

Critique of Wang Guowei's Gu Ya Theory And the Establishment of Veneration of Antiquity

Dian Shang^{1,a,*}

¹*Department of Philosophy, Drew University, 36 Madison Ave,
New Jersey, the United States*

a. dshang@drew.edu

**corresponding author*

Abstract: Wang Guowei's Gu Ya theory is considered one of the most influential aesthetic theories in modern China but has not been taken seriously in western scholarship. In this theory, Wang Guowei tries to oppose Kant's theory of genius by claiming that everyone should be able to create beauty. Wang Guowei focuses heavily on the Chinese literati instead of the whole population to which Kant refers. I found the Gu Ya theory implausible for either the Chinese literati or the peasants because the two points that Wang Guowei provides, "the first form" and the "markedness," would be considered inadequate to prove his arguments. Besides that, one reason the Gu Ya theory fails to achieve its goal is the ignorance of the "veneration of antiquity," which is significant in Chinese aesthetic appreciation. We must find solutions to either solve or refine the Gu Ya theory in order to accelerate the development of Chinese aesthetics. I firstly criticized and corrected the ambiguity of Wang Guowei's "the first form" and the misunderstanding of the concepts of "marked" and "unmarked" in Chinese literature. Then, I established the "veneration of antiquity" as my aesthetic theory that fits the Chinese literati. In the end, I posted a thought about Wang Guowei's idea of "wu ren 吾人" in his Gu Ya theory because he does not clarify and fails to build a connection with Kant's theory.

Keywords: Wang Guowei, Gu Ya theory, Chinese literature, Chinese aesthetics, Kant.

1. Introduction

Wang Guowei was known as one of the most influential scholars who introduced western philosophy to China in modern times. During Wang Guowei's academic career, he immersed himself in western philosophy starting in 1902 and turned to studying Ming and Qing drama around 1907. During these five years of western philosophy research, he published four of his most remarkable aesthetic theories, one of which is the Gu Ya Theory. In the early period, Wang Guowei followed Schopenhauer and was obsessed with his pessimism. As time elapsed, he abandoned Schopenhauer's theory and turned to Kant; then, he put his best effort into Kant during the rest of his time in western philosophy. By researching Kant's Critique of Judgment, Wang Guowei criticized the imperfection of Kant's theory of genius, which states that fine art is for genius only. As Xin Gangguo claims in *Everything that Is Beautiful Is Based On Its Forms---Wang Guowei's Discussion On the Gu Ya Theory* that "The statement of the Gu Ya theory is primarily based on Wang Guowei's critique of a fundamental

aesthetic phenomenon which is an issue about the associations of genius, non-genius, and fine art...Wang Guowei is opposed to Kant's point that fine art must be created by a genius" [1]. Obviously, Wang Guowei opposed Kant's idea that even non-genius can create fine art by establishing the Gu Ya theory. In other words, the Gu Ya theory derived from Kant's aesthetics of the beautiful and the sublime, and Wang Guowei put the Gu Ya theory in between them, claiming that such an aesthetic judgment would be the most appropriate for the Chinese literati. That is to say, Wang Guowei not only pointed out the issues of Kant's aesthetics but also built his aesthetic theory for the sake of Chinese culture. Nonetheless, Wang Guowei's Gu Ya theory has been controversial in academia after publication because scholars more or less have noticed contradictions or inconsistencies in the Gu Ya theory. Additionally, Wang Guowei never mentioned this theory after publishing *Critique of Song Lyrics of the Humans* in 1909. Similarly, I found the Gu Ya theory contains implausibility and unreasonable concepts that made his argument bizarre. In this paper, I will criticize the Gu Ya theory from two perspectives: The ambiguity of the definition of "the first form" and the lack of a persuasive interpretation of "unmarked" and "marked." In the third part, I will establish my own aesthetic theory since I noticed that the Gu Ya was inadequate for Chinese literati, and Wang Guowei ignored another essential factor that influenced the aesthetic judgment of Chinese literati, which I prefer to name "veneration of antiquity."

2. The Ambiguity of the Definition of "The First Form"

For the first point of this paper, I argue that the definition of "the first form," according to Wang Guowei, is opaque. In terms of Wang Guowei's Gu Ya theory, he separated the aesthetic types into two distinct forms, which, as he defined them without rigorous clarification, are "the first form" and "the second form." With the influence of Kant, Wang Guowei defined "the first form" as the same as the beautiful and the sublime; that is to say, Wang Guowei, at least as he expected, merely differentiated them by names, but the essence did not change. "The second form" is the Gu Ya standing between the beautiful and the sublime. In *Anthology of Jingan: the Status of Gu Ya In Fine Art*, Wang Guowei states that "As for the variety of fine art types, it is even undebatable that the aesthetic appreciations of architecture, sculpture, and music are based on pure forms; similarly, for other types which take advantage of the medium, like painting and poetry, their mediums may awaken the aesthetic appreciation as well. Therefore, the beauty of painting and poetry should be considered another form" [2]. Prior to my interpretation of this passage, I shall first state that Wang Guowei intentionally misread Kant's aesthetics of forms. Some scholars understand Wang Guowei's first form as "the form from nature itself," but it seems debatable in terms of this passage. In the article *About Kant and The Progress of Wang Guowei's Aesthetics in Terms of Morality*, Lan Guoqiao and Lyu Zhongyuan claim that "For the main works of Kant, Wang Guowei realized that he understood Kant after several times reading; if there were parts he failed to understand, then Kant must not have understood it neither. Mr. Feng Youlan agrees with this as well" [3]. That is the support of the scholars confirms that Wang Guowei misread Kant in the purpose of his aesthetic theory. From this evidence, we may suspect that those scholars misunderstand Wang Guowei's definition of "forms," which means that Wang Guowei broke away from Kant's "the form of nature" and established that "the first form" should be considered "the forms without mediums." More briefly, Wang Guowei betrayed Kant by discussing the form of fine art instead of the form of nature, but this was too subtle to notice, so it deceived the majority of scholars.

Looking over Wang Guowei's definition of "the first form," I found the misinterpretation pretty manifest. What would be the reason for Wang Guowei to believe that architecture, sculpture, and music are certain forms existing without mediums? Especially, Wang Guowei did not clarify what he meant by "mediums"--- Did he mean the mediums are physical materials or the metaphysical means for sentimental delivery? Objectively, he had to interpret this ambiguity in order to make this

argument reasonable. On the other hand, the forms of fine art that Wang Guowei listed above could not truly be distinguished by “mediums,” or to say the least, if he were willing to hold this argument, he would have better discovered the forms of fine art which would be approved by his standard. So far, the two pieces of evidence he provided diluted his argument with flawed logic. Meanwhile, Wang Guowei considered painting and poetry another form, but the term “another” once again weakened his argument because he never precisely named the other one. Through his Gu Ya theory, he only established “the first form” and “the second form,” then if there exists “another form,” it must be told as “the third form,” or the subform derived from “the first form”; however, Wang Guowei neither clarified it with sufficient evidence nor put it into a new category. In this situation, I shall only end up thinking that “the first form” he was discussing contained another feasible subform, and he did not even prove it with a persuasive reason. At this point, his innovation of the “forms” failed to relate either with Kant’s aesthetics or build his theory.

3. The Lack of A Persuasive Interpretation of “Unmarked” and “Marked”

Secondly, I criticize that Wang Guowei did not provide a clear interpretation of “unmarked” and “marked” in accordance with Chinese culture, and he might fail to comprehend the significance of “marked” in Chinese literature. By summarizing the basic concepts of “unmarked” and “marked,” Wang Guowei stated that the former represented the literary piece that delivering in a relatively natural way without too much artifice; reversely, the latter was the one that filled out dexterity and lost its plainness. Still, *In Anthology of Jingan: the Status of Gu Ya In Fine Art*, Wang Guowei claims that “Even though the first form is the same, the second form could be shown in different ways... it also works in poetry. ‘At night’s end I again take candle, and face you as if in a dream’ [4] and ‘Tonight I hold the candle to light your face, because I am afraid that we are in a dream.’ ‘I am willing to miss you every moment, even though it is painful and I would love to suffer,’ and ‘Looking at my dress getting looser and I don’t feel regretful, I am willing to be withered by thinking about you’. The first form of these verses are the same, but the former ones are unmarked, and the latter ones are marked because their second form is different” [2]. According to this passage, Wang Guowei quoted several verses from Du Fu, Yan Jidao, *Book of Classic Poetry*, and Liu Yong as examples to support his argument. I shall select Du Fu’s verse as my instance. If Wang Guowei expected to tell whether a literary piece is “unmarked” or “marked,” he must have had a plausible criterion. Compared to Yan Jidao’s verse, it is almost impossible to determine that the latter was “marked” since Wang Guowei did not tell us how to distinguish them with regard to him. One thing I must point out is that the dictions in Chinese are too flexible even to bewilder readers’ logical reasoning, which tends to have the readers judging more subjectively. To clarify this, I shall put Du Fu’s verse into a new verse in an “unmarked” way without changing the mood, like “As long as the dream I hold the candle, it makes me believe that the night still lasts,” or “Please never awaken the short dreams, please let our shadows light ,” manifestly, I kept the original meaning but changed the rhythm and several terms to make a new “unmarked” verse. But the question is, how did I determine this new verse is “unmarked?” Did I use any “marked” terms or put something into a “marked” scene? Identical to Yan Jidao’s verse, people can barely say that his verse was “marked” because it is impossible to tell which terms were written in a “marked” way due to the flexibility of Chinese letters. In addition, Du Fu referred to a poem from *The Nineteen Classic Poems*, which says “As the daylight of life is transitory, why don’t we appreciate the night with candle” [5]. What if I compare this with Du Fu’s verse and I determine which one is “unmarked”? Obviously, if I have to tell whether either of them is “marked,” then it must be Du Fu’s verse; do I have any solid evidence to support our claim? Probably not. Not only in the realm of Chinese but the merits people also admire in literature and fine art are uncertainty and possibility; people shall never agree to form an absolute and steady criterion for literature and fine art critiques.

Interestingly, there also exists a remarkable distinction between “unmarked” and “marked” in Chinese literature; if people read over the parallel prose in the South and North Dynasties and song lyrics in the South Song, it would be simple to investigate the obsession with “marked” style among the literati. Moreover, Wang Guowei terribly fell into the thought of “unmarked”, which led him to become an extremist. In his other remarkable work, *Critique of Song Lyrics of the Humans*, he mentioned something crucial for us to understand his aesthetic theory better. He stated “Fan Kangfu has praised several verses of mine that are full of creativity and have opened a new realm that the previous literati did not have. For instance, ‘Clouds are merging at the end of the sky’ from *The Rinsing River*, ‘In the dream of last night’, ‘The sumptuous chamber’, ‘Encountering the spring while it has come’, and so on from *Love of Butterfly With Flowers*. I know my talent is not as great as my forebears. However, for pursuing ‘the first thought,’ I am more diligent than anyone else in the previous periods” [6]. In this passage, he mentioned the concept of “the first thought,” and it could be another great interpretation of “unmarked.” According to Wang Guowei, if “unmarked” is considered “the first thought,” then “marked” must be the thoughts that are exquisitely crafted by literacy; in other words, “the first thought” is what people directly acquire from nature or intuitive feelings without artificial processing. Already, Chinese literary critiques have been more protean and sophisticated until the present, and thus there is profound evidence I can use. In *Zhou Li: Da Shi*, there is a metatheory of poetry-making— Fu, Bi, Xing, and I shall refer to Zhong Rong’s *Taste of Poems: Preface* to see the essence of them— “Therefore, there exist three methods of poetry: Xing, Bi, and Fu... By promoting and utilizing these three methods, poets are able to arouse their wills and literary talents; after the artful dexterity of poetic imagery, it would be plausible for readers to appreciate the poems lastingly— and this is the ultimate pursuit of poetry” [9]. According to this quote, Zhong Rong encouraged the use of literacy in poetry because it is one of the means that allows poetry to become more aesthetic. Chinese literati have been discovering the field of diction and rhetoric, especially from the songs of Chu. By observing the rhapsodies and the songs of Chu written by Song Yu and Qu Ping, it is manifest that literati have been paying attention to the aesthetics of literature by minding their rhetoric and even playing around with dictions. Despite the obsession with literacy being rooted in Chinese literature, the utterances and philosophy of previous sages still played the dominant role. Regardless of the great thinkers initiated in China, such as Confucius and Lao Zi, or the eminent monks who traveled to China from ancient India, for instance, Bodhidharma and Kumarajiva, they promoted the idea of the inclination of being natural; clearly, it was the thought which emphasized the significance of “returning to the stillness.” Referring to the literature realm, our literati still considered the “returning” would be the ultimate aim of any authentically venerable literature—they have been pursuing the introspection of their hearts and truly believed that “being natural” was the universal maxim. Nevertheless, our literati did not lose themselves in philosophy and literature; they have seen the implausibility of sharing the common ground between them. In terms of Chinese poetics, the most admirable way to make a piece return to the essence of nature is to “efface” the “marked” trace. When discussing the original manuscript of Li Po’s *Jiang Jin Jiu*, which was previously named *Xi Jin Zun*, people shall find that the literacy of *Xi Jin Zun* tended to be colloquial, and the dictions were a bit of incondite. This phenomenon was undoubtedly common since it was written spontaneously in a banquet, and there was no way people could demand it to be in a perfectly well-done format. What needs to be heeded is that the majority of readers admire this piece with its plainness and fluency, and I believe only a hint of them have heard about its predecessor *Xi Jin Zun*. The reason people think that this piece is as fluent as it had never been “marked” is because of the magnificent literacy of Li Po— he crafted the rhetoric and dictions too exquisite to efface the feeling of being marked. Even though, however, Li Po himself emphasized the importance of “unmarked” by writing the verse “As the lotus comes from the clean pond, the beauty of it is

unmarked” [10], it was merely a metaphorical way to disseminate the idea of being “natural,” and the “absolutely natural” is impotent in reality.

Another remarkable but as well as debatable phenomenon around the topic of “markedness” is the Prose Movement. During the middle Tang and the early Song, the Prose Movement led by Han Yu (Tang dynasty), Liu Zongyuan (Tang dynasty), Ouyang Xiu (Song dynasty), and Wang Anshi (Song dynasty) reflected that the literati willed to refine the markedness of the parallel prose in order to return the literature to the meaning of moral education. Nevertheless, the result might be a hypercorrection which seemed like the Prose Movement once again freed the literary style and returned the meaning of education, but it also restricted the instinct of the aesthetic pursuit. Even though Han Yu mentioned in *Entitle the Lament*, “... I have not only been learning the classic morality but also willing to make beautiful literature as the forebears. Vise versa, beautiful literature roots in the classic morality” [11]. I wonder how he understood the difference between the prose in the Tang dynasty and the prose in the previous periods because the styles and dictions were diachronically distinct. If he was advocating the “Prose Movement”, then which period of prose was he referring to? By stating this, I mean to claim that the Prose Movements in the Tang and Song still could not persuasively restrict the “marked” style of literature.

Besides that, I should also admit the merits of being “marked” in many aspects. One example I shall provide comes from *Sui Yuan Shi Hua* written by Yuan Mei, he says: “Zhao Renshu, who was from Chang Zhou, wrote a verse as ‘The wind has become elegant because of the butterfly, and the moon has waned with the person who has gone’. This is the only verse that Renshu was known to the world” [12]. For this verse, I have to confess that it was “marked”--- it is “abnormal” for us to turn our attention from appreciating a butterfly to meditating on the interest of wind since these two images are not necessarily associating. However, I can barely negate that such a verse possessed an indescribable aesthetic experience that allowed us to taste it repeatedly, and this is indeed a great verse, without a doubt. It is worth noting that Wang Guowei, regardless of whether it was the influence of Schopenhauer or not (because Schopenhauer was affected by Buddhism), made a great concern on Buddhism as well as western philosophy and Chinese literature. Those who are familiar with Buddhism should know that there are five (some classics name them three) types of wisdom and one of them is “the wisdom of literalness”. By defining that, master Kui Ji in his work *Eulogy of Prajnaparamita Hrdaya Sutra* explains it as “Or the fabulous dictions of literature, the wisdom of stillness, the fortunateness of bestowing, and the comprehension of universal principles” [13]. Master Kui Ji praises the literacy that the Buddha uses to educate all beings and also sighed for the challenge of us to compare the Buddha’s unfathomable literalness. These masters or eminent monks comprehended the meaning of life and received everlasting happiness, but they still had to confess that the power of literacy would be a type of wisdom, and this literacy was well-written or used, which implied that it must not have been “unmarked.” I shall give another solid instance to show how the Buddhist masters heeded the aesthetics and potentiality of Chinese literature. I must introduce the fabulous piece written by master Yongming Yan Shou, or Shi Yanshou, called *Cases In the Mirror of Heart*. The preface was written in perfect parallel prose, which was filled with the extreme aesthetic shock that no one shall put a negative word to it. I selected one part to demonstrate my point “And then because of the chaos of the mind, the world has split into differences; because of the chaos of knowledge, the love and abomination have lost the equity. From now on, the essence comes to oblivion; every individual is befuddled by illusory phenomenon... As it comes forth from the miscomprehension of the mind to the disparity of wisdom. Transmigrating in this Saha world with nothingness; enchaining in the messiness by yourselves... Swinging branches and moony rivers shall be the imageries of the essence; Misty islands and cloudy forest shall enlighten the truth” [14]. In order to show how great this preface was, I must primarily keep in mind that it was parallel prose. Parallel prose is a literary genre in which literati tend to compose and understand it as a purely

aesthetic form; in parallel prose, literati would release their literary skills and concentrate badly on the dictions and rhetoric to make this piece as beautiful as possible. Thus, parallel prose has always been criticized as “formalism” literature. This preface done by master Yongming Yan Shou, however, was the “marked” literature with the “unmarked” dictions; in other words, I could almost ensure that he was attentive on skills, but I still have to admit that I could hardly tell that this was written in a “marked” way since the fluency really caught our hearts. From these two cases of Buddhism, it has become apparent that even Buddhists would love to appreciate the “marked” way of literature, so our literati (including the eminent monks) have been inheriting this aesthetic appreciation as one of the essential critiques of Chinese literature. People care about artificial beauty because they believe that the poet’s interest reinforces the taste of a piece, and every individual desires to use human power to create beauty based on one of our intuitions; however, it seems like Wang Guowei was extremely disgruntled about this heritage and that is why his argument failed to persuade the readers.

4. The Establishment of the Veneration of Antiquity

At the final point of my paper, I shall introduce my critique of Chinese aesthetics, which I believe refines Wang Guowei’s Gu Ya theory, called “veneration of antiquity,”--- meaning that the aesthetic judgment of our Chinese literati could be affected in a diachronic way, which implies that Chinese literati venerate the people of the past as well as the works of them. They would unconsciously judge the past greater than the present. More clearly, Wang Guowei discovered one area of the Chinese literati’s psychological activities by revealing that Gu Ya occurs when a certain literary piece (or artwork) contains some cultural elements, say, culture codes, and the era was definitely not a matter. I am opposed to Wang Guowei that eras could be a significant matter in impacting literati’s critiques by establishing the veneration of antiquity.

This is a complex theory to be appropriately interpreted since this concept of veneration of antiquity began thousands of years ago from Confucius if I temporarily cut off the periods of the Zhou dynasty. Allow me to refer to *The Analects of Confucius* and then I shall see how Confucius described the figure of the ancient periods. In *The Analects of Confucius: Shu Er*, Confucius said: “I shall merely represent but not author; I also believe and favor the thoughts of previous sages” [15]. These so-called “previous sages” that Confucius pointed out was metaphysical figure of the Zhou dynasty. In an authentic way, the history of China shall have originated back to million years, but academia still believes that the most acknowledged periods start from the Zhou dynasty, which, unbelievably to us, chopped off a long period of time. The reason that Confucius referred to the Zhou dynasty is that he approved that the Zhou dynasty founded the main principles of Chinese culture; the emperors of Zhou Wu and Zhou Wen rooted the cultural beliefs in our blood, and the Chinese people have been nourished by them. Still from Confucius, he highly respected Zuo Qiuming and mentioned him in *Gongye Chang*, saying that “Dexterous utterances, flattering faces, and over-respect are the demerits that Zuo Qingming dislikes, and I dislike them neither. Cursing someone behind and getting close to this person in front of him at the same time is the thing that Zuo Qiuming dislikes, and I dislike it neither” [16]. Even though that Confucius also admired some of his followers such as Yan Yuan Min Ziqian, and Duanmu Ci, Confucius respected Zuo Qiuming much more seriously than anyone else. However, people are unable to tell why Confucius showed serious respect to Zuo Qiuming according to the present historical evidence, but antiquity can still be counted as one of the most significant reasons. The instance of Confucius that I provided only revealed the part that Chinese literati (or sages) venerated the political or moral aspect of the people of the past. I will demonstrate how the veneration of antiquity influenced the view of aesthetics in literature.

According to classic historical documentation, there exists a variety of great evidence to prove my point. From *History of Jin: Biography of Zuo Si*, it records that “(Si) finished *the Rhapsody of the Kingdom of Qi* in a year. He also expected to write rhapsodies of ‘The Three Kingdoms’... However,

literati and citizens did not notice the three rhapsodies after they were done. Si himself believed that these three pieces were as splendid as the works of Ban Gu and Zhang Heng, and he was worried if people intentionally ignored his pieces because of his background and authority..." [17]. This passage hits directly on the concept of veneration of antiquity. When Zuo Si finished his three rhapsodies, no bigwigs or famous literati took them seriously, but Zuo Si himself believed that these pieces should have had the same reputation as the works of Ban Gu and Zhang Heng. Here comes an interesting fact in the world of the Chinese literati, poets (in general) consider their own works to be incredibly done and comparable to that of antiquity; however, it is still debatable whether their works deserve such a reputation. "He was worried if people intentionally ignored his pieces because of his background and authority" implies that Zuo Si understood that society preferred to appreciate the antique works and would not love to pay attention to the efforts of the present literati. Sometimes situations might vary. If I recall *The Book of History* written by Sima Qian, *The Biography of Sima Xiangru* reveals a fact that the Chinese literati would admit a tremendous literary piece created in antiquity—"Long time later, Yang Deyi, who was a treacherous courtier from Shu, began to serve the emperor. The emperor appreciated the rhapsody of Zi Xu after reading and felt regretful about being unable to meet this author. Yang Deyi told the emperor that Sima Xiangru had said he wrote this rhapsody. The emperor was surprised and summoned Sima Xiangru into the court" [18]. First of all, the emperor Han Wu thought this rhapsody magnificent; however, he believed it was written in ancient times. As a common situation in Chinese history, an emperor could directly or indirectly control the thought of this state; for instance, during the periods of the emperor Song Ren and the emperor Kang Xi, the entire circumstances of China were relatively peaceful, and the literary ethos tended to be decent. But for the periods like the emperor of Liang of Jian Wen and Li Yu, the emperors of the South Tang were much different because they were obsessed with aesthetic literature, and their people were more or less affected by them. Back to my evidence, I may not be sure whether the emperor Han Wu influenced his people on this thought, but at least I can state that Yang Deyi was with him by noticing the words "Sima Xiangru had said," and Sima Qian called Yang Deyi "a treacherous courtier" with scorn because of his personality. I believe that Sima Qian's evaluation of Yang Deyi was, at least for this example, appropriate because Yang Deyi observed that the emperor Wu of Han appreciated this work but left a suspicion, and Yang Deyi himself did not dare to tell whether this was truly written by Sima Xiangru or not. If he was wrong, then he might be dead. That is why he partially agreed with the emperor Wu of Han that it seemed like only the people of the past were able to create such a piece. I explained Yang Deyi's utterance in detail because I expected to prove that almost anyone was holding the veneration of antiquity.

Meanwhile, I shall provide another aspect of the veneration of antiquity to demonstrate how literati themselves judged or understood. Po Juyi discussed this with his best friend Yuan Zhen in one of his letters *Letter to Yuan Jiu* says "Wei Zhi, you know that the majority of people prefer to trust what they have heard instead of what they have seen, and this is a universal phenomenon... but when Wei Suzhou was still alive, almost no one considered him a great poet; and people began to admire his poetry after his death" [19]. Po Juyi mentioned two essential points that need to be heeded. First, by saying that "a universal phenomenon", he directly emphasized that the veneration of antiquity was plausible for humanity, which implied that according to Po Juyi, at least, he believed that such a concept could be applied even to every civilization diachronically. When the Chinese literati or sages used the term "the majority of people," they meant to set the whole world of the population as the valid object, which apparently differed from the use of "Tian Xia." In fact, I must admit that he was prescient because the present world is still following the consequences that he foresaw. In the second part, Po Juyi talked about Wei Yingwu's poems and criticized that Wei Yingwu's reputation was not equivalent to the value of his poems— People started to venerate and admire Wei Yingwu's poems after his death but did not pay much attention while alive. Then the question arises: Do people judge

a literary work based on the author's background or the work itself? Nevertheless, this is unlike the conflict discussed in Western academia, which originated from Aristotle's ethos, that a celebrity or authenticity of the author affects our judges; In regards to the veneration of antiquity, the authenticity of the author did not play an important role which points out that the Chinese literati valued the literary works as long as they were produced by the people of the past.

The example I referred to above revealed how Chinese literati were aware of this phenomenon and tried to comment. But the subsequent evidence demonstrates the pride of the veneration of antiquity indwelling in the Chinese literati. In *Jinlou Zi*, one of the most remarkable works by Xiao Yi, the preface shows that "During these thirty-six years, because of my visual defect, I have asked my servants to read the books out loud for me. Just like what Zeng Sheng said that reciting poetry and reading classics are the best ways to meet and live with the forebears" [20]. According to this short passage, I shall perhaps explain that the basic reason for the veneration of antiquity is, at least for China, that the Chinese people (not only the literati) have been extraordinarily proud of their forebears as well as their relative cultural inheritance. There exist two possible reasons: the first one would be the pride of forebears. The Chinese people trust the knowledge and philosophy inherited from the past because they believe that the forebears were much more sapiential and already had an insight into the principle of the universe. In addition, Chinese literati hoped to have friendships with their forebears, like Mencius stated "You recite his poems and read his books without knowing his personality. Is it fair enough? Definitely not. Thus, you must be familiar with his morality; this is how to build a noble friendship" [21]. On the other hand, the Chinese people attach importance to history, which seems like an ethnic feather born in the bloodline. History represents everything this state has come along with. If I look at the development of ancient India, which had almost an equally long period of history with China, I will notice that the ancient Indians ignored to their histories. Evidence shall be found in Buddhist classics— every time the Buddha held a lecture, the recorder would put "at that time" rather than a specific time slot. Undoubtedly, this situation was influenced by the ancient Indian philosophy that time and space are insignificant, but the truth is truth, and I still consider it when discussing China. A thing that originates from the pride of forebears has become a specific cultural feeling to all Chinese literati. *Chun Jiang Hua Yue Ye*, One of the most famous poems in Tang dynasty written by Zhang Ruoxu, has perfectly shown this feeling with magnificent imagery. In this poem, Zhang Ruoxu inquired a list of questions about the relationship between the moon and mankind; however, was he purely curious about the birth of the universe and the history of humans, just like Qu Yuan's *Tian Wen*? Definitely not. When the verse "People who are now under this sky shall not see the moon of the past, but the moon that is shining tonight had been projecting its light on the people of the past" [23]. has come, it was not merely a philosophical statement but a pursuit of harmony among the forebears, the moon, and us. Such a cultural feeling has rooted in the mind of Chinese literati. Thus, their greatest realm is to arouse spiritual resonance with their forebears.

5. Conclusion

In this paper, I have discussed two major issues of Wang Guowei's Gu Ya theory which were the ambiguity of "the first form," and the misestimate of "marked" and "unmarked" in Chinese literature. Also, I have established my critique of the veneration of antiquity that should be plausible for the aesthetic appreciation of the Chinese literati. Nevertheless, as a concluding observation, the Gu Ya theory contains one confusion that I still hope to post for discussion. During Wang Guowei's discussion, he mentioned the term "*wu ren*" but did not specify the referent in detail. In Chinese, "*wu ren*" could mean "people who are in a parallel position with me,"; and it could also mean "people who are in the same state as me." If the referent is the former, which means that Wang Guowei was referring to the literati who are similar to him, then the Gu Ya theory only works for this particular group of people. In addition, as I introduced at the beginning, Wang Guowei's Gu Ya theory was

meant to criticize Kant's theory of genius, but Kant's theory was based on the entire population, and Wang Guowei was facing only China. Wang Guowei's concept of "wu ren" must refer to the literati, and if this excludes the uneducated, then it is radically different from Kant's concept of genius. The reason Wang Guowei excludes the uneducated is that they have limited historical consciousness, and historical consciousness is necessary for the concept of Gu Ya. Therefore, the Gu Ya theory seemed more confusing according to this aspect.

References

- [1] Xin, GG. (2003) *Everything That Is Beautiful Is Based On Its Forms— Wang Guowei's Discussion of the Gu Ya Theory* 一切美皆形式之美---王國維論古雅. Qilu Xuekan.
- [2] Wang, GW. (1983) *Jingan Wenji 靜庵文集. The Status of Gu Ya In Fine Art. 論古雅在美術上之位置*. Shanghai Guji.
- [3] Lan, GQ, Lyu, ZY. (2012) *About Kant and The Progress of Wang Guowei's Aesthetics in Terms of Morality. 康德與王國維美學之道德走向*. Zhanjiang Shifan Xuebao.
- [4] Owen, S. (2016) *The Poetry of Du Fu*. Deutsche Nationalbibliografie.
- [5] *The Ninth Classic Poems*. (2013) 古詩十九首. Yutai Xinyong 玉臺新詠. Shanghai Guji.
- [6] Wang, GW. (2019) *Critiques of Songs Lyrics of the Humans. 人間詞話*. Guangling Shushe.
- [7] Zhouli. (2014) 周禮. Dashi. 大師. Zhonghua Shuju.
- [8] Gu, DM. (1997) *Fu-Bi-Xing: A Metatheory of Poetry-Making. Chinese Literature: Essays, Articles, Reviews (CLEAR)*.1 vol.
- [9] Zhong, R. (1954) *Taste of Poems 詩品*. Preface 序. Wenxue Guji Kanxingshe.
- [10] Li, P. (2015) *Reminiscence With A Poem About Mr. Wei in Ye Lang After the Calamity 經亂離後天恩流夜郎憶舊遊書懷贈江夏韋太守良宰*. Li Tai Po Quanj. Zhonghua Shuju.
- [11] Han, Y, Dong, G. (2013) *Entitle the Lament 題哀辭後*. Quan Tang Wen 全唐文. Zhonghua Shuju.
- [12] Yuan, M. (2020) *Sui Yuan Shihua 隨園詩話*. Nanjing Chubanshe.
- [13] Kui, J. *Eulogy of Prajnaparamita Hrdaya Sutra 般若波羅蜜多心經幽贊*.
- [14] Shi, YS. (2015) *Cases In the Mirror Of Heart 宗鏡錄*. Preface 序. Xibei University Press.
- [15] Confucius. (2018) *The Analects of Confucius 論語*. Shu Er 述而. Guangling Shushe.
- [16] Confucius. (2018) *The Analects of Confucius 論語*. Gongye Chang 公冶長. Guangling Shushe.
- [17] Fang, XL. (1974) *History of Jin 晉書. Biography of Zuo Si 左思傳*. Zhonghua Shuju Company.
- [18] Sima, Q. (2007) *Book of History 史記. Biography of Sima Xiangru 司馬相如列傳*. Guangling Shushe.
- [19] Po, JY. (2013) *Letter to Yuan Jiu 與元九書*. Quan Tang Wen 全唐文. Compiled by Dong Gao. Zhonghua Shuju.
- [20] Xiao, Y, Yan, KJ. (1999) *Jinlou Zi 金樓子*. Preface 自序. Quan Liang Wen 全梁文. Shangwu Yinshuguan.
- [21] Mencius. (2018) *Mencius 孟子*. Wan Zhang 萬章. Guangling Shushe.
- [22] Zhang, RX, Cao, Y. (2013) *Chun Jiang Hua Yue Ye 春江花月夜*. Quan Tang Shi 全唐詩. Xianzhuang Shuju.