

On Wang Enyang's Dharmalaksana Confucian Thought

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Abstract

The famous modern Dharmalaksana scholar Wang Enyang's Confucianism is a Dharmalaksana Confucianism. He takes the original theory of Alayavijnana as the basic principle, reconstructs human nature and heavenly law in Confucianism, clarifies the Confucian disposition theory where goodness opposes evil, and reinterprets the theory of heavenly law in Confucianism. His interpretation of Confucianism takes Dharmalaksana as the supplementation, life science as the aim, mutual interpretations between Confucianism and Buddhism as the basic form, has a great significance. Its significance is mainly reflected as the transcendence of quietism of the Song and Ming Dynasties returned to forceful Confucianism, and the transcendence of mutual interpretations between Confucianism and Buddhism dominated by Zen and idealist philosophy of the Song and Ming dynasties improved to Dharmalaksana method and original Confucian mutual interpretations between Confucius and Mencius.

Key words: Wang Enyang; Xiong Shili; Dharmalaksana school; Debate between Confucianism and Buddhism

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INTRODUCTION

The revival of modern Confucianism is intertwined with the revival of Dharmalaksana school, forming two ways

to the development of Confucianism. One is the Dharmalaksana Confucianism represented by Ouyang Jingwu of Zhi na nei xue yuan and Wang Enyang, the other is the modern Neo-Confucianism developed from Buddhism. Wang Enyang is the typical representative of Dharmalaksana Confucianism, a sharp and acerbic critic for the rise of modern Neo-Confucianism, regarded as the hub of the two way's unification. Academic attentions are not much in this regard. Mr. Qiao Qingju once made an in-depth discussion on Wang Enyang's comments to Feng Youlan's neo-Idealism (Qiao, 2008). The author also took the debate between Wang Enyang and Tang Junyi as a clue to compare Idealism and Buddhism of the Song and Ming Dynasties (Wang, 2011), and sorted out the basic content of the debate between Wang Enyang and modern Confucianism and Buddhism (Wang, 2014). However, it can only be considered that Wang Enyang has been known to the world by taking advantage of Neo-Confucianism rather than by the achievements of himself. Based on the formation of Wang Enyang's Confucian thought, its learning relation to modern Neo-Confucianism, the logic system of Dharmalaksana Confucianism, and the critiques on modern Neo-Confucianism, this article has made a more comprehensive summary and generalized the significance to Confucian development.

1. WANG ENYANG'S LEARNING THINKING PROCESS

Wang Enyang (1989-1964), also called as Huazhong, born in Nanchong, Sichuan, the famous modern Dharmalaksana scholar, the typical representative of carrying forward both Confucianism and Buddhism. Yu Lingbo appraised him as "Wang Enyang has learned extensive knowledge home and abroad, and is specialized in Dharmalaksana method...His accomplishments in Dharmalaksana study enable him to be the first person under Ouyang master." (Yu, 1995, p.606) His Dharmalaksana study has been widely recognized by the

academia, and the discussions of *Faith in Mahayana Theory* can not be separated from his famous work *Comments on Faith in Mahayana Theory*. However, his Confucian thought has not gained much attention from the academia. Actually, Wang Enyang's Confucian writings account for more than half of all his works. He has made writings on the Confucian representatives of Confucius, Mencius and Hsun-tzu of the Pre-Qin Period, written new commentaries to *Analects of Confucius*, *Mencius*, *Book of Songs* and *The Great Learning*, written the tetralogy of *Life Science* and *Confucian Revival Theory*, with more than 1 million words collectively. For his purpose of learning, he summed up as "study Confucian and Buddhist documents extensively in order to differentiate the subtleness" (Wang, 2001, p.527). In his view, Confucianism of the Song and Ming Dynasties is the Confucianism transformed by Zen, and is not the true Confucianism; Confucianism should return to Confucius and Mencius Confucianism to clarify the orthodox. Meanwhile, Confucianism should refer to the profound Dharmalaksana method in order to exhibit the subtleness. Thus, in addition to the profound Dharmalaksana study and criticism of Buddhism in China, Wang Enyang is also committed to the rejuvenation and reconstruction of Confucianism. His learning began in Idealism of the Song and Ming Dynasties, made some achievements in Dharmalaksana method inherited from Zhi na nei xue yuan, and finally attributed to carrying forward both Confucianism and Buddhism based on mutual interpretations of Confucianism and Buddhism and interpreting Confucianism by Buddhism.

In the process of Wang Enyang's construction of Dharmalaksana Confucianism, he has been benefited the most from Liang Shuming and Ouyangjingwu. Liang Shuming is the famous modern Neo-Confucian scholar known as "China's last Confucianist"; Ouyangjingwu is the most important master in the revival of modern Dharmalaksana method.

In 1919, Wang Enyang studied in Peking University. He confirmed Confucian belief by the influence of Liang Shuming, and started to learn Buddhism by the guide of Liang Shuming.

At that time, his Confucian thought was not mature enough. He advocated the Confucian theory of emotionalism. Emotion is the nature of the universe, which develops to generate matters, spirits as well as the universe. Emotion has four characteristics, namely communication, love, action and life. Communication refers to the communication between oneself and the others. Love refers to the mutual compassion between oneself and the others. Action means that emotion causes action. Life means that emotion helps create achievements. The highest state of life is to display emotions without reservation. The so-called display of emotions is to resume the origin of the universe. Emotion is reflected in the human nature theory, namely the so-called goodness is the emotional nature of communication, love, action and life.

Wang Enyang later called such claim as the theory of displaying emotions, theory of salvation or idealistic monism, and even the later neo-Confucian founder Xiong Shili's *New Dharmalaksana Theory* was also not much better than this. He said the theory of displaying emotions "is in line with the doctrine of honesty of the Mean, and accords with the Buddhism of Tiantai Sect and Xianshou Sect. Even the writer of *New Dharmalaksana Theory* (according to the author, here referring to Xiong Shili) is not better than this". He also said, "this proposition is not short of proposers, and another proposer in this regard (referring to Xiong Shili) after my study of Dharmalaksana Buddhism has not had a through and mature thought as mine" (Wang, 2001, p.465).

The thought of displaying emotions does not cease with Liang Shuming's approval, which makes Wang Enyang reflect on the differences between ontology and the theory of origin. The Buddhist theory of origin fundamentally negates any real selfness, including the body in the sense of universe formation theory, "ren wo" of self-identity and "fa wo" as the foundation for existence. The theory of the original advocates that there is no dominance. Everything originated in no dominance has a causal inevitability, this state is emptiness. Therefore, the relationship between emptiness and origin is not the relationship between body and phenomenon, and there is no entity called as emptiness. Judging from the historical origin of Buddhism, primary Buddhism is a model committed to criticize Brahma-atma-aikya fatalism and nihilism of nature theory; from the origin of Buddhist teachings, theory of origin is the cornerstone of state, cultivation and result. Once established theory of origin, Wang Enyang has grasped the differences among Buddhism, Western philosophy and Confucianism. Later, Wang Enyang also firmly refuted the Confucian and Buddhist thoughts based on "ontology origin theory".

Thereafter, recommended by Liang Shuming, Wang Enyang has studied after Ouyangjingwu in Nanjing Zhi na nei xue yuan for seven years. During the period, He has written *Comments on Faith in Mahayana Theory* to criticize on the sinicized Buddhism represented by *Faith in Mahayana Theory*. Wang Enyang's criticism has caused great controversy within the Buddhist circles. However, I hold that the criticism on *Faith in Mahayana Theory* is not simply a debate within the Buddhist circles, but a comprehensive reflection of Dharmalaksana on Chinese ancient philosophical thinking of ontology, "awakening human nature" of disposition theory (according to Xiong Shili) and theory of cultivation advocating quietness and intuition. The flames of controversy have soon burned in Confucianism and become a debate between Confucianism and Buddhism. The typical representative is Wang Enyang's criticism of Xiong Shili and Tang Junyi, and the debate between Lü Cheng and Xiong Shili on the discrimination of quiet human nature and awakening human nature. His criticism on sinicized Buddhism and modern Neo-Confucianism

owns a common logical foundation and a "consistent principle".

In the 1930s-1940s, Wang Enyang returned to Sichuan and founded Guishan Study and Oriental Institute of Education in Sichuan and Chongqing to advocate Confucianism and Buddhism. As a Dharmalaksana scholar, however, he distinctively stated his schooling purpose to be "the tenet of Confucianism and Buddhism". In his view, Buddhism is to learn the truth of reality, and Confucianism is an indispensable complement to practice Buddhist truth in secular life.

Buddhism is to learn the truth of the universe, Confucianism is the guideline for the conduct of life. Travel to the world to obtain a wide range of new knowledge. Pay equal attention to cause and effect and reconcile by moderation. The principle of study is to have a honest attitude, study assiduously, pursue no fame and wealth, not afraid of hardship, and be indifferent to interests and fame. (Ibid., p.510)

He has written the tetralogy of *Life Science*, *The Righteousness of Confucianism*, *Vimuttimaggā* and *Big Buddha Theory* of direct life, advocating to comprehensively study Confucianism and Buddhism to conduct in society, to liberate and to transcend the cycle of reincarnation. His integral combination of Confucianism and Buddhism has thoroughly interpreted the Confucian doctrine of virtue in mind with the delicate Dharmalaksana method, and directed the Confucian doctrine of positive in action with Buddhism. Taking into account his identity as a Dharmalaksana method scholar, his Confucian writings of up to collectively 1 million words are really huge.

Wang Enyang has a close relationship with modern Neo-Confucianism, and has a unique view to this new approach of interpreting Confucianism. He has learned from Liang Shuming who is known as the last Confucianist, was a classmate of Xiong Shili when studied in Zhi na nei xue yuan, and was a friend of Tang Junyi who was studying in Central University. Around 1940s, the presence of Xiong Shili's *New Dharmalaksana Theory* vernacular version, Feng Youlan's *Neo-Confucianism* have marked the official debut of modern Neo-Confucianism. The modern Neo-Confucianism advocated by Tang Junyi and Mou Zong, etc. was still under deliberation. Wang Enyang was quite sensitive to this. He published *A Commentary on Neo-Confucianism*,¹ *On the Thought of Neo-Dharmalaksana Scholar* and other long articles to criticize Feng Youlan and Xiong Shili; Meanwhile, Wang Enyang had a dialogue with Tang Junyi on the comparison of Confucianism and Buddhism. Tang Junyi's *A Brief Introduction to Neo-Confucianism of the Song and Ming Dynasties* and *According to Zhuxi's Li First and Qi Next*, *A Discussion on the Theory of Entitlement and Theory of Existence* have requested Wang

Enyang's criticism. Wang Enyang made a long article to comprehensively refute Tang Junyi's comparative view on Confucianism and Buddhism of Neo-Confucianism of the Song and Ming Dynasties. Additionally, while criticizing Tang Junyi, Wang Enyang wrote another long article of 27,000 words *On the Evolution of Confucianism throughout Ages and the Necessity of Rejuvenation of Confucianism* (Part One) to summarize the evolution of Confucianism and its problems. After about half a year he wrote another long article of 63,000 words *A Discussion on the Rejuvenation of Confucianism* to elaborate the internal logic to resolve the Confucian doctrine of virtue in mind with Dharmalaksana method.

2. THE COMPATIBILITY BETWEEN DHARMAKSA AND CONFUCIANISM

Wang Enyang's Confucianism has a style of his own, which is different from the thought of his teacher Ouyang Jingwu. Ouyang Jingwu advocated the thought of unity of Confucianism and Buddhism in his old age, advocating that Confucius and Buddhism are consistent ontologically and "quiet in human nature". He is different Liang Shuming, who mainly criticizes Confucianism from the perspective of culture and philosophy, displays a intuitive thinking based on secular Confucian benevolence and intuition. He is also different from his fellow modern Neo-Confucianist Xiong Shili, whose *New Dharmalaksana Theory* still reconstructs Confucianism within the framework of theory of Ti and Yong. He is also different from later Tang Junyi, who reconstructs Confucianism from the perspective of mood theory and moral metaphysics. For Feng Youlan's inheritance of Cheng-Zhu Neo-Confucianism, he has firmly opposed.

The characteristics of Wang Enyang's Confucianism are: Firstly, bypass Neo-Confucianism to explore the origin of primary Confucianism of Confucius and Mencius. Secondly, reject Confucian ontology of heavenly law. Thirdly, pay attention to the consistency of human nature and heavenly law, and the so-called consistency is to link up with a logical method of origin theory. Fourthly, Confucianism is a secular science of conduct in society, is a prerequisite of Buddhism and a necessary means to take the consequences. Overall, Wang Enyang reconstructs Confucian human nature and heavenly law with Dharmalaksana origin theory of Alayavijnana, including disposition theory and ontology.

Wang Enyang has long concerned about the Confucian theory of human nature, and later he found that there is an inherent contradiction in the theory, where goodness of human nature and evil of human nature are difficult to reconcile. Mencius advocates goodness of human nature, Hsun-tzu advocates evil of human nature,

¹ August 1943 Oriental Institute of Education 1st stereotype edition, 1947 reprinted by adding postscript and the reply to Fung Yulan. 3rd class of Oriental Institute of Education series

and the doctrine of mean advocates the destiny of human nature. Neo-Confucianism of the Song and Ming Dynasties holds the division between destiny and human nature, and even introduces the concept of “heavenly law” to strengthen goodness of human nature. However, these still do not resolve the inconsistency of theories of human nature. Among them, the main problems are: Firstly, goodness of human nature has a form basis, but evil of human nature has only experiential basis, so the logic is inconsistent. Goodness of human nature and evil of human nature should both have sources from origin and ontology. Secondly, the reality and performance of human nature have contradictions. Confucianism holds that the reality of human nature is only one, but its performances are many, which is called as “although things are significantly different, their realities are substantially the same”. But how can a real generate divergent performances and why do divergent performances attribute to a particular reality eventually? The divergent performances should have the same nature with the reality, so why the reality is capable to generate good and evil performances? (Wang, 2001, p.10) It’s really hard to explain.

It should be said that Wang Enyang’s two questions carry much weight. As a philosophical school, Confucianism should have a coherent use of basic principles. If the significances of the concept of human nature are coherent, it is not allowed to draw two diametrically opposite judgments. If the concept of human nature contains priori or experience advocated by the subsequent modern Neo-Confucianism, it will make the error of inconsistency of basic principles. Similarly, if we stick to the unification of Ti and Yong on reality and performance, reality and performance should have a unified nature. If every reality corresponds to a performance, then every performance should have a source of reality, therefore the “performance” of goodness can not be extracted as the sole interpretation of ontology, ignoring the interpretation of “evil”. From the perspective of traditional philosophy and logic, theory of human nature has nothing more than the four circumstances: Human nature is good, human nature is evil, human nature is either good or evil, human nature is neither good nor evil. How to get out of the four circumstances and the Confucian inherent contradiction? Wang Enyang introduces the Dharmalaksana Alayavijnana caste theory.

Dharmalaksana theory believes that everyone is roughly equivalent to a Alayavijnana, and everyone has his benshi and a universe “transformed” by benshi. Alayavijnana is a spiritual warehouse called as Cangshi which contains spiritual seeds. These seeds are latent, potential, and will be “manifested” as realities when meet appropriate opportunities. Seed and manifestation are interchangeable. Seed can be manifested when meets an opportunity, and manifestation can change to be seed by

constantly learning Alayavijnana. This is called as “seed and manifestation are interchangeable by learning”.

How can Alayavijnana caste theory clarify the Confucian theory of human nature and not fall into the four circumstances? Firstly, if there are many seeds, there will be many manifestations. Secondly, the nature of seed and nature of manifestation are necessarily coherent. Good seed generates good manifestation, evil seed generates evil manifestation. These two points ensure the logical consistency of body and function. Thirdly, seed and manifestation can be converted to each other, which ensures the conversion between nature and habit. Fourthly, seed is functionally potential and has the ability to produce goodness and evil, so it is not neither good nor evil; Seed is latent and potential, so it can co-exist in Alayavijnana without conflicts with others (Wang, 1999, Vol.1, p.644).

Anyway, Wang Enyang’s Dharmalaksana theory of human nature introduces the theory of origin and manages to be logically consistent. So what is the relationship between theory of human nature and ontology of heavenly law? Wang Enyang’s approach is to use the theory of origin to make further reasonings.

Heavenly law and destiny are the realities of Confucianism. *Doctrine of the Mean* states that “destiny is human nature” to establish such an attribute. Heavenly law is the basis of human nature, and is the ultimate state for people to study human nature and then recognize the law of nature, namely understand life and worship heaven. Wang Enyang holds that ontology of heavenly law is simply untenable. Firstly, if heavenly law is the reality and origin of the world, then what is the origin of heavenly law? Secondly, if one reality can have significantly different performances, there will also be a problem in logic. Thirdly, if time theory means returning to origin, there will never be a possibility to get rid of distress.

It should be said that the three questions of Wang Enyang are not entirely unfounded. For the Confucian theory of heavenly law and theory of destiny, Neo-Confucianism has two approaches to interpret. The first is to be metaphysical, and the other is the source of morality in mood theory. Xiong Shili’s commentary on closure and openness of reality belongs to the former; Xiong Shili’s “conscience is to be manifested”, Tang Junyi’s “destiny and heavenly law are a state of mind” and Mou Zong’s three moral metaphysics belong to the latter. Wang Enyang firmly opposes to interpret heaven as the metaphysical heaven in ontology. From the perspective of theory of universe generation and ontology, theory of origin is completely different to this. The biggest difference lies in that, theory of origin holds that everything comes into being due to a reason and an opportunity. Reason is the direct cause, and opportunity is the external cause. Reason is surely important, but without opportunity, it simply doesn’t work. Wang

Enyang also does not agree with the direction rising from mind to destiny. He believes that so-called mind of morality is a mind of goodness, but the mind of goodness can not be equated to "truth", namely reality. If goodness is contrary to truth, there will also be a problem.

So how to clarify the Confucian heavenly law, destiny, knowing destiny and abiding one's destiny? He advocates that heavenly law and destiny should return to Mencius' "achieving without action is in virtue of God's will, acquiring without seeking is by destiny". In the so-called theory of destiny, heaven refers to causal necessity, and destiny refers to inevitable consequence. Knowing destiny refers to experiencing the self-inflicted inevitability of destiny; Abiding by destiny means that one should be courageous to undertake the contemporary consequences and destiny generated in the past life, and be courageous to bear the future rewards and responsibilities without complaining (Wang, 2001, p.768). The so-called causal necessity is an analysis of the Buddhist theory of origin. As Weimojiejing says, "no actor, no recipient." There is no dominated entity and ego in the world, and every behavior interacts with each other and produces a certain inevitable result. Therefore, caste theory contains human nature and heavenly law, persuades beneficence, is a logically consistent unity of goodness and beneficence.

3. DHARMALAKSANA CONFUCIAN

Wang Enyang believes that culture directs three ways, namely the way of love generating competition, way of cultivating morality and way of abandoning life, corresponding to Western culture, Confucian culture and Buddhist culture respectively. The so-called Confucianism is nothing more than "teach people to conduct correctly", or the way of life. Therefore his grasp of Confucian ideology is different from the Neo-Confucianism based on philosophy. Wang Enyang classifies Confucianism into ten parts of "industriousness, thriftiness, contentment, optimism, benevolence, ritual music, five cardinal relationships, three moralities, moderation and code of conduct of gentleman", including almost all aspects of human relations. However, Confucianism is confined to the right way of life after all, is not exactly the ultimate knowledge. Life should be in pursuit of liberation until the eventual state of Bodhi Nirvana. Namely, Confucianism is the preparatory stage of Buddhism and the retributive stage of Buddhism. Confucianism is a secular knowledge, Theravada Buddhism is a monastic knowledge and Mahayana Buddhism is a moderation between the two (Wang, 1999, Vol.5).

From a philosophical point of view, Wang Enyang's thought clearly reflects the characteristics of the basic

principle of theory of origin, Confucian theory of human nature and Confucian theory of heavenly law. Considering the ideological differences between Alayavijnana caste theory in Dharmalaksana method and the ontology based on Confucian "human nature and heavenly law", it can be said that Wang Enyang has interpreted Confucian human nature and heavenly law with Dharmalaksana. The characteristics of Dharmalaksana method lies in considering that performance reflects rule, attributes to ideology and will finally turn into wisdom to get rid of false obsession, which is diametrically opposite to modern Neo-Confucianism considering that the existential moral subject based on fulfillment of moral practice will rise to the origin of empirical world. From the ideological process, Wang Enyang's criticism on the early theory of displaying emotions, Tathatā theory of origin in *Faith in Mahayana Theory*, and modern Neo-Confucian scholar Xiong Shili's theory of Ti and Yong is exactly the same.

CONCLUSION

First of all, Wang Enyang's construction of Confucianism is intrinsically consistent, namely the basic principle of "origin" has remained the same, which plays a positive role in rectifying the general Confucian thought and experiences advocating introspection, intuition and introspection. Secondly, Wang Enyang's broad Confucianism based on the right path of life puts forward stimulation and challenges to the narrow Neo-Confucian based on philosophy. After all, Confucianism is a powerful knowledge based on the six classics and six arts. Abandoning Confucian classics and destroying ritual music to talk about mind is not enough to grasp the overall characteristics of Confucianism. Confucianism needs a methodical theory of cultivation similar to Buddhist precepts rather than a principled approach. Thirdly, Wang Enyang has created a new model of complementation of Confucianism and Buddhism. The subject of the traditional complementation of Confucianism and Buddhism is the sinicized Buddhism based on Confucianism and Zen. Wang Enyang's complementation of Confucianism and Buddhism is a pure complementation based on the original Confucianism of Confucius and Mencius and Dharmalaksana method. Compared to Xiong Shili's "creative misreading", Wang Enyang shows a more accurate understanding of Dharmalaksana method. Finally, Wang Enyang's criticism of modern Neo-Confucianism is the alarm of the rise of Neo-Confucianism, having a warning effect on the current Chinese philosophy studies dominated by modern Neo-Confucianism. After all, the fact of being the mainstream does not equal to being the truth.

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