

A Comparative Study on the Development Between Eastern and Western Thought in Ethics

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Abstract

Comparison of the development between Eastern and Western thoughts have the same basic questions, this comparative study will help us to understand the occurrence and evolution of human civilization. Studying the development context of eastern and western thoughts from 2000 years ago when Socrates appeared. It mainly focusses on the comparative between Ancient Greece and Pre-Qin Confucianism, Christian ethics and Song-Ming Neo-Confucianism, Modern ideas of Western European ethics and the Enlightenment in the Ming and Qing dynasties.

Key words: Chin; Western; Ethics; Comparative study

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INTRODUCTION

The development of Eastern and Western ethics is from a hundred schools of thought contend and Ancient Greek and Roman times till now. During this 2000 years process, they had different views about ideal of life and living but they had a plenty of same fundamental factors in the development context. From the source, content, processes, laws of view, this comparative study allows us know more about the occurrence and evolution of human civilization history. Some regularity phenomenon of human civilization has also been a vivid presentation

in the history of ethics. Mencius used the historical experience to draw circle of five hundred years of rules is that a troubled time and a peace time are the way that heroic explain his historical idealism. Mencius said, "It is a rule that a true royal sovereign should arise in the course of five hundred years, and that during that time there should be men illustrious in their generation." The former is for the purposes of national life, the latter is focussed on the history of human civilization. Ignoring the drawback of Historicism, let us consider five hundred units of study for a time to the early 20th century, from the 2000 years of Eastern and Western ethics, comparative study of the development of Eastern and Western ethics adopted since Confucius and Socrates method certainly allows us to happen and the evolution of human civilization see more clearly the historical context.

1. THE COMPARISON OF ANCIENT GREECE AND QIN CONFUCIANISM ETHICS

The development context of Chinese Traditional Ethics is mainly on Confucianism, so it exhibits a tendency immobilized, specially, the "coexistence of human and natural" model of thinking. Learning both sound in theory and practice personalities thought content is studying the objects gain the knowledge, accumulates the sincerity, upright the mind, chase the perfection, happiness in homes, harmony through countries, comes world peace. Moral realm is that to establish a mind for heaven-and-earth; to establish the way for the people of today; to carry on the lost learning of the rages of yesterday; and to find the "Great Peace" for ten thousand generations. It can be said that this pattern is stable from hundreds of thousands years. Therefore, we compare Eastern and Western Ethics development is relatively between Western ethics and Confucianism.

The Western Ethics which we understand at this moment traces back to Ancient Greek Civilization. The people who made the biggest contribution to the development of Western ethics are Socrates, Plato, Aristotle. They are like three peaks of Western Civilization (Liang, 2011).

Confucius lived in Spring and Autumn Period which is the period between the slavery tended to disintegration and the feudal system began to form. In this chaotic era, Confucius was not satisfied with “propriety disintegration” situation, he wanted to teach people by “to deny self and return to propriety” as a result of clear and bright politics. After selling his idea among countries, he found that it was hard to be received by the world. So he set up private school engaged in the practice. He established the Confucianism and focused shift – down of study, even today, Confucianism has a deep impact on our spiritual life. Friedrich Paulsen said: “Wisdom and virtue is something very rare, naturally in a century, was only created so twenty-three genius, the Saints is equally rare, very far apart in history” In terms of Chinese civilization, Confucianism is a everlasting and abundant topic. Compared Confucius with the Ancient Greek three giants is the origin of understanding Western and Eastern Ethic idea.

In terms of moral character and life experience, there are many similarities between Confucius and Plato. Plato in his home city did not get any opportunity to engage in activities “excellent learning official” road which setback Plato to exit from public life, and then he set up the college, ignited his passion to ponder the reality of outline the ideal life. And the academy had become a refuge for the lonely philosopher, who wrote the earthquake in this ancient masterpieces demonstrating today’s “Utopia”, all of the rest could be burned. This book is written in the form of a dialogue. The content of this book including talking about family, morality, art, education and other issues, which almost all-encompassing. He, like Confucius, from personal experience, explained the life and general things, which makes his doctrine full of realism and intimacy.

The lonely philosophers were looking forward to a country which is great and suitable—He was waiting for redemption on “Utopia”, He admitted that he paints an ideal which is difficult to achieve (Meng, 2009). Depicting the hope for the human life is still worthwhile, the meaning of the life lies in yearning more beautiful and good life and let a part of them becomes a reality at least. This kind of tragedy is similar to “do things that no one can make it”.

As Aristotle and Confucius, they both believed that life is a gift of nature. The good life is the gift of wisdom. They were not confined to the outside world of meditation and maintenance of the mind then understand what is for the people exist is the best life, that is living the life of virtue. They were surprisingly consistent understanding

on this issue: what is virtue? The conception of middle course by Aristotle is the same as the conception of the golden mean. Of course there is a few different understanding in fine point. Virtue is the result of theory and practice education. If the west ethics emphasizes the former, Ethics in China pays more attention to the latter, this point can tell the difference by comparison in Aristotle and Confucius’ doctrine. Aristotle put forward the point of view “ Knowledge acquisition” .He thought for the characterization of the heart is obtained for the characterization of knowledge. He also believed that “ Knowledge acquisition” But also is a practical ability. From the “principle of benevolence and loyalty” “The charity Theory” to the “Self-cultivation, regulating the family, country and the world” by Confucius, It fully embodies the Confucian value ethics value in the real life and reflect the tendency of life.

Chinese and western ethical characteristics with respect to its source revealed to us that: ethics to be a proper life description of subject system, ethicists have research foundation is in the real life perception, Focus on people’s inner life, Appeal to people of all kinds of moral emotion, it is experience and also is awareness. Ethicists are striving for the right of life thinking Is to provide what they understand the earthly happiness, In order to the peaceful and quiet of a life in the world, make life more valuable and worth living. Although happiness is not the purpose of moral behavior, as Aristotle had hoped, a moral person should enjoy happiness, and a complete moral person should enjoy every possible happiness, enjoy both virtue and happiness is the “Highest Good” (Zhang, 2010).

2. THE COMPARISON OF CHRISTIAN ETHICS AND THE IDEALISTIC PHILOSOPHY OF THE SONG AND MING DYNASTIES

After the fall of ancient Greek and Roman to get to the next one thousand years of western civilization, philosophy in this period continue to loneliness. Since then Europe into a period of darkness, and people were waiting for the revival of the philosophy. This pretty similar situation with China after the Han dynasty, the Chinese civilization is also after a long wait at this time. Ethics was only after the “Five scholars of the Northern Song Dynasty” were booming again.

Wisdom and kindness as the perfect humanity spiritual tendency, as a result of two aspects of the peak after 1000 A.D. China represented by Cheng Zhu Idealistic Philosophy of spirit, Values and morals of monopoly, is the logo. Chinese and western ethical thoughts were brewing and developing the values of asceticism in this period at the same time, it deeply depressed the

enthusiasm of the people to pursue happiness life at that time. Worship of man's spiritual existence treaded on the secular power and reality of human being, and discarded the ethics as the basis of the learning of wisdom.

The pursuit of the perfect development of spiritual life is a basic need and western wise thinking question of ethics and the most fundamental motivation, Aristotle realized that we researched the ethics is not only for the purpose of theory, but also In order to make ourselves to be good. Thus we can see that good thinking about human nature constitute a clear clue of the development of ethics. When we put the good understanding for human survival and development of favorable factors, and when the evil against it., people have shown good from evil tendencies, The theory of virtue is good has become the main vein of the development of western ethics in China.

With the decline of ancient Greek and Roman civilization, Augustine (354-430) was born in the 4th century, The Roman emperor Constantine made Christianity legal status in 313. With the core of the Christian theological ethics began to occupy the mainstream status after nearly one thousand years of history (Tang, 2007). This is a piece of history in the history of thought though not much to say, but in Augustine's theory of brewing in the modern history of philosophy to spark of thinking, Augustine as the outstanding representative of the godfather philosophy of mature marks the formal formation of Christian philosophy. In the process of creating Christian ethics, Augustine explained that one of his fundamental flaw recognition, it was he who accepted that faith, hope, love are three virtues of prerequisites. Because faith provides knowledge, hope brings hope, love creates friendship, and all these show us a path to good way of life, so Augustine confirmed them for the great goal of human in secular life to pursue, relative to the seven virtues of seven evil respectively are: pride, wrath, sloth, greed, envy, gluttony and lust. The former is in the power of light, and the latter is the dark part of the human nature. Medieval understanding of virtue is between the forces of conflict, the light eventually prevails over evil.

When ethics development becomes a pursuit of good science, Chinese and western ethics both let the asceticism as the basis of moral belief. According to Paulsen investigation, the word "asceticism" was coming from Greece. Its original intention is to point to in the stadium a sermon of animal nature, and it was also means that in the inner life of the sermon. The Christian interpreted the asceticism which was coming from the thought of ancient Greek as self denial and sanctified requirements.

In the middle ages people generally believe that before the human rebelled against god, there were two cities appeared in the world. One is the city of god, people lived there which were god decided to save. And the other is the ordinary world, people lived there which were god

decided to destroy. We can make god like if we always be good, then we will be saved and into the city of god. The reason why this contrary to human nature the moral requirements of asceticism became the moral belief, is because of people generally try to please god and be saved.

Medieval ethics and ideas associated with the original sin of the most basic foundation of the public say about the, As Aquinas "Tears the world", He believes that life is miserable, which is full of pestilence, pain, Only God can save humanity. This doctrine was introduced into China and Eastern Han Dynasty, after the Three Kingdoms to four or five hundred years has been made between the Northern and Southern Buddhism advocates the development of a lot of similarities, Buddhism founder Siddhartha-Gautama to abandon the throne and extravagant life, and then Novices, because of he is responding to human illness and death, he hoped to obtain through ascetic consciousness and liberation of the road. Buddhists believe that life is "Oliver", this course is to expose the contradictions of reality, Buddhism is not considered the root cause of the pain of life is these, but rather personal "ignorance" that is ignorant to the truth. Therefore, Buddhism practice to curb the desire to put people through pain relief to enter the territory as the only way to Nirvana charm. Christianity and Buddhism are keen for the world to promise a happy afterlife, That is the real eternal happiness, at the expense of the suffering endured Worldly Life.

For medieval philosophy and ethics of thought, the history of the appraisal is low, in Hegel, "Lectures on the History of Philosophy" in the following statements represented, he said:

We must make a judgment by the Scholastics, make an estimate. They looked like a lofty target, religion, their thinking is so acuity and delicate, they are also among the noble, thoughtful, studious individuals and scholars. But scholasticism whole is a completely barbaric abstract philosophical reason, there is no real content. It does not cause us any real interest, we can not go back to it. It is only a formality, empty mind, always in sensible regulations, unwarranted contact areas to switch to transit.

3. THE COMPARISON OF WESTERN MODERN THOUGHTS AND THE ENLIGHTENMENT OF MING AND QING DYNASTIES

Modern European history starting from the 17th century British bourgeois revolution, in more than 200 years, From Bacon to Nietzsche, the most far-reaching influence on the history and human life is the British utilitarian thought, French Enlightenment and German classical ethics.

Even China didn't like Britain, France, Germany and other countries of the bourgeois revolution, but with the

development of the industry after the middle period of Ming Dynasty, the new capitalist production relations began to sprout, at the same time, the enlightenment ethics as a new trend has begun to appear. This thought broke the old Chinese ideology of obscurantism and asceticism. Compared with the French enlightenment, the progressive thinkers such as Voltaire, Rousseau and other people devoted to cultural movement in order to emancipate the mind. Its characteristic is to doubt or opposition to the authority of the church and the feudal system, regarded the “rational basis” as the foundation of the thought and action. They put forward the core value concept of humanitarianism, opposed the Godism on humanitarian, with hedonism opposed asceticism, to promote human values, dignity, happiness (Wang & Liu, 1998). This bold and radical ideological liberation movement was Chinese enlightenment thinkers have difficult to achieve after Ming Dynasty.

The Renaissance movement began in the 14th century Italy, in the capitalist relationship formed humanism ideological trend of prairie fire spread to continental Europe, ethics by means of various forms of development on an unprecedented scale. At that time people’s moral thinking is lies in their literary works, ethics Along with the vigorous development and prosperity of literature. The ideological liberation movement named Renaissance, because at that time, people thought culture in ancient Greece and Rome declined in the Middle Ages, but in their time, culture was booming again, ancient Greece and Rome intellectual philosophy and art of this period had a huge influence. The ideological liberation movement makes people escape from the unconditional faith in God, freedom, equality, fraternity and other concept began to win support among the people, westerners began to believe that people have to decide their own fate and moral rights and the ability of good and evil, people can with their own will create immortal. It was this thought to expand the consciousness of Western individualism. Chinese always advocate collectivism, and never so far as Westerners.

In 17 and 18 Century, The British utilitarian, such as Bentham, Mill and others found a secret of human nature was that people are pursuing happiness and escaping the pain all the time. Hasten avoids pain is human nature, human always benefit themselves and never change, they were put forward on the basis of the greatest happiness of the greatest number theory. It should be said that this doctrine is fit on the need to of human nature and be more persuasive to explain human behavior. Wang Fuzhi is the greatest philosopher of the late Ming and early Qing Dynasty in Chinese who also advocated utilitarianism,

he advocated that “be used for reference”, and this theory of the shock the common customs was a rebel of justice thought in China since ancient times (Li, 2009). Although the development of Chinese utilitarianism was tortuous, has not become the mainstream ideology in the end. But philosophers have advocated the spirit to seek truth from facts was an undoubtedly correction of the China’s utilitarianism.

CONCLUSION

Morality is the human beings with their own way to express the respect and reverence for the profound universe. Kant with his understanding sums up as follows: There are two things, the more often and the more steadily into consideration, they make more peace of mind, full of admiration and awe of them: The starry sky above me and the moral law in my heart. The weakness of human nature made us could not often consciously compromise to life, and to give up the moral cost of honor. Kant put forward his “absolute order”, from the people obey the “absolute order” of unconditional obedience to determine its behavior standard of moral value, In this case, although he and Zhu Xi separated by long years, but very similar. They hated to compromise, harmonic in different cultural backgrounds and embodied the same emotion beyond all expectations.

Respect and abide by the moral is the best performance that we share the human wisdom which was before we exist, moral decline means ready to fall, The lack of moral marks of individual life and social life of the chaos. In fact, the life is interesting and meaningful things was from moral and beauty, if everything is replaced with economic interests, then the human will degenerate into animal with a new way. That why we need to run through our history details across time and space to explore human moral development of the mysteries in this time.

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