

Xinxue (The philosophy of mind) System

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Abstract: Xinxue (The philosophy of mind) founded by ancient Chinese philosopher Wang Yangming of the Ming Dynasty for over 700 years. Its ideas have deeply influenced East Asian countries such as China, Japan, and Korea in the field of social philosophy, and even indirectly promoted Japan's Meiji Restoration movement. At the same time, scholars from all over the world have conducted numerous studies and explorations on it, but overall, there is a lack of systematic exploration and research on it.

This article starts with the concept of a system, combines the content of Xinxue and integrates it into a complete, logical, and comprehensive system of Xinxue.

Keywords: Xinxue (The philosophy of mind) ,system, trilogy (Tao, Morals and Doing), artificial product.

1 Introduction

Xinxue is a discipline about the human mind and spiritual cultivation, originating from ancient Chinese philosophy, aimed at exploring issues such as the inner world, psychological activities, and moral cultivation of humans. It emphasizes inner reflection and self-cultivation, believing that by observing and understanding one's inner world, one can achieve the improvement of moral consciousness and spiritual realm. Its development process can be traced back to the Confucianism of ancient China's pre-Qin period, such as the discussions on human nature, morality, and cultivation by Confucius and Mencius. Later, under the influence of Zen Buddhism and Song Ming Neo Confucianism, the study of the mind gradually formed a complete philosophical theory. Among them, Wang Yangming is an important representative figure in the development of Xinxue, and pushing the theoretical height to its peak.

Chinese Ming Dynasty philosopher Wang Yangming (Wang Shouren) founded the study of Xinxue. Wang Yangming (October 31, 1472 – January 9, 1529), real name Wang Yun, courtesy name Yangming, was from Yuyao, Zhejiang, China, and was of the Han ethnicity. An outstanding philosopher, writer, military strategist, and educator of the Ming Dynasty, as well as a creator of the study of Xinxue. He inherited and developed the teachings of Confucius and Mencius, as well as the ideas of Confucianism and Buddhism, such as Mencius' theory of innate goodness, the Mind Sutra of Buddhism, and Cheng Hao's (a Chinese Song dynasty scholar) philosophy of "Mind is the universe". After his revision, supplementation, and sublimation, he expanded and expanded the thought of mind to the extreme, becoming a complete philosophy system.

Although the concept of mind in Xinxue originated from the ideas of Buddhism and Confucianism, mainly because it was limited to the social environment at that time, such as the dominant social environment dominated by Confucianism, and his own cognitive limitations limited his scope of thought, however, through practice, it is known that the scope of its "Mind" has extended to the entire human consciousness and ideological form and become a broad concept, greatly enhancing its breadth and universality, and pushing social philosophy to its peak.

According to his books such as 《Da Xue Wen》, 《Complete Works of Wang Yangming》, and 《Chuan Xi Lu》, it can be seen that the core content consists of three parts: "Mind is principle", "Reaching conscience" and "The unity of knowing and doing". For its connotation, it can be divided into three levels: "Tao" level ("Mind is principle"), "Morals" level ("Reaching conscience") and "Doing" level ("The unity of knowing and doing"), which are from high to medium and from medium to low, abbreviated as the "Trilogy of Xinxue". The specific description is as follows.

2 Tao layer—"Mind is principle"

The core idea of Xinxue is "Mind is principle", it is at the top level of Xinxue system, inheriting the concept of "the universe is my mind, and my mind is the universe" proposed by the Chinese philosopher Lu Jiuyuan of the Southern Song Dynasty, he proposed concepts such as "Nothing outside the Mind" and "No principle outside the Mind", These concepts determine the core ideas of the system of Xinxue, which are the "Tao" and of "Tao" layers of the system.

Once, Wang Yangming and his friends climbed a mountain, and halfway up the mountain, there was a blooming

flower. The group of people gathered around to admire the flower. One of their friends said, "This flower is so beautiful, it has nothing to do with human mind. The blooming and falling of flowers are only caused by time. How can we say 'There is nothing outside the mind'?" Wang Yangming replied, "When we don't see these flowers, both the flowers and us are silent; they are already in our mind and the colors of the flowers begin to shine when we see these flowers." Its meaning is that you only know this beautiful flower after you have the concept of flowers in your mind. If you are a baby, because you do not have the concept of flowers in your mind, the blooming and falling of flowers have no sensation to him, that is silence. So the conclusion is drawn: if there is something in the mind, there is; if there is no, there is no. This viewpoint extends to the understanding of the universe, which is "The universe is my mind, and my mind is the universe."

"Mind is principle": principle lies in the mind, only when there is principle in the mind is principle. The principles include heavenly principles, rules, and nature etc.

By cultivating one's own mind, one can understand the truth and laws of the operation of the universe, emphasizing the connection between an individual's inner mind and the overall universe, which is an important foundation of psychological thinking. The absence of selfish thoughts and distractions that obscure one's true self is completely in line with natural principles and nature. This true self naturally possesses benevolence, righteousness, propriety, wisdom, and trust, and naturally has a response to external things that conforms to the laws of natural principles. And this "Principle" not only refers to heavenly principles and humanity, but also includes truth and values. Although these contents were not obtained from his theory, they can be found in his practical experience.

The "Principle" in it comes from the exploring mind, which requires continuous reflection and exploration of one's inherent self in order to obtain this "principle". The relationship between "Mind" and "Principle" coexists, and this "principle" does not exist if one seeks outside of the mind. That is to say, any problem can only be meaningful by seeking it from within oneself, while seeking it from the external environment is only futile. This is the core idea and theoretical foundation of Xinxue, which has a universal attribute to social philosophy.

Then, it was emphasized that "there is nothing outside the mind", further clarifying the interrelationships between the mind and principle, the mind and things: principle only exists in one's own mind as principle. As long as there is a mindset of goodness, truth, and beauty in the mind, then seeing all things and things outside the mind is also goodness, truth, and beauty, and vice versa. This is because human cognition of all external things is obtained through the experiences, knowledge, and thinking of others and oneself in the past, which has obvious temporal and limitations, leading to subjectivity. For example, I only found out when my parents told me that the sun was red; I only found out after the teacher told me that one plus one equals two. So there is no truly objective existence in the world, all of which are subjective entities that are obtained through human cognition. This is because as long as someone believes that the world objectively exists, this cognition is generated by their subjective understanding, and it is illogical for a subjective understanding to derive the result of an objective existence. In the field of sociology, the "object" outside the mind is an objective existence that has no meaning or value for you and your mind. Only when there is a certain "object" in your mind can it have meaning and value.

You discovered that the sun rotates around the center of the Milky Way after learning scientific knowledge; You will feel a burning sensation when your arms approach a fire source; You see that the sky is blue and so on, all of which are subjective entities formed by your understanding of the world. It is because of you that you have the understanding of the world. If one day you are not there, then your world will not exist. So all things and things outside of your mind are related to whether there is something in your "mind". If there is something in your mind, there is something, and if there is nothing in your mind, there is nothing. Here, "existence" includes feelings and understanding of things and things. If you think you are rich, you are still rich then even if you are poor; You think you are very healthy, you are still healthy even if you are seriously ill; You feel very happy yourself, you are still happy even if you are painful and so on. That is to say, there is something if there is something in mind; There is nothing if there is nothing in mind, and it has little or no relationship with things or things outside your mind.

So, "the mind is the universe." because your life experience is a life of different feelings in your mind. Some people feel that life is sweet; Some people feel that life insipid; Some people feel that their whole life is aimless; Some people feel that their life is full of sadness and so on. All of this is a product of the mind, and different minds produce different product.

Irish philosopher George Berkeley (March 12, 1685 – January 14, 1753) proposed that "existence is perceived", which means that the existence of the world is entirely based on the existence of independent biological individuals who perceive the world. If there is no perceiving individual, then the world does not exist. He established the identity between perception and existence, meaning that the world does not exist without human perception. The concept of "perception" is known to the mind, which is consistent with the meaning of "mind" in Xinxue.

The philosopher Mencius (372 BC -289 BC, surnamed Ji, surnamed Meng, named Ke, was one of the representative figures of Confucianism during the Warring States period in ancient China. He was an ancient Chinese thinker, philosopher, politician, and educator.) said in his 《Mencius》 : "The organ of the heart is to think, to think is to obtain result, to not think is not to obtain result." the "result" can be understood as material and spiritual wealth. In addition, Mencius' concept of "the heart as the organ of thought" was limited by the scientific development at that time, modern science has proven that the brain is the organ for thinking and mind is from the brain, However, currently in the Chinese writing system, the habit of using "heart" instead of "mind" is still used.

German philosopher Ludwig Josef Johann Wittgenstein (April 26, 1889 – April 29, 1951) said, "The boundary of my language is the boundary of my world. Everything that can be said can be said clearly, and everything that cannot be said should be silent." Therefore, "The boundary of language means the boundary of my world." (Wittgenstein: 《On the Philosophy of Logic》). Language can describe the world, but what cannot be described does not belong to my world. The world is not my world until it is described by language (if we can assume a pre-existing world). When I create the conformation of the world, I create the logical isomorphism between language and the world, and language and facts correspond one-to-one. Because the connotation of language also comes from my "mind," language is also my mind.

On the surface, the concept of Xinxue appears to be based on Confucianism and Buddhism, in fact, it has transcended its scope and entered the entire field of social philosophy, demonstrating the breadth, rationality, and logicity of its philosophical system.

It is the first "TAO" Layer for "Mind is principle" in Xinxue system, and "Mind" is the source of all things and the cause.

3 Morals layer--"Reaching conscience"

The second core concept of Xinxue is to "Reaching conscience".

"Conscience" refers to the kindness and morality deep within mind. Wang Yangming believes that human nature is inherently good, and everyone has an inherent "conscience" that can distinguish right from wrong, good from evil. However, due to the temptation and influence of the external environment, it is obscured or eroded, leading to behavior deviating from morality. Therefore, "Reaching conscience" means awakening and realizing this inner "conscience" through self-reflection and cultivation, so that one's behavior meets moral requirements. This process requires people to constantly examine their own behavior and thoughts, eliminate selfish desires and distractions, and through self-reflection and cultivation, restore and enhance their moral consciousness, achieving inner quiet and clarity.

"Reaching" means not only achieving, but also a process of reflection and reflection, which requires continuous thoughts of eliminating evil. The purpose is to form conscience and determine the operating trend of behavior to ensure the expected results. If the expected results are not achieved, it is necessary to make further efforts.

The direction of "Reaching" is from "Tao" (principle) to "Morals" (conscience), which is an evolutionary process that pushes "Tao" towards "Morals", obeying the original mind, originating from the mind, conforming to heavenly principles, and ultimately reaching conscience. That is to say, the "conscience" obtained without any external interference or influence belongs to nature. The four teachings of Xinxue: "Human nature is divided into no good and no evil; They produce good and evil when people have desires; Cultivating a conscience to know good and evil; Explore ways to drive away evil deeds and engage in good deeds." This is the result of a concrete description of "Reaching conscience".

In short, it is the second "Morals" layer for "Reaching conscience" in Xinxue system and is a strategy for gain the trend of things developing.

4 Doing layer—"The unity of knowing and doing"

"The unity of knowing and doing": Practice after reaching conscience. It is to practice in the direction determined by the formed conscience, combining cognition with practice, and keeping one's thoughts, speech, and behavior consistent. Specifically, it means actively putting learning and thinking into practice, constantly reflecting and summarizing in practice, gradually improving one's theoretical and practical level, and truly applying what has been learned to form one's own behavioral norms and values.

This "Knowing" is not only understood as knowing and knowing, but also includes its breadth and depth, such as true knowledge, insight, and insight.

Wang Yangming said, "Knowing is the idea of doing, and doing is the skill of knowledge; knowledge is the beginning of doing, and doing is the result of knowledge.", it includes doing when it comes to knowledge, there is

knowledge when it comes to doing, and knowledge and doing are integrated.

He said, "It is easy to break through thieves in the mountains, but difficult to break through thieves in the mind." Evil thoughts are those who have a thief in their mind, and they require a compassionate mind to achieve the ultimate state of goodness. External enemies are easy for us to overcome, but internal enemies are difficult to overcome. The true enemy is not others but our own mind.

The philosopher Laozi (Laozi, surnamed Li Ming'er, with the courtesy name Dan and the other name Boyang, was from the late Spring and Autumn period of ancient China. He is a great thinker, philosopher, and scientist, the founder of the Taoist school, and the author of the Tao Te Ching.) said: Those who know others are wise, and those who know themselves are wisdom." (Selected from 《Tao Te Ching》).

The famous ancient Greek philosopher Socrates (469 BC to 399 BC, was one of the founders of ancient Greek philosophy) said: "Know thyself," is engraved on the temple of Delphi in the Greek holy city. It directly reminds people that knowing oneself is the most important thing in life.

It is the third "doing" layer for "The unity of knowledge and doing" in the Xinxue system, which flows according to the situation and naturally bears result.

5 Practice for Xinxue

Wang Yangming fully demonstrated the system concept of "Tao--Morals--Doing" in the practice of Xinxue.

In the Gannan region in China, there are high mountains and dense forests, and thieves are rampant, robbing families and houses, with tens of thousands of people. They often attack cities and occupy land, killing officials and civilians. Due to the fact that the bandits are all locals, they are numerous in number. The imperial court has deployed a large army several times to attack, but it has always been unable to be completely eliminated and the recruitment is uneasy, leaving the authorities helpless and gradually becoming a hidden danger to the Ming government.

Wang Yangming took orders in the face of danger and arrived in Gannan with an empty title, under the condition of no soldiers or generals. He quickly found out the eyeliner planted by the bandits, and successfully subdued them, and then implemented the protection law, cutting off the breeding ground for bandits. Finally, recruit and train suppressing bandits, and form a new army with their own disciples and students. At the time of the battle, Wang Yangming used various tactics to make the bandits suffer unbearably, making them afraid to attack or retreat. In the end, he lost confidence and most of them went home from the fertile fields.

The remaining bandit dens used the method of literary attack, writing letters to persuade surrender, The letter states: " If there is still a way to survive in this world, who would be willing to become bandits and leave a bad reputation for future generations? Also, when you decided to become bandits, you had the courage to seek death for living people. If you could turn evil into good, then the dead would have a way to live, and you wouldn't dare to do so. If you could do the same as you did when you were bandits, desperately break free from the bandit's den, how could the government insist on killing you? If we could easily kill you, the underworld In the underworld, we will suffer retribution, and disasters will affect future generations. Why do we have to do this? ".

For over a few years, Wang Yangming, relying solely on his weak military strength, was assessed as a bandit who had been in trouble for decades and returned to the local area in peace.

In addition, he became a saint of making commitment, making contribution, and achieving virtue through education, banditry suppression, lectures, and suppress the rebellion. He has fulfilled the mission of Zhang Zai (a philosopher, educator, and one of the founders of Neo Confucianism in the Northern Song Dynasty): "To establish our mind for heaven and earth, to establish our mission for the people, to inherit our unique teachings from the sages, and to create peace for all generations."

Several hundred years after its emergence, Xinxue deeply influenced the social and cultural development of Japan and the Korean Peninsula, including indirectly promoting Japan's Meiji Restoration.

In 1510, a Japanese Zen monk named An Guiwu came to China at the age of 83 to meet with Wang Yangming on the order of King Ashikaga Yoshimasa. Before leaving, Wang Yangming wrote a preface to bid farewell to An Guiwu. Upon returning to Japan, An Guiwu did not immediately spread Wang Yangming's philosophy, as he was almost 87 years old. The person was Japanese scholar Edo Shuki who truly began to spread the theory of mind. At around the age of 37, he obtained the "Wang Longxi Quotations" and then studied the "Complete Book of Yangming", achieving great success and becoming the founder of the Xinxue in Japan.

In addition, Hirobumi Ito, who served as the first Prime Minister of the Japanese government and the Speaker of the Privy Council, also played a very important role in the dissemination of Xinxue. Due to his prominent political status, the Xinxue was further promoted during the Meiji Restoration, promoting the emergence and development of the Meiji Restoration.

It can be said that the starting point of modern Japan's development was the study of Xinxue. Liang Qichao, a famous scholar in modern China, also said, " The Meiji Restoration in Japan was used in the study of Xinxue."

In addition, it also deeply influenced Ming Dynasty Prime Minister Zhang Juzheng, Korean Confucian tycoon Li Zhi, Japanese modern military strategist Dongxiang Pingbalang, Japanese entrepreneur Kazuo Inamori, and Qing Dynasty Minister Zeng Guofan.

Xinxue emphasizes the act of returning to one's inner nature through introspection, self-awareness, and practice. The core is to identify with the concept of "Mind is principle" (Tao) through personal inner cognition, achieve " The unity of knowing and doing " (Doing) through "Reaching conscience" (Morals) , and strive for the ultimate goodness, even to the sage.

In short, once there is doing, there must be result, which is an artificial product. Artificial products: are the results generated through human social activities, including artificial materials (such as money) and spiritual wealth (such as happiness). Although the content of Xinxue does not explicitly mention this issue, in fact, this result will inevitably occur after "doing", that is, it must follow the logic: from "Tao" to "Morals", from "Morals" to "Doing" and from "Doing" to result which is an artificial product.

6 Summary

The three-layer philosophical system of "Mind is principle" (Tao), " Reaching conscience" (Virtue), and "The unity of knowing and doing" (Doing) in Xinxue, has universal and logical attributes.

In the field of social philosophy, universality is applicable to any social activity; Logicality is the degree of rationality applicable to any social activity, that is, the No.1 of "Tao", " No.2 Morals " and No.3 "Doing", which maintains mutual connection and interaction and becomes a complete system.

In short, "Mind is principle " is the source of all potential, "Reaching conscience" is the strategy to achieve potential, and " The unity of knowing and doing" is to form flow based on potential.

The greatness of it lies in elevating the theory that the mind (consciousness) determines artificial products (material and spiritual wealth) to the perspective of the creator, just like the ancient Chinese philosophy Laozi said: "Tao gives birth to one, one gives birth to two, two gives birth to three, and three gives birth to all things."

Mr. Wang Yangming successfully inherited the content of Confucianism and Buddhism, and sublimated these disciplines into a comprehensive philosophical system, becoming the pinnacle of the philosophical world. Its completeness, logicality, and systematicity have almost reached a perfect level, becoming a saint in millennium with Xinxue (The philosophy of mind) System.

Wang Yangming's dying words: "This mind is bright, and there is nothing more to say."

References

《Chuan Xi Lu》, written by Wang Yangming.

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