



PHILOSOPHICAL PERSPECTIVE ON ARTISTIC DEVELOPMENT AND HISTORIC ANIMATION THINKING

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Abstract: In the context of the "era of image reading", animation is also a modern product, and Chinese animation has always been "transmitting images through images". Chinese animation has become accustomed to borrowing cartoons from countries, such as Japan or European ones, and their creativity in animation thinking has been greatly suppressed, which is a devastating blow. By tracing the origin of animation thinking from a philosophical perspective, the evolution of human thinking and expression can be further understood. This helps researchers understand the evolution and evolving innovations of human culture, and thus better understand the relationship among culture, art and philosophy. Object thinking emphasizes breaking down complex problems into smaller components, namely objects. In animation, this can be interpreted as breaking down complex scenes and actions into separate objects, characters and elements. This object abstraction and correlation help animators better understand and design the interactions among characters, the movement of objects and the dynamics of the overall animation. Although the study of "Xiang thinking" has developed in the history of philosophy, it has not been directly related to the tracing of animation thinking and artistic reconstruction. In fact, it has a significant impact on animation thinking. Through the philosophical text analysis of animation works, researchers can dig out the philosophical themes, symbols and meanings in animation. This may include the interpretation of a particular animated work and how certain philosophical thoughts are expressed through the narrative, characters, visual elements, etc. Therefore, the study of object thinking has important practical significance for explaining the uniqueness of animation thinking. One of the goals of research may be to discover the intertextuality between animation and philosophy, which includes exploring how philosophical writings and thoughts are represented in animation, and accordingly, how animation affects philosophical thinking.


Keywords: Philosophical Perspective. Xiang Thinking. Spiritual Thinking. Animation Thinking. Artistic Reconstruction.

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Resumo: No contexto da "era da leitura de imagens", a animação também é um produto moderno, e a animação chinesa sempre foi uma "transmissão de imagens por meio de imagens". Os autores acostumaram-se a pegar emprestado desenhos animados de países, como o Japão ou países europeus, e sua criatividade no pensamento de animação foi bastante suprimida, o que é um golpe devastador. Ao rastrear a origem do pensamento de animação, a partir de uma perspectiva filosófica, a evolução do pensamento e da expressão humana pode ser mais bem compreendida. Isso ajuda os pesquisadores a entender a evolução e as inovações da cultura humana e, assim, perceber melhor a relação entre cultura, arte e filosofia. O pensamento objetual enfatiza a divisão de problemas complexos em componentes menores, ou seja, os objetos. Na animação, isso pode ser interpretado como a divisão de cenas e ações complexas em objetos, personagens e elementos separados. Essa abstração e correlação de objetos ajudam os animadores a entender e projetar melhor as interações entre os personagens, o movimento dos objetos e a dinâmica da animação geral. Embora o estudo do "pensamento Xiang" tenha se desenvolvido na história da filosofia, ele não está diretamente relacionado ao rastreamento do pensamento de animação e à reconstrução artística. De fato, ele tem um impacto significativo no pensamento da animação. Por meio da análise do texto filosófico das obras de animação, os pesquisadores podem descobrir os temas filosóficos, os símbolos e os significados da animação. Isso pode incluir a interpretação de um trabalho de animação específico e como determinados pensamentos filosóficos são expressos, por meio da narrativa, dos personagens, dos elementos visuais etc. Portanto, o estudo do pensamento objetual tem um significado prático importante, para explicar a singularidade do pensamento de animação. Um dos objetivos da pesquisa pode ser descobrir a intertextualidade entre animação e filosofia, o que inclui explorar como os escritos e pensamentos filosóficos são representados na animação e, conseqüentemente, como a animação afeta o pensamento filosófico.

Palavras-chave: Perspectiva filosófica. Pensamento Xiang. Pensamento espiritual. Pensamento de animação. Reconstrução artística.

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PHILOSOPHICAL PERSPECTIVE ON ARTISTIC DEVELOPMENT AND HISTORIC ANIMATION THINKING

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Abstract: In the context of the “era of image reading”, animation is also a modern product, and Chinese animation has always been “transmitting images through images”. Chinese animation has become accustomed to borrowing cartoons from countries, such as Japan or European ones, and their creativity in animation thinking has been greatly suppressed, which is a devastating blow. By tracing the origin of animation thinking from a philosophical perspective, the evolution of human thinking and expression can be further understood. This helps researchers understand the evolution and evolving innovations of human culture, and thus better understand the relationship among culture, art and philosophy. Object thinking emphasizes breaking down complex problems into smaller components, namely objects. In animation, this can be interpreted as breaking down complex scenes and actions into separate objects, characters and elements. This object abstraction and correlation help animators better understand and design the interactions among characters, the movement of objects and the dynamics of the overall animation. Although the study of “Xiang thinking” has developed in the history of philosophy, it has not been directly related to the tracing of animation thinking and artistic reconstruction. In fact, it has a significant impact on animation thinking. Through the philosophical text analysis of animation works, researchers can dig out the philosophical themes, symbols and meanings in animation. This may include the interpretation of a particular animated work and how certain philosophical thoughts are expressed through the narrative, characters, visual elements, etc. Therefore, the study of object thinking has important practical significance for explaining the uniqueness of animation thinking. One of the goals of research may be to discover the intertextuality between animation and philosophy, which includes exploring how philosophical writings and thoughts are represented in animation, and accordingly, how animation affects philosophical thinking.

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INTRODUCTION

China’s ethnic culture and art have a long history. Over thousands of years, people have continuously enriched, innovated and developed them, forming a distinct ethnic characteristic. Under the philosophical mode of elephant thinking, whether it is poetry, literary masterpieces, or animation thinking, a rich and profound artistic pattern has been formed. A piece of art that appears beautiful on the surface, but has no practical significance, is a piece of wood without a foundation and has no value.

Chinese animation has a long way to go before it can develop quickly. It can help to expand the philosophical dimension of animation art, making it not only a form of

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entertainment, but also an artistic medium to express philosophical thoughts and reflections. This can promote cultural and ideological values in the field of animation. Philosophy is the discipline that deals with the life's meaning and existence. It is concerned with the nature of human thought and behavior, and with its relationship to the world. As an art form, animation can express the creator's thoughts and emotions through various elements, such as images and sounds, which has strong cultural and social significance. On the basis of strengthening the audience's cultural identity and aesthetic cognition of their own country, the national animation thinking should be deeply explored, and the national excellent animation thinking should be explored from the country's ancient animation thinking, giving play to the country's characteristics, and giving play to the country's unique animation thinking mode to create.

The fundamental reason why Chinese animation can have such achievements today is that it has profound philosophical connotation, and the philosophical culture and artistic essence, which it contains, are all carried by it. It can be said that the more philosophical a work is, the more it can attract the attention of the international animation industry and find its unique position in the vast global animation army. By introducing the philosophical perspective into the study of animation, the relationship among animation and human thinking, culture and society can be explored more deeply.

Young fans of animation, comics, games and novels create, socialize and express themselves in a tactical and poetic manner on the website, with various strategies used to challenge and confront control, social norms and consumerism. Starting from a pessimistic view of fan culture in animation, comics, games and novels, a neglected, albeit nuanced, poetic and tactical advancement, on Chinese social media, is evident (Chen, 2021, p. 257).

Japanese animation, or anime, plays an important role in attracting tourists. As a popular culture in Japan, Japanese animation has gradually become a unique attraction, especially for young tourists. However, little is known about the extent to which this factor attracts tourists to travel to Japan. This has a significant impact on developing animation products and activities that meet the different animation fans' needs and preferences for tourism destination marketing organizations, as well as developing different potential submarkets (Agyeiwaah; Wantanee; Li, 2019, p. 127). The role-playing activities in Japan are thriving in Chinese animation, manga and gaming communities, making cross-cultural communication meaningful (Ruan, 2018, p. 204).

From its inception to the present, animation has presented a diverse style, which is the result of continuous innovation in animation. Creative thinking in animation should be based on a deep understanding of the characteristics of animation, combined with the characteristics of animation language, so that creativity revolves around exaggeration, creativity and flavor, fully reflecting the differences between animation and other film and television

languages (Zhu, 2021, p. 1). Animation characters are the spirit and soul of animation, and they are the key to the success of animation. The cultivation of animation character design talents not only requires mastery of basic styling techniques, but also the cultivation of innovative abilities. This is urgently needed in the constantly developing animation industry and market demand (Ju, 2012, p. 20).

Xiang thinking is a major human way of thinking, which has made outstanding contributions to the human society's development and the progress of civilization, especially to animation thinking. Although people's understanding of its laws is not yet deep enough, how to better grasp and apply Xiang thinking, in the process of animation creation or learning, has received widespread attention. The research is being conducted globally with unprecedented breadth and depth (Haynes; Karin, 2019, p. 290). As long as animation thinking is rooted in traditional philosophy and adheres to promoting its own characteristics, it can rise again and thrive. In addition, in the process of returning to traditional philosophy, it is necessary to integrate it with advanced philosophy and organically integrate tradition and modernity, in order to create an international, unique and vibrant excellent animation work.

The study reveals how philosophical thoughts have profoundly influenced the development of animation. From Taoism and Confucianism, in ancient philosophy, to existentialism and postmodernism, in modern philosophy, different philosophical schools have had a profound impact on animation thinking. The study emphasizes how philosophical thoughts are represented in animation, including thoughts about nature, humanity, morality, time, reality and fiction.

This paper starts with tracing the origin of animation thinking, explores the intersection of animation and philosophy, and analyzes the reconstruction process of animation art from the perspective of philosophy. Through the research on the philosophical elements, ideological connotation and cultural background of animation, it aims to deepen the understanding of animation art and provide new thoughts and inspiration for the creation of animation art. This paper introduces the origin and development of animation thinking, and probes into the intersection of animation and philosophy. The philosophical elements and ideological connotations of animation are analyzed, and the meaning and value of animation art are explored. Finally, the reconstruction process of animation art is explored, and some new thinking and creative directions are proposed from the perspective of philosophy.

1 PHILOSOPHICAL THOUGHT OF CHINESE ANIMATION

Classic philosophical themes have become mainstream in Chinese animation, with *The Monkey King* and *Prince Nezha's Triumph Against Dragon King* being the best example. The philosophical thoughts, in the animation of *Journey to the West*, include Confucianism,

Taoism and Buddhism, and the main theme that runs through the entire film is the three major philosophical propositions, namely “Who am I”, “Where do I come from and where do I go” and “Why is this happening” (Chen, 2021, p. 257). Chinese animation, as a cultural medium, carries the characteristics and values of Chinese culture. It helps young people understand and pass on their own cultural heritage by presenting traditional Chinese cultural elements, folk stories and historical themes. The younger generation learns about Chinese history, traditional arts and values through animation, strengthening their cultural identity. Some modern Chinese animation works focus on social issues, such as environmental protection, social justice and education. These themes are closely related to the young generation’s social concerns, so animation, as a medium, helps to guide young people’s thinking on social issues and stimulate their sense of social responsibility.

(1) ABOUT “BEGINNING AND END”

When it comes to Chinese philosophy, most people like to start with the legend of Pangu’s groundbreaking, because this legend is the core of “unity of heaven and man” of the Chinese philosophy. *Journey to the West* also began with this legend, where Sun Wukong was born from a fairy stone. This is also a saying similar to the creation of heaven and earth, and a metaphor that humans are born from the universe. “Death” is the most important issue in philosophy, which reflects a kind of mysticism shared by all religions, that is, “to live towards death”. When the four disciples crossed a turbulent river, their destination was on a smooth bridge, and only geniuses, like Sun Wukong, could reach the other end. Just as they were in a dilemma, a Buddha piloted a small boat and brought Tang Monk to the other side. Tang Monk fell into the water on the boat, but was ultimately rescued by the Buddha, and Tang Monk was reborn. This is just like the “phoenix nirvana” in Indian legend. A phoenix collects wutong branches at the end of its life, then burns itself, making itself reborn in the flame, and making itself stronger, plumper, louder and purer. Chinese animation often emphasizes the family’s importance and of kinship, reflecting the Confucian concept of family ethics. For example, in the movie *Big Fish and Begonia*, one of the themes is the family’s power and of kinship.

(2) ABOUT “WHO AM I”

“Rectification of name” is a very important issue in Confucian philosophy. In modern terms, it is a form of identification. Knowing that Stone Monkey still had no name, the immortal immediately gave him a “Sun Wukong”, integrating the essence of Buddhism and Taoism. As the immortal said, the surname “Sun” was “the origin theory of babies”, and the Tao Te Ching also mentioned the discussion of “babies”. Buddhism pursues the

realm of “emptiness”, while Taoism pursues the realm of “nothingness”. There is a connection between the two, which is why the term “Wukong” comes into being. The four people, who take scriptures, represent human nature’s four different types, each with its unique value. Tang Monk represents broad benevolence and is dedicated to the Buddha, but he has one weakness, which is his unrestrained benevolence. He is a model of “gentle, kind, serious, thrifty and humble.” in Chinese etiquette culture. Sun Wukong represents loyalty and righteousness, with superb skills. He is an excellent representative of powerful figures, always able to constantly break through himself, but he is not good at teamwork. Zhu Bajie is simple, honest and knows how to seek happiness in work. He is a lively and active person, but has little confidence in his career. Sand Monk is diligent, down-to-earth, easy-going and low-key. He is a neutral character, reflecting the Confucian concept of the “doctrine of the mean”. The Buddhist concept of compassion often appears in animation, and characters often seek to redeem and save others, such as the characters in *The Adventure of Ah Tang*.

(3) ABOUT SELF-CULTIVATION

By understanding the original texts and important philosophical works of traditional Chinese philosophy, such as Confucianism, Taoism and Buddhism, as well as the Great Learning, the Doctrine of the Mean, the Tao Te Ching and the Diamond Sutra, these documents can help to understand the core thoughts and principles of philosophy. Some people may say that why Tang Monk did not let Sun Wukong fly to the West with him on his back, which would save time and effort. The author used Wukong’s mouth to say, “[...] people always cannot escape all the mundane things in this world”, and then added, “[...] master is going to a foreign country, so it is difficult to move at a single step” (Chen, 2021, p. 257). Without these troubles, one cannot obtain the true scriptures. Tang Monk gave Sun Wukong the name “traveler”, which means “[...] for travelers, there are no regional restrictions, they can go wherever they want”. It also means “[...] learn as much as you can and do all you can”, reflecting the Confucian pursuit of knowledge and the importance of self-cultivation.

The ancient Chinese philosophy has exerted a profound influence on the aesthetic concept. Confucianism emphasizes harmony and peace; Taoism emphasizes natural harmony, and Buddhism emphasizes inner peace. These philosophical thoughts have shaped the aesthetic concept of Chinese culture and also inspired the aesthetics of animation. Animation works often pursue harmonious, calm and natural beauty, which is in line with the aesthetic concept of Chinese philosophy. Chinese philosophy emphasizes the development of morality and humanity. This gives a profound moral connotation to character development and plot in animation creation. Many Chinese animation works explore themes, such as morality,

responsibility and family values, which are related to the moral concept of Chinese philosophy. Through animation, these philosophical views can be conveyed to the younger generation.

(4) A HARMONIOUS SOCIETY'S IDEAL

Feuerbach is a German philosopher and politician, who put forward many views on capitalism, religion, historical idealism and other issues. During his cooperation with Marx, especially in the *Feuerbach Theses* of 1844, his thoughts provided a certain basis for the formation and development of Marxism. In *Journey to the West*, it is mentioned that all Buddhas, immortals and other beings return to their respective positions, which is another embodiment of a harmonious society's concept (Chen, 2021, p. 257). The author uses the story of a monkey unable to escape from the palm of the Tathagata's hand to illustrate the concept of governing a country in the Tao Te Ching - "[...] justice has long arms" (Chen, 2021, p. 257). During Tang Monk's journey to obtain scriptures, he encountered many fatigued rulers, and the government affairs were also controlled by monsters. Sun Wukong, due to his unique characteristics, invited corresponding immortals to come out and use others' existing theories and methods to deal with monsters themselves. This is the principle of "there is always one thing to overcome another", reflecting the principle of the five elements mutually reinforcing and restraining each other.

Confucianism, represented by Confucius, emphasizes the importance of etiquette, morality, family, politics and education. Confucianism emphasizes the cultivation of individuals and the maintenance of social order, and advocates the moral principles of benevolence, loyalty and filial piety, which has exerted a profound influence on Chinese culture and politics. Taoism, represented by Lao Tzu and Zhuangzi, emphasizes the concept of Tao, advocates conforming to nature, and pursues inner peace and freedom. Taoism has influenced Chinese culture, art and Zen Buddhism. The Mohist school emphasizes the principle of public welfare and no distinction between high and low, and advocates the thought of selflessness and universal love. They oppose war and tyranny, and emphasize peace and morality. Legalist thought focuses on legal and political organization, advocating strict enforcement and efficiency of laws. Legalist philosophy has an impact on the political system in Chinese history, especially during the unification of China during the Qin Dynasty. Chinese philosophy has a profound influence on the shaping of Chinese culture and society's, not only in the aspects of morality, ethics, political thought, religious belief, etc., but also in the fields of literature, art, architecture and medicine. These philosophical ideas and values have always played an important role in Chinese society and have also had a positive impact on international philosophy.

1.1 TRACING THE ORIGIN OF ANIMATION THINKING UNDER XIANG THINKING

During Xiang time, a certain kind of animated thinking, also known as primitive animated thinking (O’Byrne; Radakovic; Hunter-Doniger *et al.* 2018, p. 182), has been emerged, which is a long-standing way of thinking. The understanding of “Xiang” among Chinese people has a long history. *The Monkey King* made a scene in the Heavenly Palace. It is one of the Chinese classics, adapted from the ancient Chinese mythological story of *Journey to the West*. Traditional ink painting styles, such as landscape painting and flower-and-bird painting, are used, in the animation, to present breathtaking images. This ancient painting technique makes the audience feel as if it is in a living Chinese painting, and also deeply conveys the connotation of Chinese culture and philosophy.

Elephant, as interpreted in “Shuowen Jiezi”, is “[...] a long nosed tooth, a great beast in South Vietnam, with one breast every three years, and an elephant nose shaped like a four legged tail” (Lu, 2016, p. 204). Because of its “big” and “strange” nature, it has gradually evolved into the overall impression of this bizarre and diverse world by ancient people. The “elephant” begins to communicate with the “image”. “Elephant” is not only an external image, but also contains the internal changing meaning of “Xiang”. The “Xiang” first comes from a comprehensive understanding and reflection of objective things by humans, and it is a way for humans to understand the world. In this turbulent world, it seems to be forever moving, almost unpredictable. In Laozi’s view, “Xiang” is “Dao”, and “Dao” is indescribable (Kirillova; Peng; Chen, 2019, p. 268). Therefore, “Xiang” means being clueless. From the perspective of original thought, “Xiang” is an elusive feeling that people have towards this ever-changing world. However, in fact, Laozi still uses the “Tao Te Ching” to explain his life principles, which may sound contradictory, but also demonstrates human desire for this world. Chinese people’s understanding of “Xiang” can be summarized into two types. One is the simulation of everything in the world, and the second is its biggest characteristic of being unpredictable and indescribable. Human cognition of “Xiang”, namely “Xiang” thinking, is essentially a manifestation of primitive animation thinking.

Heidegger proposed the “era of world images”, which is precisely his profound understanding of the movement and changes of “Xiang” (Kirillova; Peng; Chen, 2019, p. 268). He believed that, when people talk about the term “image”, the first thing they associate is a portrait of something (Kirillova; Peng; Chen, 2019, p. 268). Therefore, this world’s image is roughly a picture of the whole being. However, in real life, world images mean more, and people use the term “world image” to describe the world itself, that is, the whole being, which is decisive and binding on people. Heidegger had a deep confusion on the issue of images. He believed that this is not just a copy, but he cannot determine the “essence of the image”. The essence of “image” or “world image” is a primitive animation thinking, and this response is determined by the primitive animation thinking in the human brain. People have

the ability to think, but they do not necessarily produce thinking. In other words, “Xiang” is not a form of thinking, but a response to external stimuli, not an instinct. Therefore, “Xiang” is a stimulus from the outside world and a result of a thought. However, the changes in the outside world are random, which makes “Xiang” no longer a static image in a person’s mind, but an active, even some fragmented image fragment. In other words, “Xiang” is an internal communication with the original animation thinking.

1.2 ANIMATION THINKING AND ARTISTIC RECONSTRUCTION

Animation is a new form of art that has emerged with the development of imaging technology, and the creation of animation thinking, based on this, is a form of artistic reconstruction thinking (Anwar; Yatim, 2018, p. 1). When Feuerbach talked about the industrial age, he expressed dissatisfaction with the art of the industrial age, represented by photography and film. Undoubtedly, in an era, where symbols are more important than entities, copies are more important than the original, and phenomena are more important than essence, only illusions are sacred, while truth is considered insignificant. As truth decreases and illusions increase, sanctity increases. Therefore, the highest illusion is the highest divine. Animation is an art form primarily based on fantasy shapes, and it is the “supreme sacredness” of the new era. In the early stages of animation creation, creators need to have their own creative philosophy, and the application of creative thinking is multifaceted.

The emergence of animation originated from the creator’s desire to create animation, and Marx believed that human life activities were the prerequisite for artistic activities. Marx once compared the humans’ creativity and of animals, believing that animal creativity comes from instinct, while human creativity relies on their own thinking. Even before the creative process began, they had already thought of the consequences of creation. The life’s practice enables people to feel beauty in their communication with nature, thus creating various works of art. However, in the development process of its artistic reconstruction, there have been many changes in this process of creation. Movies and animations are closely related to contemporary machine replication technology and, to some extent, affect the creative and receptive characteristics of artistic works (Kirillova; Peng; Chen, 2019, p. 268). In this regard, Benjamin is representative, believing that the generation of traditional art is often an expression of “aura” (Kirillova; Peng; Chen, 2019, p. 268). “Aura” is a type of “authenticity”, which refers to the immediacy and reality of the original work that constitutes its original appearance. This kind of aura originates from artistic reconstruction, and no matter how history develops, the initial and obvious imitations have disappeared without a trace. However, it is crucial that the charm of a work is never separated from its ceremonial function (Wei, 2021, p. 134). Benjamin believed that the emergence of modern replicated art led to the decline of the charm of works.

Local animation in China started in the 1940s and developed in the 1950s. The first animated feature film in China, *The Princess of Iron Fan*, created by the Wan Brothers, caused a sensation in Asia. The puppetry piece *The Magical Pen* and the Paper Cuttings piece *Zhu Bajie Eats Watermelon*, in the 1950s, and the wash painting *Baby Tadpoles Look for Their Mother*, *Mu Di* and *The Monkey King*, in 1960, have their own characteristics. However, due to the Cultural Revolution in the late 1960s, Chinese animation was underestimated, resulting in a gap. In the late 1970s, Chinese animation experienced a period of recovery, with the emergence of a series of good works, such as *Prince Nezha's Triumph Against Dragon King* and *San ge heshang*. However, after the reform and opening up, with the entry of Western culture, technological progress and the popularization of media, various images flooded the world, and the method of “transmitting images through images” gradually became accepted and appreciated by people. In the context of the “image reading era”, Chinese animation is also a modern product.

However, Chinese animation has fallen into a very awkward situation. Chinese animation workers have been growing up watching animations from countries, such as Japan, European ones and the United States, since childhood. They are accustomed to “using images to convey images” and are accustomed to using comics from Japan, Europe and other countries as a reference. They rarely find their own way out. This artistic method of “transmitting images through images” limits their creativity. This suppression of creativity can be said to be fatal. For example, China's first animated film produced at an international level, *The Mobiz Ring*, was called the “largest 3D movie in Asia” before it was released. There is also *Mulan*, which was produced in Hollywood and carries a strong international vibe. However, when people enter the cinema and see it, they are greatly disappointed. The advantage of images lies in their lifelike and informative nature, and this advantage becomes a disadvantage when magnified. The screen is very beautiful, combined with background music and commentary, making it easy for people to understand. Readers and audiences only need to passively accept, and the joy of actively thinking and imagining, in the face of text, also disappears.

2 ARTISTIC RECONSTRUCTION OF ANIMATION THINKING

2.1 ARTISTIC EXPRESSION OF “XIANG THINKING” IN ANIMATION THINKING

Image thinking refers to the expression of thoughts, emotions, concepts and story lines through images, characters and visual elements in animation. This way of thinking conveys information, thoughts and emotions through the creation and use of visual images and animations, rather than merely through words or oral expression.

(1) CONTEMPORARY ANIMATION IN THE “XIANG THINKING” MODE

Chinese animation thinking has absorbed many advantages of traditional Chinese painting, and since its inception, it has continuously innovated its visual form to create diverse artistic effects. In fact, different painting styles can bring different artistic effects to animation (Li, 2017, p. 148). In the process of “exploring the wind of national style”, Chinese animation has utilized traditional Chinese painting methods and techniques to create a batch of animation works with ethnic characteristics, which are like a beautiful Chinese painting full of strong national sentiment. Whether it is *The Monkey King* or the lifelike *Baby Tadpoles Look for Their Mother*, the charm and techniques of traditional Chinese painting can be seen. Chinese painting has a very long history. Over thousands of years, people have enriched, innovated and developed it, resulting in the emergence of many Han Chinese as the main body. At the same time, it also includes ethnic minorities, whose works have their own unique ethnic style, rich artistic expression methods, and have formed a set of painting languages with Chinese characteristics, playing a crucial role in the field of art throughout Asia and even the world.

Taking *The Monkey King* as an example, the animation uses decorative designs with strong ethnic characteristics in its design. Stylist designers have a high aesthetic value for the selection of lines and colors in the graphic space of characters. For example, the film portrays the ribbons of the Heavenly Palace Fairy dancing in a dreamlike and lifelike manner, with intricate and continuous lines, making people believe that it is the heavenly world and the fairyland. When designing the background, the film incorporates many artistic features of decorative and landscape paintings, cleverly applying the exquisite and unique elements of decorative painting and the majestic momentum of landscape painting to the design of the film, thus making the entire background look magnificent and exquisite. There is a Finnish magazine that describes *The Monkey King* as a masterpiece that combines the best features of animation technology with traditional Eastern art styles. In addition, this animation also draws nourishment from the bronze artifacts of the Xia, Shang and Zhou dynasties, Han dynasty stone reliefs, Dunhuang murals of the Six Dynasties and folk New Year paintings to create a first-class painting art. This is also reflected in *Prince Nezha's Triumph Against Dragon King*. For example, designers use constantly changing lines to describe the changes in the ocean at different times, whether it is calm or roaring, with various postures and dynamic elements that complement the storyline.

(2) COMMERCIAL ANIMATION UNDER THE “XIANG THINKING” MODEL

At present, there are not many commercial animations in China. *Qin's Moon* is produced by Xuanji Animation Co., Ltd., and *The Dream of Jinsha* is produced by Shengshi Longtu Animation Co., Ltd., which can serve as a specific representative. The *Qin's Moon*

is an era, when the six kingdoms were unified by Emperor Qin Shi Huang, and it lasted until Xiang Yu captured Xianyang, during which a group of powerful figures rose together. It interprets the spirit of various schools of thought in a unique way. The male protagonist, together with a famous warrior and hero, has experienced great ups and downs in family, friendship and love, during the great changes of this era. Finally, he put an end to this era and ushered in a new era with his own efforts. This is also a martial arts legend full of Chinese characteristics.

The story of *The Dream of Jinsha* is a young man who travels through time and space to the ancient kingdom of Jinsha. With their love and courage, he works together with Jinsha people and elephant gods to create miracles and save a catastrophe. It showcases the harmonious coexistence among humans, nature and animals in Chinese culture, promotes the spirit of fraternity and achieves the growth of their souls at the cost of themselves. These animations, whether based on history or fantasy novels, use many traditional elements and do not have a great appeal to the audience (D'Amore, 2017, p. 58). From the perspective of the setting, these animations all have a strong Chinese artistic style, such as *Qin's Moon* set in the state of Qin. In order to better showcase the characteristics of the Yellow River culture, the crew also brought a group of people to the west of the Qin state and visited the Loess Plateau and the ruins of the ancient city of Qin state. Although the "Jinsha Country", in *The Dream of Jinsha*, is a fiction, it is also created against the background of the beautiful scenery of Tibet, Jiuzhaigou Valley Scenic and Historic Interest Area, Jiangnan water town, etc. From the perspective of the scenery, these animations are highly Chinese in character.

The school provides students with professional art and animation education, including drawing skills, animation production techniques, screenplay writing, etc. These skills are crucial for animators, enabling them to better express their creativity and thoughts. School education emphasizes not only practical skills, but also theoretical foundations. Students learn about the history of animation, aesthetics, screenwriting, etc., which helps them better understand the principles behind animation and its artistic value.

2.2 ARTISTIC EXPRESSION OF SPIRITUAL THINKING IN ANIMATION THINKING

Benjamin opposed image art to traditional art and regarded the presence or absence of "aura" as the biggest difference between the two, which, in a sense also, reflects the characteristics of animation thinking. Traditional animation thinking often carries a certain color of worship, which leads to the formation of corresponding artistic emotions, coexisting between the creative subject and the receiving subject (Harvey, 2017, p. 133). However, as a replica of an image, its ubiquitous features deprive those who accept it of its "aura". However, one cannot infer from this that, in the process of creation, there is no such "authenticity" as "here and now". On the contrary, the reason why image art can retain a more primitive "aura"

is because it can complete the total restoration of “time form” and “spatial form”. That is to say, it can restore the creator’s thoughts, rather than image art. It can only infinitely restore the creator’s thoughts, but cannot restore the creator’s thinking.

Taoist thought emphasizes the nature’s principles, of balance and of non-governance, which is embodied in Chinese animation as a concern for the natural world and an expression of harmonious coexistence between man and nature. For example, Sun Wukong, in *The Monkey King*, made a scene in the Heavenly Palace, with his free and unrestrained personality and close connection with nature, showing the spirit of pursuing freedom and the nature’s way in Taoism. Chinese philosophy is intermingled with Chinese historical and cultural traditions, which are reflected in the creation of historical stories, traditional festivals and folklore in Chinese animation. For example, *The Story of the Gods* is set against the background of ancient Chinese mythological stories, demonstrating heroism and lofty ideals in the Chinese historical and cultural tradition. This kind of animation thinking is different from the literary “imitation theory” represented by Plato, because this kind of thinking cannot replicate reality. If Benjamin’s viewpoint on reproduction art is correct, then this viewpoint is more applicable in animation thinking. As a modern art that relies on photography equipment and is built on photography, Surrealism is deeply rooted in the spirit of the photography industry. Its foundation lies in the creation of a replicated world, a second-hand, narrower, but more dramatic reality than intuitive phenomena. In this replicated world, photographers have found that if they handle reality in more detail, meaningful forms would emerge.

Therefore, when creating animation thinking, a photographer’s mentality, when creating, is a blank space. When searching for images, the photographer immerses themselves in anything they touch, equating themselves with everything, in order to better understand and feel.

Through in-depth analysis of animation works, the philosophical themes and thoughts, contained within them, can be discovered. These themes are expressed through characters, dialogue, plot and graphics. This is an important source of arguments used to prove the existence of philosophical thoughts in animated works. Studying the historical and cultural background of animation works can reveal the origin of animation thinking. Understanding how philosophical thoughts, in different eras and cultures, have influenced the creation of animation is a part of the argument. The study of animation, from the perspective of philosophy, can reveal the depth and complexity of philosophical thoughts in animation works. By analyzing the philosophical thoughts, ethical issues and ideological aspects of the works, the arguments supporting the research can be provided.

The uniqueness of an animation work is based on the traditions associated with it, but this tradition must be completely active and highly variable. For example, an ancient statue of Venus has a completely different connection to the Greek and medieval periods. In

Greece, it was revered as sacred, while in the Middle Ages, it was seen by priests as a statue of a lewd evil god. However, both of them used the same method to touch the deity's uniqueness, or rather to touch the deity's soul. This is spiritual thinking. The earliest method of embedding an artwork into traditional relationships was through worship. The initial works of art were created through rituals, starting with witchcraft rituals and, then, religious rituals. The key to the problem lies in the fact that the existence of spiritual power in art has never been separated from its ceremonial function. Defining spiritual power as "a unique expression of something distant that makes people feel so close" is simply defining the worship value of art through the sense of time and space. "Far" and "near" are two relative categories. The essence of distance is untouchable, and this untouchable nature has become a major feature of spiritual thinking.

The development of the central argument seems to relate to the diversity of animation thinking and points out its potential gap among spacial thinking, spiritual thinking and contemporary technology. This is a promising central argument that could drive further discussion and innovation in the field of animation. The creative thinking of animation is to make it possess surreal artistic value through meticulous grasp and appropriate reproduction of reality (Rahmawati; Zaka, 2021, p. 654). Because animation faces a real world, what animation thinking lacks may be a kind of "aura", more of a simulation and transformation of real things. Although animation also belongs to image art, the biggest difference from image art is that the artistic world of animation is not a transformation of reality, but a thorough innovation (Gao, 2021, p. 116).

The creation of animation is based on painting and shares the same roots and origins as traditional art. Only after the creation is completed, corresponding photography techniques are needed to perform actions, but its creation is based on traditional artistic thinking (Li; Zhu, 2010, p. 85). To conduct a detailed analysis of the "aura" concept in animation, it can be found that the most prominent one is the intuitive concept, which is highly consistent with time and space. This is very different from the "aura" concept in traditional art. Traditional "aura" emphasizes "immediacy", which is highly integrated with time and space. However, this combination refers to the creator or receiver's current state, that is, the spiritual state independent of art, giving them a devout attitude towards creation and appreciation. However, in terms of creation, it does not have much time and space connection. In other words, if art is an intuitive expression, this intuition can actually exist independently of time and space. As Benedetto Croce said: "Being objects in consciousness is people's intuition, and their formation has nothing to do with time and space" (Zhu, 2021, p. 1).

CONCLUSIONS

(1) Philosophical and spiritual thinkings are parts of cultural heritage, helping to pass on history, values and traditions. Through animation, these thoughts can be conveyed to a new generation of audiences, helping to maintain cultural continuity. Philosophical thinking and spiritual thinking inspire people to think about life, ethics and values. Throughout history, these thoughts have had a profound impact on society and politics. By incorporating it into animation, viewers can be inspired to think about big issues, helping to drive social and cultural development. The research emphasizes the intertextuality between philosophy and animation creation. Animation creators often explore philosophical issues through creation, and philosophical thoughts are expressed in the creation process. This intertextuality gives animation creation depth and complexity.

(2) As a visual medium, Chinese animation can convey Chinese cultural elements, traditional values and stories to the audience. Through animation, the younger generation can better understand and feel Chinese cultural traditions, including myths and legends, historical stories and folk traditions. This article explored the animation thinking and artistic reconstruction under Xiang thinking and spiritual thinking. The way of thinking in animation is the source of the world's human cognition. From the way of thinking in Chinese imagery to the way of thinking in Western imagery, this is a development process of human thinking in animation. Research can reveal how animation works inspire philosophical thinking and discussion among viewers. As a medium, animation can arouse the audience's deep thoughts on life, ethics and philosophy, thus providing a platform for philosophical discussion.

The philosophical thoughts of Chinese animation are mostly related to the time's social ideology, such as the idea of a harmonious society, the idea of cultivating one's character, and so on. Both can be applied to the tracing of animation thinking and artistic reconstruction. In other words, many philosophical thoughts are also reflected in the tracing of animation thinking and artistic reconstruction. In the creation of future animation, animation thinking should bridge the gap among traditional Xiang thinking, spiritual thinking and contemporary technology, showcasing the diversity of animation thinking. The research reveals the diverse philosophical roots of animation thinking. Different types of animation may be inspired by different philosophical ideas, such as Confucianism, Taoism and Buddhism, which helps to understand the animation world's richness. The study relies heavily on the researcher's subjective analysis and interpretation. Different researchers may have different views and interpretations, so there is a risk of subjectivity and personal bias.

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