

Original Paper

From History of the World to the World—A Reflection on Establishing a Community with a Shared Future for Mankind

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Abstract

Nowadays the world is still in a state of anarchy and the real political meaning of “world” does not truly exist. In this sense, the design of establishing a community with a shared future for mankind is a great innovation of theory, which, theoretically, has the significance of breaking through the world history and reconstructing the social order of the real “world”. The logical deduction of “family-country-world” in Chinese traditional culture is of great theoretical significance for the construction of a community with a shared future for mankind.

Keywords

community, a community with a shared future for mankind, history of the world, history

1. “Community” and “Community with a Shared Future for Mankind” in Classical Theory

The notion “Community” involves philosophy, politics, ethics, sociology and many other subjects, so it has a wide range of connotations. The most popular explanation is that it consists of the group of interests of several aspects.

The German sociologist Ferdinand Tönnies is the first to explain the notion “community”. In his book *Community and Society*, he puts forward the idea of mutual relationships with others in many ways and any of them will have an effect on our “will” and “body”. The community formed by this kind of positive relationship can be understood as “a connection with subjects or objects acting inwardly or outwardly”. (Note 2) Meanwhile, he thinks that the relationship itself is the connection: it can either be regarded as organic life in reality, the nature of community; or the mechanic form of thinking, the definition of society. (Note 3) Tönnies stands on the point that there are two kinds of social relationships: community and society, which, respectively derives from two human wills: the organically instinctive will and purposefully selective will. The community is formed by the instinctive will motivated by the

inner factors such as personal preference, habits and memorization while the society is formed by purposefully rational consideration under the encouragement of deliberation, wish and notion. However, since the “body” is the realization and realistic expression of “community” and “society”, Tennis’ discrimination is still in the abstract sense.

In Marx’s ideological system, Community is not only the object of criticism, but also the object of his theoretical pursuit. In Marx’s view, the capitalist mode of production has caused alienation of the human because the capital relationship of production is created by people but now it is pressing and captivating people. In order to eliminate this mode of production, it is not helpful to criticize it through writing or advertising, and it is necessary to rely on the emancipating activities armed with weapons. So Marx said, “A critical weapon cannot, of course, replace the criticism from the equipped public, and the material power can only be destroyed by the material force”. The “material force” that Marx has said refers to the activity of the awakened proletariat with the consciousness of communism. Only the proletariat, who serves as the material critical force of reality, can be united in the liberation of all mankind. Only by the liberation of all mankind can the proletariat free themselves and finally establish a free kingdom. The realization of the historical mission of the proletariat is impossible without the design of “community”. Marx’s pursuit of the Community—a free man’s union, certainly has positive significance in practical activities.

In contrast to Marx, Emile Durkheim thinks that the competition, division of labor and private ownership in the capitalist mode of production have not caused the alienation of the human. Instead they are a force of social solidarity and social integration, “the division of labor requires a kind of order, harmony and social solidarity, so it is moral” (Note 4). The unity of the division of labor and competition under the private ownership of capitalism is regarded as a manifestation of the whole society’s morality. It is by this mode of production that the organic unity of social and individual consciousness can be achieved. Finally, the purpose of social integration is attained, thus establishing a “community”.

The idea of building a community with a shared future for mankind is put forward by Mr. Xi whose theoretical design focuses on human development and the future of the world. Xi Jinping points out that nowadays the degree of communication and interdependence between countries are deepening unprecedentedly. We live in a contemporary earth village where history and reality come across, gradually forming into a community with a shared future for mankind. The world multi-polarization, the economic globalization, the information-based society, the culture diversity is growing; the global governing system, the change of the international order is accelerating; the relations and interdependence of all countries are deepening; the international power is more balanced, and the tendency of peace and development are irreversible. At the same time, the instability and uncertainty facing the world are prominent; the momentum of world economic growth is insufficient; the gap between rich and poor is becoming more and more serious; and regional hot issues are frequently appearing. Non-traditional security threats such as terrorism, network security, major infectious

diseases, and climate change continue to spread and challenge human beings. (Note 5) He describes “a community with a shared future for mankind” as “a homeland with lasting peace, universal security, common prosperity, openness and tolerance, clean and beautiful view” (Note 6), a concept that encompasses international rights, common interests, sustainable development and global governance. It is designed to establish the consciousness of a community with a shared future for mankind under win-win cooperation within the sphere and to promote the achievement of world peace beyond the boundaries of nation, nationality and cultural. Therefore, we must stand on the real “world” point, which requires crossing the obstacles of system and culture to achieve full communication within the globe, and to found a world order based on reality.

2. “History of the World” Is not the “World”

History of the world, fundamentally serves as a philosophical concept of history and existence. This concept was not proposed by Marx, but by Hegel. Hegel sets out from the perceptual and finally understands the absolute spirit after going through the intellectual and the rational. Hegel realizes that this process of reflection is only the alienation of the absolute spirit which he finally returns to and all these are the unity of logic and history. “History of the world is therefore a rational process”, In other words, the world is just the process of self-consciousness knowing absolute spirit and constant alienation of absolute spirit. Therefore, history of the world is a movement, a process of change.

Marx starts logically from the “perceptual activity” of men in reality and actively sublimates Hegel’s view of “history of the world”, absorbing its rational cores. Moreover, Marx takes commodity as the logical starting point of capitalist mode of production, and explains the theory of world history for the first time in the process of discussing capitalist mode of production. “The transition from history to history of the world is not a ‘self-consciousness’, a purely abstract action of the spirit of the world or a metaphysical ghost, but an action that is completely material and can be empirically proved”. (Note 7) It shows that history of the world is an objective material process of production, and the transition from history to the world is an empirical fact. The three industrial revolutions since the seventeenth century have widely overthrown the agricultural and animal husbandry modes of production and realized the capital mode of production: the feudal system is overthrown while the capitalist system is founded; the closed small markets are destroyed and the worldwide market of capitalism is set up. A grand capitalist world system has been established around the world. With the globalization of production, distribution, exchange and consumption, all regions and nationalities and their cultures have begun to merge in an unprecedented way, and the national boundaries of the traditional peoples newly discovered by geography have gradually been broken down. Since then, social history has been transformed from national history to world history.

However, Marx believes that it is the proletariat, not the bourgeoisie who open the capitalist world market and establish the capitalist mode of production and the capitalist world system. Driven by capital, capitalists look for places where capital can increase as much as possible including

communication between people and nations. Capital has become a real force for dominating people, and there is no such thing as true emancipation for humans. Therefore, the mission of the proletariat is to overthrow the capitalist system, liberate all mankind and establish a union of free people in the processing history of the world.

With the development of world history, the capitalist world system still exists, but its internal structure has undergone profound changes. Although peace and development are still the theme of modern world and the economic globalization is irreversible, global instability and uncertainty are becoming more and more prominent. As Xi Jinping said at the opening ceremony of the 2017 session of the World Economic Forum, “this is the best and also the worst time”. Our destiny is closely related to each other with further development of globalization, the rapid innovation of information, cultural communication and combination. However, “human beings are also in an era of endless challenges and increasing risks. The economic growth of the world is weak; the clouds of the financial crisis remain constant; the gap in development is becoming increasingly prominent and there are frequent confrontations in the military. The threats of cold war and powerful politics persist while terrorism, network security and major infectious diseases continue to occur. Climate change and other non-traditional security threats continue to spread”. (Note 8) Consequently, the idea of establishing “a community with a shared future for mankind” is the necessity of historical development and needs of the time.

3. A Theoretical Reference for a Community with a Shared Future for Mankind

As the notion of “world” in the geographical sense already exists, the formation of the concept of “world history” also originates from the discovery of the world in the geographical sense. And the real “world” must be considered at the level of political philosophy, or the social order of the whole world. In this sense, the real “world” does not yet exist. Throughout the history, the international community has so far been anarchy, or Hobbes “natural state. But Hobbes” exposition of the struggle between humans in his theory “the state of nature” is too abstract and hypothetical. Xunzi, an ancient Chinese philosopher, may explain the theory of humans’ natural state more logically. He said “In physical power they are not so good as an ox, in swiftness they do not equal the horse; yet the ox and horse can be put to their use. Why is that? I say it is because humans alone can form societies and animals cannot. Why can man form a society? I say it is due to the division of society into classes. How can social divisions be translated into behavior? I say it is because of humans’ sense of morality and justice.” He thinks the difference between humans and animals is that man can be well-organized into groups. The reason is that humans can be divided into various classes under the control of social moral principles. Xunzi believes that in order to survive, people must have a cooperative relationship from the beginning. In other words, coexistence is the condition for any individual to survive and the conflicts between people derive from their struggle for the common interests. People first cooperate to become a group, then everyone demands the maximization of their own interests and all try to occupy more wealth created by cooperating with others, but in order to take more advantages, he will certainly minimize

other people's interests. Therefore, it is the unbalance of interests in the process of cooperation that causes the conflicts. As a result, cooperation precedes conflicts, and it is unjust cooperation that leads to conflicts.

In the background of globalization, we have reason to doubt whether humans can work together as one group and how to guarantee conflicts can be conquered by cooperation in the process of team work. Or whether an effective way remains for people to deal with conflicts over public interests. In traditional Chinese culture, the concept of politics conveys a kind of social order instead of a dominating approach. The universal value of Chinese philosophers is more inclined to seek the "governance" of social order rather than "chaos". "Governance" is the prerequisite and foundation for the achievement of all other purposes, while "chaos" only destroy social order thus leading desirable purposes unattainable. Therefore, "governance" is the first principle of Chinese political philosophy. In this way, we can understand why modern masters of Confucianism are more "conservative". A well-governed society is not necessarily the best society, nor is a society of satisfaction for all, for any order will always limit certain freedom. But only in a well-governed society can it be possible to make improvements, which is considered to be the starting point and the basic guarantee of any ideal society. Thus we can understand why Chinese politicians always put social stability in their first concern. Confucius said "to rule is to set straight", meaning "to correct order and relations". Chinese traditional politics is to create a community of harmony rather than a country of national difference in the western sense, not to mention a state or nation in the modern sense.

According to the above theory, when a social order is universally accepted by mankind, then it is of world significance. And only in this sense can a true "world" be formed. Therefore, today's anarchic "world" cannot be called a true "world". In other words, a "world" based on social order and political sense has not existed yet but only the "earth" of geographical significance remains. It is illustrated by today's unresolved global ecological crisis and geo-conflicts. It also implies that "Western political thinking" does not help to solve the problem, and even causes various profound international or cultural conflicts.

In the western political thinking pattern, "country" is the largest political unit while "world" is inevitably only a geographical sense of the national federation. In other words, the Western mode of thinking is "individual—community—country/city-state", which stops at the national level. This is the limitation of Western thinking that they do not have the awareness of the whole world where public interests matter. Where public interests cannot be maintained is bound to fall into Hobbes "Jungle hypothesis". Therefore, the horizon of the true "world" emphasizes the necessity of treating the "world" as a unit of political analysis and a unit of regulation that can accommodate all issues of international relations. If the social order cannot be established in the sense of the world, then there are bound to be some unresolved international problems.

The idea of a community with a shared future for mankind fills the gap of "World Order". Meanwhile, in order to establish a real "world" and "a community with a shared future for mankind", we can

benefit from Chinese traditional culture. The theoretical deduction of “home-country-world” in Chinese traditional culture is aimed at seeking the universal and effective compromise on human conflicts. The logical deduction of the “home-country-world” in *the Great Learning* is the concentrated embodiment of Confucian practical thoughts, which requires people to perfect their moral consciousness through their own cultivation, and then to take social responsibility, participate in social activities, and construct an ideal social order of harmonious family and society, beautiful world and shared community.

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Notes

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Note 2. Ferdinand Tennis. Translated by Lin Rongyuan. *Community and Society-the Basic Concepts of Pure Sociology*. Beijing: Peking University Press, 2010, 43.

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Note 4. Emile Durkheim. Translated by Qu Dong. *Theory of social division of labor*. Beijing: San Lian Bookstore, 2000, 1.

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Note 6. Xi Jinping's Thirty Thoughts on Socialism with Chinese Characteristics for a New Era. Beijing: Study Press, 2018, 291.

Note 7. Marx, Engels. *Works of Marx and Engels*: volume 1. Beijing: People's Publishing House, 2009, 541.

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