



Tibetan in Painting: The Embodiment of the Idea of Impermanence in the Animation “The Return of the Great Sage”

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Abstract: The connotation of domestic animation is becoming more and more mature, and at the same time, it is integrated into the characteristics of the times, so that domestic animation gradually presents the aesthetic characteristics of nationality and era. Based on the aesthetic theory of Zen Buddhism’s idea of impermanence, this paper takes “Journey to the West: The Return of the Great Sage” as a case study, and takes the life wisdom of the heart triggered by the Chinese thought of impermanence as the starting point. Seeking the combination of traditional culture and animation provides ideas for the inheritance and development of traditional cultural aesthetics to a certain extent.

Keywords: the return of the great sage, the idea of impermanence, the idea of non-thought, the absence of appearance, the body, and the non-dwelling

1. The development of impermanence in China

The eight sufferings of the world make impermanence an eternal theme in ancient and modern times, both in China and abroad, thus triggering thinking about life. In the early history of Chinese thought, the Book of Changes was the first to put forward the idea of the impermanence of destiny. In “Lisao”: “The sun and the moon are not drowned, spring and autumn are in order, but the grass and trees are scattered, and the twilight of the fear of beauty” is the earliest impermanent poem, which is to think about and embody the value of life and the meaning of life. Zhuangzi’s thought is the most prominent here, deeply observing the impermanence of everything in the world, “but does not advocate that people escape from the world and be born, but advocates ‘Lu Shen’ in the world, and says that ‘knowing that it is helpless and being at ease’ is ‘the end of virtue’” [Xu Chungen. *Journal of Jiaying University*, 2016.12.26], pointing out that we should treat life with a lofty aesthetic mind, observe life, look forward to the future, enslave or control foreign things without being enslaved or controlled by foreign things, and let people act in harmony with heaven, that is, the so-called people “and heaven”, only in this way can we truly enjoy the “happiness” of life and be free between heaven and earth. Therefore, before Buddhism was introduced to China, the basic idea of impermanence had been formed, “harmony with heaven”, the life thinking of the unity of matter and self.

Zen Buddhism was introduced to China after Buddhism was introduced to China during the Ming Emperor of the Han Dynasty, and gradually merged with Confucianism and Lao Zhuang thought. During the period of the Three Kingdoms and the Northern and Southern Dynasties, the political and social darkness was perennial, and the people were struggling to make a living, Buddhism provided the best explanation for people to help them free themselves from the painful environment. In the late Tang Dynasty, through the integration and development of the front and back, the idea of impermanence reached its peak. In particular, the sinicization of Zen Buddhism has made the core content of Zen no longer a religious theory, but tends to be aesthetic art, and in the long-term interaction with the Chinese scholar class, it has gradually become an aesthetic consciousness, aesthetic conception and life attitude.

2. The embodiment of the idea of impermanence in the animation work “The Return of the Great Sage”.

2.1 No thought is the sect

Altar Jingyun: “Be able to distinguish the aspects of the law well, and do not move in the first righteousness.” “[Master Huineng. *The Sixth Patriarch Master Dharma Treasure Altar Sutra*[M]. Guanghua Temple, Putian, Fujian.2008.353] It can be seen that the importance of Zen Buddhism “no thought for the sect”. “Thoughts” here have two meanings: the first refers to delusions, which are the source of distress caused by attachment to external objects; The second level refers to mindfulness, the correct cognition that comes from being freed from bondage. “Thoughtlessness” requires people to think of “truthfulness” in their cognitive activities, and to see all things and be pure in nature, which is the correct way for the wisdom of life caused by “impermanence”.

In “The Return of the Great Sage”, the little monk Jiang Liuer, who was taken in by his master Fa Ming, his daily task is to meditate, chant scriptures, participate in meditation, practice according to the Buddha’s teachings, and obtain the blessings of the Buddha and Bodhisattva. Because his parents were killed by the mountain demon when he was a child, he had delusions, thinking that cultivation was not as important as subduing the mountain demon. The belief that the stability of life can only be achieved by fighting impermanence is the source of suffering caused by attachment to external objects. Destroying the mountain demon is not something that Jiang Liu’er can reverse or control by himself, it is undoubtedly a wrong idea. One day, Jiang Liuer rescued a little girl from the hands of the mountain demon, was chased and killed by the mountain demon, and on the way to escape, he inadvertently lifted the seal of Sun Wukong, but the wrist has not yet been unsealed, and he is still limited by the seal of Rulai, and he is very depressed at this time. After getting along, Jiang Liuer learned about the pain of the great sage, and said to the great sage: “The great sage, I must recite the scriptures carefully and ask the Buddha to change the mana of the great sage back.” Jiang Liu’er, who has reached enlightenment after the experience of the journey, returns to righteous thoughts, does not obsess over the external elimination of mountain demons, turns to his own interior, does not have delusions, and does his own things in a down-to-earth manner.

2.2 No phase is the body

In Zen Buddhism, “non-appearance as a body” refers to the impermanence of things as they are, and “appearance” can refer to all concrete things in the world. Only by transcending these concrete “phases” can we realize the essence of all things and see the truth as reality. It is only through the perception of the mind, in the phenomenon of impermanence, that everything is like a Buddha, and the prominence of the mind and the transcendence of the spirit can be completed. [Ge Zhaoguang. History of Chinese Thought (Vol.2)[M]. Fudan University Press.2016.81.73]

In “The Return of the Great Sage”, the superficial “appearance” of the Great Sage has changed, which is different from the “appearance” of the early Monkey King. The face of the Great Sage is designed to be closer to that of a gorilla, with obvious nasolabial folds and messy brown hair, which is a typical image of a decadent middle-aged uncle. Through figurative expression, it depicts more of the inner struggle of the great sage, which is closer to the human side and more modern characteristics. The difficulties and impermanence in real life, the fragility of life and the flick of the fingers of the red face all affect the sensitive hearts of modern people. Sun Wukong is not in the state of a hero, more like a person in a real society, under all kinds of pressure has ceased to be the same as before, he is at a loss for real life, unable to face the impermanence of life, full of doubts about himself, here is the embodiment of the idea of impermanence “no phase as a body”.

2.3 No housing is the foundation

Zen Buddhism believes that all laws are impermanent, all things are in the process of change, becoming, dwelling, decaying, and emptiness, and there is no permanent and unchanging thing in the world, which is fixed on a certain thing, which is “dwelling”. So “no dwelling” means that there is no specific tendency, in other words, to protect. Holding the state of “heartbeat” has no dwelling place in all dharma minds. If the mind has a thought, it is bondage. On the contrary, if you can’t keep thinking about all the Dharma, you are free from all bondage.

In the movie, when Jiang Liuer told about the majestic Great Sage in the play, Jiang Liuer asked: “Great Sage, where is your golden hoop stick, the play said that you hid it in your ears, show me?” The Great Sage reprimanded angrily: “My brain has been bombed for you, and you are not allowed to mention the matter of the golden hoop stick again.” “After leaving the Five Elements Mountain, the Great Sage wanted to retrieve his golden hoop stick, but he was bound by the Dharma Seal. The meaning of the seal here and the tight hoop in “Journey to the West” is actually the same, it is to restrain Sun Wukong, after eighty-one sad, Sun Wukong, who did not “live”, devoted himself to the realm of Daoxin cultivation, and the hoop disappeared by itself. The great sage in the animation stood on the edge of the cliff, and the kick he took was not to save himself, but to give it a go for the dead Jiang Liuer and the innocent lives who were still alive. The return that does not seek return, and the return that is not sought is often obtained without seeking. The impermanence here is “no dwelling”, the thoughts of the great sage are not extinguished, the Dharma seal is not exploded, and the divine soldiers do not come out. The golden hoop rod is not a terrifying weapon, and the Dharma seal is not a magical power to be worshipped.

3. Summary

Now in the development of animation, novelty is no longer the standard of measurement, and the standard of measurement is more inclined to have the embodiment of “roots”. What is pursued is the return of culture and the rediscovery of national traditional culture. Although there are still some deficiencies in the animation, it can be seen that the traditional aesthetics are presented in the animation, so that the animation presents its own characteristics and connotations of national aesthetics, and the culture of the same sect can arouse the recognition and resonance in the heart.

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