

The Conflict between Chinese and Western Cultures: From Adversarial Dialogue to Intercultural Dialogue

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Abstract

Since modern times, there has been a large-scale contact and conflict between Chinese and Western cultures, which has led to the dispute between Chinese traditional culture and Western culture for more than a century. However, the difference between Chinese and Western thinking is hidden behind the "confrontational dialogue" between China and the West, which makes the Chinese and Western cultures unconsciously placed in the state of mutually exclusive struggle. Facing the unprecedented global changes in a century, in order to bridge the historical limits and thinking defects of "Adversarial Dialogue" and meet the needs of globalization and the formation of a world community of civilizations, we should promote the transformation and upgrading of "Adversarial Dialogue" to "Intercultural Dialogue", and promote the harmonious coexistence of eastern and western cultures through cross-cultural dialogue, build a community with a shared future.

Keywords

The dispute between Chinese and Western culture; Adversarial Dialogue; Intercultural Dialogue; Human Community with a Shared Future.

1. Introduction

The Chinese civilization has lasted for 5,000 years, and is the only civilization in the world that has not interrupted. The history of modern Chinese civilization, however, unfolded in an era of universal interaction in which "history was transformed into world history" and in the context of the foreign expansion of Western capitalism. Marx's "German Ideology" elaborates: "The more the sphere of activity of the individual interactions expands in this process of development, the more the primitive closedness of the peoples is eliminated due to the increasingly perfected mode of production, the more complete the interactions and the division of labor between the different peoples naturally formed as a result of them, the more history becomes world history"[1]. The more history turns to world history, the more cultural exchanges among all ethnic groups deepen.

2. History of the Conflict Between Chinese and Western Cultures

2.1. The Historical Process of the Sino-Western Cultural Controversy

During the European Renaissance and Enlightenment from the 15th to the 18th centuries, China was still leading the world in science and technology and economic aggregate, which aroused the admiration and worship of Chinese civilization to some Western thinkers at that time[2]. However, with the establishment of the capitalist mode of production, and especially the rise of the industrial revolution, the West took the lead in entering the ranks of modernization, and at the same time opened the process of globalization. However, in the same historical period, China fell into a social stagnation under feudal autocracy, falling behind in

front of the rapid development of the West. When the Opium War began in 1840, China gradually became a semi-colonial and semi-feudal society. Western culture flooded into China with an increasingly strong momentum and became an unstoppable historical situation. Western learning and east gradually became a prominent cultural phenomenon, and formed a strong impact on the inherent traditional cultural concepts, forming the impact and dialogue between Chinese and Western cultures.

The May Fourth Movement, with the large input of western scientific and democratic trends, especially the influence of the victory of the Russian October revolution and the spread of Marxist thought, some awakening of advanced intellectuals produced a new hope of national liberation, thus appeared an anti-emperor anti-feudal as the content of the ideological revolution and cultural enlightenment. In this period, there was the wrong idea of "overall westernization" in culture, and the tendency of "European modernization" also appeared in literary creation.

During the period of reform and opening up, the most extensive and profound dialogue and reform were carried out between Chinese and Western cultures. After the founding of the People's Republic of China in 1949, the one-sided foreign policy to the Soviet Union was implemented. In terms of cultural exchanges, it absorbed the culture of the Soviet Union and closed and imprisoned the Western culture. Reform and opening up have not only opened up China's economic and political door, but also opened up cultural exchanges and communication. The shape of cultural exchange between China and foreign countries has changed considerably. Various Western trends of thought, including political and literary trends, have flooded in, causing profound changes in people's values and subject consciousness.

Looking back on this period of history not far away, it is not difficult to see two basic themes or two historical tasks throughout modern Chinese history: to seek national independence and achieve national prosperity and strength. In this process, in the history of modern and modern Chinese thought, the dispute between "Chinese modernization" and "westernization" has repeatedly occurred and repeated, with four conclusions: adhering to the traditional theory, the theory of overall westernization, the theory of Chinese modernization, and the theory of western modernization. The "westernization" trend represented by "He Shang" emerged in the 1980s. Since the 1990s, "Sinology fever", "Confucianism fever"[3]. The Chinese side believes that to maintain national independence, we must be based on traditional culture and oppose the penetration and influence of western culture on China, and the "westernization" faction believes that to achieve national prosperity, we must learn and learn from western culture. This is the dilemma that has confronted modern Chinese intellectual history since modern times, a dilemma that has accompanied the East-West cultural controversy for more than a century.

2.2. The Clash of Civilizations in Adversarial Dialogue

The market expansion of capitalism has driven economic globalization, and economic globalization has facilitated the flow of culture around the world. That is mainly the flow and dissemination of western discourse and ideology in the world. In today's world, contemporary globalization has formed a global cultural conflict. After the upheaval in the eastern Soviet Union in 1989, facing the new world at the end of the Cold War, Francis Fukuyama first proposed the "final historical conclusion"[4]. Similar argument to Fukuyama's "historical conclusion" is that the existing civilizations will eventually disappear, and the final rest will be the so-called "universal civilization". Samuel Huntington said: "After the end of the Cold War, the world pattern has changed from ideological confrontation to confrontation and conflict among different civilizations ... In the years to come, there will be no single universal culture in the world, but many different cultures and civilizations will coexist with each other"[5]. Jim Lacey argued, the Ancient Shibo War determined the great cultural differences between East and West that remained at the heart of cultural conflict for more than 2,500 years[6]. The Mills

Sea defaults to that strong strength is the main support for a country to survive in the international community where the law of the jungle prevails. As the Athenians said to the Milos in the writings of Robert J Art and Robert Jervis: "Conquered you, we not only expand the staff, but also increase the security of our empire ... We believe that expanding the ruling power within our capacity is a universal and necessary law in nature[7]". In the anarchy self-service system, selfishness can pay off. Great powers all seek to occupy power to the greatest extent. When a great power is rising, becoming a great power must block and stop it. Therefore, China's rise is also bound to lead to a confrontation and conflict between China and the United States[8]. Graham Allison argues that the possibility of war between China and the United States is far more likely than one might think, and that it should be difficult to avoid the Thucydides trap between emerging and steadily growing powers. It can be seen that the structure of adversarial discourse thinking is dual, theoretically values differences and confrontation, and underestimates the possibility of communication and integration to resolve conflicts. The huge differences in the way of thinking between central and western China is one of the reasons for this conflict.

3. Differences in Chinese and Western Ways of Thinking

Studies in political psychology show that Oriental and Westerners are very different in their way of thinking. For thousands of years, the East and the West have formed very different systems of thought. People of different cultural backgrounds have different ways of thinking. Professor Richard Nisbet from University of Michigan has recognised and studied this. Through a series of social psychology experiments, Nisbet revealed significant differences with Western ways of thinking[9]. To a large extent, the differences between Asian and Western thinking methods are mainly reflected in four aspects: differences between dialectical thinking and logical thinking, differences between relationship thinking and generic thinking, differences between organic thinking and mechanical thinking, differences between internalized thinking and externalizing thinking.

3.1. The Difference Between Dialectic Thinking and Logical Thinking

In contrast, China prefers to think in a dialectical way, while Western countries prefer to think logically. The "final historical conclusion" made by Francis Fukuyama after the Cold War is perhaps the ultimate manifestation of American static thinking. Fukuyama imitated Hegel's "historical end", Fukuyama said that the Cold War ended with the overall victory of capitalism and democracy, and that the confrontation between the two social systems and ideologies finally resolved the contradictions with one side over the other, and history went to an end[10]. Although the Huntington proposed the "conflict of civilization theory" around the same time, arguing that geopolitical conflict would shift from state-centered to civilization-centered after the Cold War, and that history would continue in new contradictions, but more Westerners would rather believe in the "historical final conclusion" than the "civilization conflict theory". Westerners even believe that everyone in the world is actually Western in their hearts, and if not, it is only a matter of time, as will they be sooner or later. So, the world will eventually be westernized[11]. For the Chinese who like dynamic thinking, both Hegel and Fukuyama, the view that history will end is really funny and absurd. Although Huntington opposed the "end of history", his "civilization conflict theory" view that western civilization will eventually defeat non-western civilization also escaped the shackles of American logical thinking, but far from the Chinese dialectical thinking.

3.2. The Difference Between Relational Thinking and Generic Thinking

Both China and the West recognize the correlation between things, and in their cognition, they will connect one thing to another. But they disagree over how different things are related. In

general, China is more inclined to follow a relationship thinking, the different kinds of things according to a special relationship between them, western countries tend to follow a kind of thinking, the similar things tend to see the correlation between different kinds of things, and even belong to different things[12].

3.3. The Difference Between Organic Thinking and Mechanical Thinking

When Chinese people look at things, they not only see the relationship between a thing and his things, associate a thing with his things, but also see the relationship between various components of the thing itself, connect different parts, and see the relationship with the things at this time, and associate the state of things at different stages of development. This context-focused, holistic, and continuity thinking is an organic thinking. In contrast, westerners not only see the relationship between things, but even like to separate them from other things and conduct isolated analysis. Moreover, when Westerners also like to see things themselves, they break down things into various components, and decompose the development of things into various stages, and each part and each stage can exist independently. This emphasis on original, individual and discrete thinking is a mechanical thinking.

3.4. The Difference Between Internalizing and Externalizing Thinking

China and the West not only show different ways of thinking in terms of how to view the world and how to deal with various issues, but also follow very different ways in how they should act and deal with the relationship with others. China prefers to adapt to the environment and the situation, determine its own behavior according to the environment and the situation, and is used to thinking from the other side's perspective, and paying attention to maintaining a relatively clear and certain relationship with the other side. The West, on the contrary, prefers to change and shape the environment according to its own needs or preferences, let the situation cater to its own demands, and is used to thinking from its own perspective. It does not care much about whether the relationship with each other is clear and certain, but cares about whether the other party is similar to the same kind with itself or may become like-minded. This way of thinking in China can be called internalized thinking from the outside to the inside, while the West is externalized thinking from the inside outside[13]. Internalizing thinking makes the Chinese people pay more emphasis on following the situation, be better at empathy, willing to cooperate, and pay more attention to dealing with others on the basis of clarifying the positioning of the bilateral relationship first. Externalizing thinking makes Westerners pay more emphasis on planning, be more self-centered, maverick, and pay more attention to dealing with others on the basis of clarifying the attributes of each other first. The difference between internalized and externalizing thinking also makes Chinese people often take the world as their own duty, while westerners take their own duty as the world.

China and the West have very different ways of thinking. In daily life, China is better at dialectical thinking, relational thinking, organic thinking and internalized thinking, while western countries are better at logical thinking, generic thinking, mechanical thinking and externalizing thinking. Of course, this distinction is not absolute and does not apply to all members of each group. Instead, there are individuals in each society closer to groups in another in their way of thinking. However, it is indisputable that, the differences in ways of thinking between China and the West have important theoretical significance and practical value for us to dissect the reasons for the confrontational dialogue between China and the West, to transcend the cultural clash between China and the West, and to build a cross-cultural dialogue.

4. Open and Interactive Intercultural Dialogue

With the opening of world history, the collision between Eastern and Western civilizations and the great changes in the world unprecedented in a century, blindly "adversarial dialogue" will only cause missing opportunities for equal dialogue, exchange and development between different schools of thought and cultures, and is more likely to lead to blind and narrow disputes between Chinese and Western spirit. Only by promoting the open interaction of culture and through the "intercultural dialogue" can we promote the harmonious coexistence of east and west cultures, promote the establishment of a community of human destiny and contribute to a more systematic construction of the world order.

"Intercultural Dialogue" refers to the dialogue between different cultures of different nationalities and countries, which promotes the exchanges and prosperity of various ethnic cultures. Intercultural dialogue among peoples is the dialogue between the national behavior system, value system and thinking characteristics formed in the history of all ethnic groups, and the cultural spirit of all ethnic groups[14]. Take Chinese culture for example, which is a behavioral system, value system and thinking system, it is integrated by Confucianism, Taoism and Buddhism with foreign culture. The cross-cultural dialogue between Chinese culture and the cultures of other countries is the dialogue between different behavioral systems, different ideological and value systems, and different thinking systems.

The way of "Intercultural Dialogue" is the openness and interaction of culture, and to achieve cultural interaction, we should first achieve cultural openness. Cultural openness is also not only co-temporal, but also ephemeral. Bakhtin pointed out that from the perspective of synchronic, a culture should show its own cultural heritage in the dialogue and interaction with other cultures, and enrich both cultures[15]. At the same time, from the perspective of duration, it should also be put the culture in the process of historical development, in the "long-term time", and reveal its huge potential in the dialogue with the future era. Cultural interaction is the driving force of cultural development, and cultural interaction is not one-way but two-way. In the past, when we talk about the relationship between different cultures, often only pay attention to the one-way role and influence, and ignore the bidirectional of cultural dialogue, only pay attention to the influence of strong culture on weak culture, and ignore the influence of weak culture on strong culture, only pay attention to a kind of culture on an era of cultural development, and ignore the influence of a variety of cultural interaction on the cultural development of an era. As in the May Fourth New Culture Movement, we should not ignore the support of the anti-feudal spirit reflected in folk culture movement. They happen to be the criticism of the old system, old ethics and old literature and art on the other hand, which is a more basic and positive criticism[16].

5. Conclusion

Cultural dialogue is not the purpose in itself, the fundamental purpose of cultural dialogue is to promote cultural innovation and cultural prosperity, and to promote the common progress of society and human civilization. The era of globalization has long been deeply rooted in people's hearts, the world is in a period of great development, change and adjustment, and the construction of a community of human destiny has become the direction of human civilization's progress. Under this new situation, countries around the world need to accelerate cultural exchange and dialogue. Cross-cultural dialogue can help promote the innovation and development of contemporary Chinese and Western cultures, and has important theoretical value and practical implications for promoting exchanges and development in various aspects of world culture, politics and economy.

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