

The Appreciation Mechanism of Chinese Calligraphy from the Perspective of Philosophical Classification of Information Forms[†]

Qipeng Yin

Department of Philosophy, School of Humanities and Social Sciences, Xi'an Jiaotong University, Xi'an 710049, China; yinqipeng@stu.xjtu.edu.cn

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Abstract: From the perspective of philosophical classification of information forms, calligraphy appreciation can be divided into the stages self-contained information of objective and indirect existence, self-contained information of a subject's intuitive recognition, and regenerative information of subjective initiative creation. In the self-information stage of the indirect existence of an objective view, the calligraphy works themselves have not been recognized and grasped during appreciation and the calligraphy works are only the objective form externalizing the subjective spirit of the creative subject. In the self-information stage of a subject's intuitive recognition, the spatiotemporal information, the semantic information, technical information, and aesthetic information condensed in the works are directly recognized by the appreciator. In the regenerated information stage of subjective initiative creation, the appreciator subjectively reprocesses and recreates on the basis of the overall grasp of space–time information, semantic information, technical information, and aesthetic information. It includes two forms, the analogy of “skeuomorphism” and the extension of “potential”.

Keywords: information forms; calligraphy appreciation; objective; distinguish



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1. Introduction

From the perspective of information theory, the process of a calligrapher includes the initial learning and mastering of traditional excellent classic scripts, in-depth life, life experience, conception and communication, and finally the formation of calligraphy works for the public to exchange and appreciate. This can be regarded as a complete process. A self-organizing system is the basic model of information theory. Social life is the source of information, calligraphers are encoders, calligraphy is exhibited, collections of calligraphy or other visual appreciation channels are information dissemination channels, and appreciators are both decoders of and destinations for information. Of course, encoding and decoding this information needs to be assisted by artistic ideas, calligraphy skills, and professional knowledge.

Calligraphy appreciation itself presents different forms of information. “Information, through the historical process of its own movement and development, presents three basic forms of freedom, self-containment, and regeneration. Self-contained information is the original form of information that has not yet been recognized by the subject, and self-contained information is intuitively grasped by the subject of self-contained information. Regeneration information is the creative form of the information subject” [1]. According to this philosophical classification standard, calligraphy appreciation can be divided into the objective and indirect free information stage, the self-information stage of a subject's intuitive identification, and the regeneration information stage of subjective initiative creation.

2. The Stage of Self-Contained Information of Objective and Indirect Existence

In the stage of self-contained information that exists objectively and indirectly, the calligraphy works themselves have not been recognized and grasped by the appreciator, and the calligraphy works are only an objective form of externalizing the subjective spirit of the creative subject. Specifically, if we regard calligraphy as a symbolic form, then both the symbolic form itself and the material carrier form on which it depends are still at the stage of free information, that is, existing as objectively indirect information.

3. The Stage of Self-Contained Information of a Subject's Intuitive Recognition

In the self-information stage of the subject's intuitive recognition, the temporal and spatial information, semantic information, technical information, and aesthetic information condensed in the work are directly recognized by the appreciator. The first is spatiotemporal information. The established effect of calligraphy is spatial, and its composition process is temporal. The final formation of calligraphy works is the unity of time and space. Additionally, what calligraphy provides to the audience is an established structure, which is static. An important task for the appreciator is to restore static lines to the process of movement to explore the ups and downs of the calligrapher's emotions, the changes in brushwork skills, and even their psychological basis. This indeed fully demonstrates the important role of the timeliness of calligraphy in appreciation and, at the same time, demonstrates the subjective initiative of the subject of appreciation.

The second is semantic information. Calligraphers' ideas all come from poetry, and different poetry and calligraphy are different. The artistic conception in the heart of the calligrapher drives the calligrapher's brush to write a piece of work that does not agree with the conception. The emotional expression of poetry and essays, through the creative artistic transformation of the writer, melts emotions in the writing process, so that the lines of the calligraphy bring poetic contextual meaning. Therefore, appreciating the content of the text is also an important part of understanding calligraphy works. The appreciation of calligraphy, such as calligraphy creation, is also a kind of lyrical and poetic search process. Appreciation involves carefully examining the text of the work; slowly entering the realm of poetry; and gradually perceiving its charm, from the shallower to the deeper. The beauty of calligraphy is perceived from the outside to the inside.

The third is technical information, that is, the writing skills of calligraphy. The noumenon elements of calligraphy mainly include brushwork, structural composition, composition, and ink, which are the basics in the composition of calligraphy. Therefore, an interpretation of the technical information of calligraphy works also depends on the intervention of the subject's intuitive identification of the subject of appreciation.

Finally, there is aesthetic information, that is, content such as style and artistic conception. This also requires the appreciator to grasp the aesthetic style of calligraphy on the basis of the overall identification of temporal and spatial information, semantic information, and technical information. In the process of calligraphy appreciation, the appreciator's own aesthetics, knowledge structure, and artistic accomplishment directly affect the result of appreciation. In other words, the achievement of self-information must rely on perception, that is, the intuitive identification of the subject of the information, and the intuitive identification of the subject "not only depends on the quality and quantity of the assimilated information but also on the subject's organs and nerves, and the internal structure of the brain, that is, it depends on the quality and quantity of the information condensed in the subject information control system. External object information is precisely assimilating, matching, and integrating with the information condensed in the subject information control system. The process of reorganization was discerned by knowledge" [2].

4. The Regenerative Information Stage of Subjective Initiative Creation

In the regenerative information stage of subjective initiative creation, the appreciator reprocesses and recreates their own subjectivity based on their overall grasp of temporal and spatial information, semantic information, technical information, and aesthetic information,

forming a “simulated materialization” analogy and opposition to the “potential”, which extend to two forms.

The abstract calligraphic structure and lines are inseparable from the imagination and supplement of a viewer during appreciation. Consciously making analogies on certain similar things and images is also a method that the field of calligraphy appreciation is willing to adopt. Ancient Chinese calligraphers liked to compare abstract calligraphy with concrete images. They used abstract techniques to create the artistic beauty of calligraphy and, sometimes, used vivid metaphors to supplement this beauty and to make it more colorful. Every calligraphy structure, every stroke, due to its modeling or morphological tendency, causes people to form associations, and they cannot help but find similar phenomena in life for comparison.

Calligraphy also requires special appreciation, that is, by extending from the actual stippling to virtual lines that do not exist but can be supplemented by imagination. These virtual lines are as important as the actual stippling, which is the “potential”. The extended understanding of “potency” is actually an important aspect that must be possessed when appreciating calligraphy, a unique art category that has both abstract and fixed structure rules. This kind of subjective active creation is important for calligraphy appreciation.

The appreciation of Chinese calligraphy is an artistic psychological activity with extremely rich levels and extremely complex structures. Every appreciator has their own unique appreciating procedure. It is meaningless to prescribe several processes rigidly. However, as a kind of discussion, it is necessary to re-examine the appreciation mechanism of Chinese calligraphy from the perspective of philosophical classification of information forms in the context of the current era. To a certain extent, this is not only the profound impact of philosophical transformation in the information age on the cultural field but also a rethinking of the rationality of Chinese calligraphy in the philosophical transformation era!

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2. Wu, K. Wu Kun on Self-information. *Humanit. J.* **1986**, *6*, 55.