

Vacillating between explicitness and the ambiguity

Bochao Zhang

When I came to England, I felt a 'lost' as Chinese-dislocation and relocation is the position of mine at the moment which is a properly psychological description of my feeling. While I am seeking to my identity, undoubtedly, the Chinese character is not only a suitable symbol but also the motif I am familiar with and the object I intend to investigate in this article.

In relation to my project, I believe that the art theories may underpin and sustain the idea which I intend to explore and develop in it. While I was roaming among the Saussure's semiology and Roland Barthes' thoughts I found that everyday life profound the significant meaning. Nevertheless, when I wanted to grasp the meaning which it signifies, it appeared explicit and ambiguous at times and 'it is what sinks, in opposition what floats'. (Barthes 1982). It just looks like the alternate of the day and night, but it does not demarcate clearly and as well as interact more complicatedly.

As concerning these issues, I pondered in Taoism:

The way that can be spoken of

Is not the constant way;

The name that can be named

Is not the constant name.

The nameless was the beginning of heaven and earth;

The named was the mother of the myriad creatures.

Hence always rid yourself desires in order to observe its secrets;

But always allow yourself to have desires in order to observe its

Manifestations.

The two are the same

But diverge in the name as tiny issue forth.

Being the same they are called mysteries,

Mystery upon mystery.

The gateway of the manifold secrets.

This may lead me to the mystery way: emptiness. To Chinese, the meaning of emptiness sig-

nifies neither nothingness nor void. Rather, it incorporates multiplexes and copiousness. It presents itself an antinomy and defies description. At the same time, it is ubiquity as well. In this way, Chinese emphasizes 'dunwu' which signifies an enlightenment-it refers to a thinking process: One desirably seeking to the meaning of an idea in which one may think and ruminate for a few days, a few weeks or even a few months but without any result. Then one day, it seems just like lighting flashes across one's mind in a sudden-he has been enlightened. Although he knows about it now, yet he will not be able to tell it to others. It sounds not logical but it is true. It can be seen 'shouting' as a way of teaching methods that Zen masters have been taking from which who desirably seek to a way to enlighten their disciples. Again, 'dunwu' can also be perceived in a Buddhist's meditation. Many senior monks get their perceptions of Buddhism principles with almost the same process which known as 'dazuo'.

It may arguably to say that what the differences of the philosophy or of the way their thinking are lie in between the Western and Eastern are those of the Western propensity to analogy and those of the Eastern more prone to sensation. But if we say from the viewpoint of the comparison with Western spelling language, the Chinese character signifies the symbol with slightly more senses. In this language system, the modes of people's behaviors and of people's thinking would be more or less influenced by it that might be apposite.

In common sense, Chinese believe that writing and Drawing derive from the same root. That is because of, for instance, long before the ancient China Spring-Autumn Time, the Chinese characters had been created. At those times, the Chinese character 'ri' signifies the sun which looks like as a drawing as the sun and as well as a symbol. The dot in the centre of the character represents the sun itself and the circle outside of the dot signifies the glow of the sun. This is a drawing that vivid depicts the glory of the sun.

'yue' means moon which presents itself as a real moon. Instead of misreading as the sun, the ancient Chinese chose the crescent' moon than the full-moon as the shape of the word's pattern. "shui" means water in which the shape imitates the action of the movement of water. It moves and fluxes which simulates the water falling down from a mountain. "shan" signifies mountain which can be easy detested from the shape of the outline of the character. Now, we can say that the Chinese characters derive from the assimilation to the objects of the nature.

Then, let us try to find how the meanings of the words change with the social contexts, 'Yang' assimilates the head of a sheep. 'Da' means big and fat. In the ancient times in China, there was not a system of currency money be widely used at the very beginning. Normally, the Chinese daily life relied on the exchanging of things with one another. For this reason, it was a great matter of importance to a person who possessed a big and fat sheep and a great pleasure to him as well. Thus, 'Da yang' signified 'Mei' which means beauty and good. Another example, the Chinese character 'qiu' just looks like a man is confined in a cell, that is to say, the man is in the jail which signifies social context as well.

Some other Chinese characters, however, with more abstract meaning cannot simply read from the shape. For instance, the Chinese character 'wu'-means emptiness, denotes itself a visible symbolic, which is the visible form of invisibility, hides the sacred nothing (Barthes 1982:32),

and as a symbol, semi logically, its meaning is.

Offered to the spectator to read; but what is carefully, preciously given to be read is that thesis nothing to read; here again we come to that exemption of meaning (that exemption from meaning as well).

(Barthes 1982;62)

Hence, here the Chinese character 'wu' reveals a rough ancient Chinese dialectical thinking. As for meaning, it signifies emptiness-nothing is existent. As for sign, from the shape of the outline of the character itself, it is the visible form of invisibility and with social context its profound meaning is not nothing at all but a lot. Some ancient Greece philosophers believe that there is nothing can exist from nothing. That is the case. Nevertheless, the ancient Chinese thinkers believe that nothing contains anything. It is just like the number 0 zero. Every number goes out of it: 0, 1, 2 and 3...until you cease to number it. Then every number is back to the 0. On the 0 point, every number integrates in the 0 number. So, from this point of view, number 0 is the highly density form of infinity. Similarly, the Chinese character 'wu', contains and integrates everything. Moreover, if our eyesight goes out of the earth we are living in to out-space-universe, and if we enquire how the universe exists occur, the answer is, according to the Big Band theories, that long before the universe came into being, the whole universe was condensed in a tiny denseness point and it possessed an immense energy inside until it timplores, the big Band occurs. In the Chinese ancient thinkers' minds, the character wu signified the moment is right at that point.

As regarding to the compound-word, an aphorism of the Chinese spring in my mind, as such; wuwei. Wuwei r wei, wuwei r buwei. This is like a popular language, which as influenced the Chinese for thousands years, more or less instilled and shaped the Chinese thinking modes. As for this aphorism, wuwei means do not do it then wuwei r wei means do not do it for doing it, and again, wuwei r buwei means do not do anything is that do anything. It is a paradox which may make you whorl and perplexed. Is it like another one of Derrida's notorious comumdrums that only succeed in leaving the majority of readers baffled?

(stuart sim, Derrida and the End of History)

As for such, there are many mis-readings. Every one has his interpretation of himself. Here I deeply realize that the language which not only has pronunciation but also has meaning with it together is multilayer and abstruse. Generally speaking, this aphorism steams from lao Tzu's tao Te Ching.

Man models himself on earth

Earth on heaven

Heaven on the way

And the way on that which is natural so.

On the one hand, Taoism believes that a person should behave according to the course of nature event but never against it. If one is doing something against the natural rules and he is doing intentionally, the result would be the converse of his will. Putting Lao Tzu's thoughts in the present times it still presents a significant meaning what Lao Tzu emphasizes is that human beings should be harmonious with the nature and should not be in the cost of the destruction of nature e-

cology due to human blindness and short-sighted activity.

On the other hand, spiritually, Taoism seeks for a kind of natural 'wuwei' inward to escape from constraints of outward to get an absolute freedom in spirits. Aesthetically, 'wuwei' relates aesthetics with a detachment way of living outlook that evokes artists to deep realization of the characteristics of art creative activity.

Inspired from Taoism, when I was dealing with the motif and manipulating the components of my project, I just took use of it quite arbitrarily and at random, consciously and unconsciously. It seems similar to Lao Tzu's presumption, which says:

Always rid yourself desires in order to observe its secrets; But always allow yourself to have desires in order to observe its manifestations.

So, in the course of my painting process, I seemed to go into a secret path with a somehow strange as well as familiar sensation that I had never experienced before. It was as if an adventure or a minor odyssey of art trip. I was fascinated and interested in somewhat I could not tell the state which intrigued me to try a lot of pretty small paintings. Those paintings I have made are based on a monotype on glass board at first. Then I transferred them onto paper. I repainted again on it. Frankly speaking, all kinds of materials, papers, newspapers, Chinese ink, was, water-based color and powder pigments, or say, anything at my hand I just wanted to experience. That enlarged my art experiences a lot. Nevertheless I have found that there are still many possibilities I need to try and have to try, such as , components configuration and figurative both, also as a sign, will come within my exploration and examination.

There is one point, however, that I am really in sober is that I do not intend to be trained as an abstract artist. In some extent, I would like to say what I intend to explore and to experience of my art work is to vacillate between the explicitness and ambiguity, visibility and invisibility, perceivability and unperceivability. The result may be neither here nor there, 'neither inside nor outside' (Jacques Derrida, *The Truth of Painting*, p.9). It might be lying in a gap, or in some fissure that can not tell. Just like a ghost which is an aura of secret haunting, but is still suspending.

In my project, by using language, writing Chinese characters, taking use of English newspaper or Chinese newspaper, figures and marks all might be as a sign, after painting and repainting, drawing and redrawing, arbitrary and deliberately, building and ruining. All this may look like a writing-writing and erasure which cover imperfectly that reveals the writing beneath here and there for beholders to read by themselves. It may signify a meaning or exemption of meaning. It does not matter. What it does matter is from which it would have unveiled the psychology of present people inner complexity, contradiction, anxiety, discomposure, frustration and vulnerable emotion.

References

- [1] Lao Tzu, *Tao Te Ching*: Penguin classic, 1963
- [2] Jacques Derrida, *The Truth of painting*: university of Chicago, 1987
- [3] Roland Barthes, *Empire of Signs*: Hill and Wang, 1982
- [4] Stuart Sim, *Derrida and the End of History*: Icon book, 1999