



 [IP--the art of absence](#) by Louise S. [2013, Jan 27]

Dear All,

It is my pleasure to share two attachments from Dr. Xuefu Wang.

The first attachment is a water scene, which made me wander about the relevance of such idyllic pictures and the existentialist psychology in China, which, according to Xuefu Wang, is supposed to “face squarely” the difficulties in life, blood, gore, and all. At first glance, I did not see any “difficulties” in life. Then I sensed an uneasiness in my gut, when I caught sight of the cormorants. I recalled Bashō’s lines:

so fascinating,  
but then so sad:  
cormorant boat fishing. (Bashō, 2004, p. 78)

Adams (2010) explains, “Fishermen would leash cormorants, put a ring around their necks to prevent swallowing, have them dive for fish, and then pull them back in to regurgitate their catch” (p. 58). The unspoken harshness of life seems to be misted over by these water scenes. I wandered why, until I opened the second attachment.

The second attachment has three “love songs” written by a contemporary Chinese writer, Han Mao (1955- ). The 3rd song concerns adult children not being able to come home to be with the aging parents-- not exactly a love song in the Western sense. The first one is especially moving. Here is my translation:

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#### Parting Song

Having accompanied you through this season,  
Our journey now culminates in a parting that promises no reunion.  
What shall I give you  
As a token to remember as well as to forget?

Not willing to let you take with you  
The love beads made of frozen tears;  
Nor wishing to tie you with  
The intricate knot woven with thoughts of sorrow.

Let me give you a strand of pure breeze--  
The flower that did not blossom  
Will never wither.

Let me give you a shard of white clouds--  
The candle that was not lit

Can never be put out.

The meandering road is disappearing into the forest,  
The autumn night that is now will never be again.  
From afar is heard a song without words;  
In the sky hangs a crescent insomniac moon.

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What transpires in these lines is this: That which is not said is more important than what is said; and that which did not happen is more impactful than what took place. Now how is psychology going to study that which did not happen? Heidegger said that (positivistic) science has problems with absence. This point is driven home here by the attachments.

Enjoy,

Louise

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#### References

Adams, W. W. (2010). Bashō's therapy for Narcissus: Nature as intimate other and transpersonal self. *Journal of Humanistic Psychology*, 50, 38-64.

Bashō, M. (2004). *Bashō's haiku* (D. L. Barnhill, Trans.). Albany, NY: State University of New York Press.

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 [恋歌三章](#)  [梦幻渔舟云水间](#)



 [Comment by Waseem Alladin](#) by Louise S. [2013, Jan 27]

Dear Louise and All,

My grateful thanks to both Dr. Xuefu Wang (to whom a warm welcome!) for sharing these moving powerpoint pictures and to you for taking the time and trouble in providing us with translations and for raising questions which I have also been concerned about. They say a picture is worth a thousand words but the question of absence can also be approached from a legal and a scientific viewpoint. As is commonly said the absence of evidence is not evidence for absence. In my undergraduate days I remember being fascinated by a paper entitled the "The intuitive psychologist and his shortcomings" where the author was contrasting a behaviourist approach to that of the intuitive approach by using Dr Watson and Sherlock Holmes in the well known dog that didn't bark incident. I guess in mindfulness meditation some may talk about the pause/silence between two thoughts, though some may argue that thinking is not necessarily linear and that we think at more than one level or thing at the same time, that metacognition (for want of a better term) is more the norma than the exception. Then we have the 'elephant in the room' that everyone present notices but pretends is not there. I will stop here before my sanity is questioned! :))

Best wishes and with warm gratitude

Akbar

Dr Waseem Alladin

Ross, L. The intuitive psychologist and his shortcomings. In L. Berkowitz (Ed) *Advances in Experimental Psychology*, Vol. 10, New York: Academic Press, 1977.

What transpires in these lines is this: That which is not said is more important than what is said; and that which did not happen is more impactful than what took place. Now how is psychology going to study that which did not happen? Heidegger said that (positivistic) science has problems with absence. This point is driven home here by the attachments.

 [Comment by Xuefu Wang](#) by Louise S. [2013, Jan 27]

Dear Louise and All,

Thank you, especially Louise, for the beautiful translation and introduction. Your committment encourages me and others a lot.

Sincere admiration!

Thanks also to reflection from Dr. Waseem Alladin.

Xuefu

 [Comment by Catherine T.L. SUN](#) by Louise S. [2013, Jan 27]

I am reminded of the beautiful 11th Verse from the Dao De Jing:

三十輻共一轂，當其無，有車之用。

埴埴以為器，當其無，有器之用。

鑿戶牖以為室，當其無，有室之用。

故有之以為利，無之以為用。

Thirty spokes surround the hub to make a wheel, but it is the space in the middle that makes the carriage usable.

Clay is molded to make a pot, but it is the space inside that provides use of the pot.

Doors and windows are cut out to make a room, but it is the space within that makes the room usable.

Thus turn what there is into an advantage, and turn what there is not into utility.

The translation is mine.

Best,  
Catherine

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