

# A Probe into the Philosophical Implication of “Sense” in the Sense of Ritual

Jiehao Liang

School of Marxism, Wuhan University of Technology, Wuhan, Hubei Province, China

**Keywords:** sense of ritual; sense of gain; sense of happiness; sense of belonging; sense of identity.

**Abstract:** Ritual, as an ancient map of civilization, comes into being with the development of human society. While creating abundant material wealth, mankind also pays attention to the development of the spiritual world. The crystallization of human thinking is recorded with a series of civilized symbols. Creating ritual culture is an important methods. Human civilization develops under the influence of rituals. Through the construction of the ritual civilization, human beings can transmit knowledge, educate the next generation, condense their emotions, and build up a unique spiritual home. Participants with the same sense of ritual can share the strong psychological and behavioral identity. For this purpose, we can hold that “the sense of ritual” is a special emotional experience; it is the recognition, identification and practice of external rituals. It can condense people's emotions on certain rituals to the greatest extent and guide our inner world to respect and identify external things. It contains the senses of gain, happiness, belonging and identification.

## 1. Introduction

Rituals can be found everywhere in our life. The opening ceremonies at the beginning of the school encourage students to cherish the time; the graduation ceremonies express deep wishes and earnest expectations for the students leaving school. In Randall Collins' Interaction Mutual Chain, the author points out that the “interactive ritual” means “common expectations or emotional experiences of people.”<sup>[1]</sup> Meanwhile, Victor Turner's Forest of Symbols links the “symbolic” meaning of ritual symbols with human associations, thus gaining emotional understanding on symbols.<sup>[2]</sup> In fact, a ritual is the unity of people's emotion, will and feeling. It is a certain activity in a specific time and space; it embodies people's love and respect for external things. Rituals are related to people's inner satisfaction and emotional sustenance. The sense of ritual is a unique spiritual feeling. People can get specific feelings and spiritual experience, as well as spiritual happiness from specific ceremonies. The sense of ritual focuses on “sense”, which cannot be simply understood as “feeling” or “perception”. It includes the “sense of gain”, the “sense of happiness”, the “sense of belonging” and the “sense of identity” in the interaction between people and external things. According to German sociologist Max Weber, man is an animal suspended in the web of meanings woven by himself. “A ritual is a world full of meanings and a symbolic system with perceptual means as symbols of meanings.”<sup>[3]</sup> In addition, the sense of ritual also contains the “sense of sacredness”, the “sense of awe and belief” as well as the “sense of meaning”. Take the sense of household rituals as an example, the seven necessities are “fuel, rice, oil, salt, sauce, vinegar and tea”. If people carefully prepare and live attentively, they can experience different joys of life from specific small things.

## 2. The “Sense of Gain” in the Sense of Ritual

The sense of ritual exists in every little thing of life. Little things in life, even trivial matters, provide you opportunities to get rid of mediocrity and experience different spiritual feelings. Of course, such feelings cannot be accurately expressed in words, or bring material reward, but they reflect your deep-seated self-cultivation and unique feelings. The wonderful of life does not lie in extremely successful careers, but in achievement and happiness we get from the ordinary life. “Former British Prime Minister Lloyd George has a seemingly common habit: he always closes the door behind him. When a friend asks him if it is necessary to do so, he always says, it is necessary.

I've been closing the door behind me all my life because that's what I have to do. When you close the door, you shut everything behind it, whether it's a good achievement or a frustrating mistake, and then you can start all over again." Rituals are very common. It's a little ritual to knock on the door before closing and entering. Such rituals can help you win the respect of others. Rituals are very common seen. Some people think that rituals are far away from our lives. In fact, they always exist everywhere in our daily life. Even eating requires a simple sense of ritual. From small daily things such as eating, you can get unique spiritual experiences and feelings on the Table. Simple and ordinary things in life can also bring different experiences. From these small things, we can understand the solemn and sacredness of ordinary life. People who can get different feelings in every little thing of life are real "philosophers". The sense of ritual can always bring us surprise and happiness. There is always happiness in life; the problem is how you experience, which depends on what kind of person you are. Only those who understand the meaning of rituals can know that rituals are not too high and deep to be measured. They exist everywhere, waiting us to find and get something from them.

### **3. The Sense of Happiness in the Sense of Ritual**

People always pursue happiness. Happiness has been an eternal topic since ancient times. It is a common topic of philosophical discussion. For example, Zhuangzi, an ancient philosopher, believed that happiness is the transcendence of external things and the pursuit of freedom; it is the pursuit of the spiritual realm in which "all things have the same essence". Aristotle, a Western philosopher, believed that happiness is a supreme kind of good. He held that happiness was a "realistic activity of the soul in accordance with virtue" and that happiness should be achieved through practice. Although different philosophers have different opinions and pursuits of happiness, we can still see that happiness is a subjective spiritual feeling that human beings yearn for and that happiness is closely related to human life. After satisfying material needs like food and clothing, human beings want to obtain happiness and enjoy beauty. The inquiry and chasing of happiness are the pursuit of human values and our highest aspiration for life. In most cases, happiness cannot be obtained through purposeless pursuit. On the contrary, it always exists in our lives, and can be constructed through specific rituals. At the same time, these rituals in our lives also need specific groups to work together. Rituals can only be completed through interaction among different people. "An important element of ritual is its collectiveness. A ritual is the behavior of several people who share the same emotional experience. It's certainly not a ritual for a person to enjoy his dinner alone, but a group of people having dinner under the influence of the same mood often evolves into a ritual."<sup>[4]</sup> Christians in the West always pray in front of food before dinner. It is such a simple ceremony that can evoke people's respect for life, as well as their gratitude for God and the nature. They can feel the taste beyond the food in these simple ceremonies, and treasure food even more, so they can get happiness at dinner time. At the same time, the person who cooks the dinner also prepares the food with happy expressions. They cook the food carefully, hoping that the person who has dinner can obtain happiness and joy. Happiness is very common. It does not stand high, nor does it have vague meaning. Through a small ceremony, we can all get happiness. Human beings are perceptual creatures as well as group creatures. People always harvest happiness in giving and maintaining their relationship. We often find that we need a series of actions and activities to maintain a relationship (whether friendship, love or family relationships). For example, to maintain friendship, we can send greetings to our friends regularly on special festivals every year. Although friends may not often meet, and we may know nothing about each other's life, a greeting at a specific time can always bring warmth. Casual words and small acts can bring satisfaction and happiness to each other. I think people who are good at living and can find these. An utterly worthless person will pay no attention to these small actions; he may even think these things are superfluous. Happiness always exists in the rituals of our lives, waiting for you to discover and practice.

### **4. The Sense of Belonging in the Sense of Ritual**

The word "belonging" has a sense of solemnity and dignity. Belonging is not a simple place

where people live, or physical sustenance. If so, there will be no essential difference between man and other natural creatures. An important difference between human beings and animals is that human beings are spiritual pursuers. People want to experience spiritual enjoyment, such as the feeling of beauty, joy, belonging and security. People also need the sense of belonging in spirit, which cannot be obtained from a simple house or a luxurious living place. For this reason, we need to find a place for our soul to live in. "Home is where the heart is". "Home" is always our original starting point. No matter where we are, we always remember home. Actually, home is an Abstract noun. It can't be seen or touched, but we can never forget it. What do we remember in the end? In fact, what we remember are family members, the familiar flavor in the house and touching moments happened in our home. Home is the birthplace. It is the harbor where we grow up, and the place where we belong. Even if you are poor and have no furniture, you can't forget the familiar feelings and the sweet family time. As we grow older, we begin to miss the past. The older we grow up, the lonelier we feel. Even though we are rich, what impresses us the deepest are memories of tender feelings in our childhood home. People always show their sincere feelings in their memories. People always search their spiritual belongings in their childhood memories. Childhood families always carry certain rituals, which show parents' expectations for their children. For example, before the exam, parents always cook boiled eggs with chopped green onions, hoping that children can do well in the exam. Later, when we grow up, we suddenly feel that these stereotypes and practices are unnecessary. We abandon these rituals. But when we break away from the rebellion of puberty, we find that they are not old rituals or boring life segments, but the love of our parents. Only when we grow up can we feel their love, and regret that we did not cherish the boiled eggs before exams. As we grow older, we begin to miss the past. We miss these rituals in everyday life of our childhood. They constitute our childhood memories; they are full of emotions and belong to our spiritual world. Now we grow up but find that we have nowhere to go. Although we can cook boiled eggs with chopped green onions every time, we can't find the emotions and the spiritual satisfaction of childhood. Where does we "belong to"? This is a question worth considering.

## **5. The Sense of Identity in the Sense of Ritual**

A certain kind of ritual, especially a certain kind of ritual at a specific time point, can always arouse people's emotional resonance. But now we are often bored with life, because we do not value the fragments of life, and pay no attention to subtle rituals of life. Rituals should contain our identity and yearning for life. Now a popular topic is, "why the New Year festival becomes tasteless?" Everyone can tell the difference between the present New Year festival and the previous one. Indeed, the Spring Festival atmosphere is fading now. But now we have better material conditions. People should feel happier. They should have more pursuits in life, instead of satisfied with material pursuits. But we find that this is not the case. Material enrichment does not teach us to live, nor help us to enjoy the life. Nowadays, we treat specific events as ordinary things, and live ordinary life mechanically. We are all pushed forward under the pressure of life. Sometimes we are helpless; we even begin to get tired of life. Being tired of Chinese New Year is a good example. If you ask who doesn't want to celebrate the New Year, the answer will be young people. The society develops rapidly; we feel that festivals are insipid. Seemingly, we are bored about the festival; in fact, we are also bored about life. It is very difficult for us to find different meanings in the insipid life. We also live casually. It's hard for us to feel the joy of buying new clothes and enjoying New Year's Eve dinner. Life needs the recognition of identity. You need to recognize everything that looks insignificant. Although they are small, they can always bring us ripples in peaceful life. A person who has no identity in life will be bored about everything. How can he have a great love for life? How can a person who doesn't even love life identify with life? "If you want to enjoy art, then you must be an artistic person."<sup>[5]</sup> If you want to have an interesting life style, you should be the person who will create fun in life. You need to pay attention to every detail of life, instead of muddling through your life. Your attitude towards life determines whether you can find pleasure in life. If you hold indifferent attitude towards life and have no sense of identity, it is natural that life will not bring you any return.

## 6. Conclusion

In a word, the final foothold of sense of ritual is “sense”, which is the emotional experience of people when they participate in a series of ceremonies. “Sense” here cannot be simply attributed to human feelings. Its implication lies in the two-way interaction between human beings and the outside world, which can be physical or non-physical existence. “Emotion occupies the central place of all levels of social life, including micro, macro, personal, organizational, political, economic, cultural and religious activities”.<sup>[6]</sup> Human beings always have emotional reactions when participate in ceremonial activities. The emergence of the sense of ritual can brings us new desire for life, as well as expectations and feelings for the outside world, which encourages us to think deeply about our own value.

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