

The Chinese Universal Values and the Future Human Civilization

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I. Modernization, Globalization and Universal Values

- For the recent centuries, with the expansion and spread of Western civilization to the whole world, democracy, freedom, equality and human right have been accepted as universal values. Is Western civilization the only source of universal values? This question can only be made clear in the context of modernization and globalization.

So-called “modernisation” is not just something belonging to such fields as science and technology and economics. It is a process stirred up by the scientific and technological revolution that is revising the whole cultural system and changing its form.

Thus modernisation is a process from scientific and technological revolution to renaissance of tradition.

From history and the foreseeable future, the process of modernization in the world can be divided into four phases.

The first phase is the process of Western modernization.

The second is the spread of Western modernization to other civilizations, that is, the process in which other civilizations introduce and assimilate Western modernization.

The third phase is the modernization of other civilizations themselves; to be more specific, the modernization of their own traditions.

The fourth phase is the mutual adjustment, assimilation and integration of the major civilizations, including the Western civilization, which gradually forms a universal modernity.

The modernisation process of world scope is fully compatible with the globalization process.

The major civilizations in the world, whether it is Western civilization or other civilizations, are formed and strengthened in the course of history and have their unique style and profound culture, revealing the universal values in different culture domains. Thus, the different universal values from different civilization will play different roles in the future globalized human civilization, just like the process of the unification in ancient China in Qin and Han dynasties.

- In that process, Confucian, Taoist and Legalist thought, changing from local knowledge to general world knowledge.
- Based on their advantage, they played different roles in the different levels and areas of the united culture.
- I believe the same things will happen in today's globalization. In terms of culture advantage, if culture can be divided into spiritual culture, institutional culture and material culture, I think the advantage of Chinese traditional culture lies in the spiritual culture, while the advantage of Western modern culture lies in the material culture.

- As for institutional culture, the Chinese and Western civilizations are equal. If the modern Western politics is democratic, the Chinese traditional politics is aristarchy or elite governance.

II. The Chinese Universal Values and the Future Human Political Civilization

- Churchill ever said: “The democratic institution is very bad, but other institutions are worse.”
- A political institution better than democracy:
- (1) In terms of framework, a new political institution should be built creatively on the basis of the combination of the Western democratic politics and the East Asian traditional elite politics. During this process, the conception of “concentrating on rule of virtue supplementing by rule of law” 德本刑末 deserve our attention.

- (2) In terms of the politicians' qualities, the Confucian idea of "sagely inside and kingly outside" 内圣外王 should be adopted, just as Confucius said, "to rule is to set straight. If you give an upright leader, who will dare walk crooked." 政者，正也。子帅以正，孰敢不正？
- "if a ruler makes his own conduct correct, what difficulty will he have in governing? If he cannot rectify himself, what has he to do with rectifying others." 苟正其身矣，于从政乎何有？不能正其身，如正人何？
- (3) In terms of political strategies, it's important to learn from Taoism, especially the political conception of wuwei (to govern by doing nothing, noninterference) in politics.

III. The Chinese Universal Values and the Future Human Belief

- Spiritual culture:
- 1. Aestheticism
- 2. morality
- 3. belief
- Among these three aspects, belief is predominant and is the leading one. It determines the general style and direction of spiritual culture. There's no doubt that it is also the soul and the core of human's spiritual homeland.

- Belief can be divided into two kinds, namely religious belief and humanistic belief, or we can say irrational belief and rational belief.
- For most races in the world, religion is their belief. However, the Chinese belief system embraces religious belief and humanistic belief, with the latter as the main body.
- As for the Chinese traditional humanistic belief, it has unique advantages in modern society. Although religion still stands for the mainstream value of some nations, it has been greatly challenged by science.

- Christianity is totally denied by Darwin's evolutionism. In this case, religion will never be as prosperous as before.
- Men are spiritual creatures and belief is the core of spirit. Thus people cannot live without belief. How should we do? The only way is to carry forward and develop Chinese traditional humanistic belief or rational belief, and to reconstruct people's spiritual homeland.

- That is, with the advance of era and the improvement of people's ideology, the humanistic belief or rational belief factors in Chinese spiritual culture will become a growth point of spiritual belief in the future civilization.
- History will confirm that in the field of belief, the religious or irrational belief will become weaker, while the humanistic or rational belief will turn stronger and will ultimately become the human's mainstream belief in the world.

IV. The Chinese Universal Values and the Future Human Value Categories

- I believe that in the profound East Asian culture, there are numerous value categories. But, it's not so easy to list some representative ones because it is actually a matter of preference. For my part, it is a sound approach to refine the culture systems which can most reflect the East Asian value.
- There are four thought and cultural systems that can most embody the East Asian values:

- Zhouyi 周易 or *the Book of Changes* -- taihe 太和 (the great harmoniousness)
- Daoism -- ziran 自然 (origin-like, beginning-like)
- Confucianism -- renyi 仁义. ren: love, benevolence, humanity; yi: appropriate, righteousness.
- Buddhism--cibei 慈悲. Ci: bringing everyone happiness; bei: removing everyone's pain.
- As the Chinese core values, are taihe, ziran, renyi, cibei universal? We can classify them into two kinds.
- One is taihe and ziran, as is discussed above, embodying the cosmic laws. Therefore, there's no doubt that they are universal.

- The other is renyi and cibe, reflecting human nature, thus its universal value could not be denied either.
- It should be noted that the universal values from the Chinese civilization could supplement and correct the defects of the universal values from the Western civilization.
- East Asian and Western universal values belong to different value categories.

- Obviously, taihe, ziran, renyi and cibe are East Asian universal values that derive from different belief systems and belong to final values, while Western universal values like freedom, equality, democracy and human right can be attributed to common values like social values, political values, and etc.

V. The Chinese Universal Values and the Direction of China's Reformation

- Although the ancient China's world as an organic whole led to the weakening of localism, the cultural distinctiveness and innate character of the each region did not disappear.
- According to region, we can divide the culture of the time into many different types .
- Similarly, in the future globalized world, different regions will keep their cultural character, especially their values in a long time.

- At present, China is undergoing a large-scale cultural movement. This movement launches in two approaches. One is the revival of traditional culture, which is like Renaissance in Europe; another is full absorption of human civilization, especially western civilization. These two approaches interweave together, but it doesn't mean a simple integration of different cultures.
- Instead, it is a kind of new innovation on the basis of integration. This process is like the emerging of Neo-Confucianism in Song and Ming dynasties, which is created by Confucians who succeeded traditional Confucianism and fully absorbed the thoughts of Buddhism and Taoism.

- The guideline of this new culture's building is Zhongti Xiyong (中体西用), namely taking Classical Chinese learning as substance, and taking the Western learning as function.
- As can be expected, China will undergo a dramatic change after this movement.
- In politics, a unique political system will come into being by absorbing western democratic politics and at the same time reviving the wisdom of traditional politics.
- In culture, the structure of many in one(多元一体) of ancient China will emerge after reviving traditional culture and at the same time absorbing other civilizations, especially western civilization.

- Of course, in the future, beliefs of Chinese people are also multifold. But Chinese traditional Confucianism, Buddhism and Taoism will become the mainstay again. Christianity which is currently flourishing in China will be greatly restrained.
- However, the basic value system at the present stage in China includes two parts, one is state ideology which is Marxism localized in china; another is national value which is reformed Confucianism and traditional religion.

- The former is the guideline of governing the nation, which decides the political system of the nation and the policies of the development of the nation. It is for the needs of reality. The latter is the soul of the nation. It regulates ethics and morals, keeps the customs and habits, supports spirit and belief and maintains the sense of national identity. It is mainly for the extension of history.
- The main function of the former represents in the political area. The main function of the latter represents in the area of culture. It exerts a more profound impact on political life and has become the precious cultural resources of building political theory of socialism with Chinese characteristics.

- That is to say, the state ideology and national value play different roles and they supplement each other and both of them are indispensable.
- Of course, history will tell us that it is only a transitional solution. In the long run, the mainstream of the future Chinese civilization will be:
 - **Confucianism + Western democracy**

- The End