

Lu Xun's "Self-Duality" as an Enlightener: Centered on "in the Wine Shop" and "Loner"

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Abstract: As a representative writer in the early stage of Chinese new literature, Lu Xun has always been regarded as a firm soldier on the enlightenment front. The foolish Chinese images in his works have also been regarded as the symbol of anti-feudalism and anti-traditional ethics by scholars in various periods. However, it is undoubtedly a misreading of Lu Xun to simply analyze his works from this certain angle. Lu Xun did not have no doubts about enlightenment, nor did he completely deny the traditional rural society. Lu Xun's understanding of enlightenment is complex. From "in the Wine Shop" and "Loner", Lu Xun expressed his dual doubts about the two lifestyles of adherents and drifters in his unique way of questioning back and forth, showing his profound thinking on enlightenment. The different images of the two failed enlighteners also reflected Lu Xun's exploration of the internal causes of Enlightenment failure. Lu Xun's enlightener attitude has duality, this may be the necessary starting point for a comprehensive understanding of Lu Xun's creative thoughts.

1. Introduction

In May 1918, for the first time Zhou Shuren wrote the "Madman's diary" (kuang ren ri ji) under the pseudonym of "Lu Xun", which was published in Volume IV, No. 5, *New Youth* (xin qing nian). Since then, it has opened the curtain of modern Chinese literature era. Lu Xun is firmly connected with the new culture movement, the May 4th Movement and even the whole modern history of China. To a considerable extent, understanding Lu Xun is to understand the new culture movement, and understanding Lu Xun's complexity is to understand the complexity contained in the radical reform in China's ideological circles a hundred years ago. The year of 2021 marks the 140th anniversary of Lu Xun's birth. With the changes of the times, today's readers are always surprised to find that Lu Xun's significance is remain huge, and the complexity, even contradiction contained in his works are still fascinating and thought-provoking.

Chinese scholar Luo Cheng concluded that in the past forty years, the Chinese researcher's explanations of the May 4th movements were roughly divided into three paradigms: political, ideological and social. They emphasized the origin of the revolutionary, enlightening and reconstructive aspects of the May 4th Movement. [1] The study of Lu Xun does not go beyond these three paradigms. Based on this, the discussion of Lu Xun's literary works often aims to precipitate some political, ideological or social ideas. Considering that Lu Xun's works are sometimes almost obscure and ambiguous, the interpretation of Lu Xun's works based on a specific paradigm can effectively reveal the obvious intention and important influence of his thought on the one hand, but meanwhile, it may cover up his multi-dimensional self-references in his literary world.

For a long time, Lu Xun has been solely understood as an anti-feudal, democratic soldier fighting in the "array of nothing". His "call to arms" (na han) is full of anger towards the national evil, and his "wondering" (pang huang) is a confusion that he can't find a way out in the darkness. This view simplifies Lu Xun's complex thinking on the essence of enlightenment to a certain extent. In fact, Lu Xun's reflection on Enlightenment itself has always been ups and downs in his creation. "In the Wine Shop" and "Loner" are the concentrated embodiment of Lu Xun's contradictory attitude. Lu Xun created two typical images of enlighteners in these two novels: Lv Weifu was an enlightener who

couldn't find a direction and chose to return to the original place: his old village, while Wei Lianshu was even more determined, from sinking in reality to self-destruction. The two figures have different endings, but they both go to a deeper level of the problem of enlightenment.

We believe that Lu Xun, as an enlightener, has a profound duality in his self-image implied in his works. Based on these two articles, this paper attempts to present Lu Xun's dual selves as an critical exile of enlightenment, as well as a sentimental guardian of the earth.

2. "In the Wine Shop": the great self-interrogator

As Qian Liqun, a famous Lu Xun researcher, said, the novels with the most "Lu Xunien" atmosphere are "In the Wine Shop" and "Loner". [2] In other words, these two novels can best reflect Lu Xun's specific image of himself.

The most plots of the "In the Wine Shop" are carried out through the dialogue between "I" and Lv Weifu. For example, Lv Weifu told "I" about digging his little brother's grave and moves it to a better place and so on. However, their status is different somehow, though not entirely as equal. Readers could feel the ethical hierarchy between them. In the past, they were both pioneers of "foreign religion" and trying to change the current unsatisfied situation in China. Now "I" continues to drift and adhere to my faith, but Lv Weifu has become decadent. In this way, the equal dialogue between the two became the trial of one person against another: "I" played the role of "great interrogator", and Lv Weifu became a "great prisoner", exposing his sins and declaring his "goodness" intentionally or unintentionally. [3]

As mentioned above, these two are actually Lu Xun's two parts inside, which respectively represent a part of Lu Xun's complex and deep internal world. They exist not as mere "character", but as the depositor, embodiment and expression of some spiritual phenomenon and life feeling. [4] "I" represents a soldier who adheres to the ideal and walks in the spiritual world. He is a drifter. Lv Weifu represents the adherents who return to daily life and convert to the traditional world. The dialogue between the two shows Lu Xun's deep thinking on the road of enlightenment. In the past interpretation, Lv Weifu was often regarded as a completely negative image, an incomplete reformer, a loser on the road of enlightenment, and a weak person who eventually returned to tradition and gave up his modern faith. I think this view is one-sided. In the novel, Lv Weifu moved the grave of his little brother who died prematurely. Lu Xun did not hesitate to restore the beginning and end of the matter at length, but also described it sincerely and deeply. Was it just simply to criticize Lv Weifu? Lu Xun still used Lu Weifu's mouth to tell us how the little maid Shun Gu was pitiful and how she went to death. Obviously, these two things are not just to set off Lv Weifu's retreat and weakness. Lv Weifu said "he is willing to make the world better "for Shun Gu, which shows the soul stirring impact brought by the beauty of life. In other words, Lv Weifu and the traditional secular life that he represents is not just the object of interrogation. The more beauty they reflect, the more they reflect the trial of "I", which represents adhering to the ideal of enlightenment and reform. In other words, the dialogue between them is a two-way trial, the very trial at the text level actually points to Lu Xun's two incomplete attitudes towards the ideal of enlightenment.

What is an incomplete attitude? In the text, Lv Weifu asked me, "can't you fly farther", which shows one side of Lu Xun's attitude. As a defender, Lv Weifu is incomplete. He may choose to give up his belief for some complex reasons, but it doesn't mean that he thinks it's wrong to keep the belief. He still hope that these "flies" will fly farther. Moreover, Lv Weifu's intentional or unintentional guilty attitude in the dialogue also reflects his doubt about his choice. At the same time, as a "drifter", "I" can't help but feel deeply moved by Lv Weifu's fate. In the face of Lv Weifu's perfunctory application, "I" looked back and saw that none of the things we had expected in the past had achieved successfully. It was worth thinking about whether the faith was meaningful, but "I" also decided not to sink into LV Weifu's chaotic nothingness or confusion. Though "I" finally didn't find the answer, the dialogue lit up something in the darkness. Apparently, the contradiction between "adherents" and "drifters" has not been solved in the novel. Lu Xun himself chose the road of "drifters" and chose to fight in the "array of nothing" against nothingness. Although he himself somehow have doubts about this road,

cause he does not know where the road of enlightenment will really leads, he still just chose to “go”. “I walked towards my hotel alone. The cold wind and snow rushed on my face. I felt very happy.” When the self-division of the inside enlightenment was inevitable, Lu Xun dealt with this problem in such a unique way.

Lu Xun also explores the causes and consequences of the failure of enlightenment in this work. Lv Weifu is a typical type. After many futile and meaningless struggles, he chose to return home and became a “defender” in confusion. But Wei Lianshu from the “Loner” is another more radical typical image. After the failure of the resistance of enlightenment, he resolutely went to destruction with a gesture of revenge.

3. The “Loner” wandering in the society

As mentioned above, “the loner” was created in a special period – “the May 4th ebb tide”. Facing the painful reality, Lu Xun and other pioneers of his contemporaries had to deeply rethink the significance of the May 4th Movement and even the rationality of enlightenment. This thinking undoubtedly penetrated into the creation process of these two works: “In the Wine Shop” and “Loner”. From the reflection on the May 4th movement, the creation of the two images of Lv Weifu and Wei Lianshu are similar in some way. Because they are both “Nala” after going out of the house. They are frustrated due to the failure to achieve their ideals and give up their faith reluctantly, but their outcomes are different, and the delicate depiction of these two characters contained in Lu Xun’s works is also mean to be different intentions.

In the wine shop, “I” and “Lv Weifu” talked about the past of “us”, which clearly revealed Lv Weifu’s identity as an enlightener. However, in the “Loner”, the relationship between Wei Lianshu and enlightenment is relatively implicit, which is only reflected in a few words, in a quite subtle way. For example, in the first conversation between “I” and Wei Lianshu, he talked about the nature of children, this question actually involves the essence of enlightenment. Whether children’s nature is good or bad determines whether enlightenment is fundamentally effective. If children’s nature is good, then naturally can transform part of people’s “deterioration” affected by the environment through enlightenment, but if nature is evil, how can people be transformed? Therefore, the dialogue between Wei Lianshu and “I” is essentially representing Lu Xun’s doubt on the ideal of enlightenment. In the text, Wei Lianshu’s attitude towards children became close to “me” after repeated blows, and he “was hated by” innocent “children”, which undoubtedly confirmed the previous view of “me” on children - evil in nature, and also symbolized Lu Xun’s shaking of enlightenment ideal. There is no further exploration on this issue in the text, but we can continue to explore it, looking for Lu Xun’s unspoken thinking. Children’s good nature can naturally be cultivated into “new people” through enlightenment education, but the evil nature of children does not mean that the evil part cannot be transformed through the change of environment. It can even be said that transforming the evil part of human nature is the due meaning of enlightenment.

When it comes to Lv Weifu, we can’t fail to mention Wei Lianshu, not only because of the high similarity of the structure, intention and temperament of the two works, but also because of the different outcomes of the two characters. Precisely from this difference, we can further explore Lu Xun’s self-reflection and self-division in the process of enlightenment. Before discussing the differences between the two images, we can first pay attention to a core common feature of the them, that is, the anti-traditional thought. At the same time, the two are deeply trapped in the traditional social laws. Taking Wei Lianshu as an example, he advocated that “the family should be destroyed”. However, his grandmother and him shared the most profound connection with each other. He believed in “foreign religion”, but he was deeply hurt and then destroyed in the isolation of traditional relatives and friends. The same is true of Lv Weifu. After he failed to find a way to reform China, he had to return to the traditional cultural atmosphere to avoid destruction. “In them, the opposition between the new intellectual and the old ethical people has always existed, which makes their awakening always with inherent emptiness. When facing the reality of China, this awakening reflects its unreal and powerlessness.” [5]

This was an unavoidable and inherent defect of the enlightenment at that time in China. It was obvious that the enlightenment born in this way could not undertake the important task of “establishing new people” and Rebuilding China's new order. The difference between the two lies in their attitude towards the tradition. Lv Weifu, who returned to the tradition, passed through perfunctorily after all. Wei Lianshu, who completely said goodbye to the tradition, fell into the snare woven by the traditional culture, completely bound himself in the “one headed cocoon”, and finally went to destruction in the way of variation and distortion.

Wei Lianshu's ending still shows Lu Xun's deep exploration of the reasons for the failure of enlightenment. According to the situation of China at that time, it is impossible to find a way out without opposing tradition, even one still keep flesh and blood ties with it. “Overall anti-tradition” is the attitude Lu Xun himself has always seem to hold. However, the farther a person deeply trapped in traditional ethics goes on the traditional road, the more he is abandoned by the society and finally becomes a “loner”, so how can the “loners” isolated from the society transform the society in a condescending way of enlightenment? This is a core problem put forward by Lu Xun in the “Loner”. Like “in the Wine Shop”, Lu Xun did not decide how to solve this problem, but he chose a Lu Xun's style way to go: “I” finally walked calmly, internalizing the pain into a calm mind, rather than hesitating in the pain. Although there are dual faces inside Lu Xun's inner world, but his action expressed gigantic determination and firm faith to create a brand new China. In that new world, the painful wandering may still exist, but the calls from enlighteners have been heard and answered so the wandering will be guided and stopped, melting in the people and warm a hometown.

4. Conclusions

The ideological enlightenment trend brought about by the May 4th Movement was vigorous. Lu Xun, who was in the general trend of the times, could not avoid to be deeply influenced by this trend. However, different from the extreme attitude of some other defenders, Lu Xun had a clear reflection on the complexity and internal contradiction of enlightenment. This ideological tendency was stronger after the May 30th incident (Wu Sa incident). In these two works, Lu Xun's self-separation fully reflects his two completely different attitudes, on the one hand, he is a stick to the tradition, on the other hand, he is a drifter on the road forever. These two attitudes are not the whole picture of Lu Xun's thoughts. The adherents are not necessarily despicable, and the drifters are not necessarily noble. The back and forth questioning between the two and the confusion that seems to never find the answer are the truth hidden in the depths of the texts, and Lu Xun also stepped into the wind and snow in this spiral exploration, which still attracts people to follow today.

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