

The Elements of Ecological Civilization in the Basic Concepts of Chinese Philosophy

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Abstract

Chinese philosophy has always been characterized by focusing on concepts and their corresponding interpretations, many of which can have meanings or enlightenments beyond their specific era through different ideological interpretations. On the one hand, it is because Chinese philosophy itself has touched on certain ontological concepts of universal significance, such as "nature" and "deeply educated and change"; on the other hand, it is because it is a pre-modern philosophical culture, which contains some ideas that are opposed to contemporary modernity. This present paper is mainly based on this and manages to solve the four elements as follows: the proposal of ecological civilization and its basic logic, the ecological deduction of the concept of ontology in Chinese philosophy, the ecological enlightenment of value concept in Chinese philosophy, and the ecological value of the concept of practice in Chinese philosophy.

Keywords

Chinese philosophy, Ecological Civilization, Basic Concepts.

1. Introduction

Chinese philosophy has always been characterized by focusing on concepts and their corresponding interpretations, many of which can have meanings or enlightenments beyond their specific era through different ideological interpretations. On the one hand, it is because Chinese philosophy itself has touched on certain ontological concepts of universal significance, such as "nature" and "deeply educated and change"; on the other hand, it is because it is a pre-modern philosophical culture, which contains some ideas that are opposed to contemporary modernity. Thus, when people propose to surpass traditional industrial civilization and its modernity with the new ecological civilization in contemporary times, these ideas can just become elements that provide some reflections on modern industrial civilization. Actually, in traditional Chinese culture in which the Chinese philosophy is at its core, there are many unique philosophical resources to bring to the making of an ecological civilization, or providing some enlightenment for the creation of ecological civilization.

Chinese traditional philosophy is the product of pre-modern agricultural civilization, which though does not contain the direct environmental philosophy, but because of its different development thoughts comparing to the modern civilization, many of its philosophical elements can form a reflection and rebellion against the modern civilization. From the perspective of the relevant content in traditional Chinese philosophy, it has already involved people's perception of the external world of humans, as well as people's practice methods in it, and extended their value judgments on the external world. So generally speaking, we can say that there must be certain enlightening values for the construction of contemporary ecological philosophy, and the extraction of these values and the further abstraction of ecological deduction can precisely provide for the construction of ecological civilization theory many basic concepts and ideas.

Therefore, the time we are eager to create an ecological civilization beyond the modern civilization, lots of resources from the Chinese traditional philosophy make us very important enlightenment and positive value for the creation of this new civilized mode.

2. The Proposal of Ecological Civilization and its Basic Logic

According to the existing literature, the concept of ecological civilization was first developed by Iring Fetscher, a professor of political science at the University of Frankfurt in Germany, in his article "Conditions for the Survival of Humanity: On the Dialectics of Progress" published in 1978. It is proposed that "people yearn for ecological civilization is an urgent need. This civilization is different from the technological state mentioned by Schersky. It is based on the premise that there is a social subject that consciously leads this system. This kind of civilization depends on a humane and free way, not by a group of experts who serve to implement ecological dictatorship around the world, but only by the majority of people to fundamentally change their behavior patterns." [1] Thus the concept (Ecological Democracy) was used by the American scholar, Roy Morrison, in his work *Ecological Democracy*. Since the end of last century, the ecological civilization has developed into a popular concept in China from the national policy to the life concept. Synthesizing the different definitions and contexts of ecological civilization, it can be said that ecological civilization refers to a civilization that "takes ecology, nonlinear science, system science, and ecological philosophy as basic guidelines to seek the co-evolution of mankind and the Earth's biosphere. It is a civilization that consciously uses ecological knowledge, 'macro system perspective' and ecological wisdom to guide human production and life." [2] According to the understanding of many scholars, the ecological civilization does not just choose a dimension of ecological environment based on the modern civilization, but means the subversion and transcendence of the whole modern civilization, (the core ideas of modern civilization such as centralism, utilitarianism, capital and consumerism will be thoroughly questioned and subverted), which shows that it is impossible to develop a new ecological civilization according to the logic of modern civilization, but it is necessary to find out the elements of construing ecological civilization from those ideas which are quite different from the modern civilization. Therefore, ecological civilization follows a holistic and systematic logic. It believes that the development direction of civilization is to make its internal relations closer, that is, civilization does not develop from a certain center, in fact the elements are connected to each other, and the value of each element is fully highlighted, and the overall development is shown. It can be said that what ecological civilization shows is a kind of community civilization, which emphasizes the overall development and value presentation of the ecological community. This also means that ecological civilization believes that the various connections formed within its community are greater than any of them. A single existence is more important. It is in this sense that ecological civilization is also regarded as a civilization with a holistic tendency.

Of course, what needs to be pointed out here is that the concept of holism contained in ecological civilization is not to come up with an ultimate value that surpasses humans and other species early, but to form a new field of civilization, that is, to the greatest extent. Retain the diversity of value and the interdependence between different values, and then reconstruct the way of understanding and practice of civilization, so that civilization can continue to conduct self-reflection and self-development, so as to form the kind of sustainable civilization that we expect.

3. The Ecological Deduction of the Concept of Ontology in Chinese Philosophy

Just for that this is not only to overcome some shortcomings from the modern civilization, but also to reflect on and rebuild the civilization from the core concept. For example, to reflect on the ontology and value theory of modern civilization, to criticize its leading way of life and moral principles etc. With such a background, many concepts in Chinese traditional philosophy can become the effective resources for creating ecological civilization, which includes the unique concept of ontology, axiology, pragmatism, and even ethical and morality in Chinese philosophy. First of all, from the perspective of ontology, Chinese philosophy has not produced the dual opposition between "mind" and "matter". From the philosophical understanding of its formation, it does not recognize a natural environment that can strip the meaning of human beings or a person who lacks the natural environment. In other words, the ontology, or "fundamentality" set by Chinese philosophy is a whole that interacts with and interacts with human beings and their surroundings.

All things in the world, including the human-being himself, can only have reliable significance and existence for the existence in the whole relationship. Therefore, concepts such as "nature" and "environment" do not mean an objectified and instrumental existence in Chinese philosophy, but form a "life world" by interacting with human beings. Moreover, this kind of constitution is not a subjective setting by human beings, but a natural generation of the inherent essence of human beings and all things. By this way, Chinese philosophy rejects all kinds of centralism thoughts at the ontological level, and emphasizes holism and generationism, that is, the relationship between the human-being and the nature, and to ensure the overall stability and sustainable development of this relationship. Therefore, the thoughts of "harmony between man and nature" ("Heaven and Man Are One", seen in "Zhengmeng Taihe Chapter" by Zhang Zai) and "the Dao emulates nature" ("Tao Follows Nature", "Laozi·Twenty-Five Chapters") in Chinese philosophy can provide corresponding ontological support for the construction of ecological civilization.

Secondly, according to this ontology, Chinese philosophy avoids the dichotomy of subject-object value judgment in axiology, that is, it does not distinguish the so-called intrinsic value from the external value, and it does not treat the value of all things simply with the thinking of instrumental rationality. Chinese philosophy understands value more from the perspective of "the unity of matters and me". That is to say, value is not unitary, but pluralistic, not concentrated on one side of people or things, but must be produced in the interaction between them. Today, this kind of value can surpass the utilitarian value which dominates modern civilization. Because the interaction between man and nature is diverse and abundant, and this interaction will become more complex with the development of the times. With the continuous development and enrichment of this interaction, there will be multiple values, which can not be quantified by some utilitarian criteria. Therefore, instrumental value and utilitarian value cannot meet people's diverse needs, and the value concept of modern civilization needs to be transcended in this dimension. This is why in the construction of contemporary ecological civilization, we will find new values from many thoughts of "all things are one" ("All Things Are One", "Zhuangzi · On the Same Things") and "the Benevolent takes all things as one incarnation".

4. The Ecological Enlightenment of Value Concept in Chinese Philosophy

Thirdly, in the tradition of Chinese philosophy, value judgment is a very core and very interesting field. Because in this tradition, from the beginning, there was a clear direction, that is, favoring spiritual value and depreciating utilitarian value. Whether in the political field or in

the cultural field, the value of morality is often placed above the value of utilitarianism, and to a large extent, people are required to give up utilitarianism, material, and their related values when necessary. Thus, taking the above values as the criterion, it leads to the practice theory contained in Chinese philosophy, which emphasizes spirit but neglects material. The vast majority of Chinese traditional philosophers and thinkers believe that only through spiritual pursuit can we realize the multiple values of all things, and then the world unfolded by spiritual cultivation and spiritual experience can better reflect the value and significance of human beings. Therefore, in the value system of Chinese philosophy, people are required to reduce material demands and demands as much as possible, and to promote moral value as the main pursuit goal. Therefore, it can be seen that the concepts with higher value in Chinese philosophy are mostly "benevolence", "sincerity", "righteousness", "reason" and other concepts that require people to contribute, or we can say they are The subject is required to extend and give a certain value, instead of just including the external existence into the category of "usefulness" to itself.

Here, we might as well look at the ecological enlightenment of these values from the two core values of Confucianism. One is the core concept of Confucianism "benevolence", or "loving others". In the view of Confucianism, this is a value that can be extended from kinship to heaven and earth. This kind of "loving others" can be embodied in the practice of "fishing with only one hook, shooting just the flying birds", and it can also be expressed as "compassion" towards other life forms. In other words, in the Confucian values of "benevolence" and its practice, a specific care is projected for everything other than human beings. In the value system constructed on the basis of "loving others", not only can the world and everything find a specific level of value in it, but more importantly, these values do not exist in isolation, whether they are humans or involved in it. All other existences must obtain the final establishment of their value in the interaction between each other.

Second, it is possible to find out the ecological results that may be extended in the value choices of daily life from the "discussion from the reason and desire" in Confucianism. Although within Chinese philosophy, not all ideas will spare no effort to belittle "human desires," but most of them require people to "control desires" or "abstinence" to a certain extent. From this perspective, it is said that Chinese philosophy rejects the practice of materialism and consumerism from the root, stresses "lessening desires" and "controlling desires", and combines practical activities with the generation of all things to realize the spiritual realm of "praising the cultivation of heaven and earth" and "being in harmony with heaven and earth" ("Zhan Tiandi's Transformation Education", "The Golden Mean"). It can be said that this theory of practice provides another possibility for people's social life, that is, to improve people's quality of life through unproductive and non-consumptive practice, and to realize people's value pursuit. In this way, it overcomes the single way that modern civilization develops society by creating material needs and improving consumption efficiency, thus creating a new sustainable way of life.

5. The Ecological Value of the Concept of Practice in Chinese Philosophy

Fourthly, as we all know, one of the important characteristics of Chinese philosophy is ethics, and therefore, it also contains many elements of practical wisdom. These elements can not only be presented as specific ethical principles, but also can provide people with relatively concrete guidance in the specific life world. This diverse and contextualized concept of practice exactly meets the practical and inclusive requirements of ecological civilization. Thus, based on these basic characteristics of Chinese philosophy, the extended ethical principles also constitute the transcendence of modern civilization. For example, in modern civilization, emphasis is placed on individuals, rights, possession and difference, while in Chinese philosophy, more emphasis

is placed on relations, responsibilities, and mutual care and recognition. These ethical elements can form the basic ethical principles that support the ecological civilization by drawing lessons from each other with contemporary related ideas. For example, the sympathy for others in Chinese philosophy - "the not-endure mind" ("Unbearable Heart", "Mencius·Gongsun Chou Shang") can form a kind of care for nature through the combination of contemporary care ethics; the emphasis on the nature of human relations can be used for reference with community ethics, thus providing the corresponding moral basis for solving global environmental problems.

Looking further, the ethical practice emphasized in Chinese philosophy provides a practical concept that is very proper for the ecological environment. Combined with the value concept mentioned before, in traditional Chinese philosophy, the practice activities between man and nature that are respected are often introverted to people's spiritual practice. That is to say, in most Chinese philosophical thinking, practice ultimately points to people's spiritual experience, rather than realistic and concrete gains, that is, people are required to do their best to deal with the natural environment, to experience the kind of "natural morality." This also requires people to not only understand the natural environment as a pure resource or inanimate tool in the practice of facing nature, but must combine their own practice process with the movement of "seeking for the harmonious" that nature itself has. stand up. In other words, any practical activities that people face in the face of nature must contain a certain ethical and spiritual core. This also sets up a channel of spiritual communication between man and the natural environment, and the establishment of this channel is a foundation for the construction of ecological civilization. Ecological civilization itself needs to establish communication and interaction between man and nature, and if this communication and interaction is a benign process, it must be practiced on the spiritual level of mankind. Because, if man and nature can achieve harmony and unity in the practical sense, the most important point is that people can incorporate the natural environment into the spiritual world and make it the inner awe of the human spiritual world. In this regard, the specific concept of practice in Chinese philosophy and its contemporary inspiration to human practice can precisely become the basic principles for the realization of ecological civilization.

6. Conclusion

Of course, it must be noted that Chinese philosophy itself originated from pre-modern times, in which the ideological resources must be effectively innovated and properly created in order to be able to become the resources for the construction of ecological civilization. It thus inevitably involves a hermeneutic problem, that is, how to make these traditional ideas merge with modern civilization and construe ecological civilization, so as to form ideas with theoretical effect. This may be a more ambitious and far-reaching issue. From here, we can confirm that as a new form of civilization, the ecological civilization itself needs to constantly seek its own legitimacy basis and corresponding theoretical resources from the inherent logic of human civilization self-development.

References

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