

Weekly Assignment 5. Genius as a Theoretical Obstacle

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5. *Why has the concept of genius been considered an obstacle to the recognition of artistic ability in women?*

The concept of genius is an essential concept in theories of art of 18th and 19th century. According to this view, the key to becoming an outstanding artist is to possess an innate ability to create art, and the art training plays an unimportant role in the making of a brilliant artist. In other words, it is those of initial talent who are destined to become successful artists.

This concept of genius has been considered a severe theoretical obstacle to the recognition of artistic ability in women. It has long served as a solid reason to back the bias that women lack the ability of art creation intrinsically. The logic goes like this:

(P1) Whether one can become a successful artist dominantly depends on whether he or she has a genius for art.

(P2) Much fewer women have become successful artists than men.

(C1) Much fewer women have genius for art than men.

In this way, the fact that women artists are rare is attributed to their lack of talent, which is obviously unfair. The fact is that equivalent art training as well as supportive social environment plays equally important role in the making of an artist. But the bias known as (C1) above is so widely accepted that it brings about two consequences:

First, artistic achievements of women artists are often underestimated and harder to be recognized. People are prejudiced to think that women lack the ability of art, and therefore tend to doubt the value of their works and whether they are independently created without the help of men. Women artists' ability

is looked down upon from time to time.

Second, women receive less support from the family and the society when they start to reveal their artistic ability. They are often persuaded to choose a career more “suitable” for women, and their ability primarily shown are easily ignored.

And what is stated above makes the concept of genius an obstacle to the recognition of artistic ability in women.