

ACAEMIC NEWS

PART ONE

A Review on the Joint International Conference of Nordic Forum of Sino-Western Studies and 20th International Symposium on Bicosmology

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From 6th to 7th August 2019, the “2019 International Conference of Nordic Forum of Sino-Western Studies”, sponsored by the Nordic Forum of Sino-Western Studies and 20th International Symposium on Bicosmology, was held at the University of Helsinki, Finland.

More than 20 professors, scholars and doctoral students from Beijing Normal University, China University of Political Science and Law, Macau University of Science and Technology, University of Edinburgh, University of Helsinki, University of Nizhni Novgorod, Whitehead Institute and Nepal Sanskrit University attended the conference. The participants conducted in-depth and productive discussions on topics of biological cosmology, natural philosophy, natural history, natural history education, Dunhuang Studies, philosophy of religion, applied philosophy, comparative philosophy and other related philosophical issues, and tried to provide a practical path with global cultural characteristics for solving the problems of global natural history and natural history education by integrating the ideas and wisdom of participants from Europe and Asian countries. The following is a brief overview of the main issues.

1. Natural History, Nature and Education

Professor Liu Xiaoting of Beijing Normal University focuses on the paradigm of natural philosophy, Chinese traditional studies on natural history. It is pointed out in the topic that Greek natural science contains two traditional tensions of natural history and natural philosophy in its origin. Due to the prominent direction of contemplation in the evolution of Greek thought, it led to the emergence of natural philosophy. On the other hand, natural philosophy was evolved into metaphysics and introduced the concept of natural science in modern times through medieval efforts. The popular education in the world introduced in this paper is the industrialization education with this natural science as the paradigm. During the traditional evolution process of the natural history, it is mainly based on the natural environment, using various methods to integrate people into nature, establish an organic connection between man and nature, and promote the healthy growth and

development of human education. In particular, the education related to nature, including the education carried out in nature, the education of understanding and experiencing nature, and the use of nature education have the great theoretical significance to embodied cognition, emotional realm, natural feelings, social environmental protection, self-healing, etc. Professor Liu has stressed the analysis on the paradigm of anecdotes that collected all the knowledge by Chinese traditional studies on natural history.

Professor Liu Xiaoting highlighted the concept of image-related knowledge in the dominant form of natural Chinese studies. The image can be divided into object image (image of nature) and hexagram image of Yi. The object image is the appearance of the thing, and the hexagram image is the arrangement form of the hexagram, which is the skill of holding the image. The former indicates abstraction and contemplation, while the latter embodies practicality and skill. This determines that Chinese natural history and Western natural history also differ greatly in the way of education. The main reason is that natural history education not only adheres to the overall concept, skills concept, socialization concept, survival education concept, wisdom education concept and multicultural concept, but also include a wide range of social and educational content, especially the contents which are called art education and physique education in the West. In this regard, the commonly called Education for Qualities, General Education and Liberal Arts Education can be classified or included in the scope of natural history education. The return of the tradition of natural history and the re-establishment of the paradigm of natural history make the promotion of natural history education not very urgent. To this end, Professor Liu pointed out that it is necessary to advocate the sentiment or spirit of natural history, and actively explore the natural resources of human tradition, especially the historical, humanistic, physical, intrinsic and classical experience of China. In particular, it is of far-reaching significance to popularize natural history and set up a paradigm of natural history education as soon as possible to realize universal education in the new era.

Ding Hongwei, a researcher at Whitehead Institute, focuses on the analysis of the “embodied” characteristics of natural history education in his paper, and makes an in-depth discussion on several core concepts of embodied cognition, phenomenology of education, embodied philosophy and natural history education at different levels. In a broad sense, the study of different levels of natural history education is based on the instinctive way of living with nature. Through observing the experiential activities of plants, animals, insects and minerals in nature, it promotes the multidimensional development of human knowledge, emotion and values. In a narrow sense, natural history education is to guide and encourage children to fully develop their instinct to be close to nature, so that children can acquire knowledge, emotion and values in the process of dialogue with nature, and finally form a harmonious state of mind and life concept. Thus, researcher Ding put forward the specific concept of embodied philosophy. The embodied philosophy is the cognitive basis of the similarity of linguistic signs, the three basic principles of embodied philosophy are the embodied mind, the cognitive unconscious, and metaphorical thought, which are the philosophical theoretical basis for the research of embodied cognition in natural history education. It makes a detailed analysis on the three dimensions of natural history education: the dimension of nature education, the dimension of natural history education and practice-oriented natural history education.

Professor Paul Huang of the University of Helsinki put forward valuable suggestions on the

contemporary transformation of knowledge innovation education mechanism, i. e. Education in Finland and General Education in Chinese. Since the Education in Finland has been ranked first in the world by the United Nations for many years, especially the recent announcement that Finland will gradually abolish the establishment of professional disciplines has attracted worldwide attention. Based on his experience in Finland for more than 20 years, Professor Huang has analyzed that several main features of kindergartens, primary schools and secondary schools in Finland (superficially) are short class hours, less homework and fewer examinations. Teaching is mainly carried out in a relaxed form which seems to be “play”. Students do not advocate competition with each other, but emphasize cooperation. At the same time, relevant international organizations have come to the conclusion that the quality of education in Finland is among the best through testing and evaluation. Finland, as one of the world-famous Nordic welfare states, its far ahead competitiveness, integrity, livability, human happiness index is an indirect proof of the quality of its education. As per Professor Huang’s experience, it can lead to far-reaching conclusion. As a Chinese scholar who promotes general education in universities, I was inspired by the empirical phenomena listed by Professor Huang, as well as the academic qualifications and their implications for contemporary human beings, especially for Chinese education.

2. Biological Cosmology

The structure of biological cosmology by Professor Konstantin of University of Nizhni Novgorod in Russia reflects a cornerstone moment. The scope of the biological world (related to life processes) is unlimited; it contains all possible life phenomena and processes; biology, ecology, anthropology and individualism (psychology), social culture, cosmology (i. e. globalization) evolution, including the process of cultural life on earth. (The only exception is the field of political research, taking into account its complexity and the difficulties in achieving realistic scientific methods). Professor Konstantin pointed out in his paper that any natural science, social science or humanitarian science (except political science) will match the research issues and exchange of views in the mainstream of biological cosmology, but only in the case of explorers using (or critically testing) Aristotle’s (organism, functionalism) methods in carrying out their activities. So it’s used to study and understand the Aristotle’s four causes of cosmological and drive the forces of reality. However, another important point is to acknowledge (or at least consider) the final outcome and the dominant value of enTelecheia, that is, to consider (including key aspects) intrinsic (goal and overall organizational) factors, their main value life in the life of theme. Obviously, in principle, it is impossible to create a scope that can understand this kind of (all-inclusive) research. Professor Konstantin believes that, taking into account the basic principles of the intrinsic teleological biological cosmology (functionalism), our own functionalism approach has been proposed for the construction and operation of such structures. This is the choice of self-contained research direction to achieve the point of view of biological cosmology, therefore, it provides a sufficient number of different research areas, which have their own research objectives and scope, it will be used for the accumulation and structuration of given (available) information in biological cosmology to make a prospect.

3. Dunhuang Studies and Dunhuang Art Philosophy

Dr. Liu Jing of Macao University of Science and Technology generally discussed all the philosophical issues involved in Dunhuang art, against the background of the artistic view, the trend of modern philosophy and the new visual threshold of the study of artistic philosophy from the perspective of metaphysical philosophy. Started from the perspective of “ontology”, it analyzed and narrated the living conditions of the people behind the Dunhuang art form, and comprehensively introduced the direct and explicit blueprint of Dunhuang art—the content of religious Buddhist scriptures, and further analyzed the artistic interpretation of the content of Dunhuang art to the Buddhist scriptures. Dr. Liu Jing herself is a practitioner of art painting, she showed her paintings of “Illustration of Bodhisattvas Sermon” (taking Cave 290 of Mogao Grottoes as an example) about Dunhuang murals arts on the spot as the central category and logical starting point, launched a discussion on other important aspects of Dunhuang art and put forward some quite new viewpoints.

Among the rich and colorful topics, she believed that Dunhuang art painted the Bodhisattva in a rich and colorful way, it expressed the connotation that Buddha itself as a symbol is Nirvana, which is the result of a special survival practice; Bodhisattva as a symbol is the loader of the practice process of the result of Nirvana. Because of special characteristic of Bodhisattva, Dunhuang artists devote much more passion to Bodhisattva than Buddha. Through the depiction of Manjushri, Vimaiakirti, Avalokitesvara and other Bodhisattva, the profound significance of Dunhuang art can be seen from the indirect or direct depiction of prajna, meditation, thought and outlook of Dunhuang art. As an artistic symbol, Dunhuang flying asparas, which is the most free form and the most expressive of artistic spirit in Chinese Buddhist art, is not identical with the religious archetypes of Gandharva, the God in charge of holy songs and dances, and Kimnara, the God in charge of entertainment in Indian Buddhism, but takes the rich myths and legends about “flying” in ancient China as one of the important cultural origins. At the same time, inspired by the ancient Chinese literati’s persistent pursuit of the spiritual realm of “flying”, and influenced by the atmosphere of “advocating peace and quiet” and “worshipping contemplation” in the philosophy of the Southern Dynasty of China, the connotation of flying has been abstracted from the concrete images of Buddhist Gandharva and Kimnara, and has become a cultural and philosophical symbol that focuses on expressing “spiritual freedom”.

Dunhuang art is extensive and profound, involving many disciplines, which needs to be unremitting exploration from different perspectives and different ways of thinking. Dr. Liu Yun made a useful exploration of Dunhuang art from a philosophical point of view, in which the subject content and art form of Dunhuang art with inspiring feature will play a positive role in promoting the study of Dunhuang art.

4. Research on Chinese Philosophy and Comparative Philosophy, Natural Philosophy and Applied Philosophy

Liu Yuanyuan, a doctoral student at the University of Edinburgh, pointed out that all forms of

reality are regarded as the result of continuous and dynamic changes and developments in nature in Chinese philosophy. As she mentioned in her thesis that organic naturalism is an important feature of Chinese philosophy, and demonstrated it from two aspects: first, from the perspective of ontology, based on the relationship between subject and object in Taoism; secondly, from the relationship between man and society. Through the study of these two aspects, it tried to prove that the potential of change lies in the essence of things, and everything is in an organic dynamic process of change.

Zhai Yujia, a doctoral student at China University of Political Science and Law, makes a brief overview through the comparison of the community thoughts of Marx and Whitehead. It is discussed that Marx and Whitehead did not have a clear definition of the concept of “community”, but in their theory, they contained the idea of community. In the context of the commonality of many dimensions, and when they analyzed civil society and the state and explained political liberation and human liberation, Marx used the word “community” to describe the concept of “community”. As he pointed out, the current capitalist society is an illusory community, and the future communist society is a “real community”. Both Marx and Whitehead emphasized the understanding of all things with a process, connection, dynamic and whole epistemology, and this kind of common theoretical character is also reflected in their community thought. Dr. Zhai explored the community thoughts of Marx and Whitehead, in which he took the harmony between man and nature, man and man, man and himself as the value orientation, providing philosophical basis for the construction of ecological civilization, and manifesting the value appeal of common well-being with the purpose of highlighting the value of subjectivity.

Based on the most basic physical principles and concepts, Chen Yunpeng, a graduate student of Inner Mongolia University, solved the Schrodinger equation of quantum mechanics for material system. As mentioned in the paper, Aristotle put forward the point of view of the first motivation, Newton put forward the view that God is the first driving force in order to solve the singularity problem, but at the same time, it also needs the induction of empirical data as a supplement. The first principle has hierarchical distinction and relativity. The first principle is the static part of the system, which shows simplicity. The auxiliary hypothesis is the dynamic part of the system, which shows complexity. Finally, it concluded the substantive concept that the use of first principle can help people to better understand and solve problem in the world.

For a long time, the relationship between man and nature has always been an issue of concern to human beings. We can see works that reflect the relationship between man and nature in many literary works. Trees are not only ordinary non-human natural creatures in daily life, but also play an important role in the development of our species and culture.

Xu Mengru, a graduate student at Nepal Sanskrit University, raised the deep question of “Can we be naturalistic” as the background to discuss the topic of the thesis. She believes that human beings live with nature, but they are never useful to nature. We are intervening in nature because we can use fire. Each living entity works together for nature, not for human beings. The paper analyzed the environmental consciousness of Indian epic “Mahābhārata” and pointed out that it is the essence of “Mahābhārata” to maintain the naturalness of nature by respecting the existence of every phenomenon in nature. We should also get inspiration from literary works, respect nature and protect nature.

During the rich topic discussion, from the perspective of religious values, researcher Baoyan has given a brief review on funerals of the Hui nationality, which always followed the principle of “simple and quick burial”. The paper points out that funerals are simple, solemn and strictly abide by Islamic rules. To a certain extent, from the notes of Muslim festival ceremonies that participated by the author can see the reality of Islamic death rituals in the contemporary mixed areas of Hui nationality. The different manifestations of different Hui people in the death memorial ceremony, or the “daily” differences caused by the “non-daily” ritual norms, record the multi-orientation of the contemporary Hui nationality in the construction of cultural identity. Through the description of the death ceremony, the paper discusses the ethnic and religious identity, and further reflects on the cultural identity scene of the contemporary Hui nationality.

Conclusion: the theme of this conference is very open and also shows great philosophical significance. Scholars attending the meeting held rigorous and enthusiastic discussions around topics as natural history, nature, natural history education, cosmobiology, Dunhuang philosophy of art, Chinese philosophy, natural philosophy, applied philosophy, comparative philosophy, etc. which fully reflected the international perspective of this academic seminar. In particular, the participation of young scholars and artists shows that the researchers of philosophy education in the new era should possess the problem consciousness, the contemporary era consciousness as well as the sense of responsibility and mission. The organizers of the University of Helsinki in Finland have highly appraised the conference and thanked the participants for their strong support, hoping to strengthen international exchanges among scholars in the future.

PART TWO

A Report on the International Research Project Regarding the Topic of the Impact of Religious Values on Chinese Social Life

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During the period 20 to 21 August, 2019, a two day workshop titled “The Impact of Religious Values on Chinese Social Life” was held at the Culture Center Sofia, Helsinki, Finland. The workshop was most successful from its commencement, throughout all presentations and session proceedings, and in achievement of its overall goals and objectives.

This important workshop was just one of a planned series of related international research activities over the next four years. As founded by the Academy of Finland and the University of Helsinki. The meeting was comprised of twelve scholars invited from China, and twelve scholars invited from western countries.

The entire workshop program was spread over four sessions, with several topics being discussed. Including, the core values contained within each of the three Chinese traditional teachings