

Comparison and Choice of Cultural Patterns of the Chinese Cultural Renaissance

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Abstract: Cultural differences suggest the existence of a variety of cultural patterns. In the context of globalization, conscious choice and construction of cultural patterns are of great necessity. Choice is related to comparison and involves evaluation comparisons of nature and function and recognition comparisons of content and structure regarding cultural patterns. This paper holds that cultural values can be established based on the foundations of basic cultural value functions, namely if they satisfy people's need for transcendence and enhancement, appreciation of the beauty, social survival and progress. Also, different situations should be combined with specific existence situations within a specific culture. Accordingly, life-vitality orientation should be regarded as a criterion in cultural evaluation and choice.

Keywords: cultural difference; cultural pattern; evaluation comparison

Cultural retrogression and progress, decline and revival, because of cultural changes, have two sides, namely objective forces of social and cultural operation on their own, and the other side based on people's subjectivity. The creation and development of human cultures have produced significant differences. They are pluralistic and are presented in multi-patterns. Thus, in the pursuit of cultural progress and revival, whether human participation achieves the desired effect is closely related to rational choice and conscious promotion of culture. This involves the focus of comparative culture. Is there a pattern for cross-cultural comparisons and is there a common standard for such comparisons? In this paper, based on relevant cultural theories, several views are expressed from the perspective of cultural

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* Foundation item: This study was funded by the Japan Society for Asian Studies.

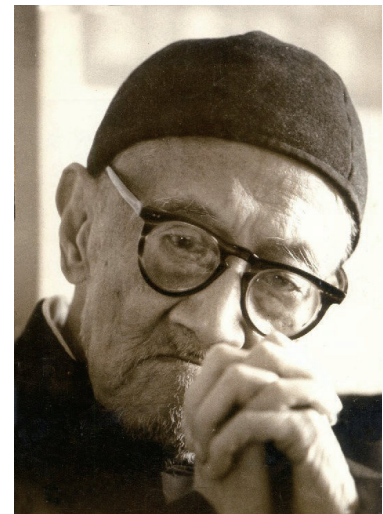
sociology in order to provide information for choice and reference for contemporary construction of Chinese culture.

1. Cultural Differences and Patterns

Ogburn, the cultural scientist of the United States, once said, "Individuals and nations have difference in biology and so is in culture."^① As the creation of society and occurrence of history, culture indeed determines that there may be differences between societies in different areas, groups and times. Specific social cultural differences are observable objective phenomena. There are many words of wisdom about cultural difference like, "Men are born the same but habits make them different." (*Analects of Confucius* · Yang Huo); "People living one hundred miles away have different habits while those living one thousand miles away have different custom." (*Han Book* · Records of Wang Ji). They also repeatedly appeared and were verified in many travel notes and sketch books of Chinese and foreign people in successive dynasties. The cultural anthropology, originated in the industrial era, provides a large number of field data for cultural differences between different regions and ethnic groups. Different perspectives focusing on factors such as ethnic groups, geographical environments, communications, and psychology provide rich interpretations for the reasons of cultural differences. A variety of theoretical generalization and expression for the phenomenon of cultural differences have been formed like cultural circle, district, type, and pattern.

There are two main reasons for the existence of cultural differences.

First, it is the environmental differences



Liang Shuming

between the occurrence and development of culture. As the famous American anthropologist, Boas said, "Culture of any nation can only be understood as a product of history, and its characteristics are determined by the social and geographical environment of that nation." Life in any human society exists in a certain environment, and different environments determine the people's way of making a living, like nomadic life on the grassland, fishing life on islands, and farming in areas suitable for cultivation. Different social environments further lead to specific cultural differences, for example whether one group is adjacent to hostile groups or whether there is social differentiation are examples. These factors affect the differences between the problems to be faced and coped with by different societies or groups, which further affect differences in cultural creation and development direction. A group threatened by potential enemies would have a corresponding focus in military technology, while a group in peaceful life is unlikely to develop a war culture.

^① Please refer to details in Significance of a New Perspective of Cultural Sociology—Enlightenment of the Cultural Sociology Theory of Mannheim written by Yuan Yang, in *Journal of Southwest University for Nationalities* (Edition of Humanities and Social Sciences) 2011 No. 7.

Second, culture is the creation of human beings through their creative characteristics. The specific creators will inevitably have an impact on the creation, and will play an active role in the given space of environment. Marx Webb believes that the prophet of different types affects cultural differences between East and West. Liang Shuming holds that culture is the creation of genius, which affects the difference between eastern and western cultures. Of course, these views are suitable for further discussion, while it could be recognized that cultural differences between different groups and societies are affected by different cultural creators, which is expressed in these views. There seems to be some slight differences in physiological structure between human individuals and groups. There is objective data of these differences based on the biology like nerve patterns, psychological traits, cognitive abilities, and reaction speed, among others. Additionally, there may be subtle differences in the effects of social life on individuals. As a result, different people's responses to external stimuli may not be completely coincident. Therefore, cultural creation and choice will be different based on different levels of cognition, different psychological feelings, and different invention tendencies, which will affect the diversity of culture presentations and development. We can see the different response of modern China and Japan to the threatening of the West, as well as the divergence of Chinese elites since the modern times in resolving the crisis and reconstruction of Chinese culture. All these phenomena show subjectivity and cultural differences in cultural creation thus formed.

Cultural differences suggest the existence of a variety of cultural patterns. *Patterns of Culture*, the first book made a name for American anthropologist Benedict says, "A culture is like a person, and is more or less a consistent pattern of thoughts and behaviors." The concept of cultural patterns is

applied in this paper, while two points need to be made clear. First, there are many theories and concepts for the expression of cultural difference, but internal integration and choice of the same culture are suggested as well in different expressions of different cultures. "Any society has to choose one fragment of the arc of the possible human behaviors, as long as its cultures are to be integrated."^[4] Therefore, it is a concept closely related to both cultural construction and the specific operation mode of the specific society, which is more in line with the perspective of cultural sociology, and can better relate to the theme of this paper. Second, different cultural anthropologists do not agree on the issue of cultural patterns. In this paper, the concept of cultural patterns is adopted in a comprehensive way. In the identification of differences of human cultures, Benedict's diversity and particularity of patterns is accepted, but her specific demonstration generated from the perspective of psychology for the difference of patterns is not rigidly adhered to. Regarding the identification of association and combination of cultural elements, the expression of universality of patterns by Kroeber and the Functionalism school is preferred.

According to this, it can be understood that cultural pattern refers to the combination of certain forms of cultural content and the tendency of expression in social life. Cultural pattern represents a kind of relatively fixed characteristic of human group life, which is the basis of human thought and behavior. On one hand, the cultural patterns of different nations, regions, and countries have commonality simply due to human nature across time and space. In those patterns, communication is made through languages, characters and symbols. There are codes of conduct and certain forms of systems, and contain elements to meet material and spiritual needs to a certain degree. On the other hand, more often than not, cultures of different

nations, regions, and countries contain different content and form characteristics as a result of spatial and temporal differences between different human groups, as well as differences between people's initiatives in cultural creation. There is pattern differentiation in the view of comparative culture. Cultures like Chinese, western, and Indian as well as ethnic cultures, to varying degrees, have developed unique cultural patterns consistent with their content and form characteristics.

The proposition of the scientific theory of cultural patterns has the significance of correcting the scientific theory of linear philosophy and culture which is supported by the traditional scientific theory of evolution. The viewpoints, labeled as the representative linear scientific theory of culture, believes that human cultures develop from low level to high level in accordance with the common law of evolution. The development will undergo the same stages, starting from the same point and stepping forward to the same ending. The differences between different cultures are presented in the form of under-developed states and developed states, and backwardness and progress. The scientific theory of cultural patterns suggests the differences between different national cultures is not only manifested in the diachronic meaning but also in the synchronic meaning; the occurrence of culture is diversified and displayed in multiple patterns, while the development moves along multiple lines and through multiple ways. In the contemporary era, this scientific theory of culture has been named the mainstream or macro view of culture, and has replaced the scientific theory of linear culture.

2. Comparative Differences of Cultural Patterns and Their Causes

Since there are a variety of cultural patterns and different patterns represent operating modes

of different societies and life styles of different nations, cultural patterns are of great significance to specific social and national life. In the context of globalization, with increasingly frequent cultural communication and exchanges, conscious choice and construction of cultural patterns are of great necessity from the perspective of people's initiative and that of the pursuit of cultural progress or cultural renaissance.

Choice is related to comparison. It involves the issue that evaluative comparisons of nature-function (value comparison) are possible in addition to recognition comparison of content-structure (comparison of similarities and differences) between different patterns. In terms of the objective history of human cultures and ups and downs as a result of the changes, value comparison is possible, in the longitudinal dimension, between different historical forms of the cultures in the same social cultures of the same nation or the same region. However, there are two different theoretical tendencies in the comparison of value from the synchronic perspective in the horizontal dimension between social cultures of different nations and regions, namely affirmation and negation. However, there are two different theoretical tendencies in the comparison of the value of different cultures between different ethnic groups and regions in the horizontal dimension.

Generally speaking, in the view of historical philosophy and cultural evolution theories of unified movement patterns of the world (historical philosophy—evolutionary perspective), it can be regarded that comparisons of value could be possible between cultural patterns of different nations. There are the good and the bad, the high and the low, the advanced and the backward, and the barbaric and the civilized. Preferential choice can be applied to cultural patterns. In the view of relativism philosophy and historical particularism theories of

anti-essentialism(from the perspective of relativism particularism), the possibility of cross-cultural value comparison is denied. Cultural patterns advocate particularity and self-adaptation of inherent cultural patterns of different nations. If divergence does exist, then is it possible to make evaluation comparisons between cultural patterns of different nations? What is the root cause of the divergence?

Logically speaking, the possibility of evaluation comparisons between different cultural patterns should be determined by the nature of culture.

Regarding the nature of culture, Rickert made a very good explanation when he referred to the distinction between culture and nature, "Nature is the sum of those grown and 'born' from and by themselves, self-born and self-growing things. Contrary to nature, culture is directly produced by people with the intended purpose or readily available but is specially reserved by people at least for its inherent value."^[5] That is to say, culture is a creation of human beings with purpose. The purpose of creating culture is to satisfy people's needs, and then the attribute of culture's meeting people's demand and satisfying people's needs is its value. Malinowski also said, "All of the different uses of culture include different ideas and generate different cultural values."^[6] The value of culture is realized in the process of the reality of social life and is embedded in the social structure. Therefore, the so-called cultural value is manifested as the functionality in the objective society from the perspective of cultural sociology. For this point, Mannheim puts forward that cultural sociology, "attempts to understand this objectivity in accordance with the functionality of cultural objectivity."^[7] "The formation of various cultures... exists in a kind of functional relationship."^[8] Therefore, the basic nature of culture is its value-functionality.

It is the value-functionality of culture that results in the divergence of opinion about whether

evaluation comparisons can be made between different cultural patterns. On one hand, from the standpoint of value-functionality, there are differences in value's size and degree, and in function's intensity and positive and negative. It is the basic premise and foundation of the comparability between different cultural items and patterns, regardless of whether cross national, or cross time or space. The party with the view of comparability develops his opinion based on this logic. Historical philosophy, with the tendency of ontology, regards a certain historical noumenon as the source of value or the highest and final value, and examines human cultures from vertical and horizontal perspectives. There is evaluation comparison with noumenon value as the benchmarking, and correspondingly there are the good and the bad, the high and the low. The scientific theory of cultural evolution takes the degree of cultural differentiation, namely field expansion and function promotion's role in helping people out of the original state, as the evolution standard. Measured by this unified standard, cultures of different times and different nations have inevitable differences in function and utility, thus different evaluation comparison is generated from each evolutionary stage. As White said, "The structure and process of human society are functions of culture,"^[9] and, "Increased understanding about astronomy, medicine and culturology will enable the human species to adapt to the Earth and the universe in a more realistic and effective way."^[10] By culture's ability in the use of energy, functional effect of culture in fact, he divides the evolution and development history of culture into four stages, namely the stage when humans depended upon their own energy; the stage when they, through planting crops and feeding livestock, were able to make use of photosynthesis to convert solar energy to grains and further harvest and store them; the stage when they, through power revolution, utilized new energy

from underground resources like coal, petroleum, natural gas and others; in the near future, it will be a stage when nuclear power will provide convenience to human's daily life instead of being used as a tool of war.

On the other hand, as the creation of humans, culture in practice is always the creation out of a specific purpose in a specific environment by a specific person. This specification determines the specified value and function of the value of creation. Both value and function cannot exist outside of a specific relationship in a specific environment and between subject and object. Accordingly, the demands of value and functions are specific and diversified as well. Demands can be various, subjective and flexible. Therefore, there is incomparability in the level of abstraction between different cultural events. Based on this logic, historical particularism holds that each nation has its unique history and life style and this determines the uniqueness of the cultures of different nations. Opponents of evolution sum up the universal law of the development of human cultures in the single pattern and hold that cultures of different nations are not comparable. As Boas said, "The social ideals of the Chinese people are so different from ours that their evaluations of people's behaviors are not comparable. Some believe it is good while others believe it is bad."^[11] He further pointed out in methodology, "The scientific study of social cultures requires researchers to be free from restriction of any evaluation on the basis of our cultures."^[12] The philosophical relativists opposed to the abstract value controlled by noumenon over specific differentiated cultures, emphasizing the relativity of value of culture as a specific object. As Herskovits stressed, "Cultural relativism is a kind of philosophy, recognizing the values generated to lead people's lives by each society and understanding their values depended upon by survivors despite

of their differences."^[13] Lyotard also declared, "Let's fight against the unity of the whole, let's become the witnesses of something inexpressible, let's do not compromise in the development of all sorts of divergences, and let's strive to uphold the honor in the name of difference."^[14]

By the analysis above, it is concluded that the two kinds of logic of comparability and incomparability at the level of evaluation comparison between cultural patterns are extended from the self-attribute of culture and so both have their rationality. As each takes a foothold on one side of the attribute of tracking culture, each logic has a single logical deduction instead of including the logic of the other.

In the cultural logic of the scientific theory of historical philosophy—evolution, the commonality of human cultures as human creations, composite objects and value—function objects, neglecting the materiality and complexity of cultures is defective in that it only sees the forest instead of the trees. Despite the idea and historical consciousness of cultural evolution and the establishment of the principle of cultural comparability, it is far too abstract and general in the specific operation level of comparison. The deducted standards for comparison lack objectivity, which is just an understanding of personal preference, not the representation of common standards.

In the cultural logic of the scientific theory of relativism-particularism, the starting point is the personality of cultural creations like specification, diversity and relativity, which rejects the universality and commonality of culture and is defective in only seeing specific trees instead of the forest as a whole. As a result, the specific characters are identified between different cultural patterns, showing respect for cultural differences, but it has a defect in its emphasis on the adaptation of each national culture in a too general way. It is lost in absolutism in the emphasis on negativism of comparability between

different cultural patterns, namely idealization of cultural adaptation.

In fact, there is duality in the value–function of culture. In the actual cultural patterns, cultural influence on people’s lives and the life experience it provides are not necessarily positive. First, as a product of people’s coping with environmental issues, the choice and path are not the best or the most appropriate. Due to limitations of human beings, they may respond in the wrong way and make wrong choices, so as to bring themselves difficulties and crisis. Second, there is differentiated status and interests in the groups of people. Since entering the cultural society, all the members of a group are hardly satisfied in a joint and balanced way by any cultural events, while more often than not, only part of the group are satisfied. In this way, a single cultural pattern, for some members, is external, alienated, and oppressive, and brings pain instead of happiness. Third, human life is flowing and the living environment and living problems are changing. When the old cultural pattern cannot adapt to and cope with the new environment and problems, they would lose their property of meeting people’s needs and become nooses around people’s necks. Therefore, human cultures are constantly striving for changes and progress, trying to overcome their negative attributes and develop their positive attributes, and further promote human cultures to the state from which the majority benefit as much as possible. In this way, cultures of different nations have various forms of changes like spreading, selection, acceptance, enculturation, renaissance, and so on. Apparently, if the logic of relativism- particularism is absolute, it will easily turn into narrow nationalism and may also become an excuse for self-defense and resistance to progress in backward systems.

From the above analysis, it can be concluded that there is a base for evaluation comparison between

different cultural pattern and nations, but due to the specific attribution of cultures, abstract and general comparisons should be avoided.

3. Evaluation of Cultural Pattern and Value Perspectives of Choice

From the viewpoint of the basic principle of comparative study, the so-called “different classes are incomparable”(quoted from *Mo-tse·Jing*) emphasizes that the pre-condition should be available for comparison. The pre-condition of cross-cultural comparison is the same or similar attributes of the two sides to be compared and the common standard applicable to both must be established. This paper argues that the cultures of all the nations in different patterns are the purposeful creations of humans, which determines the comparability in scientific theory between different cultural patterns on the basis of the fundamental common ground of value-function both of individuals and the society. Thus, according to the basic connotation of value-function of culture, the value perspective of the evaluation and choice of cultural patterns can be established.

Culture is the product of human’s adaptation to the environment and seeking to survive and to be satisfied. The specific connotation of culture’s value-function is the result of the relationships and problems to be coped with in the social life of human beings. Generally speaking, social life is dealing with relationships and problems in three aspects namely; human and nature, human and society, and human and himself. Relationships in three aspects namely; utilitarian, moral and aesthetic are generated between humans and the objects, when people deal with the above mentioned relationships and problems. The major connotation of culture’s value-function is reflected in the adaptation and satisfaction of these three aspects of relationships. Consequently, in principle, three evaluation

perspectives for cultural patterns based on value and function can be deduced and generalized.

First, it should be reviewed if cultural patterns can satisfy people's need for self-promotion. Humans are the products of nature, but they are different from other creatures. Humans strive for exceeding nature and improving themselves, and overcoming the defects in the state of natural life to distinguish from other creatures in nature. Culture is the means and result of people's transcendence of nature and self-improvement. Therefore, people advance from the primitive of nature and constantly develop their cultural also as to obtain the orientation of supernatural cultural value. People would give evaluation like barbarism and civilization, and progress and retrogression for a certain cultural phenomenon or the result of a certain cultural change. There are lots of examples like moving from caves to buildings and houses, from the boundless sexual relationship between men and women to the institution of marriage, from primitive barbarism to cooked food, from paying no attention to hygiene to paying great attention to it, and from cannibalism to respect for life. Humans' development can be witnessed in these phenomena, which are regarded as culturalization and progress, otherwise, it would be regarded as barbarism and retrogression. However, evaluations on the foundation of different cultural value standards are relative, the result of cultural relativity. From the point of Confucius' esteem for Zhou Li, he firmly believed that the culture in the Spring and Autumn Period is retrogression of great damage. It is denied by Lao Tzu that culturalization is progress from the negative perspective of benevolence. Humanists think that the ancient Greek culture is the progress of human civilization, while the ancient Greek poet Hesiod holds that the folk custom of the city-states of Ancient Greece is constant retrogression of humans from the Golden Age to the Silver Age, the Bronze

Age, and the Iron Age. His view is concluded in the negative perspective of humans' violence and greed. However, since human culture is the fundamental characteristic distinguishing humans from other creatures, whether people's bodies and minds break away from the original defects in a certain cultural reality should be regarded as the base of evaluation of the value of that culture.

Second, it should be reviewed if cultural patterns can satisfy people's need for appreciation of beauty. Beauty appreciation is the sensory perception and spiritual feelings through observation and experience of objects. Those which bring feelings of joy and happiness to people physically and mentally are called beautiful, otherwise they are called ugly. The aesthetic object can be specific things or the entire social life as a whole. Chernychevsky once said, "Beauty is life." Whether social life is beautiful or ugly is largely determined by the culture which shapes and expresses social life, like systems, morality, patterns of interpersonal relationships, modes of distribution, ways of satisfaction. Thus, the aesthetic point of view is developed in the evaluation of nature as a result of cultural changes. In a certain real-life situation formed by the culture of a kind of phenomenon, social members may feel physically and mentally happy, while in the social life formed by the culture of another phenomenon social members may suffer from life and feel pain. In different social lives in human history, numerous praise or curse has been witnessed for social life. The Democracy period of the city-states of ancient Greece is recognized as the Golden Age in the history of western society, which is the first peak of western culture as well. People felt good in that period and the Athens people were confident in their creations. Pericles, who led them to success, declared, "Human beings are the most important, and all the others are the fruits of human labor."^[15] From the aesthetic point of view, Hagel evaluated the cultural and

spiritual condition at that time “according to the principle of Greek life, the principle of universality of ethics and the abstract freedom inside and outside of an individual are in harmony undisturbed.”^[16] The Spring and Autumn Period of ancient China went through severe social transformation with turbulent social life. People felt that it was retrogression from beauty to ugliness and it was a crisis. As a result, most of the thinkers at that time had negative attitude in cultural evaluation. Confucius spoke publicly that, “The Spring and Autumn Period” was full of “disintegrated ceremony” and the time when “bad government prevails” (*the Analects of Confucius · Ji Shi*). Mo-tse also said, “The Spring and Autumn Period” was the age of “fatuous emperor” and “indifferent and selfish people” (Mo-tse · Jian Ai II). Mencius said, “[During] the Spring and Autumn Period...the society did not develop in accordance with natural law and false reasoning and heresy prevailed.” (Mencius · Teng Wengong II). Chuang-tze said, “[During] the Spring and Autumn Period...there was great disorder in the society, it was difficult for the academic stands of sages to be manifested in the world and moral standards to be unified.” (*Chuang-tze · the World*). These evaluations contain identical aesthetic painful feelings. When foreign visitors travel in a different place, they often have aesthetic perceptions of pure or ugly folk customs. Hence, aesthetic value is a perspective for evaluating the nature of culture.

Third, it should be reviewed if cultural patterns can satisfy the need for social operations and progress. Society is run by culture. Culture satisfies needs of both people and social operations, so the degree and efficiency of such satisfaction becomes the foundation of people’s evaluation of the nature of culture. It will be reviewed if new systems can improve social order in a more effective way, promote the living standard of societal members, if new morality and fashion

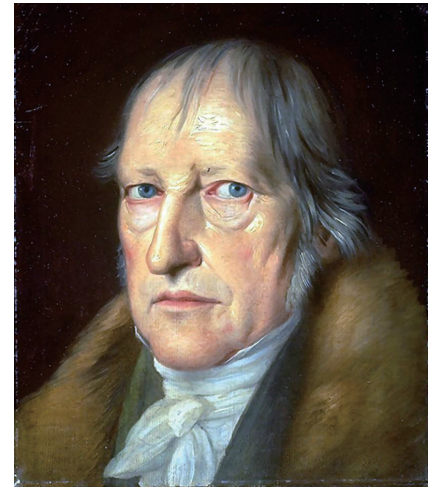
is conducive to harmonious interpersonal relationships, if new production tools can increase output, if new academic ideas are helpful for knowledge advancement and wisdom activation, among others. If the new culture enjoys a higher degree and efficiency in satisfying the operations of society than did the old one, it is thought as progress, otherwise, it is thought as retrogression. All the positive evaluations about phenomena like Solon Reform of the ancient Greece, Shangyang Reform of the Warring States Period of China, the humanism movement, religious reforms, the enlightenment, the invention of the steam engine, the popularity of the Internet are examples based on the values of culture like efficiency enhancements of social operations and the promotion of social progress. On the contrary, the cultural nature of other phenomena like burning books, burying Confucian scholars alive, the Wang Mang Reform, the replacement of the Republic by a monarchy in ancient Rome, and the Bourbon Restoration of France are regarded as retrogression.

The above three perspectives for value evaluation of cultural nature are relative division. Human’s utilitarian, moral and aesthetic relationships with the world are mutually included. Aesthetic pleasure does not do without understanding or perception of utility and morality, while moral promotion does not do without utilitarian and aesthetic need and utilitarian satisfaction contains moral and aesthetic satisfaction. Meanwhile, the qualitative analysis of cultural value is related to that of culture’s function. If cultural value is the intrinsic attribute demonstrated or granted in the relationship between culture and humans, then cultural function is the external manifestation of cultural value and cultural value is achieved through cultural function.

4. Situational Standards for Evaluation and Choice of Cultural Patterns

The three value perspectives of principle, derived from cultural connotation, are acceptable for longitudinal comparison of cultural history and review of the results of culture changes. They could be used as the operation standards for horizontal comparison between cultural patterns of different nations as well. Taking into account the assertive perceptions and elastic demands of different times, individuals and nations, corresponding evaluation perspectives would be endowed with different meanings by reviewers with different positions. Cultures are of rich diversity. Specific cultural events have different status and play different roles in social life with different performance under different space—time conditions. These require that specific situations should be attached great importance and treated differently, with the general guiding principle of the following three evaluation perspectives for cross-cultural comparison.

First is the comparison between superficial cultural events to satisfy daily life and communication. Traditional behavior etiquette and habits are good examples, like western people embrace and touch other's faces to express greetings while the ancient Chinese make a bow with hands folded in front. Western people eat with knives and forks while Chinese eat with chopsticks. It is not easy to establish common standards for comparison of advantages and disadvantages between the different cultural events, as they represent similar functional significance and self-adaptive and do not involve major issues like personal life quality or social security. Therefore, the comparison can only be identification in common sense for their value and functional significance in social life, distinguishing the similarities and differences



Georg Wilhelm Friedrich Hegel

without any difference in quality. Thus, the choice of culture at this level should be guided by self-adaptation of people's lives, providing respect to the spread of traditions.

Second is the comparison between aesthetic objects of art, like painting, music and poetry. As subjective experience and transmission mediums are involved with these kinds of objects, it is difficult to establish common evaluation criteria in a pure aesthetic sense. The comparison of the advantages and disadvantages we can see is made by the evaluation criteria through unilateral self-identification of the viewer. When Hegel compared the lyric poetry of China and the West, he said, "The Chinese people should be mentioned first of all when talking about a few nations with outstanding achievements to the Oriental lyrics." But Chinese lyrics are not as good as Western lyrics as "...the essential difference is that in Oriental lyrics independence and freedom of the individual of the subject are not realized and the content is not spiritualized...finally, the major patterns of manifestation of the lyrics are simile, metaphor and image...despite of their efforts to express emotions and objects themselves, they are not the emotions

and objects.”^[17] Hagel viewed nature, society and the spiritual evolution of humans through a common lens of movement and development of absolute spirit, believing that beauty is the manifestation of absolute spirit and taking the closeness between human consciousness and the absolute spirit as standards. It is indeed a kind of aesthetic perspective, but it is hardly the only one. Hence, for the readers of Chinese poetry, it is hard to accept the depreciation of Chinese poetry of aesthetic comparison evaluation based on such a perspective. Wang Fuzhi, in the Qing Dynasty, once stressed the lyricism of poetry, “...temperament is reflected in the poetry”(Qing Dynasty, Wang Fuzhi: *Ci of Yan Xiansheng* written by Xu Wei, Volume V of *Selection of Ming Poetry*) and pointed out that poetry share common expressions and attitudes towards natural law, cause and contribution, fidelity, rites and music with Scripture of Yi, Scripture of Reading, Scripture of Manner and The Spring and Autumn Annals but poetry has its own characteristics. “By rich and deep emotions and gentle artistic expression of poetry, one person’s emotion is touched, his soul is cultivated, and his mind is educated.” (Qing Dynasty, Wang Fuzhi: *Shi Yi*) Poetry cannot be replaced by those scriptures. With this evaluation standard, Hagel’s judgment of lyric poetry is incorrect as it requires the same of poetry as a general concept similar to philosophy. Therefore, there are the sayings that emotions prevail in Chinese poetry while intellectuality prevails in Western poetry. So some contemporary Chinese poets think that, from the special emotional expression of lyric poetry, the aesthetic view of Chinese poetry is more conformed to the characteristics of lyric poetry than that of Western poetry, “In Western poetry there is not necessarily less discussion about the emotional phenomena of art, but they speak in the cognitive way of Logos, namely ‘emotion’ is a cognitive object placed in front of a speaker. Emotion is put

into the rational cognitive framework for analysis and anatomy instead of becoming alive through their discussions. Accordingly, they only grasp the rational concept of emotion instead of the real live flow of emotion itself. In brief, emotion is absent when the Western poets are talking about and treating emotion in their rational way. Only the concept of emotion is present.”^[18] From painting art, Chinese people are impressed and surprised at the lifelike images when they first see western paintings. “The paintings look like sculptures,” “the figure looks very angry with his beard up, and looks happy with his eyebrows up, his ears are outlined as the real ones, his nose is at precise position, and his eyes and mouth look like speaking, which are not superior to Chinese paintings.” (Ming Dynasty, Liu Dong and Yu Yizheng: *Imperial Scenery*). The scholar of the Ming Dynasty, GuQiyuan, described the oil painting of Madonna and the child placed in the temporary church by Missionary Matteo Ricci, “They are true to life, with their bodies and hands and their faces looking like they are alive.” (Ming Dynasty, GuQiyuan: *Guest Language Superfluous Volume VI*). The painter of the Qing Dynasty Zou Yigui made such evaluations when he saw western paintings, “The Westerners are good at the Pythagorean method, so the paintings are precise in light and darkness and scenery distance without any deviation. There are shadows with all the figures, houses and trees. The paints and brushes are completely different from the Chinese ones. The shadows change from broad to narrow, measured with a triangular. The painted palace on the wall is so natural as though it were living that people want to walk in it. Chinese painters can refer to a few skills of the western painting for some new ideas; however, it has no calligraphy of drawing at all. It cannot be included as quality painting despite of its absolute lifelikeness.” (Qing Dynasty, Zou Yigui: *the Art of Painting of Xiaoshan Western Painting*,

remarks: ZouYigui styled himself Xiaoshan). Chinese writing brushes are applied for the Chinese paintings, with emphasis on the romantic charm and artistic conception instead of lifelikeness. Therefore, it is difficult to establish a common standard for evaluation from different aesthetic perspective and artistic mediums. The only way is to appreciate beauty and ugliness by different aesthetic standards. Against the background of the spread and sharing expansion of contemporary world cultures, the culture of any nation should be orientated to conforming to the trends of the times, striving for enriching and satisfying a variety of people's increasing needs for aesthetic on the basis of national traditional styles.

Third is the comparison between economic systems, political systems, social integration systems, pattern maintenance systems and the overall cultural pattern based on these four cultural events. From the structuralfunctionalism perspective, the survival and maintenance of social systems require the function and mutual integration of the four events.^[19] The overall value and functional significance of cultural patterns are to maintain the survival and development of the social system and its members, aiming at securing a healthy social operation and high life quality for the social members. Therefore, the distance from this aim can be used as the common metric for comparing and measuring the advantages and disadvantages of different cultural patterns. Specifically, it is the strength and control of patterns of life maintenance and vitality, which can be summarized as life-vitality standards for convenience of expression.

The life maintenance of cultural patterns refers to the supporting and promoting functions of specific cultural structures and operational modes for the survival and development of individuals and groups. Such functions prevent individuals and groups from extinction and further help them in

life promotion for the extension of life(material) and vitality of spirit. The vitality control of cultural patterns refers to the capability of specific patterns for coping with challenges and competition. This capability secures the opportunity that the group wins the opportunity for life, keeps it under control and gains the initiative for survival and development when faced with challenges and competition. Since life is the fundamental and biggest issue for any individual or group and this standard has the universal applicability under the instructions of three evaluation perspectives. It eliminates the obstacles of opposition of and comparison between the scientific theory of historical philosophy-evolution and the scientific theory of relativism-particularism at the operational level.

First, the life-vitality standard has the original value emphasized by the scientific theory of historical philosophy-evolution as well as the life situation emphasized by the scientific theory of relativism-particularity. Life-vitality is the most basic value of human life. With the promotion of life-vitality and the expansion of social life, the value of life-vitality is situational. People's cultural choice is appropriate or inappropriate, so people living in different cultural situations have good or bad feelings. Different competing groups may win or be destroyed. Just like the hero in Large Rat of the Book of Poetry was so determined that he said, "I swear to leave you and go to another paradise." Undoubtedly, this poem contains comparisons of advantages and disadvantages of cultures between their own world and another world and life experience. In the history of the same nation, there are flourishing and troubled times, and there are cultural prosperity and decline respectively.

Second, the life-vitality standard has the overall vision of the framework of the historical philosophy-evolution scientific theory, but it does not necessarily deny the values of the fine adaptive

components of culture. The cultural pattern is an integration of multiple cultural elements, so its consideration of life-vitality of cultural patterns contains effectiveness evaluation of structural conformity and function convergence, which is considered in an overall vision. However, if the cultural elements of the whole are analyzed and reviewed individually, the culture of any nation or any society has its advantages and disadvantages. The advantages can play part of their role in a certain social field, at a certain level of life and in a certain situation at a certain time, so as to satisfy the certain needs of social members, like the formation of collective consciousness, life decoration such as beautiful costumes and architecture, temperament cultivation of songs and dances, production skills and facilities for life wisdom among others. Therefore, comparison of value and evaluation of advantages and disadvantages of cultural patterns as a whole between different nations does not mean complete denial of the good and self-adaptive parts of the inferior one, but in turn, the inferior culture in comparison cannot keep their overall defects ignored due to their partial good elements.

Third, life-vitality embodies the requirement of centralization of the historical philosophy-evolution scientific theory and the multiple orientations of relativism-particularity. At the abstract level, life-vitality is the common pursuit of social life of all the nations at all the times. Therefore, the performance can be colorful. Accordingly, cultures with multiple values, a variety of styles and diverse purposes naturally exist. However, when confronted from the choice of life-vitality, all the multiple requirements should be conformed to the principle of centralized integration of life maintenance and vitality control, otherwise, the so-called self-adaptation advantage of multiple-prosperity will be so abstract that it will lose its significance. In the fight between non-life and vitality, the Chinese Taoist culture and the

natural world described by that culture have the advantages of aesthetic beauty, wisdom, vitality and comfort. In the group competition and cultural shock, it is difficult to maintain such a natural life and sustain such a group. It only exists in the ideal land of idyllic beauty. If a country is destroyed and the nation becomes extinct, its cultural pattern can hardly be regarded as an excellent one. Besides, in a pure aesthetic situation, arts, in a variety of styles, are good at their respective charm. But in the choice of life and vitality, there are objective standards for comparison. A moving melody can be criticized for “the sing-song girl does not understand the hatred for subjugation, and still singing demoralizing tune across the river.” It is apparent that at the critical moment of a nation, a march is really needed instead of a demoralizing tune. In the Spring and Autumn Period, JiZha, the son of the feudal prince of Wu State, made comments over the tunes and rhythms of each state according to life-vitality standards when he attended a ceremony in the court of Zhou State.

Therefore, comparatively speaking, a cultural pattern should be regarded as good in value evaluation when it meets the following requirements. Otherwise, it should be regarded as bad. With adaptability of economic and cultural environments, it satisfies the diverse vitality needs of individuals and groups in the society, and secures the sustainable development opportunity for their lives. With the ability of target acquisition, it leads social groups to a broader and more promising society, in which social members live happily with full play of their intelligence. With the ability of cultural integration, it provides social members with spiritual and material space for freedom, independence and mutual harmony, proper and effective labor division and cooperation and interest distribution. With the sustainability of cultural patterns, it provides strong social or national cohesion as well. In a

prosperous and hopeful life, people are healthy both physically and mentally, instead of dark, depressed, painful, poor, weak and anxious. Choice for cultural construction is included in the comparison of cultural patterns.

5. Conclusion

Presently, the Chinese nation is at the critical moment of revival and rise. The revival of the Chinese nation and the rise of China cannot do without the protection and declaration of culture. The culture of one nation, objectively, can go up and down with the change of the country's fortune. But meanwhile a good manifestation of national spirit and the active play of cultural creativity through

cultural changes are an important guarantee for the long-term and healthy development of a nation. In one word, cultural construction and creative thinking are required for the contemporary prosperity of the Chinese culture and the redevelopment of Chinese culture's influence over the world. With continuous expansion and deepening exchanges between people of different nations and regions across the world, global information communications, and an overall view of different cultural elements and patterns, people have a clear sense of consciousness about the issue of comparability and incomparability between different cultural patterns. Consequently, direction and basis would be available for the conscious choice in cultural construction.

(Translator: Huang Yan; Editor: Yan Yuting)

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