Enlightenment to Modern Times from the Ethic Cultures in Zhou and Qin Dynasties

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Abstract: In traditional Chinese ethics, thoughts about ecological hold various points of view, with Confucian ethic cultures in Zhou and Qin dynasties as the most ancient cultural forms demonstrating a harmonious humanistic care to reflect the relationship between human and nature based on Confucian culture, which contains ethical philosophy that people and natural harmony coexistence and co-prosperity. The philosophical foundation and the spirit of the “unity of people and nature”, humanistic care of “brotherhood and sharing with all creatures.”, and moral education and practice of “limitedly and timely taking resources”; although these beliefs born in ancient times but still meaningful to environment pollution in the modern world, and the human and the nature harmonious construction are critical and persuasion, research on their connotation will help people better look at the relationship between human and nature, and modify our values and behavior, as well as send an enlightenment to the development of modern ecological ethics.

Introduction

To realize harmony between man and nature is the fundamental key of modern social development. After world war ii, the ecological environment of rapid deterioration seriously threat to human survival and development, ecology crisis become the focus of all mankind. Humans have to re-examine the relationship between itself and nature, have to rethink the way we live. People started focused attention on the traditional ethics in China, trying to look for construction of the paradigm and the methods of the harmony between man and nature. Many traditional Chinese ethics thoughts of ecology, with Qin Zhou Confucian ethics culture as the most ancient one showing a harmonious humanistic care and examining the relationship between human and nature in the light of Confucian culture, which fully contains ethical the philosophy of a coexistence and co-prosperity of people and natural. The philosophical foundation and the spirit of the “nature and humanity”, and humanistic significance of “brotherhood and sharing with all creatures” and moral education and practice of “limitedly and timely taking resources” are born in ancient times, but are meaning ful to world environment pollution in modern times and harmonious construction of the human and the nature. Researches on their connotation will help people better look at the relationship between human and nature, and modify its values and behavior, as well as the development of modern ecological ethics has important enlightenment significance.

I. Philosophy Basis and Spiritual Meaning of “Unity of People and Nature”

Core significant of ecology lies in how to deal with the relationship between human and nature. Modern environmental theory of ethics attempts to gradually build a path which is different from human centralism and the non-human centralism, namely "harmonious coexistence between man and nature". Traced back to the root, this concept is a basic idea of traditional Chinese culture, providing a solid foundation to take good care of nature. As far as in the Zhou dynasty, the ideology of "unity of people and nature" has become the mainstream of Chinese ethical philosophy. It functions as a world view and cosmology, embodying the highest spiritual ambit of life pursues, and the ecological ethical tradition in Zhou and Qin dynasties, reflecting an attitude of the harmony and
integration towards life. Not even one Taoist and Confucians classis does not present this important thought of "unity of people and nature". In Analects, Confucius said: "Heaven does not speak? Yet the four seasons, all things grow, heaven does not speak?"(Analects·Yang Huo), depicting the nature of the universe, "What a Great King Yao is. Only heaven and Yao is great and vast " (Analects ·Taibo ), which fully shows the even a saint must follow the rules of nature to achieve the unity between human and nature, and the universe as a whole. Although Confucius does not explicitly put forward the thought of "unity of people and nature ", in his works, he has put the relationship between human and nature as the researching target into moral horizon to investigate, and also explain it in the aesthetic vision. Confucius said: "the wise favor water, and the benevolent love landscape. From the perspective of Traditional Confucian, Heaven contains two meanings: one refers to nature", which has a kind of objective existence of natural law, seasons run, and all things grow. "the nature is in position, and everything is in prosperity." (Doctrine of the Mean·Heaven); " in long-time peace, livestock grow well, while when killing bursts, plants wither" ( Zunzi · Wang Zhi ). It is heaven that leads all natural phenomena and changes, including the natural ecology, and human activities should comply with the heaven and earth. At the same time, Mencius illustrates the concept of "credibility", the relationship between heaven and man and regards the following the laws of nature as a intrinsic pursuit for wise sages, "there is a way to achieve Honesty, and if one cannot understand what is benevolence, there is no chance to make himself honest, therefore, honesty is self-evident and the pursuit of honesty is obvious o." (Mencius · Li lou Shang). He also illustrates in his works with the example of Dayu harnessing flood: in accordance with the law is the practice of the wise, claiming people should behave in line with the law of heaven and earth, finally achieve a unity of people and nature. After detailed collection, we may find that idea of "nature and humanity" contains several layers of meaning: first of all, the theory of nature and virtue. “Classical Chinese remarks that : "Those sage behave following the law of the nature, the brightness of moon and sun, the order of seasons and the fortune of spirits" The laws of nature are in line with the virtue of man, and there is a unity of people and nature, with the virtue of nature the root cause of man's virtue. Mencius attaches great importance to the unity of people and nature, a supreme mentality of sage and gentleman, arguing that people's morality attributes from heaven, namely, it is heaven that bestows people benevolence, loyalty, rites and morality. Secondly, theory the nature of mind, heart and nature share something in common. Mencius said, Heart is the organ who can think, which will lead to benevolence, if not, we cannot be benevolent; therefore, heart is the most valuable organ that the nature bestow me."(Mencius · Gaozi) We will know about a person who takes full advantage of his heart and in this way, we will know about the nature as a response (Mencius · Gaozi ). Human nature integrates with heaven, with human’s talents and goodness deriving from the nature, and it is heaven and earth where man are born into, and only harmony coexistence between human and nature can integrate the nature of people and that of the heaven, to advocate loyalty, being considerate, universal love, taking good care of all creatures, human and nature sharing close relationship.

From the deep sense, heaven and human are highly harmony. Through understand the way heaven controls everything by moral awareness in spiritual, and apply it in their music rites and education. Therefore, "unity of people and nature" is a kind of essential spirit of ethical ecological dimension in Zhou and Qin dynasties, which contains the ultimate pursuit and humanistic care. The fusion of the heaven and human, to a certain extent provides the theoretical basis for the ethical relationship between man and nature.

II. The Humanistic Significance of “Brotherhood and Sharing with all Creatures”

Traditional ethics in Zhou and Qin emphasizes equality of all creatures and value orientation of following everything is created without equal. Zhang Zia remarks in his work Zheng Meng·Qian Zai: The Sky (Qian) refers to father, and the ground (Kun) refers to mother. I am a tiny live who goes on with them. Therefore, I regard everything in the universe as my body, the law guiding the universe as my nature. All people are my brothers and sisters and all things are my fellowmen." Heaven and earth are regarded as the root of human, people are each others’ compatriots and all
things between heaven and earth are their partners, so that heaven, earth, people, live together, constituting a harmonious environment. This provides an interpretation of concept, the traditional ethics of "nature and humanity" in Zhou and Qin dynasties will apply to practice as a humanistic care. This provides possibilities and reality for people to treat everything. People should not only love their compatriots, but more apply such mind to love everything, emphasizing the equality of all things, and relying on and coexist with all creatures. Meanwhile, "brotherhood and sharing with all creatures" embodies the equality of nature and human, which is not kind of anthropocentrism above nature, nor a fetishism misalignment value. This speaks high of the unique value and dignity of human as a rational being, and at the same time, affirming the natural equality and identity of all things, and giving a relationship of partner friend to the natural objects. This thought highlights the claims by the school of Confucian: order of the universe embodied in "heaven" kinship, love, and sharing, which is a kind of love and benevolence of harmonious ecological morality. All creatures are different with different intrinsic values, which is the realization of the overall value of tools of ethical culture Zhou an Qin dynasties, and there are no high or low for overall value, thus when Zhuang Zip in response to Dong Guzi about "Dao": "The Tao(way)embodies in everything, such as ants, worms, bricks and even in urine.” Traditional ethics culture of Zhou and Qin dynasties begets more emphasis on human society and nature symbiotic dependent harmony, and human and other creatures live together in this big family, as a part of mankind must love the universe, making their reach is all things without life complete and harmonious coexistence.

In the western equality of the traditional culture, there is a lack of such ecological values, as westerners believing human is higher than plants and animals, man is the master of nature, and all other natural objects are to provide human food and clothing live. traditional culture in Qin and Zhou dynasties, on the contrary, give a play to the initiative of the morality, which takes the ultimate concern of morality as value orientation, being all the creatures in mind, blessing all things, and creating a harmonious ideal moral world. People and creatures are shared with each other in life and emotions, with people giving their love to everything, which not only provides strong theoretical basis for modern ecological ethics, but also provides a theoretical support for morality.

III. Moral Indoctrination and Practice of “Limitedly and Timely Taking Resources”

Traditional cultures in Zhou and Qin dynasties view nature as a organic system, in which we advocate thrift and oppose to extravagance, an important traditional moral indoctrination, reflecting the moderation on material comforts and cherish of natural resources. The idea "making use of resources sustainably " take nature as a protection object, cultivating people to arrange their work according to the law of the natural seasons and the ecological order, and to require human not to go so far when exploring the nature for life, nor drain the pond to get all fishes. Instead, we should maintain sustainability of resources, ensure a balance of taking and giving while following the inherent nature of nature. Menci us points out the consequences from not working according to the laws of nature: " The woods in Mount Niu once was prosper, as they were far away from big cities. If they were cut down with knives, could they keep the prosperity? The woods which grow day and night and nurtured by rain drops are indeed burgeoning, but the herds of sheep and cattle. " (Mencuis·Gaozi)Taoism also underlines that " eating moderately and tailored dressing. " (Huai Nanzi·Jinshen Xun). Confucius also has points out: " If people split the stomach of animals to kill their babies, Qi Lin(an auspicious animal in traditional Chinese culture) by no means will come to them; if people catch fishes in append by running the water out, the dragon will not help them to harness water for a favorable weather; if people fall down the nest to get eggs, the phoenix will never bless them."(Shih chi·Biography of Confucians). All these above attempt to remind the ruler keeping the sustainable development of ecological resources, and only in this way can we achieve people's survival. Since nature is the foundation to the survival of human, only follow " limitedly and timely taking resources " can we achieve the harmony between human and nature, sustainable development. On the contrary, taking natural resources freely will bring mankind huge disaster, which has been confirmed by many ecological problems in Contemporary society. Moreover, ethnics in Zhou and Qin dynasties emphasizes taking resources based on time, following
the inherent laws of nature. “Following the four seasons and time” emphasizes the importance of "time". If the governance does not interfere with the farming season, there will be surplus grains; If catching fishes without fine-meshed nets, there will be enough fishes; if cutting down woods moderately, there will be endless firewood.” (Mencius·King of Lianghui). This is a similar view Xunzi holds in his works. Overall, this moral education of protection of the environment are of great theoretical value, and in the practical level, it also enjoys a high feasibility. It is developed on the basis of safeguarding the interests of the people, emphasizing the pursuit of "surplus grain", "surplus materials", and meanwhile, it also attaches great importance to the inherent law of nature, "neither kill the life of everything nor interfere their growing". The most important point of limitedly and timely taking resources is to achieve the sustainable development of natural resources and to keep the sustainably economic life, enabling people to live and work in peace and contentment by saving and following the natural internal law.

Industrial civilization brings in development and various greedy desires at the same time. People take resources from nature unrestrainedly, defy the laws of nature, and try to transcend the restrictions nature put on human, as a result, there are shortage of resources, ecological destruction and environmental pollution. The thought exerts far-reaching influence on the concept of environmental protection and ecological construction in contemporary society: on the one hand, we should meet the consumption arising from development needs, avoid damage during the development process ultimately and seek a healthy and sustainable development; On the other hand, we should also to cultivate and practice this traditional ecological moral philosophy, so as to make a harmonious coexistence and sound interaction between human society and nature. Overall, ethical culture in Zhou and Qin dynasties offers a practical resource of moral value for human living in modern ecological crisis. Only the development of the human is based on sustainable use of resources and protection of the living environment, can we follow the natural law, conform to the long-term development interests, and achieve a win-win situation between human and nature.

IV. Enlighten to Modern Times From the Ethic Cultures in Zhou and Qin Dynasties

Ecology thoughts of ethic culture in Zhou and Qin dynasties enjoy a profound connotation, which extends social and family ethics category into ecological nature and whose the spirit of “unity of people and nature” reflects the spiritual state of mind that heaven and human coexist, and humanistic care “brotherhood and sharing with all creatures” highlights moral obligation of equality of all things, harmonious coexistence, and coordinated development, moral education and the practice “limitedly and timely taking resources” advocates the harmonious ecological outlook of sustainable development, which derives from the generalized benevolence and awe of all creature from the mentality of understanding others with ones’ own idea. This philosophy is precisely what the contemporary human look for when suffering from punishment by ecology after enjoying rich fruits of industrialization and the painful experience to reconstruct the harmonious relationship between human and nature. This echoes with Ecology thoughts of ethic culture in Zhou and Qin dynasties, and review of this theory attempts to apply it into the construction of modern ecological concept and practice, and better build the Chinese dream and develop its cultural value.

Ecology thoughts of ethic culture in Zhou and Qin dynasties originates in the backward agricultural society, and it is the environmental situation at that time to comply with the solar terms and seasons. Without experiencing large-scale damage under the process of industrialization and technological excessive intervention, this thought emphasis on people's initiative, which has a certain historical limitation; therefore, it is necessary to make innovations and integration with the times when applying into the construction of contemporary ecological environment, with an ultimate goal to achieve ecological harmony. Specific aspects are as following:

First, the spiritual significance of “unity between people and nature” emphasize people should percep the way of nature with virtues in mind, extend a heart of love to the universe, which affirms moral subjectivity and initiative of human, as well as the nature that all things are created with equal value; however, this theory is sound in the theoretical level but difficult to implement in its practical level, thus, if we need it to produce the positive effect in modern society, we should arise the
enthusiasm of the people, strengthen national environmental ethics education, rise the idea of “unity
of people and nature” to a moral cognition level, and can reach a consensus on practice. Meanwhile,
we should expand knowledge science and technology and understanding to rules of nature,
perceptual ethics morals, so as to make outlook on morality of ethics in Zhou and Qin dynasties
underlining sensibility and technology and tools of natural ecology science being complementary.
Second, “brotherhood and sharing with all creatures.” points out the virtual direction of
ecological ethics, lays the ethical cornerstone to ecological civilization, extend moral and
humanistic care to the creature and nature, but it impossible to avoid a extension in accordance with
blood tie relationship. This care, to a certain degree, embodies the self-interest that human interests
are above everything which is its theoretical limitations. It may lack of necessary when applied to
the construction of contemporary ecological civilization, there must be added with a strong policy
support when we positive publicize and study the idea and punishing the destruction to nature.
“Brotherhood and sharing with all creatures” will be lifted as a kind of moral self-discipline,
gradually permeate into ideas of people, so that can make the moral idea gradually become the
reality, and achieve coexistence, integration and harmonious development between people and all
creature.

Last but not least, moral education and practice of “limitedly and timely taking resources” enjoy
a rationality on the theoretical level, and retinal essence of ecological aspect of traditional ethics of
Zhou and Qin dynasties, with the value orientation of rational kernel, its restraint, resource
conservation, sustainable take and consumption, being in line with the mainstream of construction
of ecological civilization and adhering to the scientific outlook on development. The development
of the industrial civilization has brought about a variety of greedy desires, with people taking out of
nature without limitations, defy the laws of nature, and try to transcend nature’s limitations on
human; therefore, the result is that the shortage of resources, ecological destruction and
environmental pollution and other ecological problems; in this way, this thought enjoys a profound
influence on concept of environmental protection and ecological construction in contemporary
society. The sustainable development theory internalized in “Limitedly and timely taking resources”
in ecological aspect of traditional ethics of Zhou and Qin dynasties is a reconstruction of the
Chinese traditional ethics within the ecological level, highlighting that development needs of
consumption should be met on the one hand, damages during the development process should be
avoided on the other hand, and ultimately seeking for a healthy and sustainable development;
additionally, we should also cultivate and practice the traditional ecological moral philosophy to
make the human society and nature harmonious coexistence and benign interaction. The idea
provides the basis in theory and practice for today's ecological environment construction, but must
rise it to national level and combine with the theory of ecological civilization construction,
improving relevant laws and policies, so that we could effectively seek ecological sustainable
development and achieve the harmony in human society.

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