The Concept of Environmental Sustainability in the Eight Trigrams and Sixty-four Hexagrams

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Abstract. Environmental sustainability has been widely concerned by most countries in the world and has become an increasingly important world problem. This paper used hermeneutics as its research method and took the concept of environmental sustainability contained in Eight Trigrams and Sixty-four Hexagrams as its research object. The research would be carried out from four aspects: (1) the concept of “the Innate theory is the theory of mind,” (2) Sixty-four Hexagrams, (3) Eight Trigrams and (4) environmental sustainability.

Introduction

Eight Trigrams and Sixty-four Hexagrams are the backbone of Chinese traditional culture. They not only contributed to the existence and development of the Chinese nation, but also made outstanding contributions to the invention of the binary of the computer by the famous German mathematician, Leibniz (1646-1716). Today, environmental problems have seriously affected human survival; so far, no effective solution has been found. It is necessary for us to discuss the concept of building environmental sustainability contained in Eight Trigrams and Sixty-four Hexagrams.

The Concept of “The Innate Theory Is the Theory of Mind”

The Sixty-four Hexagrams in the Figure 1 and the Eight Trigrams in Figure 2 that have been discussed in the system of the philosophy of the Book of Changes are considered by scholars to be innate diagrams or xian tian diagrams (xiantian tu); the philosophy that developed from Innate Diagrams is called Innate Theory or xian tian theory (xian tian xue).

Based on the concept that mind is the Supreme Ultimate, Shao Yong (1012-1077), a renowned philosopher of the northern Song dynasty (960-1126), believed that the Innate Diagrams were generated from mind and innate theory was the phenomenon of the mind or xinfa. Regarding this, the Supreme Principles that Rule the World reads, “Innate theory is the phenomenology of mind. Thus diagrams all arise from within it, infinite transformations and all things come into existence in the mind. Although the diagrams are without words, I speak all day without ever departing from the diagrams; this is because the principles of all things in the universe are fully expressed within them.”[1]

According to Shao, human mind which is “the essence of all phases of existence in their totality”[2] in the terms of absolute is calm, as still water, and free from deluded thought. Due to one ignorant thought, a defiled thought arises, an activity happens, the mind or “the Supreme Ultimate becomes differentiated, the two modes of yin-yang appear”[3] in the mind. The interaction of yin and yang generates Four Forms, which again produce the eight Trigrams. The eight Trigrams produces 16 hexagrams, these 16 bring into being 32, and 32 make 64 Hexagrams, and 64 Hexagrams generate all things in the universe.[4]

Sixty-four Hexagrams

Shao believed that there were supreme principles governing the universe. These principles could be discerned in terms of certain times, and the best known of them is the objective, that is, viewing things from the things perspective (yiwu guanwu). For viewing things from thing’s perspective, he
arranged the square eight trigrams, the square sixty-four hexagrams, the circular eight trigrams and the circular sixty-four hexagrams. The relationships of the yin and yang lines in the square diagrams represent the square’s creation of all things. The twenty-four divisions in the circular diagrams indicate the twenty-four solar terms. This can be seen in Figure 1 as follows.

![Sixty-four Hexagrams](image)

Figure 1. Sixty-four Hexagrams [5].

According to this diagrams, Spring Begins (lichun) – this begins on February 3, 4, or 5; Rain Water (yushui) – this begins on February 18, 19 or 20; Waking of Insects (jingzhe) – this begins on May 5, 6, or 7; Spring Equinox (chunfen) – this begins on May 20, 21, or 22; Pure Brightness (qingming) – this begins on April 4, 5, or 6; Grain Rain (guyu) – this begins on April 19, 20 or 21; Summer Begins (lixia) – this begins on May 5, 6, or 7; Grain Fills (xiaoman) – this begins on May 20, 21, or 22; Grain in Ear (mangzhong) – this begins on June 5, 6, or 7; Summer Solstice (xianzhi) – this begins on June 21 or 22; Slight Heat (xiaoshu) – this begins on July 6, 7, or 8; Great Heat (dashu) – this begins on July 22, 23, or 24; Autumn Begins (liqi) – this begins on August 7, 8, or 9; Limit Heat (chushu) – this begins on August 22, 23, or 24; White Dew (bailu) – this begins on September 7, 8, or 9; Autumn Equinox (qiufen) – this begins on September 22, 23, or 24; Cold Dew (hanlu), October 8 or 9; Hoar Frost Descends (shuangjiang), October 23 or 24; Winter Begins (lidong) – this begins on November 7 or 8; Light Snow (xiaoxue) – this begins on November 23 or 24; Heavy Snow (daxue) – this begins on December 6, 7, or 8; Winter Solstice (dongzhi) – this begins on December 21, 22, or 23; Slight Cold (xiaohan) – this begins on January 5, 6, or 7; Great Cold (dahan) – this begins on January 20 or 21.

Eight Trigrams

Thus, the principle of creation of environmental sustainability took its origin in the mind or the Supreme Ultimate in terms of the Eight Trigrams and can be viewed as follows (Figure 2).
“One mind” or the Supreme Ultimate was divided into two and thus produced Heaven and Earth. Heaven and Earth had the division of spring, autumn, winter, and summer, and hence produced the four seasons. The four seasons are divided according to the yin, yang, hard and soft, and thus produced the eight trigrams. When the Eight Trigrams assumed their proper order, the course of Heaven and Earth was thereby established and the symbols for thunder, wind, water, fire, mountains, and marshes were fixed. As to the distribution of their operations, Zhen 徵 in the east produces things, and its position in the year is that of the second month of the lunar calendar; Xun 鳳 in the southeast gives them dissemination, and its position is that of the fourth month of the lunar calendar; Li 禹 in the south gives them growth, and its position is that of the fifth month of the lunar calendar; Gen 既 in the southwest nourishes them, and its position is that of the sixth month of the lunar calendar; Dui 旅 in the west receives them, and its position is that of the eighth month of the lunar calendar; Qian 聰 in the northwest puts them into good order, and its position is that of the tenth month of the lunar calendar; Kan 安 in the northeast marks their termination and beginning, and its position is that of the twelfth month of the lunar calendar.

According to these principles, when Eight Trigrams further developed into Sixty-four Hexagrams, or more than Sixty-four Hexagrams, the entire transformations and all things came into existence, their certain times of day, hours, minutes and seconds can be viewed exactly in terms of the circular diagrams. The principles of myriad things of the universe are thus fully expressed by diagrams, although any explanatory text were not composed accompanying the diagrams, the transformation of all phenomena has never departed from them. Since the innate theory took its origin from mind, hence, it is called the phenomenology of mind.

Environmental Sustainability

According to above mentioned Eight Trigrams and Sixty-four Hexagrams, the principle of environmental sustainability includes three factors: the relationship between man and man, the relationship between man and nature, and the relationship between man and society. Human beings must maintain the harmonious relationship between these three aspects so as to maintain the sustainable use of human living environmental sustainability. Regarding to this, Tuan Zhuan, a commentary on the Book of Changes mentioned, “vast is the ‘great and originating (power)’ indicated by Qian! All things owe to it their beginning: - it contains all the meaning belonging to (the name) heaven. The clouds move and the rain is distributed; the various things appear in their developed forms. (The sages) grandly understand (the connexion between) the end and the beginning, and how (the indications of) the six lines (in the hexagram) are accomplished, (each) in its season. (Accordingly) they mount (the carriage) drawn by those six dragons at the proper times, and drive through the sky. The method of Qian is to change and transform, so that everything obtains its correct nature as appointed (by the mind of Heaven); and (thereafter the conditions of) great harmony are preserved in union. The result is ‘what is advantageous, and correct and firm.’ (The sage) appears aloft, high above all things, and the myriad states all enjoy repose.”[7]
Conclusion

The aim of the principle of environmental sustainability in Eight Trigrams and Sixty-four Hexagrams is to realize the basic nature of enlightenment in human beings mind through direct experience and insight into the true nature of things. During the ancient times, this principle had great influence upon Chinese people’s concept of sustainable development of the environment. Today, as environmental sustainability becomes more and more important, this principle will surely provide a useful reference for the construction of environmental sustainability again.

References


