

The Triple Logic of Generation of Cultural Vitality

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Abstract: Cultural lifeforms are the cultural forms of Chinese modernization resulting from the “combination of the two”. It is precisely because of its life-like characteristics that this cultural form can be called a “cultural life form”. From the viewpoint of theoretical logic, culture can respond to environmental stimuli and evolve; from the viewpoint of historical logic, culture can carry out “metabolism” and self-regulation; from the viewpoint of practical logic, culture can “grow and differentiate” and “reproduce itself”. From the logic of reality, culture can “grow and differentiate” and “reproduce itself”.

Keywords: Cultural vitals; Two combinations

Cultural organisms possess the characteristics of “living organisms”. In his *Anti-Dühring*, Engels stated that “life is the mode of existence of a protein body, the essential element of which lies in the constant metabolism with the external nature surrounding it, and when this metabolism ceases, life ceases with it, and the result is the decomposition of the protein.”^[1] The qualities of culture are the same as those described by Engels, with a constant “metabolism” that follows the development of the society, and once the metabolism stops, the culture is no longer alive. Ernst Walter May, the “Darwin of the twentieth century,” argued that the nature of life is characterized by seven sets of features: evolution, self-propagation, growth and differentiation, metabolism, self-regulation, response to environmental stimuli, and dual genotypic and expressive changes. Similarly, culture has similar manifestations to the essential characteristics of life.

1. Theoretical logic

1.1 Cultural “responses to environmental stimuli”

Culture is the product of human society’s adaptation and response to natural environmental conditions. As organisms perceive and adapt to environmental stimuli as a basic requirement for survival, cultures respond differently to geographical and other conditions. Different natural and social environments shape the formation and development of cultures, and people develop different survival strategies, technologies and ways of living according to the needs of the environment and the resources it contains. As one of the six major civilizations, the vast territory of the Chinese land and its complex and diverse geography created the richness and diversity of the Chinese civilization; the vast plains provided the necessary conditions for the emergence of the farming civilization; and the natural isolation of the Chinese land determined the inward development of the various ethnic groups to be easier than the outward development, which provided favorable conditions for the convergence of diversified, multiregional, and multicentered cultures in the Central Plains, and for this reason, the Central Plains became one of the most important regions in the world. It is for this reason that the Central Plains became the core of Chinese cultural development and the most developed and advanced region in ancient China.

1.2 Cultural “evolution”

Culture evolves over time. Similar to natural selection in biological evolution, culture shows a similar logic of development. Analyzed from the perspective of materialistic history, just as “the hand-pushed mill produces a society of feudal lords, the steam mill produces a society of industrial capitalists”^[2], culture is a conceptual superstructure adapted to a certain socio-political structure and set up on the basis of a certain economic foundation, and the development of social productive forces and the development of social relations go hand in hand, culture as a conceptual superstructure will also evolve. The development of social productive forces and the development of social relations go hand in hand with the development of culture as a conceptual superstructure. Culture and

the material base of society are also a pair of contradictions, and only cultural ideas that are in line with the productive forces of a particular social period can be widely disseminated and popularized. Broadly speaking, human culture has gone through three stages of evolution, namely agrarianization, industrialization and informatization.

2. Historical logic

2.1 Cultural “metabolism”

Culture is not a static thing that has been completed and remains unchanged; its development is also a process of critical succession. Living organisms need to absorb nutrients and eliminate waste through metabolism in order to maintain their vitality and health. Culture also needs to absorb new elements and dispose of old concepts in order to adapt to changes in society and the times. In the case of ancient China, after the “rites and music collapse” at the end of the Western Zhou Dynasty, all countries needed to find a matching ideology of governance and peace to maintain their strength. The social classes continued to explore and gave birth to many schools of thought such as Confucianism, Mohism, Taoism, Legalism, Nomenclature, Soldiering, Agriculture, Yin-Yang, Miscellaneous, Zong-Heng and so on. Among them, Legalism, as a representative of the interests of the emerging landlord class, was able to effectively strengthen centralized power, and thus became the dominant ideology after the Qin Dynasty unified the Six Harmonies. Although the Legalists had major differences with Confucianism, Taoism, and the Military School of Thought, they still critically inherited some of their ideas in practical governance. The Legalists absorbed the Confucian concepts of social order and family ethics, the Taoist ideas of cultivating one’s own personality, and the experience of the Military School in military organization and discipline, and management, and at the same time, to a certain extent, inherited the rationalist ideas of Mozi’s quest for a rational and just social system. and realized it through the vehicle of law.

2.2 “Self-regulation” of culture

Chinese culture is remarkably inclusive. As living organisms have the ability to self-regulate to adapt to changes in their environment, Chinese culture is also capable of accepting and respecting the values of different cultural backgrounds in order to adapt to a multicultural environment. Take Confucianism, for example, which has been a part of Chinese history for more than 2,000 years, as an example, in the 13th chapter of the Analects of Confucius, Confucius said, “Gentlemen are in harmony but not in agreement, while small men are in agreement but not in agreement”^[3], emphasizing the importance of open and rational discussion of issues of disagreement, rather than agreeing with others for no apparent reason in order to cater to them or to seek personal gain. In the Spring and Autumn Annals, Dong Zhongshu absorbed the Taoist and Yin-Yang School’s idea of “the unity of heaven and mankind” and put forward the idea of the induction of heaven and mankind, which emphasized the relationship between man’s mission and heaven’s destiny. He also absorbed the thought of Legalism and put forward the idea that “it is said that virtue is the main penalty, the penalty can not be independent.”^[4]The view that only on the basis of ethics and morality can criminal law play its due role. Sung Ming Ethics, on the other hand, absorbed the ideas of Buddhism and Taoism to systematize and discern Confucianism. Wang Yangming put forward the idea of “the so-called unity of knowledge and action, there is nothing outside the mind, that is to say, no matter what you do, no one can be related to you” in the “Record of Transmission”.^[5]The idea of “unity of knowledge and practice” emphasizes that the unity of knowledge and practice is the key to the sublimation of the mind. In addition, the Chinese civilization has experienced many ethnic integration throughout its history, the three representative ones being Qin, Jin and Yuan, which brought fresh blood to the Chinese nation and made the Chinese civilization stronger, demonstrating the strong inclusiveness of the Chinese culture.

3. The logic of reality

3.1 Cultural “growth and differentiation”

Excellent traditional Chinese culture is the foundation of today’s advanced socialist culture. The growth of organisms is usually an orderly process, starting from a young age and becoming bigger and more mature with the passage of practice, and differentiating into different cell types and tissues and organs with different characteristics and functions. Similarly, the growth of culture is also a gradual process, and through the inheritance of people from one generation to the next, the culture develops and evolves continuously, developing unique cultural elements, traditions and values. Take the socialist core values that permeate the development of socialism with Chinese characteristics as an example, no matter the pursuit at the level of national construction, social construction or individual citizens, they are all, to a certain extent, born from the excellent traditional Chinese culture, drawing on the nourishment of the excellent traditional Chinese culture, and manifesting the value of the excellent traditional Chinese culture. For example, Zuo Qiu Ming pointed out in Zuo Zhuan (The Chronicle of Zuo) that “a granary is solid and knows manners and etiquette, and food and

clothing are sufficient and one knows honor and shame”^[6], which elucidated the relationship between national wealth and stability of people’s lives, and social etiquette and morality, and emphasized the importance of unity between the country’s wealth and the people’s wealth. Apart from the socialist core values, today’s socialist culture has a wide variety of differentiated outcomes, but none of them can survive independently of the excellent traditional Chinese culture, and all of them have been transformed and developed to some extent.

3.2 “Self-propagation” of culture

Cultural inheritance is the result of social and individual choices. While living creatures pass on genetic information to their offspring, culture is passed on through education, literary works, traditional customs, etc. Compared with the unconscious and natural process of biological inheritance, cultural inheritance is a conscious and artificial process. The inheritance of excellent traditional Chinese culture is also divided into two parts: internally, it unites the spirit of the nation and builds cultural identity and confidence; externally, it serves as a “bridge” to spread Chinese culture and promote cultural exchanges. Internally, the form of cultural transmission is dominated by education. Through the joint action of school and family education, students determine the correct values, moral concepts and behavioral norms, and the cultural value system can be transmitted. Through the study of language, philosophy and history, students identify their cultural roots and learn about the process of cultural development and evolution, and cultural identity is cultivated. On this basis, there are also various traditional festivals and ceremonies, various cultural activities, and contemporary Internet and social media and other diversified means of dissemination. Externally, the dissemination of Chinese traditional culture has been extremely inclusive and peaceful. Chinese civilization has never replaced multiculturalism with a single culture, and has developed the qualities of pluralism, openness and integration in the course of its long history. The Chinese people also believe in a variety of religions that have influenced and integrated with each other. This inclusiveness determines the openness of Chinese culture to the world’s civilizations.

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