



Value Discrepancy Between Chinese Collectivism and Western Individualism From the Daqing Spirit

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Abstract

The Daqing Spirit, narrowly speaking, stems from daqing. On a broad sense, it belongs to the Chinese nation. It is not only the precious spiritual wealth of the Chinese nation but also a part of the advanced Chinese culture. This kind of national spirit covers excellent ideas, noble characters and strong will, which is natured in the long development of adapting to a new environment. The orientation of individualism or the collectivism is one of the key points in understanding oriental and western cultural sense of value and is the important obstacle reflected in linguistic communication.

Key words: Daqing spirit; Cross-cultural communication; Value; Collectivism; Individualism

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INTRODUCTION OF DAQING SPIRIT

Daqing Spirit is the living extension of Chinese national spirit and its splendid light in the specific historic condition. It is an important part of the national spirit

with patriotism as the core and the time spirit with reform and innovation as the core spirit. Daqing spirit is also the reflection of the system of socialism core value the precious spiritual, political and cultural resource which remained in the Daqing's construction of socialism, represented by Iron Man Wang Jinxi. As an essential part of Chinese national spirit, Daqing spirit came into being without accident, whose connotation is the patriotism of bringing honor to the country, hardworking spirit of self- independence and self-reliance, the practical spirit of science and "three honests and four stricts", and the spirit of contribution in cherishing the whole and reducing the national burden, which is summarized patriotic, pioneering, realistic approach, and dedication.

"I would rather lose 20 years of my life and with all my might to build up the largest oilfield." This was one of the resounding slogans raised by Daqing Iron Man and is the real reflection of Daqing Spirit and Chinese sense of value. To be brief, Daqing spirit reflects the patriotic, pioneering, realistic approach, and dedication of Chinese sense of value and serving one's country with unreserved loyalty and exerting and striving hard without any let up in traditional culture, combined together.

1. CONNOTATION OF VALUE

In the more and more frequent cross-cultural communication, both sides often feel the strong cultural conflict among different peoples, such as the bright contrast between linguistic and non-linguistic behavior. However, both the unique communication mode and the specific behavior rules will be restrained and limited by native sense of value, which reflects the essence of national sense of value, as how Professor Hu Wenzhong put it in 1993, "the core value of culture is concept while the concept is not without foundation whose appearance and development is bound to the historic and cultural traditions" (Hu, 1993).

Okabe pointed in 1983 that “cultural sense of value plays an important role in communication whose fluency depends on the degree of the difference between their cultural senses of value” (Okabe, 1983). This gap-like difference is usually obvious in cross-cultural communication. Sense of value is the important engine in social sense, a part of the individual mental construction of every social member and is the choice and recognition to the subject of sense. Sense of value decides the social individual behavior choice while just as the brain can control man’s linguistic behavior, people’s sense of value leads to various national cultural differences. Therefore, to know the different national sense of value is the precondition of clarifying the various differences of language, society and culture, which will surely be the foundation of cross-cultural communication.

Sense of value is not strange for us but what is sense of value? Scholars have different understanding about its definition. “Sense of value is the mode made within the individual or group communication whose the inner most culture is that we everyone has sense of value.” Michael professor put it in this way while Geert Hofstede thinks in a brief way” It is the vague tendency to like this but dislike that.” In 1995, Samovar and Porter hold the opinion that sense of value is often ruled, telling people what is good or bad, what is right or wrong, what is true or false and what is positive and negative, deciding what is worth devoting to, what deserves protection, what scares people, what should be studied, what is to be laughed at and what makes us united. The most important is that sense of value leads people’s thoughts and behaviors.

In a word, “Every culture has its unique system telling people which behavior is expected and criticized by the society, what to love and hate, what is beautiful and kind, what is ugly and evil, what is normal and ridiculous, what is justified and not. Scholars call it the system or the sense of value” (Jia, 1997).

2. WESTERN ORIENTATION OF INDIVIDUALISM

Philosophically speaking, individualism is typical philosophy of western capitalistic politics and society with the characteristics that it highlights individual domination and self-control, government should protect individual interest and prevent anyone interfering and invading the interest. Individual value is the highest. Meanwhile, individualism is also a system of value that individual is the core of all the values who regards the society as a means and condition to achieve his goal and individual is the final aim. Morally speaking, individual is born equal and everyone has the right to live with his own willing. Socrates thought that living with others’ willing is morbid. Thus we can see that individual equality is both the core content of individualism and the common western

political rule. As the idealistic foundation of western sense of value, individualism reflects the fundamental nature of western sense of value within its every aspect.

2.1 Definition of Individualism

Generally speaking, individualism has general and narrow senses. General one is the individual-cored thought came into being with the development of capitalistic production relations and the combats against feudal oppression and thearchy governing after the Renaissance. The narrow one is the idealistic system and theory of individualism after its appearance and one of the western political and social philosophies. Coming into being in a certain cultural history of the west, individualism is not equal to self-cored and selfishness. Due to different national condition, there is different understanding on this point between Chinese and foreigners. Through the study of interview, research and analyzing the data of Chinese and foreign testees, Gao Yihong found that in most Chinese’s opinion, individual is opposite to collectivism and is similar to egoism and selfishness. “People living under the collectivism cultural background often regard the behavior of people who lives in individualistic background as selfish” (Triandis, 1991). However, foreign testees all think individualism is a positive word and have positive meaning. “Western individual includes a system of value, a kind of human theory and a kind of political philosophy.” pointed by Zhu Yongtao in 2002. From the aspect of system of sense, individualism thinks all the values are individual cored and individual itself is the final aim while the society is only the method to reach the aim; everyone is morally equal. Humanly speaking, individualism thinks anyone shouldn’t be used by the other as the tool to reach happiness. For a normal adult, the most satisfying point is to let him choose his aim and the method to reach his aim freely and set it into action. Thus it advocates that in behavior people should only care themselves and their own family and friends, fight against the authority and its domination of individual and require the government interfere their life as little as possible. As a political philosophy, individualism advocates that the main duty of the government is to maintain the law and the order, to protect individual interest and prevent anyone interfering and invading the interest, and to supervise the implement of the volunteer agreement. That is to say, the core content of western individualism is that people have the right and freedom to decide their individual life and future. In other words, everything is in the charge of myself. Individualism focuses that in the relationship between individual and the whole, individual is the standard, or individual is the starting point, core and the aim. The responsibility of the country and the society is to protect the individual interest. Among all the rights, freedom and equality are the fundamental ones. Therefore, the highest responsibility of the country and the society is to protect individual rights such as freedom and equality.

2.2 Origin and Development Process of Individualism

The pioneer individualism was dating back to the beginning of the Renaissance when there was some comment of humanistic ideologists. They stressed individual characteristics, dignity and happiness which reflected the sprout of individual thought. In 17 century, English famous ideologist Hobbes made the earliest comment on individual desire and happiness. He thought that in terms of nature, everyone only cared their individual interest and only fought for their own satisfaction and development of individual desire and happiness. In the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries' capitalistic Enlightenment, with the development of production capability and science and technology, individual thought moved forward. Adam Smith advocated individual freedom and free competition, and disagreed the government's interfere in personal economic activity. His thought was the economic foundation of that period. In a word, as a political and social philosophy, individualism is combined with the appearance of capitalistic mode of production.

Modern Renaissance and Reformation promoted the development of individualism. Human rights' challenge to thearchy is the focus point of Renaissance, whose people gained liberation and full development from the chains of dark ages, making the modern individual. Reformation's main contribution to individualism was that it confirmed the individual conscience and judgment. It lay the thearchy foundation of people fleeing from roman religion and swept the road to recognize individual. From Middle Ages to modern times, western individualism suffered a gradual liberation from the liberation of God's authority to that of human authority. God created individual and gave each the soul, which made the existence of individual had unique sense and gained him the individual rights. What's more, because we admitted that everyone was criminal before God, at least people with different social status shared equality at one time, their souls need the rescue of God and the final judgment. Everyone is equal before God, regardless of property, class and social background. Individual can keep direct touch with God through the Bible. Thus individual gained the strong sense of his own rights and responsibility. Under the support of the sacred mission, individual began to challenge the traditional authority in the later revolutions. In the revolutionary combats, western sense of individualism began to be founded and completed.

In western culture, sense of value stressing individual as the core is in the leading position, but only in American culture, individualism develops to the extreme. Some Americans even regard America equally as individualism. The author of *Rebuild American Dream*, Robert J Green said that when I say I love America, it means I love freedom and individualism." "Individualism is surly the

core of American culture." said Zhu Yongtao in 2002. American Encyclopedia thought that in America, the word individualism was first used by American naturalism philosopher Ralph Waldo Emerson dating back to 1835. Emerson stressed and recommended individualism and thought that it was useful to the personal development and social promotion as a positive spirit. Emerson's opinion was based on John Locke's concept that God gives human rights and individual is politically equal. To look back at American history, it is not difficult to find that individualism was together with America from its appearance on. In 1602, the first pioneers left Europe, travelled across the oceans and came to the deserted New World with the beautiful of religious freedom and happy life. They broke the former restriction and enjoyed the unprecedented freedom. But the rough living condition in the early ages forced them to be self-independent and self-reliant. In 1776, the new nation announced the breaking of the English constitutional monarchy and the restriction from the old religion. The national independence made American admire the individualism and new religious concept in the time of early pioneers. From then on, Americans believe in individualism and everyone pursue the realizing of individual value. American individualism includes three aspects: individual has the highest value, we stress individual democracy and freedom and we admit private property.

2.3 Reflection of Individualism

Independence is the positive reflection of western individualism, which can be seen in American Declaration of Independence: people who cannot tolerate English royal rough oppression, advocate a free and independent nation. Certainly, this was American people' desire for national freedom and independent nation. However, from the 200-year-process of America's history, American people's advocacy of individual independence is higher and higher. In the west, individual independence or individualism, in another way, freedom, the most valuable word in America, is the individual independent condition, which has an idealistic atmosphere of self- fight, continuous try and struggle. This typical American sense of value was completely spread and widely advocated in the western development and now is broadened into American everyday life. In daily life, Americans advocate individualism everywhere. Independence is one of the main points of individualism. Therefore, parents arrange their baby in a separate room after his birth and make him learn to be independent from early ages. The tradition and spirit of depending on oneself is transferred from generation to generation and influences the growing young, while the educational mode and rules of society, family and school shape their value of life. The older pay attention to their words and behavior, influencing the gradual ripe thought and opinion of the young, because they know that action speaks louder than words. Generally

speaking, when one reach his eighteen to twenty-one, he becomes independent economically and emotionally, thus depending on parents is not a glorious matter. Therefore, they leave home early and work for tuition depending on themselves. Meeting a company, beginning a career or living alone is not necessarily be agreed by the older. Similarly, parents do not influence children's privacy such as marriage, occupation and hobbies. On the contrary, children do not ask parents' choices, representing they are independent and mature. Between sacrificing freedom and depending on oneself, American will select the latter one without doubt.

Language reflects culture. English proverbs reflecting individualism are everywhere, such as all men are created equal. This announcement 200 years ago has become American's call for freedom and equality. However, in China, due to the thousands-year-concepts of feudal privilege, one's birth background and even birth place can judge his whole life, so someone owes his failure to his background without privilege. God helps those who help themselves. It emphasizes that everyone should depend on himself and be independent. In Chinese, in spite of the slogan of independence, we trust the collective power more, but not self-independence. The squeaky wheel gets the grease. It means that we should express our willing to gain our own interest.

Besides the proverbs reflecting individualism above, Americans also create lots of words reflecting this main cultural sense of value, such as self-made. Abraham Lincoln came from a poor family and finally reached the president position through his struggle and hardworking, who is the top example being self-made. Words like self-reliance, self-awareness, self-centered, self-esteem, self-dependence and self-fulfilling came into the readers' eyes. According to statistics, words with the prefix of self are over 100 in English dictionary. Compared with English, Chinese words with self are more negative, such as self-advertised, self-expression, self-shift, self-laugh, self-enjoy and self-admire. However, with the increasing of communication between the west and the east, we believe that Chinese words with self will reduce their negative meanings. According to Report on the Consumption and Living Condition of Chinese Undergraduates in 2004, independence and multielement have become the key point in understanding modern undergraduates. Thus words like self-advertised, self-expression and self-centered have some positive meanings in some situations. Meanwhile, because individual sense of value stresses to respect and protect private space and life, American create special words and sentences to describe the disgusting ones who like to overhear others' privacy, such as poke one's nose into other people's business; meddle in other people's affairs; keep your big nose out of my business; mind your own business, and especially that a man's home is his castle, which was from English proverb that my

home is my castle. When you learn English, you should pay attention to the difference between Chinese and American privacy. In America, what is privacy is Chinese care to others, such as where are you going? Or where have you been? This will make Americans uncomfortable and Chinese asking about others' occupation, income and marriage which is American privacy, is intolerable. American cannot tolerate Chinese shared bathroom, which they think is the most serious harm to privacy. Only understanding the importance of privacy to American, can we truly know its connotation and avoid linguistic errors in cross-cultural communication.

3. ORIENTAL ORIENTATION OF COLLECTIVISM

China was built on the agricultural economic foundation and highlight family and kinship. We have strong sense of belongs to group under the idealistic influence of harmony between man and nature, thus collectivism appears.

Social group is regarded as the final clue of producing all the values and the final subject of producing cultural value. All the individuals can realize his own value only when he meet the requirement and interest of the group. We cannot gain recognition without put all the valuable to individual into the value system of the whole group. Individual is not independent subject of value and has no independent position in weighing and commenting value.

We can see that collectivism puts interest of the whole in a higher place than that of individual and individual characteristic, dignity and value is insignificant and incidental. Patriarchal clan system, kinship and natural affection as the umbilical cord, Chinese traditional culture emphasizes the restriction to characteristics and cultivation of group personality, so piety and loyalty which belongs to God is the core of traditional cultural sense of value. Individual can only regard piety and loyalty as the rules and find his position in family and kinship. Chinese value what others think and prefer ethics which is the relationship between people to individual, which indicates that Chinese traditional culture recognize individual in the relationship between people.

Individual is included in the group and only when the society develops and stays permanent, individual can gain the most interest. Oriental morality stresses that relatives and friends should be combined to one point. This collective idea has direct relation to ancient agricultural culture. They lived in the same area for a long time peacefully and needed and helped each other, which gave them strong sense of group. Harmony between man and nature would surly made the orientation of the group just as separation would result in individualism.

Obviously, the main feature of Chinese culture is to stress collectivism and to look down upon individualism. Many scholars sent articles to comment on this problem.

Li Zonggui pointed that politically speaking, it reflected the chain-relationship among individual, family and the nation; culturally, it showed tolerance, difference and recognition of common cultural spirit and source; morally, it represented that we should obey the interest of individual, family, nation and the whole society gradually and sacrifice individual or partial interest when necessary to protect the group interest, putting the interest of the whole above everything else. Qian Xun from Tsing Hua university analyzed deeply the relationship between traditional thought and collectivism and pointed that collectivism calls for replace interest with morality, prefer the group to individual, and we should sacrifice for the country and the nation selflessly, stressing to the co-existence of individual, group and the nation, and the difference between individual development obeying social development and traditional oppression and neglect to personality. Chinese owe their achievement to their parents and people who have helped them without too much arrogance. When we take action and make a choice, we often think about others' interest. We can gain enlightenment in Confucius' words that give others what you want and tell others what you want. Triandis pointed in 1991 that in the collective surroundings, we emphasize harmony, face and the male privilege in a family.

Group-cored collectivism has its positive meaning as traditional Chinese culture. From the positive aspect, Chinese are modest, cautious and cooperative, speaking highly of collectivism and patriotism, which is Chinese diffidence, connotation, silence and tolerance. Because of emphasis on the whole, Chinese culture has strong living power and combination, good adaption and transition, making Chinese culture the only uninterrupted ancient civilization. China's long unity and permanency should be owed to the influence of group-cored collectivism. From the negative aspect, group orientation makes people lack of power and competing sense of advancement, because we have dependence on others. For example, in a family, there is a complementary effects hid between the old and the young. The old tell the young what they should do and what should not; the young will ask the old for advice before making a choice; choosing a university, an occupation and even a company, the young would make the old satisfied. The old will intervene in the young's

privacy. More common phenomena are that the young depend more on the human resource of the old to take a good chance, such as a good job or a good house. They stress too much on the relation and even depend and cooperate with each other in every field. Many people make gain the relation the philosophy and life guidance. Because we stress much on self-compression, foreign scholars think Chinese culture is I-less culture.

CONCLUSION

50 years of entrepreneurial road, generations of people to serve their country, the Daqing oil field has been advancing together with the homeland no matter wind or rain, not only created amounts of oil, but also formed a "patriotism, pioneering, truth-seeking, dedication" spirit of Daqing. a value discrepancy showed obviously from this spirit of Daqing: that is, the Chinese collectivism and western individualism. On the foundation of admiring the whole, oriental culture emphasizes the harmony and achieving common goals of the whole and the protection of the group. Therefore, regarding the group as the subject of value, Chinese traditional culture makes a society-cored system of value. Ont the other hand, cored in individual, individualism is the idealistic foundation and standing point. They mainly believe that everyone has value and they highlight individual freedom and stress individual domination, control and development. In a word, western sense of value is individual-cored living philosophy.

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