

On Proper Naming: The Reflection of Ancient Asian Philosophy on Modern Society. The Quest for Peace and Livelihood

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Throughout human history, no matter in the east or in the west, there would be a chaotic situation taking place every few decades in human society. In ancient times when the material production was at low level with tools not yet developed, the cause of chaos could be easily understood by the Chinese sayings: "People die for wealth, while birds die for food." and "Food is the heaven for people".

In face of starvation and losing of homes, or extreme unfair treatment by governments in distribution of wealth and benefits, there were always people who would rebel or take a military or political coup, or started a war by neglecting the peace agreement.

But in today's world, where technology is highly developed and material productivity greatly exceeds the demand, why is there still constant social turbulence?

Whether in China or many western countries, we can see the stores displayed with all types of merchandises, stocked with goods unable to sell, and warehouses of factories overstocked with products unable to go to market.

It's not because the overall purchasing power of the society is insufficient, but because of production and consumption level of the society has reached its excessive high point. Nowadays, merit boxes, which are public boxes for donations, are popular things everywhere. Still good and usable items can often be found discarded at the garbage room of the community. What does that mean? It demonstrates that the demand for living goods is not the primary concern of human society any longer. Thus many skilled people have been liberated from the production sector to engage in various social management work in our society, and division of work is becoming more and more precise. In this way, it seems that people on earth should have nothing to worry about? On the contrary, there are much more problems nowadays, and the society is in a chaotic situation that is almost unprecedented.

Why is that?

Some people may attribute it to the social complexity brought about by the highly developed civilization, but I don't think so. As we all know that no matter how advanced science and technology are, it is based on the laws of science discovered by our predecessors.

Because the scientific workers strictly follow some basic laws of science and the commonly accepted rules of logic, they have made the rapid development of science and technology in modern times, and created miracles one after another in human society, while produced some reliable scientific and technological products to serve mankind which have greatly helped improve their living standards. I haven't heard that a certain type of sophisticated technology products had acted recklessly due to their high complexity level, or functions differently. Although I personally think that modern science and technology did have their share of burden of blame in jeopardizing the life of modern people, during the short period of their glorious history, the professionalism and the qualification of those scientific and technological workers are indeed worthy of admiration for people from other industries. At least they clearly know the **concepts** in their own domains. Otherwise, they won't be able to produce anything good.

One of the most important issues, as what the ancient people called "name", might have been ignored by people of many industries. The ancients said, "if an appropriate name is not applied for the thing, then it is not a reasonable name and it would cause confusion about any work related to that thing, and lead to the failure of work." That is to say, if the name is not properly placed, or the meaning is not correctly explained, it would be difficult to explain the principles and mechanism of such thing and thus unable to execute its purpose. Perhaps some people may feel that this is insignificant, why bother making a big fuss about it? I am afraid it is not quite so. Actually in the first chapter of Tao Te Ching (One of the bibles of Chinese people), it is clearly written: "The beginning of the universe is in the status of being nameless, while the creation of all things in universe is accomplished during the process of giving names."

These words don't conflict with the scientific postulate of the start of the universe at all, but are intended to interpret the different side of the nature of universe. Thus, we can see how important it is to name things. People create and give names to things according to their respective attributes and our understanding about them, and those names composed the structure of our civilization. They are like the codes of our civilization, and provide answers to our questions. Chinese people are the ones addressed the importance of names just like the westerns addressed the importance of atoms in natural science. So no matter if you believe it or not, it is there doing its work. At the same time, names give things eternal life. Without a name, when things are used up or destroyed, they are gone for ever. With names, things can regenerate and appear again.

In field of culture or philosophy, this phenomenon of "name" problems may be most prominent, especially in today's world, where the division of labor is fine, and the economic interdependence of each country upon others is so strong. The world can't do without petroleum from the Middle East, just as it can't without high-tech software from the United States, as well as all kinds of life necessities made in China, and so on. Economic interdependence will inevitably lead to the exchange of cultures and the confrontation of different ideologies. Whether the result of communication and confrontation is acceptance, expulsion or integration may largely depend on the common understanding of the concepts in those domains.

While the civilization is evolving, along with it, there were many new fancy words coming out in all fields. There are good ones, also bad ones. Just as our forefathers have foreseen: strange words with ambiguous meanings, and improper names appeared to make people unable to distinguish right from wrong, even the government officials or the law

enforcement officers are confused themselves. How would we expect them to make the right decision and enforce the law properly? Each country has their own languages and cultural origins, in addition to which, the inappropriate translation of words may also lead to misunderstanding of the same philosophical, political or legal terms from other cultures, or even the same culture by different people. Has anyone run into such embarrassing situation as if a scholar gentleman argued with a single-minded soldier off the battle, the result of which is hardly optimistic, because the two can never stand on the same ground. The logic on which the mode of Human's thinking is based is very similar, just as mathematics has been accepted among all nationalities in basically the same way. So the fundamental problem that leads to difficult communication of different nations is caused by the different understanding of the same concepts, or the "names". In other words, the varied depth of knowledge about things and the interpretation of the meaning of things from different aspects leads to many incomprehensible and unnecessary conflicts in the world.

Probably some people will say that it would be naive to think it the way mentioned above, and that many conflicts in the world were actually caused by some governments fighting for the best interests of their own countries. If that is true, it would only explain another case of misunderstanding concept in politics, which is about the confusion on the concept of "national interest". On the appearance, some countries may be able to gain certain material benefits because of their powerful military forces, but they will certainly lose the faith upon them, not only of the people of other countries, but also of their own people. What they lose is the capital of relationship, which is the true long-term benefit for all entities. Some people might say that some governments are fighting with other countries in order to promote their culture and advocate their belief and make other countries accept their cultural advantages so that they would gain the greatest recognition in the world. Then, they must make it clear first what is their cultural advantage and how it should be expressed through the right concepts. Humans mostly admire people with the attributes of bravery, industriousness, nobility, generosity, benevolence and humanity, wisdom, faith, and sense of responsibility, etc., but not stealing, slandering and framing, getting weaker into worse situation, and raping human nature to humiliate themselves. Different nationalities may be inclined to different human values. They may also have different understanding of those values.

However, those values are the bases of any belief they have clung onto. In the antique time, the Europeans advocated chivalry; the British advocated the culture of gentlemen; the Americans respected the cowboy spirit; while the ancient Chinese liked to use their favorable term "Junzi", somewhat similar to gentleman, but not the same, to express their national spirit; and so on.

Unfortunately, I can't cite all the examples here one by one, only I don't know what kind of national spirit the modern countries are advocating. If they haven't come out with a clear idea, maybe they should first consult with their ancestors, then surf the Internet, and then discuss with their neighbors in this global village, before they are going to do such great deeds for their nations. Otherwise, they probably wouldn't even know what they are fighting for before they've blooded their face or gotten their skull broken into pieces. Perhaps after they have really come to understand what that idea is, they would suddenly realize that there is nothing to fight for at all. All humans are nurtured by the same root - that is mother earth. Why must they act so earnestly to eliminate one another? It's OK to have some fun by playing games like in sports matches, but it should be a match of gentlemen. Like some ancient people said, if you have to compete with others, courtesy always goes first. After the contest, the opponents could still befriend each other by toasting together with greetings

and cheers wholeheartedly.

What is the point to fight each other to death!

The adventure of humans has reached the top of all mountains and the bottom of all oceans, while seldom giving an second thought by taking away all that they can. There is not much left on earth but a few glasses of liquor and several pieces of peanuts made of metal?

It is definitely not worthy of powerful human force to fight for the pitiful leftover on earth. It would be so much better to use the human wisdom and power to engage in some meaningful work to make a positive transformation of human society and find new resources and new way out. In modern world, raw materials are playing much less important roles in people's life and countries' economy than before. Whether or not a country can succeed in the new era, largely depends on how they can effectively organize and deploy their social and economic forces, how they can efficiently utilize and recycle their resources, how they establish their rapport among their partners, and how they built their relationship with other countries. Fighting for the territories and raw materials are the games of wild animals and primitive people, which should be voided among highly civilized beings.

There is still an important concept here I would like to mention. That is, the fights between the governments are not the same thing as the fight between the civilians. The government, acting on behalf of the state, seems to devote themselves to the people of the country. However, it is not exactly the same thing. Although the government is elected by the people, once it is formed, it becomes an instrument of the state as a separated entity with its own will. It is obviously indebted to the people, but its ultimate goal is to demonstrate the reasonableness and purpose of its existence, which is the nature of all individual entity and should not be blamed for. The people have given the government all kinds of supplies and privileges to do its job, and they are no longer obliged to bear other pressure and burdens for the government, unless they are employed by the government temporarily or part-time (full-time personnel, of course, have been included in the government), or in the extraordinary events of natural disasters or when the country is facing immediate takeover or extermination under the attack of their enemies.

Why? because each ordinary citizen has his/her own share of burden and responsibility in this human's survival game. Therefore, it is not wise or practical for the government to frequently get civilians involved in their fights against their opponents, in order not to disturb or even ruin their normal life. Once the damage is done, it would come back on the government and jeopardize the base of their power.

The common people are the foundation of a country. Losing the common people means shaking the foundation of the country and the government.

If people from all trades of the world can share a set of common terms and follow a set of well-accepted laws and rules from the beginning to the end of anything they are doing, then the unresolvable problems would be greatly reduced, because they can communicate freely with common understanding of things they are talking at any time with a designed work language constituting of clearly defined concepts.

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