

# *Analysis of the Philosophical Thought of “Yin” and “Yang” in the Art of Chinese Calligraphy*

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**Abstract:** The art of calligraphy is an excellent traditional Chinese culture, and promoting and developing the art of calligraphy is an important way to uphold the Chinese cultural position, pass on the Chinese cultural genes, and show the Chinese aesthetic style. The “yin” and “yang” in calligraphy is connected to the yin and yang of all things in nature. The dialectical thought of the Chinese philosophy of “yin” and “yang” is complemented by the framing of the art of calligraphy's own artistic laws, and its philosophy is always present throughout the development of the art of calligraphy, reflecting the organic unity of the cultural, artistic, and philosophical aspects of Chinese calligraphy.

The art of calligraphy is the most important bearer of excellent Chinese traditional culture, and promoting the art of calligraphy is one of the most fundamental ways to pass on Chinese cultural genes and establish cultural confidence.

Chinese characters have gradually achieved artistic self-awareness over the long period of cultural refinement, gradually shifting from practicality to artistry, generating their established legal requirements, and developing into the art of calligraphy, an excellent traditional cultural art unique to the Chinese nation. The development of art is never independent and is deeply influenced by social and cultural trends and aesthetic needs. And this influence is fundamentally a reflection of the worldview and aesthetics of the creative subject, a catalyst of traditional Chinese philosophical thought. The expression of interest and emotion contained within the works is an interpretation of the philosophical spirit of the creative subject, using technique to enter the “Tao”, or using the “Tao” to promote technique, the dialectical thought of Chinese “yin” and “yang” philosophy and the framing of the art of calligraphy's own artistic laws are mutually reinforcing.

## **1. The beauty of reality and emptiness**

"Emptiness" and "reality" are a pair of aesthetic categories that are both opposed and unified in Chinese aesthetics, which is in line with the dialectic of Chinese “yin” and “yang” philosophy. This paradoxical embodiment of “yin” and “yang” is infused in the development of the art of calligraphy over thousands of years and has influenced the formation of the aesthetic concept of calligraphy.

"The palm of the hand should be left empty, the fingers force solid, the fingers are not solid then trembling and powerless, the palm is not left empty then stifled and no momentum."<sup>[1]</sup>The execution of the brush emphasizes the solid finger force and the flexible palm, the solid finger force is evenly balanced, the palm is easy to use, the combination of emptiness and reality, in the running

process of the brush not only to ensure the force is sufficient, but also to ensure the flexibility of rotation, the spirit of the sudden birth.”(Deng Shi Ru) said: 'word painting sparse place can walk the horse, dense place does not make the wind through, often count white when black, strange interest is out.’”<sup>[2]</sup>In this statement, Deng Shi Ru puts the beauty of calligraphy's reality and emptiness into the sparseness and density of character construction. In this statement, Deng Shi Ru incorporates the beauty of calligraphic reality into the sparseness of character construction, contrasting the white spaces with the ink lines, adding density where there are many strokes and sparseness where there are few strokes, creating a more pronounced change in sparseness and density, creating a contradictory contrast between them, making the individual characters a whole with obvious changes, and giving them a different kind of beauty. In terms of overall chapter style, Jiang Ji of the Qing Dynasty, says:” Use the reality as the emptiness, the reality of all the spirit, with the emptiness as the reality, the break is still continued. Look at the calligraphy of the ancients, outside the word there is a brush intentionally, there is a powerful momentum, this is the beauty of the chapter.”<sup>[3]</sup>The combination of the emptiness and reality in the layout of the chapters is discussed, where the emptiness in the reality can increase its dynamism and the reality in the emptiness can add to its strength, making the entire calligraphy work more harmonious as a whole, arranging and combining the individual characters to enhance the contrast, revealing the yogurt and concealing the flaws, and finally completing the strengthening of its beauty in order to achieve the complete construction of the form of the art work.

## 2. The Beauty of moderation and harmony

Yin and Yang are mutually opposed and unified, and are mutually reinforcing." The one who is in the middle is the one who is free from excesses and deficiencies. Harmony is the same, no misbehavior and no hostility is also."<sup>[4]</sup>The so-called "moderation" means that the emphasis is on moderation and not too harsh, and "harmony" means that it is reasonable and does not violate the rules." Moderation" and "harmony" are originally two harmonious concepts, just like rituals and music, which are also the natural essence. In the aesthetics of calligraphy, the aesthetic concept of "moderation and harmony" has a very important place. There are many contradictory concepts in the art of calligraphy, such as withering and moistening, oblique and square, fat and thin, etc. The so-called "moderation and harmony" is to grasp the harmony and unity in contradiction and opposition. To find a neutral pole between opposites is to find the circle in the square, to pursue the strange and dangerous in the smoothness, and to seek the dexterity in the stability. In addition, "calligraphy is a painting of the heart", and calligraphic works also reflect the temperament of the calligrapher, "moderation and harmony" does not only refer to the aesthetic concept of calligraphy, but is also a reflection of the pursuit of values in the life of the creative subject. Both to "follow the heart" and "not to exceed the rules". The art of calligraphy is originally a neutralization of the subjective and objective, an accumulation of the traditional aesthetic and cultural concepts of the Chinese nation. The beauty of neutrality in the aesthetic field of art is the artistic embodiment of the traditional Chinese idea of the middle ground, and the inheritance of this traditional philosophical spirit has added to the development of the art of calligraphy.

## 3. The Beauty of Change

”Yin’ and ‘Yang’, the Tao of heaven and earth, the outline of all things, the parent of change, the origin of life and death.”<sup>[5]</sup>In the traditional Chinese philosophy of yin and yang, it is believed that “yin” and “yang” are the root of all things in the universe, and that yin and yang interplay with each other to produce all things. This not only emphasizes the universal significance of the unity of “yin” and “yang” opposites, but also puts forward the importance of the word "change", which is the

transformation of things from old to new under the influence of established rules.

The development of Chinese calligraphy is also a process of general change, from the evolution of the calligraphic style to the maturation of the technique to the establishment of the calligrapher's personal style, all in a process of general change. Many calligraphers have achieved their success in calligraphy by creating their own artistic identity based on the inheritance of their predecessors. The art of calligraphy is the artistic embodiment of the creative subject's aesthetic philosophy and personal emotion into the objective nature, a fusion of subjectivity and objectivity, which are just like the complementary relationship between "yin" and "yang", the sympathetic change to produce all things, and the derivation of new ideas on the basis of inheritance.

The word "change" is the essence of everything in the world, but "change" needs to be carried out on the basis of "inheritance", and there must be "old rules" as well as "new principles". The art of calligraphy is based on the inheritance of traditional Chinese art, with its established rules, and requires personal artistic emotion while conforming to the laws of the ancients, a dialectical unity of the calligrapher's individuality and commonality." The beauty of calligraphy is in the ability to combine, and the spirit of calligraphy is in the ability to separate." The ability to "combine" the traditions of the art of calligraphy, to understand its essence, to pass the rules of the ancients, and to "separate" from the rigid barriers of calligraphy, to transport the spirit of self, is the embodiment of the beauty of calligraphy's versatility.

#### 4. The Beauty of Personality

The "Tao" is the unity of heaven and man, the unity of subjectivity and objectivity, the interplay of creation and one's own mind. The outside of creation is the outside, and the inside of one's own heart is the inside, so that one can learn from creation to polish one's art, and from one's own heart to refine one's virtue.

Virtues become internal and skills become external. The cultivation of moral character as the first important thing to learn calligraphy, high moral character, between the points of the painting has a light and elegant breath flowing, low moral character, although the brushwork is refined, skillful, its inner corruption will still be exposed on the paper. Since ancient times, it has been said that "the book is like the person", and the cultivation of the calligrapher's virtue will invariably improve his own connotation. The creation of art works is the artistic reconstruction of objective things, and in the process of reconstruction, the artist is given his own aesthetic concept and emotional personality. To a certain extent, the change of "The heart of the self" will affect the tone of the artwork. But the statement "the character of the calligraphy is the character of the person" is a bit absolute, just like the descendant Wang Duo, whose character was criticized, but it cannot be said that his calligraphy is low, and the artistic value of his works is very high. Calligraphy and human virtue are originally two different concepts, and although they are occasionally related, they do not have the same criteria for judging, and when the ancients used people to ruin books, they wanted to emphasize the importance of human virtue more than anything else, and not to judge the goodness of artworks entirely by moral standards.

The art of calligraphy is influenced by traditional Chinese philosophical thought, focusing on learning from nature and honing one's mind. The study of nature focuses on the objectification of nature, the reproduction of the experience of nature by the form. The focus of honing one's heart is on the externalization of the subject's "heart", combining the spirit of personality with abstract line forms to express the calligrapher's own emotions. The work is only the carrier of the subject's personality and spirit, and its ultimate expression is the spiritual realm of "Tao", which is the innermost expression of the beauty of personality in traditional Chinese art.

## 5. Conclusion

Excellent traditional culture is not only limited to the surface aesthetic function, but also its inner cultural connotation is the penetration of traditional Chinese philosophical concepts. CAI Yong of the Eastern Han Dynasty, says:” The calligraphy is based on nature. When nature is established, ‘yin’ and ‘yang’ are born, and when ‘yin’ and ‘yang’ are born, the situation is carried out.”<sup>[6]</sup>He used the concept of yin and yang in calligraphy, which is connected to the natural “yin” and “yang” of heaven and earth, that is, to the natural "Tao" of heaven and earth. The deep philosophical ideas contained in the art of calligraphy are no longer limited to the level of technique, but rather the concept of the unity of opposites and the complementarity of “yin” and “yang”, which runs through the entire development of the art of calligraphy. The art of calligraphy draws on the nutrition and wisdom of the traditional Chinese philosophy of “yin” and “yang”, and demonstrates the unique charm of Chinese fine traditional culture and art in creative transformation and innovative development.

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