural workers want to make culture more accessible and understandable to ordinary people through day-to-day consumption. The cultural economy has gradually taken shape under the influence and interaction of the two forces.

Together with the effect of globalization, advanced media technology has driven commodities and information to flow across geographic boundaries, creating a common global network that supports the daily life of modern people. The combination of culture and economy has given consumption more meanings than consumption itself. Sociologists have observed that the combination has influenced some specific symbols and meanings (e.g. hierarchy and identification) behind our behavior (e.g. choosing what to eat, wear, and how to live).

As this process of social development moves forward, arts and cultural education organizations are forced to cautiously reconsider the deeper meanings of cultural production and consumer behavior in today’s social life. Lastly, sociologists have brought up the strategy

of “life style” to describe the possible impact that the strategy has had on the aesthetics education of the society.

Keywords: Culture Industry, the Aestheticization of Everyday Life, Life Style

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1. Introduction

The words “collage” and “hybrid” are often cited to describe the phenomena in a postmodern world impacted by trends of globalization.

1.1. A globalizing living experience

Since the 1990s, the word “globalization” has not only become an important concept in the discourse of academic circles, but has also become a significant part of the living experience of people around the world.

According to Robertson's observation, there are several important milestones in the development of the concept of a global society since the 15th century. The idea of a Sovereign state first appeared in the 18th century; in the beginning of the 20th century non-European countries began to be recognized by the international community; in the 1950s the United Nations was established; and since the 1990s the global society has been confronted with challenges posed by rising multicultural and multiethnic influences, as citizens around the world began to call for increased protection of their rights, and the concept of a “global” society has gradually came to be more widely recognized(Chen, syue-yun, 2002).

Beck also pointed out that current globalization trends are a result of political, economical and trans-national forces, and can exert influences that transcend actions controlled by ethnical and national authorities. Viewed from the perspective of a social system, globalization refers to the increased connection and intimacy between countries. In the process during which such a system is being formed and structured, the effects of trans-national capitalism, global information technology, international division of labor and global military power have become the motivating forces driving regional populace towards the formation of a global village.

Faced with the tides of globalization, the development of social systems in individual countries have diverged from their historical and traditional courses, and have instead become

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abstract systems in themselves, which through monetary and power currencies further form and shape political, economic, social and cultural entities, such as transnational enterprises, international organizations, non-profitable organizations and web-based non-governmental organizations (e.g. Greenpeace).

1.2. Characteristics of a hybrid world

Globalizing trends in the fields of politics, economy and technology have brought about peculiar, complex and fast-changing living experiences. Current trends of globalization refer to a fluid and dialectical process. These trends create a hybrid world in which modern citizens are confronted with an artificial social and cultural environment that can be described as both real and virtual, with blurred boundaries between real and virtual worlds.

For instance, as the international media exerts its influence over all corners of the world, it can often be seen that there are no definite boundaries between education and leisure, or between learning and consuming. In the past decade or so, social spaces such as malls, amusement parks, resort villages, cultural heritage sites and museums have become new places where people find new connections and experiences. The global flow of capitalist products and media experiences has constructed a novel cultural landscape. The traditional binary oppositions of culture/ commodity, popular/ refined, cognitive/ aesthetic, rational/ emotional are no longer suited to define the daily experiences and cultural landscape of the general public. In addition, traditional opposing binary modes such as border/ central, developed/ undeveloped have also become inadequate to describe the complex, overlapping, and dispersed political, economic and cultural phenomena around the globe.

Under such ambiguous and unstable social environments, the boundaries between nature and culture, certainty and risk have become increasingly blurred, and people are forced to make choices about their lives without any clear guidelines. Beck claims that the attitude of learning how to do something, or reflecting on why something should or should not be done has substantial impact on a number of issues, including one's opportunities in life, social equality and justice, and the quality of culture (Chen Xue-yun, 2002).

Indeed, when capitalism relies on advanced media technology to mobilize capital funds, labor, commodities and information around the globe, the life styles of global citizens are also constantly changing in the modern world. The impact of globalization not only means that monetary currencies, commodities, electronics and information are disseminated across geographical borders, but more importantly, it has become a significant backdrop against

which people assign symbols and meanings to their everyday life.

The contemporary British sociologist Anthony Giddens has proposed the concept of “the form of life” in discussing the impact of globalization on modern people’s everyday life. Giddens’ “form of life” refers to how social actors structure their daily life, or a set of behavior pattern that gives meaning to their life—in short, it refers to a certain “life style.” He adds that a life style is not a fixed role or part an individual plays in life, but rather a style of living that is formed after the individual has made choices based on a wide range of options.

The distinguishing feature of a life style is based on the question of “choice,” because during the assessment of a choice or the process of forming a decision, there is no single organization or institution that could tell the individual which choices in life “should” be made. Furthermore, even choices such as what to eat, what to wear, what jobs to take should not simply be seen as deciding on an option, but as a way of displaying one’s self-identity, and deciding “one’s individual path” (Sin-huang Siao and Wei-gong Liu, 2001).

This sort of evolutionary result also highlights an important fact: In the past, the identity (class or status) of a member of society was based on one’s professional work or social status, but in the 21st century, one’s life style has become the main domain where one constructs his or her individual or collective identity.

Taiwan society has been making great strides on the road to democracy. Since the lifting of the martial laws, there has been rising awareness on the subjectivity of Taiwan as well as the issue of self-identity. After the martial law era, members of the Taiwanese society are not confined by the dictates of the government and have become free to make their own choices. But at the same, because individuals can no longer depend on the old established ways of living, they are forced to make decisions based on a wide spectrum of options, and the question of how to make these decisions has become an important lesson faced by all members of the society.

How to act? Who to be? Under a more liberal social atmosphere, does the pressure to make choices motivate individuals to form interests with stronger enthusiasm, and to acquire more solid skills in order to choose their desired life styles?

1.3. Motivation and purpose of this dissertation

Professor Syuan-yang Gao in his *Sociology of Popular Culture* points out that pop culture has become the most active field in the entire domain of culture. Since pop culture is disseminated among the social populace through mass media, the study of this particular area of culture allows us to further understand the public’s life styles, attitudes and popular trends.

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Studies in the sociology of arts that have emerged recently also focus on the interactive relationship between society and art. In discourses related to the sociology of arts, Bourdieu's theories play a significant role. His main contribution lies in incorporating the concept of "field" into the sociology of art, categorizing art as an independent field. The artistic field can be analyzed in the same way as economics or politics, and every field can be seen as a particular social space, which possesses a certain order established by its own unique rules and its own reward system.

Moreover, the philosophy of modern sciences is usually divided into the branches of "natural science" and "social science," with each representing "objective/ subjective" paths in the search for truth, and having obvious differences in terms of epistemology and methodology. Critical theorists who advocate "historical realism" believe that the so-called "reality" as it exists in human society is in fact a kind of "virtual reality" that is shaped by social, political, cultural, economic, racial and gender factors and values — a reality formed over a long historical process (Huang Guang-guo, 2001). This signifies that society already provides individuals with certain perspectives and feelings of looking at the world. In other words, individuals are conditioned by society in terms of how they perceive and interpret the world, and how they feel about certain people and things. While knowledge is often seen as gleaned from ways by which people interact with the world, it might be more fitting to say that people receive knowledge which has been filtered and interpreted by larger social forces. Therefore, proponents of historical realism believe that knowledge should not be perceived in purely abstract terms, but needs to be reevaluated within the context of social history in order to be understood, and by doing so its social meaning will also be revealed.

Based on this theoretical groundwork, the present study will attempt to place the development of aesthetic education within its social and historical context, to better explore the background and factors that have shaped the globalizing cultural economy in recent years, and to discuss the relationship between cultural production and consumption, and the impact this has on culture and arts organizations. This dissertation will also introduce life style concepts and strategies from the book *Advent of an Aesthetic Society*, written by Sin-huang Siao and Wei-gong Liu, which may serve as a guide to lead modern society towards a more aesthetically fulfilling life style.

2. Rising and Shaping of Cultural Economy

2.1. Background on the emergence of cultural economy

Australian scholar David Throsby mentions in his recent book *Economics and Culture* that economics and culture, like the southern and northern hemisphere, are two areas that the human society concerns itself with most, yet they have existed in virtual isolation from each other throughout history. As the society develops and human beings become more desirous of aesthetics, the two areas have undergone subtle changes. In general, the overlapping and interactions between culture and economics can be perceived from two viewpoints as discussed below:

2.2. From an economic perspective

As is commonly observed, the process of social development and economic evolution have changed from the agricultural, industrial and service economy in the past to the so called “experience economy,” following changes in patterns of consumption. B. Joseph Pine II and James H. Gilmore note in *Welcome to the Experience Economy* that the era of experience economy has arrived.

The book categorizes the stages of economic development as below:

Primary industry—the era of agricultural economy: Consumption is based on fresh food productions from agriculture and fishing, while added value is limited.

Secondary industry—the era of industrial economy: Supply of manufactured products with increase in added value

Tertiary industry—the era of service economy: Supply of final products with more increase in added value

Quaternary industry—the era of experience and knowledge economy: Activities that create memorable experience and lasting impressions (See Table 1)

Table 1. stages of economic development

Category	Primary industry	Secondary industry	Tertiary industry	Quaternary industry
Characteristics	Agriculture	Manufacturing	Services	Experience
Content	Commodities	Goods	Services	Experience

Source: *Welcome to the Experience Economy* written by B. Joseph Pine II and James H. Gilmore

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The authors of the book further explain that in the stage of agricultural economy in early human society, production activities focus on production of raw material and consumption is based on the idea of self-sufficiency. In the stage of industrial economy, production activities focus on manufacturing goods while consumption is based on functionality and efficiency. In the stage of service economy, the focus shifts to the division of labor and product functionality while the main mode of consumption becomes service-oriented. In the stage of the so-called experience economy, the focus is on upgrading services with the aid of products while consumption is driven by the pursuit of certain sensations and experiences, with the aim to create experiences having a lasting impression on consumers.

Daniel Kahneman, who won a Nobel Prize in Economics with his research in experience economy, divides experience economy into four categories, namely, experience of entertainment, education, escape and aesthetics. He also notes that experience economy focuses on providing a memorable experience in an attempt to satisfy the psychological demands of clients. Experience economy is centered on the idea of service supplemented by the consumption of products to create a significant experience with added values.

An account on Hakka Tung Blossom Festival illustrates this point:

The Hakka Tung Blossom Festival has attracted many tourists to come and watch the snow of May. While the tour guides tell stories that transport visitors to another historical and cultural era, it seems more than worthwhile to pay one or two hundred NT dollars for a cup of coffee.

The phenomenon above demonstrates that an object not only has practical functions and value functions, but it also generates meanings. When commodities are packaged into symbols of taste and capacity, their value is replaced by representations signified by the symbols, and these become an important basis in determining the product value of a certain commodity.

2.3. From a social and cultural perspective

2.3.1 The end of traditional aesthetics

Since modernity needs to be understood in relation to tradition, it is vital to bring into discussion the critical theories of the Frankfurt School when dealing with studies of modern

arts and culture. The aesthetics of the Frankfurt School, formed in the 1930s, is a school of theories based on modern cultural phenomena stemming from studies of 19th century modernism to the development of avant-garde art. Theorists of the Frankfurt School include Max Horkheimer, Walter Benjamin, Theodor Adorno and H. Marcuse. Theodor Adorno is the first theorist since the Industrial Revolution in Europe who has discussed comprehensively the cultural phenomena in industrial societies. He observes that the modern art appreciation should break free from the emphasis on internal formal aestheticism to take into consideration larger social influences. He suggests that the meanings of art should be interpreted not only through discussion on formal issues, but also through cultural, historical and sociological perspectives. This approach is now recognized as the more appropriate methodology in studies related to contemporary arts and culture (Chen, Ruei-wen, 1997) .

In his discussion on the modernity of arts, Benjamin says that in a modern society that is dominated by commodities, art works, such as urban architecture, interior design, photography, crafts of furniture, movies etc, suffer from alienation. These new emerging forms of art differ from those of the past and require a different set of aesthetic judgments.

Professor Pao-Teh Han (2003), an eminent architect who is also dedicated to the promotion of arts and culture in Taiwan, in his essay “Myth of Postmodern Art Education” reflects on the setbacks in art education in recent years, and attribute the decline of art education to the loss of rationality, or the degeneration of classical aesthetics. Following the principles of classical aesthetics that have existed for thousands of years, which are based on ideas of harmony, unity and homogeneity, Professor Han attributes the loss of these principles in the 1970s to two main reasons:

The first reason is based on class theory. Class theory assumes that no secular values can exist outside the realm of politics. Therefore, if authentic aesthetic values were created by the upper and elite classes in Western civilization, where does that leave the aesthetic judgments of the lower class? It is not that the lower class has no appreciation for the arts, but to acknowledge the influence of politics in the realm of aesthetics is to deny the existence of authentic aesthetic values.

The second reason is due to the influences of commercialism. Merchants in the capitalist society utilize the idea of authentic aesthetic values to generate profit for themselves. As everyone is attracted to beautiful objects, beauty is naturally a significant selling point, regardless of whether it is a status symbol or a universal value. This phenomenon is clearly seen in more economically developed countries in the world.

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2.3.2 Popularization of aesthetic objects in social trends

Material abundance in Taiwan has become more noticeable in recent years as Taiwanese society advances with economic growth and development. The material abundance provides the society and public with sufficient conditions to pursue “good quality” and a “tasteful” aesthetic life.

Compared to the past, modern people have more chances and more diverse ways to gain aesthetic experiences. These aesthetic experiences often take place outside of conventional art venues. In other words, many aesthetic experiences are sparked by commodities as more and more commodities have become agents of aesthetic experiences that stimulate sensations and provoke reactions. A commodity crafted with aesthetically pleasing designs can create a memorable experience for its consumers. In other words, well-designed commodities with aesthetic components, such as furniture or stationery products, have become more common in the daily life of modern people. In turn, an aesthetically satisfying experience will generate desires for similar experiences of consumption.

2.3.3 The government’s serious implementation of cultural creative industry in recent years

Although scholars of the Frankfurt School, such as Adorno, discussed the concept of culture industry (*kulturindustrie*) a negative light, there have been less and less criticisms against the concept over the last half century. Nowadays, “culture industry” has not only become a mainstream concept, but also an economic strategy and target pursued by many countries. “Culture” and “economics,” two fields that had been considered as incompatible before, has begun to overlap and this has given rise to the emergence of “cultural economy.” (Nan, Fang-suo, 2005).

Since some countries, such as the UK and Korea, promote cultural creative industry and have good achievements for recent years, knowledge economy has become a mainstream idea now. Cultural economy, which is created by a cooperate mechanism of artistic industries and commerce, not only creates economic value but also upgrades people’s life quality and glamorize the living environment.

In recent years, countries such as the UK and Korea have had considerable success in promoting the cultural creative industry, and knowledge economy has also become a mainstream concept. Cultural economy, which is created by incorporating commercial mechanisms into the cultural industry, not only results in the development in economic growth but also the enhancement of people’s quality of life and living environment. Since

2002, Taiwan's Executive Yuan has also proposed to develop several projects with the aim to promote the culture industry. The project "Challenge 2008: National Development Plan 2002-2007" consists of smaller projects including "Development plan for cultural creative industry," "Plan for increasing number of tourists," "Plan for digital Taiwan," "Plan for constructing community of new hometown" and the recently proposed "Plan for ten constructions." The government hopes that these projects will breathe new life into the knowledge and culture industries.

3. Consuming Behavior and Connotation under Cultural Economy

3.1. The birth of cultural commodities and keen sales of museum products under cultural economy.

In the later half of the 20th century, economic productivity has been rapidly enhanced as the society has developed comprehensively. At the same time, with the increasingly fast pace of globalization, entrepreneurs have made commodities and information circulate even more rapidly than before.

With the enhancement of productivity and increase in wealth, people have gained more free time for leisure activities and consumption, which means there is more room for "cultural economy" and "aesthetic living". When people spend more time on leisure, they will begin to demand that the activities can generate meaning or take the form of a learning experience. These demands naturally draw cultural elements into play. The increasing needs of culturally-oriented consumption will then stimulate a growing supply of cultural products.

Faced with globalizing trends, Taiwan has also entered an era of global consumption. Now that democracy has become the mainstream idea of the era, private and governmental agencies continuously strive for ways to provide service to the people and to receive wide public recognition. Thus, not only do local governments actively support various arts and cultural festivals to gain popular appeal, social and educational organizations also make substantial efforts to host arts and cultural exhibitions. By fulfilling the needs of the public, they also show their commitment to art and culture consumers and their efforts to promote the concepts of life-long education and aesthetic living.

According to a report by the Council for Economic Planning and Development, although consumption by the general public contributes less and less to economic growth, the ratio of infotainment consumption has increased. (e.g. Taiwan's annual infotainment spending has

increased from 19.2% in 1985 to 22.3% in 1994). Consumption is no longer based on basic needs but rather “an experience of commodity” (such as music, drama, fine art, comic books, advertising, design, fashion design, TV, movies, computer software, tourism, leisure, cuisines, etc.) This sort of “experience economy” motivates consumers to spend more and is in fact a growing trend among developed countries.

This trend is evident in two exhibitions held by the National Museum of History. In 1997 it organized an Impressionist exhibition titled “Golden Impressionism” and in 2000 it held an exhibition of Terracotta Army of the Qin Dynasty, which attracted 1.65 million visitors. The record-high number of visitors and revenue of the museum gift shop clearly illustrate the popularity of cultural commodities.

Apart from displaying art works and providing art education, museums are paying more attention to provide leisure activities. For example, there is an outdoor cultural plaza on the ground floor of the National Museum of History; Wang Yan Syuan, a Western style café, is located on the second floor; He Fong Ge, an art corridor, is located on the third floor; Yi Cui Lou, a Chinese tea house, is on the fourth floor. These art and leisure spaces allow visitors to enjoy an aesthetic experience whether appreciating historic art works or having coffee while looking out a window with a beautiful view of a garden.

3.2. Cultural commodities and sign values

Consumer products stressing aesthetics and cultural commodities have gained popularity in modern capitalist economy because the relationship between commodity value and capitalist profit has changed dramatically.

A distinguishing characteristic in the operation of capitalism today lies in creation of sign value derived from a product’s functional value and exchange value. Yet this sign value becomes the main source of capitalist profit. For this reason, the consumption of a cultural commodity is not based on its uses (functional value) or its pricing (exchange value), but rather its sign value, which has become what modern capitalists see as the most profitable marketing factor, aided by the influence of the media on the consciousness of the general public.

But a sign does not function like a traffic signal, where a single signal elicits a reaction, and there exists a strict correlation between the two, blocking out any type of emotional engagement and mental exploration. By contrast, the appeal of a sign draws on its representation of a symbolic significance, which can evoke a wide range of responses in terms of thoughts, feelings, perception and imagination. For instance, once a bottle of mineral water becomes a sign, the act of drinking water is no longer a physical necessity, but is

associated with various symbolic meanings that create unceasingly dialogues with people's senses, emotions, thoughts and even the subconscious (Liu, Wei-gong and Siao, Sin-huang, 2001).

An example from Jin-lin Huang's *Sociology and Taiwanese Society* further illustrates a true phenomenon of how a commodity in modern society can be packaged into a sign representing taste and competence.

"After finishing this cup of coffee, I'm about to become someone else."

This commercial first appeared in the spring of 1997. The scene shows a dimly-lit café in Paris. A bearded French gentleman tells an Asian lady sitting next to him that he is about to join the mercenary army and if he is still alive ten years from now, he will receive a new name and identity. He will be free to live without any previous records. At La gauche de Seine, one is free to enjoy a strong-flavored coffee on a lonely afternoon, speaking to oneself but surrounded by the company of strangers. One does not necessarily have to live alone; the Seine River may not leave you with anything, but a cup of coffee will never leave you in solitude. Such associations come to mind in this decidedly French-flavored coffee commercial, which isn't really selling coffee, but rather, an image of "France," "Paris," "Seine River," "a café on La gauche de Seine" and a "forlorn and solitary existence."

Under the packaging of these signs and images, the product separates itself from the "three-in-one" instant coffee image and strays further away from impressions associated with fast food product lines. The refined packaging results in a series of images being attached to the product. The product is transformed into a product of images. Hence, the objects of our consumption have also turned into "images of objects." Regardless of how this product might be different from other "three-in-one" coffee brands, consumers are only concerned with the particular images evoked by the product. (Hung, Jin-ein, 2000)

In order for a product to obtain sign value, it has to become a sign first, and its sign value is then decided by the degree of difference between this specific sign and other signs. Once a product turns into a sign, it creates a marked difference from other products that possess similar characteristics.

The fact that a product can become a sign does not necessarily mean that the product possesses the attributes associated with the sign. The product has to be re-processed to be mounted into a cultural system, after which it can transform into a sign through its attributed cultural meanings. Sin-huang Siao and Wei-gong Liou believe that this type of work cannot be achieved by traditional workers in economic fields such as production line workers or management personnel, since the nature of it is unrelated to enhancing a product quantity or capability, but has more to do with the interpretation of meaning and significance.

Creating a product's sign value involves understanding cultural meanings that are

desired by the public, and transferring those desired meanings onto the product through associations represented by the sign. Siao and Liou (2001) expound the view that it is artists and cultural workers — including writers, painters, musicians, photographers, architects, performance artists, and media workers — who specialize in assigning, creating, and searching for meanings. The above exposition shows the how sign values function within a system of cultural economy as well as the importance of artists and cultural workers to the economic industry.

4. Possible Strategies for the Development of Aesthetic Education

Amidst the globalization currently taking place in the cultural economy and society, the question of how to bring aesthetic education to the general public has become a topic of concern to cultural institutions and society at large. As the times change, moreover, how are we to think of aesthetic education? What is beauty? What is perception of beauty? These questions deserve serious attention.

4.1. The basis of aesthetic pleasure

When dealing with the issue of aesthetic sense, most discussions of aesthetics in the West bring up the relationship between the subject and object of art. For those interested in aesthetic research, Immanuel Kant's *Critique of Judgment*, published in 1790, is among the most fundamental texts, especially the first half, *Critique of Aesthetic Judgment*.

In the chapter entitled *Analytic of the Beautiful*, Kant seeks to analyze judgments of taste (*Geschmacksurteil*), not any specific beautiful object. Nor does he directly deal with the object of beauty. He does not analyze the beauty of flowers, the beauty of gardens, or the beauty of architecture, painting, poetry, or dance; the aesthetic knowledge he imparts has to do with the nature and modes of judgments of taste, especially the spiritual structure and state of consciousness of the subject of aesthetic judgment (Hong, Cui-e, 1997).

By way of further explanation, judgments of taste are expressed thusly: "This X is beautiful." Needless to say, this judgment causes us to make an exclamation of aesthetic affirmation. It is a specific object of beauty. It is X. By contrast, Kant's aesthetic analysis does not analyze this X; it analyzes the entire judgment that "X is beautiful."

Kant puts forth two efforts in his writing that are worth noting. First, his aesthetic analysis focuses on four aspects, namely, quality, quantity, relation, and modality. He asks:

What is the basis (Bestimmungsgrund) of judgments of taste (quality)? Do judgments of taste have universality (quantity) and inevitability (modality)? What is the source of aesthetic pleasure (relation)?

Second, Kant's aesthetic analysis seeks to distinguish between aesthetic pleasure, pleasure derived from goodness, and sensory pleasure and comfort. In other words, he contrasts and distinguishes rigorously between beauty, perfection, and comfort. He also draws a distinction between judgments of taste relating only to the subject's perception of pleasure or displeasure, knowledge judgments of taste relating to knowledge of the object, and utilitarian and moral judgments relating to behavior (Hong, Cui-e, 1997).

Two issues especially worth noting concern the source of aesthetic pleasure and the object of aesthetic judgments:

4.1.1 Aesthetic pleasure

For Kant, the term "aesthetic pleasure" refers to where a person becomes conscious of the impact of an object representation upon his state of mind, and he wishes to maintain this state of mind. This is what Kant generally refers to as pleasure (German: "Lust"). The opposite is displeasure (German: "Unlust"), where a representation causes a different state of mind that we would like to be free of immediately. This is the aesthetic attitude that the present study would like to emphasize, i.e. when one makes an aesthetic judgment based on this kind of attitude, consciousness is not disconnected from the object, but reflects back upon the subject's own feelings. At the moment we make an exclamation of aesthetic affirmation, we become conscious of the happy emotional state of the subject itself.

Next, beauty and aesthetic sense as referred to by Kant are unique to humans, and meaningless to pure animals and the pure wisdom that is divinity. Moreover, aesthetic judgments are unrelated to judgments involving ordinary faculties of understanding. Aesthetic judgments are a type of "appreciation" or "taste." They are not based on feelings, nor do they require conceptual understanding, but are a special sort of direct perception that cannot be contemplated using ordinary concepts, because they are a matter of neither logical inference nor morality.

4.1.2 No assumption of any ought-to-be nature of objects

In Kant's aesthetic analysis, comfort, beauty, and goodness indicate three different relationships between representation and pleasure. When an object causes sensory pleasure, it is called comfort. Goodness, in the meantime, is that which is praised by people, i.e. it is such

that people accords it an objective value. And that which causes people happiness solely through static observation, Kant refers to as beauty. This type of beauty or aesthetic pleasure has no bearing upon any relation of interests, and does not include any concept of objects having any purpose or ought to be nature.

Since it places no restrictions upon the object, it therefore cannot preclude any possible source for it (aesthetic pleasure), or place anything beyond its scope.

The aesthetic experience described above shows the relationship between subjective “impression” and objective “representation”, and holds that aesthetic experience is corroborated or objectivized in the form of physical matter by the emotions of the subject. Gestalt psychologists have used the theories of isomorphism and allomerism to interpret this formation of “image,” and in *Shenmei yu singshihgan* (“Aesthetics and the perception of form”), Ze-hou Li has stated the following:

It is more than just the connection between physical matter (sound, color, form, etc.) and audiovisual sensation; more important is their connection with motor sense. Objects (the objective) and perception (the subjective), the physical world and spiritual world, are permanently in a state of motion. Even things that appear to be at rest in fact have elements in motion... Therein exists a correspondence and mutual interaction at the level of formal structure... Gestalt psychologists understand these types of phenomena as formal structural isomorphism, or perhaps allomerism, of the power of the external world (the physical) and the power of the internal world (the psychological), i. e. while physical matter shows differences, it is nevertheless the same from the standpoint of formal structure; it generates the same electrical pulses in the cerebrum, which is why the subjective and objective are coordinated, the physical and the self are one, and the external object and the internal emotions are consistent, and therefore generate aesthetic pleasure amidst symmetry, balance, beat, rhythm, order, and harmony.

Ze-hou Li has already given a clear overview of why and how “impression” and “representation” are formed and converge, thereby generating aesthetic sense, and has described the results thereof (Chen, Man-ming, 2005) ; he has also shown the interrelatedness of the origins of the aesthetic experience referred to in Kantian theory of taste.

4.2. Marginalization of aesthetic education

As for the status of aesthetic education, Broudy (1971) has analyzed the causes of the marginalization of aesthetic education in US society and put forward four reasons. First, from the standpoint of livelihoods, aesthetic activity is not indispensable to the maintenance of life. The second reason is religion, which causes aesthetic experience to be seen as superficial. The third reason is rooted in history, which has made the people of the US place greater importance on the useful, the active, and the technical. The fourth reason is physical; the physical environment is not yet ideal, and aesthetic needs are therefore not pressing.

In his *Tan mei* (“On beauty”), Professor Pao-teh Han laments: “Why has something so simple as aesthetic sense encountered so many setbacks in education, and even been ignored?” In his opinion, from the perspective of the development of modern art, there are two main reasons:

First, a disconnect has arisen between art and aesthetic sense, yet art is still seen as the natural representative of aesthetic sense. And second, the fact that aesthetic sense is hard by nature to pin down has prompted much pondering over it by philosophers, thus giving rise to aesthetics as a branch of learning, and in the mouths of scholars, beauty becomes a profound, inscrutable thing that encompasses both aesthetic sense and the study of aesthetics, with the result that a simple feeling has morphed into complicated mental gymnastics. (Han, Pao-teh, 2005)

Two scholars have thus pointed to the reason for the marginalization of aesthetic education — it is not of pressing importance to people’s everyday lives.

Popular trends are the “spokespersons” of the modern consumer society, and constitute an important aspect of everyday life, below the level of the culture economy. We can tell clearly by observing popular trends just how deeply the capitalist economy has worked its way into our lives. Pop culture, moreover, is an extremely broad concept. It is a rich, complex general concept that includes apparel, fashion, hairstyles, consumption culture, leisure culture, luxury culture, material culture, popular life styles, popular tastes, urban culture, subcultures, mass culture, and folk culture. (Gao, Syuan-yang, 2002)

The growing complexity and diversity of contemporary pop culture has given rise to pluralism and polymorphism. It has traditionally been thought that popular trends start in the upper classes and spread from there to the lower classes, but this view is increasingly being questioned by commentators who feel that it does not fully account for the various forces that affect the development of contemporary pop culture. Wei-gong Liu holds that in our efforts to understand the spread of popular trends, we must move beyond our focus on collective social behavior and factor in the impact of the culture industry.

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Everyday life provides abundant evidence to show how contemporary pop culture forms myriad threads of complex interdependence with consumer markets. From the standpoint of modern modes of survival, the joining together of life and art is no longer limited to the conceptual. It has been pointed out before that in modern society, aesthetics have become a fundamental factor in the everyday condition of modern people. Most people have had the experience of finding aesthetic beauty in their surrounding environment, be it clothing, household wares, cityscapes, storefronts, or public spaces.

Modern people continually encounter the aesthetic in the course of their lives. Sociologists refer to this phenomenon as the aestheticization of everyday life. According to the observations of Sin-huang Siao and Wei-gong Liu (2001), the aestheticization of everyday life has changed two major views that people hold regarding aesthetic sense: the first has to do with the value judgment of aesthetic sense, and the second has to do with the prerogative to interpret aesthetic sense.

4.2.1 The value judgment of aesthetic sense

As the aestheticization of everyday life progresses, aesthetic sense is no longer narrowly defined to mean only how one perceives regular works of art. It is now broadly defined to mean the special way one perceives anything at all. This special perception need not be based upon or informed by professional expertise in aesthetics; any ordinary person can judge the beauty or ugliness of anything based on his or her own understanding and perception.

Artists no longer have a monopoly on the power to make a final determination on what constitutes art and beauty. The aesthetic tastes of the general public, moreover, are not necessarily philistine, bad, unworthy of preservation, or anti-intellectual, and the aesthetic tastes of the elite are not necessarily elevated, good, worthy of preservation, or the expression of wisdom. There is no such clear distinction.

4.2.2 The prerogative to interpret aesthetic sense

In modern society, the authoritative stature of intellectuals or experts is no longer unchallengeable. This certainly holds true with respect to artists. Wei-gong Liou borrows upon the ideas of post-modernist social theorists in stating that artists no longer act as makers of law, but merely as commentators. Laws and regulations enacted by lawmakers must be rigorously obeyed, but the opinions and views of commentators are only for reference. Liou further states that it is not up to the commentator to decide whether his or her commentary will be accepted. Furthermore, not everyone is qualified to be a lawmaker, but anyone —

whether artist or layman — can be a commentator.

4.3. A strategy for aesthetic living: principle of living, life style, and living space

For the sake of correspondence with the abundance of aesthetic symbols in modern society, and in order to help modern people determine how to live their lives, Sin-huang Siao and Wei-gong Liu (2001) put forward a “triangular complex” concept of action for the aesthetic life of modern people. This triangular complex is composed of living aesthetics, life style, and living space to ensure that the idea of living an aesthetic life is not just a slogan, but is a method that can be acted upon. Herebelow we shall introduce a modality of action for the aesthetic life that they expound upon in their book, i.e. a principle of living which takes living aesthetics as the core, takes life style as the concrete way of living, and enables one to act upon the key elements within the living space.

4.3.1 Living aesthetics as a means of helping people determine how to live their lives in a society where aesthetic symbols abound

The British sociologist Mike Featherstone believes that the aestheticization of everyday life encompasses three meanings:

First, there are the principles of artistic creation and aesthetic movement put forward by artists (such as Dadaists) who were attempting to do away with the boundary between art and life.

Second, there is the philosophy of life that intellectuals (such as G.E. Moore) have long put forward, whereby “life is art.”

And third, there is the appearance and rapid circulation of symbols in modern life (Featherstone, 1991).

For its definition of living aesthetics, the present study adopts the third meaning put forward by Featherstone, i.e. the aesthetic experience felt by modern people in the course of their interactions with symbols in everyday life.

Within the framework of the culture economy, people continually come face to face with many different symbols in their everyday lives. Persons, events, times, places, and objects are not the only things that can act as carriers of symbols laden with aesthetic meaning; colors, light, odors, images, and forms of expression can all be important aesthetic symbols, and every symbol carries deep meaning waiting to be interpreted.

With respect to the many things that can make a modern person perceive pleasure, the

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contemporary French sociologist Pierre Bourdieu has this to say: Living aesthetics uses code to map meanings to the symbols with which one comes into contact. Aesthetic perception is basically a kind of decoding action, and living aesthetics is an individual's decoder. At the same time, the people who are capable of decoding are those who have access to the necessary decoding key. For someone without decoding ability, entering into a place of aesthetic sense (be it a walled art museum, open-air public art exhibit, etc.) is like looking at a jumble of corrupted code. Total confusion results. Hidden meaning cannot be understood. But living aesthetics is a decoder that modern people can use to unlock the symbolic meanings in their environment. Living aesthetics ensures that symbols are no longer corrupted code, but codified information that can transmit aesthetic sense.

4.3.2 Living aesthetics is composed of aesthetic schemes

Living aesthetics is composed of aesthetic schemes. The reason different people have different living aesthetics is that each person has different aesthetic schemes.

Bourdieu and Schulze put forward different theoretical constructs for the study of aesthetic schemes. Bourdieu divides aesthetic schemes into two categories: form and function. People who adhere to the former type of aesthetic scheme look at aesthetic sense from the perspective of “art for art's sake,” while those who adhere to the latter type of aesthetic scheme emphasize the social function of aesthetic sense.

Schulze, on the other hand, in his best known work (*Die Erlebnisgesellschaft: Kultursoziologie der Gegenwart* [The experiential society: a cultural sociology of the present]) divides them into three categories: high culture schemes (Hochkulturschema), commonplace schemes (Trivialschema, i.e. schemes emphasizing beauty in the commonplace), and excitement schemes (Spannungsschema). These three types of aesthetic schemes can be joined together, the difference between them residing in whether one focuses on pleasure, distinction, or philosophy of life (Schulze, 1993), as set out in Table 2.

Table 2. Schulze's aesthetic schemes

Aesthetic scheme	Representative symbol	Complex of meaning		
		Pleasure	Distinction	Philosophy of life
High culture	Classical music	Meditation	Opposition to barbarism and coarseness	The ideal
Beauty in the commonplace	Cha Cha	Comfort	Opposition to being different for its own sake	Harmony
Excitement	Rock and roll	Action	Opposition to routine	Narcissism

Source: From Wei-gong Liou, *Dangdai hsiaofei wenhua shehui lilun de fenxi jiagou* [Analytical framework for a social theory of contemporary consumption culture]

In addition, Bourdieu sees a close relationship between class status and aesthetic taste; people with a lot of cultural capital have aesthetic taste that is oriented toward form, while people with a lot of economic capital have aesthetic taste that is oriented toward function. Schulze, however, argues that the three aesthetic schemes mentioned above can join together in different combinations, thereby giving rise to different experiential orientations (Erlebnisorientierung). In categorizing different social groupings, Schulze eschews an experiential orientation based on class status. These aesthetic schemes allow us to categorize the living aesthetics of different social groupings.

4.3.3 Different milieus arising from aesthetic schemes

Modern people, on the basis of their living aesthetics, actively build their own living environments centered around aesthetic sense. Accordingly, people with different aesthetic orientations form clearly different social groups. Schulze refers to the human groupings formed around these different aesthetic orientations as “social milieus.”

The term “milieu” refers to the sum total of the environmental factors surrounding an actor, including the natural, societal, and spiritual. Under the influence of these environmental factors, an actor builds a life style unique to himself. The “milieu” referred to by the sociologist Hradil is not a novel concept, but was discussed by classical sociologists such as Auguste Comte and Emile Durkheim. It is worth noting that the contemporary concept of milieu has undergone a clear change with respect to research concepts. Early research on factors that influence the environment concentrated especially on “the external, objective, and natural” (such as climate), but the focus has now shifted to “the internal, subjective, and perceived” (such as values). As for the relationship between the actor and the environment, early research argued that the actor passively acclimated to his or her environment, while today's research stresses the actor's active acclimation the environment (Hradil, 1992).

Sin-huang Siao and Wei-gong Liu note that the attractiveness of the milieu concept lies in the fact that it helps researchers to understand how an actor goes about building his or her own living environment and what are the special characteristics of the life style thus expressed. More importantly, there are boundary lines between these different social milieus — boundary lines formed by living aesthetics. Upon entering into a milieu not compatible with their own living aesthetics, people immediately feel out of place.

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Table 3. Schulze's five major social milieus in Germany

Experiential orientation of each milieu	Combinations of living aesthetic schemes (“+” means mutual attraction; “-” means mutual rejection)		
	High culture schemes	Commonplace schemes	Excitement schemes
Seek fame and position (Prestige milieu)	+	-	-
Seek sameness (Unity milieu)	+	+	-
Seek stability (Harmony milieu)	-	+	-
Seek self-fulfillment (Self-fulfillment milieu)	+	-	+
Seek excitement (Pleasure milieu)	-	-	+

Source: From Wei-gong Liu, *Dangdai hsiaofei wenhua shehui lilun de fenxi jiagou* [Analytical framework for a social theory of contemporary consumption culture]

4.3.4 Life style

As globalization progresses, the living world becomes more diverse and social experience increasingly dissimilar. For this reason, the question of how to live one's life is an important choice for individuals, and the objective is self-fulfillment, not necessarily the good of the group or organization.

With respect to the various life styles that are formed from different social milieus, the US sociologist Sobel (1981) defines a life style as a modality of living that is distinctive and recognizable. Featherstone(1991) feels that life style contains uniqueness, self-expressiveness, and a formal type of self-awareness, and therefore life style signifies an individual's view of self, the world, and the feeling of one's own uniqueness. He further argues that all individual behaviors are affected by his or her unique life style.

Modern people now place increasing importance on life style. As Giddens (1998) stresses, a choice is not a simple act; a decision involves the actor's answers to questions about “how I should live my life” and “who should I be.” It is an expression of an actor's self-identity.

In a globalized society, members of the general public are forced to continually make decisions and search for self-identity in order to seek self-fulfillment. In the process, in addition to intellectual reflective judgment, Lash (2000) also feels that emotional aesthetic reflective judgment should also be accorded its proper importance, especially now, in a society where science and technology pose a daily growing threat to the natural environment, and where the media breaks further away from an identification of the society's culture.

Unlike the ability to carry out logical analysis, verification of hypotheses, and other exercises in critical thinking, aesthetic reflection is a special kind of experience. Mixing artistic life and aesthetic sense into everyday life, this kind of aesthetic imagination brings us closer to the truth of life, and makes us better understand the meaning of existence.

Furthermore, amidst the progress of globalization, social milieus symbolize a new cultural movement. By participating in new communities or milieus, individuals hook into communities of emotion where they are able to give expression to one's self and one's aesthetic sense, "extract" local experience, "perceive" the existence of collective life, share collective emotion, seek out life, live out life, and embody aesthetic living. Words like "justice" and "peace" do not adequately describe interpersonal relationships within a culture of emotion (Chen, Syue-yun, 2002).

5. Conclusion

The economy and culture are indeed, as David Throsby describes, like the southern and northern hemispheres. They are the two things we care most about in human society. They have long existed in human society in virtual isolation from each other, nevertheless, the development of society and people's eternal longing for beauty have begun to bring about changes.

Economy and culture are the two matters most closely related to human beings in social life. Today, "culture industry" is not only a mainstream concept, but has become an economic strategy and goal that many countries pursue. Entrepreneurs hope to increase the added value of products by incorporating a cultural element; meanwhile, cultural workers want to make culture more accessible and understandable to ordinary people through day-to-day consumption.

Together with the effect of globalization, the development of media technology has driven merchandise and information to flow across geographic boundaries, and become a thread of thought that supports our daily life. The combination of culture and economy has given consumption more meanings than consumption itself. Sociologists have observed that the combination has influenced some specific symbols and meanings (e.g. hierarchy and identification) behind our behavior (e.g. choosing what to eat, wear, and how to live).

As this process of social development moves forward, arts and cultural education organizations are forced to cautiously reconsider the deeper meaning of culture industry and consumption in today's social life.

The Ministry of Education issued its White Paper on Arts Education Policy, which serves as the blueprint for efforts to develop national arts education. Besides seeking to foster the emergence of culturally creative industries and aesthetically competitive arts professionals,

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the White Paper also stresses the need for arts education to gradually break free of the educational modes and restrictions imposed by a mainstream focus on technical virtuosity, and calls upon us to adopt a style of arts learning that emphasis well-rounded character development characterized by greater self-directedness, openness, and flexibility. The present study examines overall trends in societal development and borrows upon the life style concept and the possibility of achieving it, as put forward by sociologists; in so doing, our purpose is to throw out a few ideas that are perhaps not so fully thought out, in hopes of eliciting more enlightened commentary from others, so that those involved in arts education can discuss our ideas and point out where they can be improved.

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