

Process Philosophy and the Scientific Outlook on Development

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Abstract:

The Scientific Outlook on Development has been being CPC's ruling idea and the development strategy of China's society. Analyzing the basic connotations and philosophical foundations of the Scientific Outlook on Development, we find out that there are many common grounds with process philosophy. If we grasp this relationship, we can prove the universal significance of process philosophy and its vitality in China, and we can find out an effective approach to contemporary China's context for process philosophy. In this paper I make a brief inquiry into the relevance of the Scientific Outlook on Development and process philosophy from four approaches, including process, organism, holism, and creativity. We believe that the Scientific Outlook on Development and process philosophy can be mutually proved, inspired, and supplemented, and it will bring us exciting effect in theory and practice.

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It is well known that the Scientific Outlook on Development has been being CPC's ruling idea and the development strategy of China's society. According to the official saying, the Scientific Outlook on Development is "the achievement in adapting Marxism to Chinese conditions". Therefore, philosophical foundations of it are mainly from two sources, one is Marxism and the other is traditional Chinese philosophy. Analyzing the philosophical foundation of the Scientific Outlook on Development, we find out that there are many common grounds with process philosophy. If we grasp such relationship, we can prove the universal significance of process philosophy and its vitality in China, and we can find out an effective approach to contemporary China's context for process philosophy. In this paper I will make a brief inquiry into the relevance of the Scientific Outlook on Development and process philosophy from four approaches, including process, organism, holism, and creativity.

I

That the world is a process is the fundamental thought of process philosophy. In Whitehead's words, the actual world is a process, and the process is the becoming of actual entities; How an actual entity becomes constitutes what that actual entity is...Its "being" is constituted by its "becoming". If we analyze the philosophical foundation of the Scientific Outlook on Development, we will find out that it is compatible with Whitehead's thought.

Ancient Chinese Confucians and Taoists regarded *Yi Jing* as one of their own classics. According to *Yi Jing*, "Sages discover that a myriad of things are constantly changing and try to find out the principle or law of things." "Sages speak about the most numerous and complicated changes." It means that traditional Chinese philosophy admits that the world is eternally moving and

changing. What is the meaning of “change” in this context? According to *Yi Jing*, “The great characteristic of Heaven and Earth is to produce.” “Changes mean production and reproduction.” So the change is producing change. Lao Zi clearly pointed out that “Dao produced the One. The one produced the Two. The two produced the Three. And the three produced everything.” The production of the myriad things reflects the process of beings. Whitehead had ever said that his philosophy is more familiar with Eastern philosophy than the traditional Western philosophy. It’s true.

Relatively speaking, Marx’s related thoughts are quite surprising, because they are too close to the thoughts of process philosophy! In Marx’s vision, the world is essentially the historical and becoming being. Marx clearly pointed out “the existence of men is their actual life-process.” Existence and process is identical, and it is the life-process. Later on, Engels wrote a famous saying, “The great basic thought that the world is not to be comprehended as a complex of readymade *things*, but as a complex of processes.” It can be noted that the thought, being is the process of becoming, is indeed inherited from Hegel and further developed, from the perspective of Marxist philosophy.

The Scientific Outlook on Development is considered to represent the world outlook on development of Marxism, and its basic premise is that the world is constantly developing. Deng Xiaoping had ever pointed out that “Development is the fundamental principle.” The Scientific Outlook on Development takes development as its essence. These indicate the reflection of the fact that China’s modernization level falls behind the Western developed countries, modernization process is repeatedly disturbed, and the ambition to develop China soundly and rapidly. But if only so, it will be too simple. Its substantial philosophical foundation is still in the Marxist philosophy, which believes that development is an everlasting process, and the process is an active self-made process of becoming. China is constituted by its contemporary becoming or developing—Its ‘being’ is constituted by its ‘doing’.

II

Whitehead thinks that neither material entities nor spiritual entities are isolated. Due to the prehensions, all actual entities are relational, interactional and mutual inclusion. So, any part of an actual entity as existence of process in its process of becoming comprises complicated nexuses of other actual entities. Based on the organism, process philosophy finally helps people “feel at home in the world, and feel a sense of kinship with other species, which are viewed as having their own experiences, values, and purposes.” Indeed, there are fruitful organism thoughts in traditional Chinese philosophy and Marxist philosophy. The Scientific Outlook on Development is also the continuation of the thought.

Generally speaking, traditional Chinese philosophy views the world from perspective of yin and yang, and thinks that the mutual communication, harmony, and balance between yin and yang are the normal and ideal state. And these relations can not be carefully analyzed and reduced, because their relations are complicated organic relations full of life and charm. Although traditional Chinese philosophy is a little bit chaotic, its simple organism indeed avoids the faults of modern Western mechanism, and its thought and aim are close to process philosophy.

Marxist philosophy has quite clear organic thoughts. According to Marxist philosophy, all things are interconnected, and in the relationships of mutual restriction and influence. Things can not exist without these relationships. However, Marx mainly analyzed “organism of the state’s life”, and pointed out that the society is not solid crystal, but an organism capable of change, and is constantly changing. The big difference between living organism and crystal is that living organism can not be reduced or understood in physic-chemical analysis.

The Scientific Outlook on Development different from the past outlooks on development is “scientific”. And the “scientific” is not the same as the meaning of science in the sense of

instrumental reason or scientism in the modern West. Or it can be understood that the Scientific Outlook on Development is the correction of the lessons of the worship of GDP in the East-West modernization process. In Hu's words, "The Scientific Outlook on Development takes development as its essence, putting people first as its core, comprehensive, balanced and sustainable development as its basic requirement, and overall consideration as its fundamental approach." As a strategy of development, it is based on the ontological promise that things exist in universal and complicated interrelations. Relations among nature, society and human, all sides of society, human's every side, and even different generations are mutually restrained, and they cannot be separated and reduced. In a word, the world is a complicated organism. We can comprehend Hu's objectives and interest in organic thought combined with his theories of harmonious society and harmonious world. As an organism, its ideal state is harmonious. Harmony means the guarantee of "coexistence" and the respect of the irreduction of each relation in "many".

III

According to process philosophy, actual entities coexist by prehending one another. Coexistence is the precondition of existence and diversity. The process of the becoming and developing of actual entities is from the old coexistence to the new coexistence. Every individual and many can have significance only when they are in the process and holistic condition of coexistence. It is worthy noticing that process philosophy believes that we have already presupposed the unity of totality, externality and internality when we express experience. That is, there is the whole fact containing within itself my fact and the other facts.

The thinking way of traditional Chinese philosophy is undoubtedly holistic. Self, family, clan, state, world and the universe is outward extending. At the same time, each of them is hierarchical, and every individual gains self-recognition when he/she belongs to a special whole. Individual will

lose value and meaning without family, and state. Body is the same as the above mentioned matters. Traditional Chinese medicine is the most representative thought, because it regards body as an interrelated and mutually prehending whole, and it even believes that any part of body contains the whole of the body. And meridian theory is the typical representation of the holistic thought in traditional Chinese medicine.

Marx regards nature and society as a whole. One important characteristic of Marx's ideal society is the accomplished unity of nature and society. For society, Marx regards the total society as a whole, and he breaks through the fashionable nationalistic trend, based on "human society and socialized human beings". When he argued that history would turn to history of the world (globalization), he particularly pointed out the relationship between "internal communication" and "external communication". It is very similar to Whitehead's thought of totality, externality and internality. Marx believes that the organic society has a determinate trend to total development. Development of things can be described as the development from one whole to another.

The Scientific Outlook on Development emphasizes comprehensive, balanced and sustainable development, and is aimed to balance urban and rural development, development among regions, economic and social development, relations between man and nature, and domestic development and opening to the outside world. All of these embody its holistic feature. It can be understood that the Scientific Outlook on Development tries to realize optimization of systematic effects, through a kind of internal structural adjustment (connotative development), based on China's recent years' development. The systematic Chinese society is an organism, and China's modernization develops in the background of globalization. The Scientific Outlook on Development faces our fact and the other facts, and it is compatible with the holistic thought in process philosophy. The harmonious thought in the Scientific Outlook on Development also emphasizes the unity of internality and externality, that

is, China is aimed to build a harmonious society at home and appeal for a harmonious world at the international level.

IV

According to process philosophy, the world is the process of creative advance into novelty. Novelty suggests that it is irreducible and adventurous, and expectation of it inspire people's great curiosity. In the sense of ontology, creative thinking is still the opposition to mechanism. From the inspiration of the methodology, process philosophy emphasizes creativity to oppose convention and stagnancy. At the level of national civilization, process philosophy actually opposes the examination of the development level of civilizations by a stagnant standard or form. Whitehead had ever clearly pointed out that a race preserves its vigour so long as it harbours a real contrast between what has been and what may be, and so long as it is nerved by the vigour to adventure beyond the safeties of the past. Without adventure civilization is in full decay.

In Chinese philosophy classics, change and becoming are emphasized, and the importance of creativity is very remarkable. Even it can be said that things are a process of creativity according to traditional Chinese philosophy. In *the YiJing*, "Its achievement is abundant because it renovates things every day." It even clearly points out that, "The great characteristic of Heaven and Earth is to produce." And "the great characteristic of life is to create." Mankind learns that creation is the principle from the world of becoming.

The trademark slogan of Marxist philosophy is "The philosophers have only interpreted the world in various ways; the point is to change it". He emphasizes to change the world by praxis (productive labor and communication). The conception of praxis is regarded as the first conception in Marxist philosophy, and Marxist philosophy is entitled as praxis materialism. Praxis, production and labor are regarded as a kind of initial creative activities.

Essentially speaking, the Scientific Outlook on Development is such a theory which emphasizes connotative development. Compared with the denotative mode, the Scientific Outlook on Development emphasizes more about the transformation of social structure, and the increase of technical content of products. The transformation of social structure needs a kind of system innovation, and the increase of technical content of products needs a kind of science and technology innovation. Innovations in both of system and technology are originated in the innovations in our thinking and theory. The precondition of all innovations is the emancipation of minds. The CPC regards innovation as the soul of our national progress, and the inexhaustible driving force for social advance and national prosperity. Hu Jintao repeatedly emphasizes to emancipate the minds, and encourage all the people to innovate boldly. In China, scientific development has already become a ruling ideology, and innovation is regarded as the fundamental driving force and the source. On the essence of the Scientific Outlook on Development, putting people first as its core is to ensure that development is for the people, by the people and with the people sharing in its fruits. It means that the scientific development can be realized only based on the creativity of the people.

Based on a brief analogy of the four above-mentioned aspects, we can find out that the Scientific Outlook on Development as a strategy of development has distinct physical feature of practical manipulation, but it is rooted in the rich and solid philosophic foundation of traditional Chinese philosophy and Marxist philosophy. We will find out that there are many common grounds between process philosophy and traditional Chinese philosophy, Marxist philosophy, and the philosophic foundation of the Scientific Outlook on Development. We have reason to believe that the Scientific Outlook on Development and process philosophy can be mutually proved, inspired, and supplemented, and it will bring us exciting effect in theory and practice.