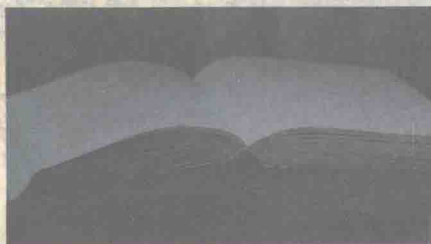




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亨利·詹姆斯的 艺术道德观

Art and Morality in
Henry James's Writings



陈 丽 著



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前言

亨利·詹姆斯是英美文学史上著名的小说家和文艺理论家,本书主要研究詹姆斯作品中艺术与道德的关系。本书的主要论题是,詹姆斯不仅推崇艺术,而且关注艺术与道德的关系。作为一位具有深刻道德意识的艺术家,他的创作不仅深受当时盛行的唯美主义思想的影响,而且深刻探讨了唯美主义的倾向所引起的道德后果。对艺术的道德思考贯穿了詹姆斯的创作。

评论家们已经从不同角度讨论过詹姆斯作品中的艺术与道德,但这些评论大多散见于对詹姆斯的哲学、文化或传记研究中,专门而系统的研究仍然很缺乏。有关詹姆斯的艺术道德观,一些方面还未得到应有的关注;一些问题虽已有探讨,却仍需进一步研究,例如,关于英国唯美主义代表人物沃尔特·佩特的唯美主义理论在詹姆斯作品中的体现;有些方面尚未得到研究者的重视,而这对正确理解詹姆斯的艺术道德观至关重要;有关詹姆斯艺术理论中对艺术形式的追求与道德的冲突,研究者们指出了詹姆斯的矛盾态度,却未做出进一步阐释;詹姆斯如何看待艺术的距离原则与道德的冲突也没有得到系统的分析。因此,系统、深入地探讨詹姆斯作品中艺术与道德的关系仍然是詹姆斯研究领域中十分必要而有意义的课题。

本书从艺术审美和艺术创造两个方面研究詹姆斯作品中艺术对道德的影响,根据佩特“无为”的唯美主义思想来理解詹姆斯作品中的艺

II 术审美,根据詹姆斯有关“作为”的思想解释艺术创造。由于无论是艺术审美还是艺术创造都要求与艺术对象保持一定的距离,本书继而分析詹姆斯如何看待艺术的距离原则与道德的关系。在研究过程中,本书将詹姆斯的文艺理论、小说作品、书信、自传、笔记等一并纳入研究视野,相互参照,以期揭示詹姆斯复杂、微妙、动态的艺术道德观。

本书首先讨论詹姆斯作品中艺术审美与道德的关系。佩特推崇无为,将艺术审美当做人生的最高价值。本章就詹姆斯如何看待佩特无为的艺术理论做出了新的阐释。在过去的研究中,佩特的唯美主义理论对詹姆斯的影响主要表现为对强烈的审美印象的追求、对主观意识的重视和对人生体验的追求。本书的研究指出,无为的意义不仅限于此;佩特推崇无为,目的是在被各种社会和自然规律分割、统治的现代社会中获得一种自由感;并且,佩特的唯美主义提倡敏锐的观察和感觉,接纳并吸收新鲜事物和思想,强调要根据具体的、切身的观察(而不是某些先验的、绝对的教条)来进行道德判断;而佩特的艺术思想在这些方面与詹姆斯的艺术道德观一致。基于这种认识,本章分析了詹姆斯对佩特无为的唯美主义思想动态而复杂的态度。他认为,这一原则鼓励追求艺术享乐,从而可能导致道德堕落和自我主义。但是,他渐渐意识到,审美无为可以为人提供一种人生的自由感。同时,佩特的理论强调敏锐的观察和对新事物的吸收,这对詹姆斯来说是做出正确的道德判断的基础,因而詹姆斯认为,无为的唯美主义精神会促进对道德的更深刻的认识,形成更高的道德感。艺术精神与道德精神获得了一致。

本书继而讨论詹姆斯如何看待艺术创造与道德的关系。詹姆斯和英国唯美主义另一代表人物奥斯卡·王尔德一样,认为艺术高于生活,是艺术赋予了生活形式和意义,强调要将生活的混乱转化为艺术的完美有序。而艺术与道德的冲突就表现为:对艺术形式的追求使得艺术家对素材的控制和操纵成为必要,从而导致自我主义和专制。那么,如何来理解詹姆斯艺术理论中对权利的主张和他对个体自由的关注?研究指出,詹姆斯和佩特、王尔德一样,将艺术扩展到人生的各个方面,认为每个人都可以成为人生的艺术家。詹姆斯的小说塑造了一系列王尔德式的艺术家,他们用艺术的眼光对待生活,试图使自己的生活变为一件艺

艺术品,达到艺术的完美。因此,研究认为詹姆斯的很多小说可以从艺术创造与道德的角度来解读,它们从象征意义上体现了作家的艺术道德思想,与詹姆斯在其文艺理论中提出的观点相互呼应、补充。研究表明,詹姆斯认为,艺术形式赋予生活意义,展现生活的价值,艺术家的操纵和控制虽然不可避免,但可以原谅,艺术与道德达成矛盾的统一。但是,他同时怀疑形式是否能够表达生活的复杂性、多样性和开放性,艺术家往往会被头脑中一些传统的文学模式和世俗观念所控制,用它们代替艺术的形式,并使生活符合这些现有的模式。这时,詹姆斯往往更加强调艺术形式的追求所导致的自我主义和专制。

本书第三部分研究詹姆斯作品中艺术的距离原则与道德的关系。根据爱德华·布龙的艺术理论,艺术要求审美或创作主体与艺术对象保持一定的审美距离,而这会导致对道德的漠不关心和自我与他人的分离。本书分析了詹姆斯对艺术距离的道德思考,展现了他对这一问题的矛盾态度。就艺术审美而言,研究借助英国唯美主义代表人物约翰·罗斯金关于“伊希斯”和“斯利亚”的理论,分析从唯美的角度看待生活的道德后果,说明以自我为中心、仅追求感官享乐的审美方式与道德相背离,而同时有情感付出的审美才是道德的。就艺术创造而言,研究指出,詹姆斯认为保持距离对艺术创作至关重要,但同时意识到这一艺术原则与道德的冲突,提出将艺术的距离原则和情感的投入结合在一起,以避免艺术的距离引起道德上的冷酷无情。能否达到艺术距离和情感投入之间的平衡对保持道德至关重要。

本书说明,艺术与道德是詹姆斯一生关注的两个重要方面,他推崇艺术,也关注道德,对艺术的追求始终伴随着道德思考。通过探索詹姆斯复杂的艺术道德观,我们得以走近詹姆斯和他的作品、艺术理论和道德哲学。

在本书付梓之际,我要衷心地感谢我的导师刘乃银教授。先生学养深厚,治学严谨,是他引领我进入了文学批评的瑰丽世界,教导我成为一名合格的文学评论者。他学识广博,思维敏锐,时时为我拓宽视野,指点迷津。先生教给我的研究方法使我终身受益。他批阅、修改我的博士学位论文达十多稿,可谓呕心沥血,殚精竭虑。待我顺利通过论文答辩时,

先生已两鬓染霜。毕业后我又屡次与先生讨论,商定修改方案。可以说,没有先生的教导和辛勤劳动,就没有本书的问世。

IV

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Abbreviations

James, Henry

- AM *The Ambassadors*. Penguin Books, 1994.
- GB *The Golden Bowl*. Ware, Hertfordshire: Wordsworth Editions Limited, 1995.
- PL *The Portrait of a Lady*. New York: Oxford University Press, 1981.
- RH *Roderick Hudson*. In *Henry James: Novels 1871-1880*. Ed. William T. Stafford. New York: The Library of America, 1983.
- WS *Washington Square*. Penguin Books, 1995.
- LC I *Literary Criticism: Essays on Literature, American Writers, English Writers*. Ed. Leon Edel. New York: The Library of America, 1984.
- LC II *Literary Criticism: French Writers, Other European Writers, the Prefaces to the New York Edition*. Ed. Leon Edel. New York: The Library of America, 1984.

Wilde, Oscar

- DG *The Picture of Dorian Gray*. In *Complete Works of Oscar Wilde*. Ed. Vyvyan Holland. London and Glasgow: Collins, 1948.

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Introduction

Henry James, having long been labeled as an aesthete, is also a novelist with strong moral sense. His writings, greatly influenced by the then prevailing British aestheticism, are laden with moral evaluations. Dedicated to art, he is greatly concerned with the moral consequences of art. Therefore, this book will explore the relation between art and morality in James's writings.

James's conception about art and morality has already been dealt with from different angles. In his biography of Henry James, Leon Edel traces James's moral evolution to his embrace of European civilization.¹ He examines the process by which James was "converted ... from an old Calvinistic inheritance of codes and rules and rigidities into a more relaxed (though still laborious) American-European" (*The Life of Henry James* 1, 819), revealing James's growing enchantment with European civilization

1 Leon Edel's biography of Henry James was first published in five volumes: *Henry James: The Untried Years, 1843-1870*, *Henry James: The Conquest of London, 1870-1881*, *Henry James: The Middle Years, 1882-1895*, *Henry James: The Treacherous Years, 1895-1901*, and *Henry James: The Master, 1901-1916*, in the year 1953, 1962, 1962, 1969, and 1972 respectively. They were reedited in two volumes under the title *The Life of Henry James* in 1977.

and his gradual liberation from the American Puritan morality. Edel says,

2

James had finally abandoned his American innocence. He could still portray it as subtly as of old; but he himself now understood it as never before. He was aware that what he had pictured as "corrupt old Europe" represented a splendid façade of civilization, formed over the centuries, behind which existed all manner of things Americans might judge harshly and regard as evil — but that this façade also concealed a life of liberty. (*The Life of Henry James* 1, 820)

Edel suggests that James's increasing privileging of European civilization loosens his native moral seriousness and releases him from the moral rigidities of the American Puritanism.

Yet what Edel discusses is how James's worship of European civilization influences his moral attitude. He does not separate the element of art from the relatively general concept of civilization and fails to show specifically how for James the aspiration for art affects morality.¹

Alwyn Berland, in his *Culture and Conduct in the Novels of Henry James*, a study of James's notion of culture, analyzes James's attitude to the relation between art and morality. Berland explains James's idea of culture in terms of Matthew Arnold's conception of Hebraism and Hellenism, which designate respectively the call to duty and the call to beauty. He maintains that for James, both art and morality are indispensable elements that comprise man's wholeness and an ideal form of culture. He writes, "the great dream of the Jamesian pilgrim is the Arnoldian ideal: the marriage of Hebraism and Hellenism"(35). Berland purports to prove that for James, art overpowered by morality leads to the Puritan moral fallacy, whereas morality overwhelmed by art results in art for art's sake, and James is opposed to both. He observes, "The opposition of Hebraism and Hellenism may be seen, in varying dramatic forms, over and over in James ... Like Arnold, James rejected each of these two terms alone, each

1 See Leon Edel, *The Life of Henry James*, 1 and 2.

without some interfusion of the other, as fragmentary”(31).

Carrying out his study in the moral-humanist tradition of John Ruskin and especially that of Matthew Arnold, Berland aims to show the necessity for James to combine the aesthetic and the moral, rather than exploring in the direction of how people’s aesthetic impulse influences their moral integrity in James’s writings. For example, in his analysis of *Roderick Hudson*, Berland comments,

Roderick, weak in the moral fibre ... meets Europe head on and is destroyed. Mary Garland ... has the moral strength to resist the evil, and the imagination and intelligence to absorb the beauty ... she maintains her moral integrity at the same time that she gains an aesthetic one. The two together constitute what James believes to be true culture. And this is the general goal ... to which all of James’s sympathetically seen Americans will aspire. (89)

Berland demonstrates that the ideal relation between art and morality for James is the perfect marriage of moral integrity and aesthetic sensibility. But he does not view the art/morality relation in James’s works from the perspective of what moral problem the aesthetic sensibility will cause.¹

Different from Berland, Dorothea Krook explores the conflictive relation between the aesthetic and the moral values in James’s novels and tales. In her *The Ordeal of Consciousness in Henry James*, a study of the moral and philosophical themes in James’s fiction, Krook tracks the aesthetic/moral clash that runs through James’s major works.² She argues that for James, the aesthetic must be subjected to the moral:

This conflict of the aesthetic and the moral in a highly civilized society is to emerge in James’s later novels as one of his great themes, perhaps his very

1 See Alwyn Berland, *Culture and Conduct in the Novels of Henry James*.

2 Dorothea Krook’s *The Ordeal of Consciousness in Henry James* explores the nature and development of the principal themes of James, especially the relation between moral and aesthetic values, the elusive nature of truth, and the redemptive power of love, through the interpretation of the term “consciousness” in James’s works.

greatest ... The theme is further developed in several of the works that follow *The Portrait of a Lady* — in *The Princess Casamassima*, *The Awkward Age* and, most particularly, in *The Ambassadors*. But for its definitive rendering we have to wait until *The Golden Bowl*, where we will find the whole fable directed to the single end of exhibiting the triumphant supersession of the aesthetic by the moral. (60)

In Krook's view, James suggests that the aesthetic can be antithetical to the moral. She explains, "aestheticism seeks always to substitute the appearance for the reality, the surface for the substance, the touchstone of taste for the touchstone of truth," but for James, the truth "in the life of man ... is in the first instance moral and only secondarily and derivatively aesthetic." (60) Krook claims that in *The Portrait of a Lady*, Isabel Archer's aesthetic view of life undermines her moral integrity:

Isabel Archer is too susceptible ... to fine appearances, to a brilliant surface, to the appeal, in short, of the merely aesthetic, to be morally altogether sound. (60)

When Krook analyzes the relation between the aesthetic and the moral in James's fiction, as can be seen, she associates "aestheticism" or "the aesthetic" with the appreciation of outside qualities and the valorization of surfaces. Hence Krook holds that when people are tainted with the aesthetic view, they tend to admire the appearance rather than the substance, to prefer the superficial value to the true nature. Starting from this understanding of aestheticism, Krook argues that in James's fiction, the aesthetic exerts a negative influence on one's moral integrity and should be submitted to the moral.¹

Yet, the aesthetic sensibility does not necessarily express itself as the admiration for the outside qualities and the ignorance of the inner nature, as Krook presumes when she discusses the relation between art and morality. Jonathan Freedman traces James's sustained interrogation of the tradition of British aestheticism and inevitably looks into James's moral

1 See Dorothea Krook, *The Ordeal of Consciousness in Henry James*.

reaction to the then prevalent aesthetic values.¹ According to Freedman, what James first discerns is “aestheticism’s affectation, its hypocrisy, its fraudulence, its moral and aesthetic failures.” But he gradually uncovers the ideal of the aestheticism, “the aestheticist valorizing of *aesthesis*, of the heightening or perfection of sense experience,” and sees it as “the redemptive” principle in “the social sphere it inhabits.” (136) Freedman argues that in *Roderick Hudson*, Roderick’s practice of a life of the Paterian “impassioned contemplation” results in “moral deficiency and ... creative failure,” whereas Rowland’s aestheticism shows a tentative exploration of “the Paterian notion of experience ... privileged for its own sake.” (141) He claims that in *The Portrait of a Lady*, Gilbert Osmond and Isabel Archer also designate two forms of aestheticism. In the case of Osmond, aestheticism is represented as “a species of malevolence ... as central to a hyperbolically understood form of evil.” However, Isabel Archer’s exploration of the Paterian notion of “intense vision experienced in, of, and for itself” might be understood as “a positive, even redemptive model” of aestheticism. (145, 146, 163)

When Freedman examines the presence of the Paterian aestheticism in James’s fiction, he seems to interpret the Paterian aestheticism mainly as the quest for intense experience, in the form of physical sensation or psychological consciousness. And his analysis of James’s moral response to the Paterian aestheticism is chiefly based on this understanding. For example, in Freedman’s analysis, Roderick represents the form of aestheticism in which “the aesthetes pursue intense experience directly

- 1 Freedman’s *Professions of Taste: Henry James, British Aestheticism, and Commodity Culture* is described as a work that “explores more comprehensively than any one else James’s relation with Walter Pater, Oscar Wilde and British aestheticism” (Hocks 24). It places James within the historical context of the British aestheticism and both James and the British aestheticism in the larger framework of “commodity culture.” Freedman investigates the role James played in the process of the commodification of the artistic vocation, the rise of aesthetic professionalism, and the formation of American modernism, which evolved from the tradition of British aestheticism.

through the senses, and particularly through the heightened sense experience of intoxication and sexuality”(141). The fact that Isabel achieves a perfect moment of intense vision that borders on “Paterian *aesthesis*,” for Freedman, shows that

both Pater and James privilege a special moment at which, under conditions of high intensity, “a quickened, multiplied consciousness” comes into powerful visionary being ... for both James and Pater the moment at which consciousness exercises itself in heightened vision is valuable in and of itself — is the ultimate end, the perfect end. (163)

When Freedman discusses Lambert Strether’s aestheticism in *The Ambassador*, he describes Strether as a “Paterian man” who pursues for “a quickened, multiplied consciousness”(196), and holds that the novel locates itself in “a demonstrably Paterian universe, a world tending toward exhaustion and entropy in which intense experience alone can serve as respite and redemption.”(195)¹ As can be seen, Freedman’s study of the interaction between James and Pater’s aestheticism primarily concentrates on James’s appraisal of the possibility of ensuring a worthy life through the pursuit of intense experience.

The affinity between Pater and James is not confined to a search for the maximum intensity of experience. As will be discussed at length in the following chapter, Pater’s aesthetic theory involves a more complex connotation than a mere quest for intense impressions and consciousness as an end in and of itself. Pater recommends a life devoted to aesthetic contemplation on the ground that it provides people with a sense of wholeness and freedom in the modern society, which is tyrannized by social and natural determinism. Pater’s aesthetic theory advocates the education of the senses, acute observation, and mental openness to new

1 See Jonathan Freedman, *Professions of Taste: Henry James, British Aestheticism, and Commodity Culture*, especially Chap. 3 and 4.