On Equity Between Human and Nature

WU Xuan

Shanghai university of Finance and Economics, Shanghai, China

Ontological negation advance the third kind of relationship between human and nature, “Equity Between Human and Nature”, which different from either “Western antagonism” or “Chinese traditional integration”. Human and Nature divided but equivalent, based on the limitation of Antagonism and Oneness Between Human and Nature, as well as the Fact and empirical discovery of equity between human and nature”. This third point of view is expected to bring a creative and productive separation and “a new harmony” which keeps those two different types of the worlds mutual, respectful and equal.

Keywords: equity, antagonism, attachment, the third kind of view

Introduction

Contemporary international and intercultural codependence and conflict give rise to a set of questions that call for reconsidering the relationship between man and nature. While “Western antagonism between human and nature” implies human centralism that the human is superior to the nature because of its ability to separate from the world, Chinese traditional way of thinking stood on “oneness between human and nature” considers the human as the integral part of the nature, containing the idea that the nature is superior over the human as Confucianism and Taoism interpret. Can we find a new third harmony to solve the questions if the two kinds of thinking are powerless for modern and contemporary international cultural relations? Ontological negation (WU, 2008, p. 1) is committed to the Chinese theoretically original issue. “Equity Between Human and Nature” is one philosophical proposition of Negativism. This opinion about the relationship between human and nature, which is different from either “Western antagonism” or “Chinese traditional integration”, remains the Chinese harmony as well as modern individuality and Originality. Chinese modernization should be neither Western “anthropocentrism” based on human’s superiority and aggression, nor the peaceful way of Chinese traditional culture based on human’s dependence and attachment. How should be Chinese modernized harmony development? This paper seeks to establish the concept of “Equity Between Man and Nature” and Chinese modern human—nature philosophy through reinterpretation of various manifestations of reciprocity both the cultural and the natural realms.

Limitation of Antagonism and Oneness Between Human and Nature

According to Ontological negation, on the relationship between Human and Nature, China’s modernization

WU Xuan, professor, vice-chairman of China Literature and Art Academic Society, College of Humanities, Shanghai university of Finance And Economics.

should be established on the fundamental proposition of “human and nature, divided, but not antagonistic”, a Chinese theoretically innovative issue. The three reasons are as follows: (1) The Western mentality of antagonism between human and nature gives rise to confrontations between worlds of different natures, which contradicts Chinese culture’s idea about harmony and coexistence of the world; (2) China’s “oneness between human and nature” can barely show the creativity of human, especially the creation of world outlook and way of thinking, which is highly valued in modernity, so it is necessary to “divide” human and nature to tap into the issue about human leaving the existing world on the aspect of nature, relying on its characteristics of creation; and (3) based on the aforementioned limitation of the West and China, it is crucial to see the “limitation in common” for China’s modern “relationship of human and nature” to obtain a innovative revelation, different from Western and Chinese traditions, to amend the limitation.

Firstly, the Western modernity, which is established on conquering and transforming nature, is an inter-race, inter-culture, and international confrontational relationship evolved from human’s conquering and confrontation with nature. Huntington could only adopt “clash of civilizations” to study the “politics-culture transformation” in today’s world, which well interpreted the nature of the relationship. From the perspectives of culture and philosophy, this kind of clash is summarized as the “antagonism between human and nature”, with an emphasis of the specific method of rational comprehension, subjectivity and economic development, so “antagonism between human and nature” is a “separation of human and nature through fighting”. The “antagonism” and “clash” originate from “this side of the lake” is superiority and conquer over “the other side of the lake”, which also includes “beauty and ugliness”, “good and evil” and “true and false”. When it comes to politics, “antagonism between human and nature” prompted the West to plunder resources, invade other countries and disregard oriental culture, which have formed a negative and unperceived image for its development. “Antagonism between human and nature” is further evolved into “human centralism”, “Europe centralism” and “Rationality Centralism”. Consequently, “antagonism between human and nature” did deliver the remarkable development of the modernization and world-wide impact of the West. However, merits and demerits come hand-in-hand: Due to the limitation of natural resources, development through conquering nature will eventually jeopardize the environment human relies on. Also, conquering nature is structurally the same as conquering other cultures, so the world will be logically dominated by a single, homogenized civilization established by the West culture. In the end, it is very likely that cultural pluralism will come to an end, killing the possibility of diversify like the nature. In the face of such an issue, Chinese culture, without the tense religious duality, can neither adopt the “Duality confrontation” mentality to realize modernization by neglecting its own advantages and characteristics, nor take the pattern of Western modernization as its own and eventually leading to serious consequences. If Chinese culture’s view of the integrated and harmonious world does not necessarily contradict modern development, and if Chinese modernization employs a path differs from that of the capitalist West, out of China’s responsibility to the world, as a country with its own cultural traditions, the mentality of the “confrontation”, “antagonism” and “clash” between human and nature must be criticized and transformed in the build-up of China’s modern philosophy. “How is it possible for non-antagonistic separation of human and nature?” Thus it arises this theoretically innovative philosophical issue. Any mentality and concept of “Duality Antagonism” or “Duality Confrontation” will be treated as “limitation” that deviates from Chinese culture.

Secondly, it seems to be widely acknowledged that “oneness of human and nature” is the main theme of China’s philosophy. Although Xunzi from China¹ used to say “to know the different roles god and human play”, Pythagorean scholars have also derived from the harmony of music “the harmony of cosmic order”,² and Wordsworth’s *I Wandered Lonely As a Cloud* (2010) also explained the bond between human and nature, since “oneness of human and nature” was proposed by “great people act in accordance with the nature” (p. 78) in *Commentary on the Book of Changes* (1993, p. 78), the dependence on Confucius ethics and Daoism was interpreted as the “oneness of human and nature” through the authority of “the way of heaven” and further evolved into the dependency on others and community. The conversion to a simple existence advocated by Taoism was followed, and thus it came the mentality of Crossing-Saints and Obeying-Classics, and the development and innovation view of “change the technique while maintain the philosophy”, have indeed become the culture constructed by the lack of consciousness of Chinese scholars and civilians. The upside of “oneness of human and nature” lies in the ethical harmony of standing aloof of worldly strife, the universal harmony of brothers within four seas, and “vitality of changing” which conveys significant world outlook and ethics, and could also be reinterpreted given different circumstances, is just the reason for Chinese culture’s “continuous vitality”. The downside of “oneness of human and nature” is that it masks the vitality and creativity of human, and leads to cultural issues of “innovations at low level”: “depression of the continuous expansion of life’s desire”, “independent will strained and weakened by survival instinct”, “innovative theories overshadowed by theoretical interpretation”, “world outlook innovation outshone by technological innovation”, and “concept of one civilization incorporated and scattered by that of another civilization”, which have become the fundamental obstacle for China to establish its own modern main theoretical image. If we say China’s modern culture has not distinguished itself from traditional Chinese culture, China’s social science can hardly establish its own theory subjectivity because it relies on Western philosophy and principals, and China’s universities were deemed by Mr. QIAN (2010) to be uncreative universities which “only say what have been said, and dare not say what hasn’t been said” (p. 113), that “innovation” and “combination” proposed by “oneness of human and nature” can hardly reach the “innovation” on principles and way of thinking. To follow development of Western mentality and principles with the low-level innovation of coping with changes (understanding and interpretation of Tao) by sticking to a fundamental principle (Tao, concept) that will definitely lead to dilemma of the opening ceremony of the Olympic Games in 2008, where we had nothing to show about China’s modern cultural products but our ancient arts. In the face of such a dilemma, earning China’s modern culture, the respect of the world by enhancing “innovation” on world outlook, nature and structure of cultural product will naturally give rise to the mentality of “separation of human and world”. Innovation is only possible when “separated from reality” on world outlook and way of thinking. Therefore, the “limitation” of traditional “oneness of human and nature” on “masking the originality and creativity of human” must become a theoretical issue that needs to be seriously taken and tackled for the theory construction of China’s modern “human & nature” relation.

¹ In his discussion on heaven, Xunzi proposed “knowing the different roles god and human plan”, with an emphasis on different roles and authorities of “human” and “God”. When commenting *The Book of Rites* (2006), Zhen Xuan wrote “distinction is also a kind of responsibility”, which also implies “property distinction” for modern people.

² In his *On the Heavens*, Vol. 2, Chapter 13, Aristotle mentioned the Pythagorean theory. “Harmony of Cosmic Orders” proposes that celestial bodies with different sizes, velocities and distances give different tones, which forms a harmony that resembles music.

Form the above, while “Western antagonism between human and nature” implies human centralism that the human is superior to the nature because of its ability to separate from the world, Chinese traditional way of thinking stood on “oneness between human and nature” considers the human as the integral part of the nature, containing the idea that the nature is superior over the human as Confucianism and Taoism interpret. Therefore, Chinese modern human-nature philosophy has to be aware of the surface problem both human centralism based on “Western antagonism” and human attaching themselves to the nature, sage, classics, tradition, nation, groups etc. based on “Eastern oneness”, and also has to see the limitation of “inequality” in both of them. The entire Western civilization through the different and creative comprehension of “the other side” being opposited to “this shore” of the Bible, is ancient “church first”, modern “reason first” and contemporary “life first”, which is described as a schema of historical progress. In this schema, people really feel modernization being superior to the traditional life, and justify “unequal” rational thinking and subjectivity theory of “human surpassing, dominating and transforming the nature”. On the contrary, the evolution and development of Chinese civilization may be described as the superiority of the tradition culture, as well as the concept of the generation is worse than the last generation, which is described as the style in LU Xun’s novel *The Storm*. This style strengthen unequal consciousness of human depending on the nature and the tradition through the perception about the Chinese literature and art not brilliant as the ancient literature and art. So, not only should we emphasize the subjectivity and individuality as the Western culture does, but also we should emphasize that people coordinate with the nature, the morality, the tradition and the group to reach harmony, which is the basic thinking mood of modernized Chinese culture. However, the whole problem of Chinese modernization can not be simply expressed as both the Western developing style and the tradition Chinese harmony. Because in this way, we can not grasp the essence of how to develop and how to reach harmony, and not break the developing view of the Western and the Chinese thinking mood of harmony. For example, if we emphasize the modernization leading by the country’s economy and personal profits, it would cause the green issue of globally ecological crisis because it is hard to pause or end the economic development and the personal profits. It is a good example that the developed countries evade on the problem of carbon reduction in 2009 Copenhagen international ecological summit. This so-called economy development will clash the harmony of Chinese tradition if personal benefit is prior to group benefit, or countries’ benefit is prior to the survival of the globe, or human rationalism is prior to sensibility of life. That is to say, to give expression to the harmony of Chinese tradition, it’s necessary to lower down the economic development, suspension subjectivity, the concept of individual priority as the prerequisite. If we do that, not only will the economy develop unstable and non-sustainable, and also we can not inspire the creativity, the fatal weakness of Chinese culture modernization. In other words, if Chinese modernization is neither Western “anthropocentrism” as coordinately based on human’s superiority and aggression, nor the harmonious way of Chinese traditional culture, keeping peaceful between human and nature, individual and group. The key point is how to be modernized harmony rather than how to be Chinese modern development. As a result, the theoretical innovation of Chinese modern “human-nature relationship” should mainly criticize “unequal in common” whether “antagonism” or “oneness”. That is, on the one hand, “nature” and “human” should be thought about “separately” in order to ensure and respect the creativity of human beings. On the other hand, as the eight diagrams in *The Book of Changes* focused, there is the fact that “asymmetric”, “structural changes”, and “harmony” are the essence of Chinese

culture. Therefore, we have to or we are able to grasp “nature and human in separation” and also put and keep them in a state of “Symmetry harmony”. “The equity” may be “the third kind of relationship between human and nature”. It is expected to bring a creative and productive separation and “a new harmony” which keep those two different types of the worlds mutual, respectful and equal. It is different from either “Western antagonism” or “Chinese traditional integration”. This notion will have a great influence on “the value of Western creation and development grounded on inequality”, and will be able to change it gradually to the modern and harmonious cultural affect stood on the equity. It also will be beneficial for the modern Chinese people to release their vitality and creativity on the basis of “respect and equality”, which is the eastern attitude towards the world, and to shape the figure of the contemporary Chinese culture and modern Chinese people, which is calm, gentle, powerful, and respectful.

The Fact and Empirical Discovery of “Equity Between Human and Nature”

This is to say, if theory innovation views the world with the “common limitation” of “human and nature, divided, but not equivalent” from China and the West, then our discovery of the world shall be able to make up for this limitation and become “special fact and experience”. Or, whether or not we can discover the “fact” or “experience” of “human and nature, divided and equivalent” will become the key of proving that “equity of human and nature” is not merely a theoretical hypothesis. This kind of “fact” and “experience” could be investigated on the following three aspects:

(1) View the issue of world peace from the perspective of existentialism basis of “human and nature, divided and equivalent”. In physics, positive charges and negative charges, N pole and S pole, gasification and liquidation are all symmetric structures. The stress and stability of these symmetric structures could also be demonstrated by “peaceful coexistence of the strong” in the animal world, like the case with lions, tigers and elephants. Under normal circumstances, inequality only exists between the “strong” and the “weak”, there is a smaller chance of confrontation because of the “balance of power”. International relationship is derived from the political unit of “nation”, and the coordination and confrontation of interests between different countries is the most important international issue after the Cold War. However, in retrospect, the stability among nations was not due to the temporary stability of many small countries ruled by one superpower or voluntarily rely on one superpower, it was, due to the restriction from the “balance” of power and military among nations, to be specific, the “balance of power” formed by “equity” among major powers, the relationship of mutual deterrence and respect. The fact that a third world war did not break out in the 65 years after 1945 is mainly because of the confrontation and balance between powers. On the other hand, the wars in Afghanistan and Iraq are live proof of the fact that the power gap between nations is a main cause for war, just like in the 30s, Germany started the war because it thought itself to be the most powerful country in Europe before World War II. “Balance of power”, which forms among independent powers like US, China, Russia, and Japan, leads to confrontational peace, which could be explained neither by asymmetric confrontation derived from “antagonism between human and nature”, nor by dependent stability derived from “oneness of human and nature”. It is the empirical fact of the implementation of political equity, which in nature coincides with China’s Five Principles of Peaceful Coexistence.

(2) From the perspective of “human and nature, divided and equivalent”, we could draw experience and inspiration from the relationship among different cultures: between *The Book of Changes* and Bible, neither one

is better than the other, because the two cultural classics respectively represent the understanding of world of two different cultures. As cultural classic is itself innovated by human, it will not only exert a profound impact on its own culture, but also significantly affect the development of world history—*The Book of Changes* used to and still is affecting the cultures of eastern countries, while Bible has affected the whole Christian world and gave rise to the ancient and modern civilization of the West. This is the proof of the impact of Western and Eastern civilizations. Although Chinese culture has been on the decline since late Qing Dynasty, we cannot therefore draw the conclusion that the Bible is superior over *The Book of Changes*, because Confucius and Taoism did not put too much emphasis on the invocative experience that connects Chinese culture and modernity, the innovative experience of SU Shi, CAO Xue-qin and LU Xun, which we call as “literature Penetrating Tao”³ (WU, 2010, p. 111) is not inspired differently from “literature carrying Tao” and “Destiny Theory” in modern Chinese literature theory, thus “Obeying-Classics” and “Carrying-Tao” dominate Chinese culture and lead to its lack of major creation of modern principles and world outlook. If “literature penetrating Tao” could become the counterpart of “literature carrying Tao”, China’s modern culture will not only have its own product that differs from the philosophies of Confucius and Taoism, *A Dream of Red Mansions* and ancient arts, but also exert an eastern impact on world modern history on the basic aspects on modern culture, including “individuals”, “vitality”, and “creativity”. The “equal influence” of eastern civilization and Western civilization will not only be a historic concept, but also a reality concept. It is the same case with the cultures of the seven great religions, the Christian culture cannot be viewed as superior because the comprehensive creativity which generates culture is not well positioned in its own culture, and thus does not facilitate the modern creative development of indigenous culture. In fact, with integral experience, China has paved a way of affecting the world by economic development, on culture, if we could affect the world by mild and powerful culture of the east, which differs from the conquering culture of the West, such a change will make it more feasible for the “equity” between Chinese culture and Western culture, and also challenge the “combination of Yin and Yang” “Complementary Chinese and Western cultures ” and “one’s luck and destiny will change over time” from the “Cultural Centralism” mentality.

From the relationship between human and nature, “human and nature, divided and equivalent” could explain the crisis in our environment and solution does not come at the price of human development. “Green revolution” is becoming an increasingly important ecological issue around the globe, which at first glance is the result of seeking modern development at the cause of our environment in the West, while in nature, it derives cultures and of the West and east that features human centralism. Xunzi (2006b) considered that:

Fire and water possess a spirit but no life, grass and trees possess a life but no sensitivity, birds and animals possess sensitivity but no sense of morality, only humans possess spirit, life, awareness, as well as the sense of morality, hence the noblest beings in the world”, which is an example of human’s superior philosophy. Our cultural innovations are physical evidence of “human superior to animals. (pp. 275-276)

But it also masks another kind of “special fact”: When we are talking about the immoral animals and insensitive grass and trees, we are judging them from a human perspective of “morality” and “sensitivity”, not from the perspective of animals, with the difference between animals and human in mind. The natural, organic,

³ “Literature Penetrating Tao” is a unique and non-conceptual literature creation that respects and transforms conceptual Tao.

and recycled world of animals and plants is a world alienated by human's cultural innovations, and is also a world with untold "morality" and "sensitivity". Animals and plants cannot experience human happiness of acquiring material interest, but they could neither feel the anxiety, pain and depression that come along with this happiness, not to mention violation, slavery, sabotage, and cruelty, the negative issues of human culture. On overall life quality, the world of animals and plants is "dependent on nature", "equity to human's world". Humans may be as innovative as they can, but if they still plan civilization development with the mentality of "superior to nature" and "antagonistic to nature" while not ignoring the order of nature, there will be increasingly serious consequences until the end of our civilization. In other words, innovative and self-motivated human must keep such a "balance of power" with recycles and organic nature, that the ecological peace of earth could be ensured permanently. This is a new revelation on the relationship between human and nature from the "balance of power".

It is worth mentioned that the "special facts and experience", in the view of the aforementioned consciousness of "human and nature, divided and equity", is a kind of "special facts and experience of understanding". As "special facts and experience of understanding", the different characteristic of the facts between Humanities and social science and Natural science is that "the latter facts" of the observation and the experiment have objectivity and regularity, which would not transform by man's subjective will and cultural characteristics. For example, once Einstein's theory of relativity is experimentally proved, it would become the original theory, accepted by the scientists all over the world, which has the transcendence for culture, nation and age. The different scientists of 20th-century physics, such as Dirac, Heisenberg and Einstein etc., have different "fact-finding" so as to form their different scientific formulas, which Mr. YANG (2010) has mentioned that different scientific theory also have different styles of scientists. But, in the face of the result of the decided fact and experience by the scientists, the controversy about the original theory, which is the threshold of scientific research and scientists unable to go round, will generally disappear. In contrast, the theory innovation of humanities and social science has the otherness of culture, nation and age. The reason is that humanities and social science research method is based on, what Dilthey said, hermeneutics method. Due to the restricted factors of interpreters' culture, ethnic and age, different interpretations of the facts and reality would be formed. The view of "oneness between human and nature", in Chinese traditional culture, is more easy to find the fact of human peaceful with nature and society, while in Western culture, the concept of "confrontation between human and nature" is more easy to find the fact that human intend to threat natural and other countries' economy and culture, which are the result of elucidative relativity. That is not to say, no experience of "antagonism between human and nature" in Chinese culture, and no experience of "oneness between human and nature" in Western culture. But to say, thus experience and facts would not be found because of the view of Chinese "oneness" and Western "confrontation". If "human and nature, divided and equity" can be found the corresponding facts and further make the corresponding facts, it means that there is a special understanding and interpretation relations between establishment of the facts and theory. Such a character makes the decided fact of original theory of humanities and social science having more subjectivity and relativity, thus makes "different fact" and "different experience" having relativity, which also proves that it exists the phenomenon from "equity between human and nature" to "equity of understanding". An explanatory fact, about the people cognition of reality, lies in the dominant position, which not because of the explanatory facts better than other facts, but that explanatory facts are accepted by more people.

Conclusion

The intuitive logic of early Chinese philosophy is epitomized in the Eight Trigrams, introduced in *The Book of Changes* (*Yijing* 易经), namely, *Qian* (乾), *Dui* (兑), *Li* (离), *Zhen* (震), *Xun* (巽), *Kan* (坎), *Gen* (艮), and *Kun* (坤). Although each of the trigrams has its different structure and implications, they are all composed of the same elements and symbols, which are *Yin* (*Kun*) and *Yang* (*Qian*). That is to say, not only are Yin and Yang the very foundation of the cosmos, but also, when aligned differently, their meaning is wholly altered—the Eight Trigrams are eight different kinds of structure, combining of Yin and Yang. The eight kinds of structure may be associated with creative original experience of the hominid, also may be further extended to contemporary understanding of the notion that “structural change is the highest form of creation” instead of the material and element.

In terms of culture, structural change means the different understanding of the world form the different culture, civilization and nation. It is may be analogized that the Eight Trigrams are the people’s different creation because the different understanding is not determined by the one of the *Taiji* but by self-invention, which conform to the Eight Trigrams created by the hominid king. But as “material”, Yin and Yang can not decide this creation. Especially, forming Symmetrical Characteristic of the Eight Trigrams and Mutual blending of *the Taiji*, could the concept of “equity or multifaceted equality between man and nature” be reshape, which different from the relationship between man and nature of *The Yizhuan* (1993)? From Xunzi’s 荀子 “Separation of Man and Nature” (*tianren xiangfen* 天人相分), LIU Zong-yuan’s 柳宗元 “Independence of Man and Nature” (*tianren ge buxiangyu* 天人个不相预), or LIU Yu-xi’s 刘禹锡 “Inter-conquest of Man and Nature” (*tianren jiaoxiangsheng* 天人相交胜) (LIU, 1997)⁴, could the new philosophical understanding of The contemporary Chinese culture be derived and generated, and broke through the understanding of the Eight Trigrams as *The Yizhuan* and *The Daodejing* (2011) interpret? These issues will be further explored and discussed in future.

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⁴ Tian Lun Shang “All creatures have wins and fails. Heaven is the largest in shape, while Man is the smartest in animals. Heaven conquest Man, while Man overwhelms Heaven. In a word, Inter-conquest of Heaven and Man”.