

The Hypothesis of "Civilized People": Connotation and Reflection

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Abstract: To put it simply, the hypothesis of "civilized people" mainly refers to accounting for individuals' behavioural motivations with the help of civilization. Specifically, in the process of "civilization" and "humanization", cultural elements are the primary incentive of personal behaviours. Through comparative analysis, this paper points out the main shortcomings of the unitary "civilized people" and explains in detail the fundamental proposition of the dual "civilized people". Finally, relying on the "interpretation" and "transformation" functions of Marxist philosophy, this paper makes a profound reflection on the content of the "civilized people" and its future development direction.

Keywords: Civilized people, behavioral motivations, connotation, reflection.

1. Hypothesis of the unitary and dual "civilized people"

Since Cassirer (Wu, 2012) proposed that "an individual is a symbolic animal", the study of human behaviour has opened the door to the "civilized world". Weber (Liang, 2002), Fukuyama (Wang, 2010) and others have successively made more detailed discussions on motivations of social, organizational and individual behaviours from the aspects of social spirit, organizational culture and ethical habits, respectively, and outlined a relatively straightforward development context for the hypothesis of "civilized people" (Peng, 2012). Even if the latecomers are still constantly committed to enriching and perfecting the theoretical connotation and ideological system, they have not been able to fundamentally eliminate the analytic model of the unitary "civilized people". The so-called unitary "civilized people" mainly focuses on exploring the one-way influence of culture on human behaviours, not the two-way influence between the two (Yang, 2020). The hypothesis of unitary "civilized people" mainly contains three fundamental propositions. In the dimension of reality, culture is the main incentive for human behaviours (Yang, 2020). Then, culture determines and models individuals' behaviours in the social life aspect (Zhao, 2019).

The above three fundamental propositions fully affirmed the impact of culture on behaviours but ignored the fact that while being affected by culture, people also positively and actively cultivate or create new cultures through new practices. Furthermore, generally speaking, culture exerts a profound and continuous influence on personal behaviours. Therefore, there are apparent flaws in the unitary "civilized people" hypothesis.

1.1 Drawbacks of the unitary "civilized people"

A person is not only the inheritor of culture but also the creator (Zhao, 2019). With the continuous exploring and development of academic research on "culture and people", the shortcomings of the unitary "civilized people" have gradually emerged. Specifically, it has four main shortcomings. Firstly, the use of the word "culture" is vague. Different scholars have different understandings about the meaning of "culture". By far, there is no normative conclusion about it. The typical adoption is to define it as a "man-made" existence related to "nature". In Cassirer, Weber, Fukuyama, etc., "culture" seems to be connected mainly to the sum of human spiritual activities and their products. However, they have not given a general description, except for the definitions of "symbols", "spiritual temperament", "trust", and "ethical habits" in their theories from a more microscopic level (Zheng, 2021) (Wu, 2012) (Wang, 2010).

Afterwards, they shared an idealistic solid colour. The unitary "civilized people" reduced the motivation of human behaviours to a spiritual level of culture and believed that human behaviours were an externalization or concrete manifestation of culture. This kind of thesis exaggerated the role of the spirit, ignoring the objective material basis of "culture" and human behaviours. Thus, it is easy to fall into idealism if we emphasize the decisive role of "culture" in human behaviours without considering the objective conditions and limits required for its decisive role (Zhao, 2019).

Additionally, they tended to excessively promote the spiritual aspect of culture and neglect the material aspect. The material and spiritual aspects are two constitutive parts of culture, and each of them plays an indispensable role in influencing human behaviours. It is not advisable to unilaterally highlight the role of either. In the development process of the unitary "civilized people" (from Cassirer to Fukuyama), researchers consciously or unconsciously avoided discussing the influence of culture's material side, which greatly limited its promotion and led to its decline.

Finally, it is in line with the idea of presuppositionalism. The unitary "civilized people" try to limit culture to the "meta-motive" of human behaviours, and they try to provide a presupposed conceptual exposition of human behaviours in different historical periods and various social conditions with a simple "transformation to the civilization". However, this presuppositional inference lacks a comprehensive understanding of the "civilization" in "to the civilization" (Liu et al., 2021). With the continuous advancement of social history research, new behaviours that meet the requirements of the times will indeed appear, and they will gradually be accepted and recognized by society in the process of development and improvement. Then the new culture will emerge on this basis and slowly promote the original culture to accomplish the innovation. As a result, it seems incomplete to attribute the new culture to the initial motivation for new behaviours. Only by understanding the development attributes of "civilization" from the new and old levels can we more accurately grasp the dual dynamic relationship between culture and human behaviours.

1.2 Basic propositions of the dual "civilized people"

From the perspective of practice-oriented and problem-oriented, after drawing on the classic exposition of "the relationship between culture and behaviours" in Marxist philosophy, it is necessary to put forward the hypothesis of dual "civilized people" and use it to replace the unitary "civilized people". Because in contrast, the former is more methodologically realistic, dialectical and developmental. As an innovative theoretical hypothesis, the dual "civilized people" contains three fundamental propositions. In the practical dimension, culture is the motivation of human behaviours, and human behaviours are the basis for the birth of a new culture (Yang, 2020). In

social life, culture shapes human behaviours, and human behaviours also cultivate new cultures. Thirdly, culture and human behaviours influence and interact with each other.

Regarding the first proposition, there are three explanations. To begin with, in terms of reality, culture and individuals are essentially the same. They are the sum of all social relations, not theoretical concepts at the abstract level. They will constantly chase their development in social practices. Moreover, Social practices are the foothold and starting point for both to move towards a higher level. After that, "culture" and "human behaviours" are collective concepts that include the new and old sections (Li, 2001). The inherited and the new cultures created in practice constitute the primary connotation of "culture". The old behaviours moulded by the old culture and the new behaviours that cultivate the new culture constitute a complete expression of "human behaviours". In addition, the relationship between culture and human behaviours can be divided into two stages, namely inheritance and creation. In the stage of inheritance, the old culture is the motivation of human behaviours and plays a crucial decisive role in human behaviours, while in the creative stage, human behaviours are the premise of the emergence of the new culture and the key to cultivating new culture.

The second proposition can be understood from the following perspectives: a person has the dual identity of cultural inheritor and creator (Feng et al., 2005). Through their own words and deeds, people inherit the old culture created by their predecessors and create and cultivate a new culture with the characteristics of the times with the help of their series of new behaviours. Human behaviours carry two significant functions of cultural inheritance and creation simultaneously, and the two complements are indispensable. While culture plays a role in moulding and exerting a decisive influence on human behaviours, human behaviours also exert a dynamic counter-effect on culture. When individuals' behaviours are consistent with the main content of culture, human behaviours will enhance the influence and attraction on culture in social practices. Moreover, when the two are inconsistent, culture will undergo some changes due to the influence of human behaviours, especially when individuals' behaviours are imitated and accepted to a large extent. A new culture that matches the behaviours will be created, and the old culture will be transformed or improved to varying degrees.

As for the third proposition, it needs to be interpreted from the two levels of "humanization" and "civilization". "Humanization" refers to the "humanization" of the objective material world and the subjective spiritual world, that is, in the process of understanding the world and transforming the world (Li, 2016). The natural world gradually connects with people and becomes a "humanized" world, and individuals also transform themselves by "human standards" to make themselves get rid of the state of obscurantism and become a natural "person", that is, "humanized" (Li, 2016). In the process of the formation of the "humanized" world, human behaviours have played an irreplaceable role in promoting, and in the process of becoming "civilized people", that is, achieving the goal of "civilization", human behaviours are not only the carrier of practical culture but also an obvious sign of showing people to accomplish "civilization". Just as Professor Li Deshun said, culture is the synonym of "humanization" (Li, 2016).

Whichever proposition is, the meanings of "culture" are easily misunderstood. There are three common types of misunderstandings: the first viewpoint is that the behavioural motivations of individuals are "culture" solely, which ignores the importance of other objective factors. Without the support of material conditions, discussing behavioural motivations will lose its practical functions. Secondly, the connotation of "culture" is misunderstood as the sum of spiritual products or the existence relative to politics, economy, etc., interpreting and criticizing the dual "civilized

people" from a narrow perspective. Thirdly, it is believed that individuals' behaviours can cultivate a kind of culture without taking universality and social acceptance into account.

In a nutshell, the dual "civilized people" is to dialectically explore the relationship between culture and human behaviours in the process of development. It cannot simply be reduced to "culture is the motivation of human behaviours" or "human behaviours are their motivations". Because the former is the main point of the unitary "civilized people", and the latter is a misinterpretation of the dual "civilized people". The correct interpretation is based on a comprehensive investigation of the status of culture and human behaviours. In the stage of inheritance, culture is the main driving force of human behaviours. In contrast, in the stage of creation, human behaviours cultivate and promote the birth and development of new culture.

2. Philosophical Reflections of the "civilized people"

Philosophical reflection on the hypothesis of "civilized people" is based on the function of Marxist philosophy of "explaining the world" and "transforming the world". Reflection is to "understand the world" more comprehensively and "transform the world" more effectively (He, 2019). Then, carrying out critical thinking in the content and its development direction aspects to test how these could improve this field's practical and theoretical level.

2.1 Reflections on the content of "civilized people"

There have been few special studies around the hypothesis of "civilized people" in the past two decades, and the related achievements are minimal. As far as the current publication is concerned, the research content mainly focuses on the following areas: firstly, it focuses on the impact of the "civilized people" on managerial concepts or foundations. Secondly, based on reality, it emphasizes the role of the "civilized people" in specific management scenarios, such as enterprise management, public sector management, university management, etc (Chen et al., 2019). Thirdly, under the premise of reviewing the development process of the primary assumptions of human nature, the enlightenment brought by the "civilized people" is expanded generally.

There are many deficiencies in the existing research content from "explaining the world" and "transforming the world". From the perspective of "explaining the world", the content is more inclined to explore the influence of culture on management (such as management activities, management concepts, etc.) and lacks the exploration of the production process and the occurrence logic. For example, it is not enough to pay attention to the impact of corporate culture on enterprise management in enterprise management and what kind of inspiration these influences have on enterprise management. To further clarify the way or process through which corporate culture affects the behaviours of employers and employees. Therefore, the current content of "civilized people" needs to be further strengthened in practical terms of the strength and extent of "interpretation".

From the perspective of "transforming the world", the current content is not closely related to practice. Most researchers focus on theoretical improvement or theoretical development, and there are few studies on typical cases or practical actions. Whereas practice is the foundation of cognition, and only by taking root in practice can we continuously form new understandings. Additionally, practice is the purpose of cognition and the ultimate foothold of the "civilized people" is a social practice. We can better understand and transform the material world by attaching importance to managerial practices and actively distilling practical experience.

2.2 Reflections on the direction of "civilized people"

The research direction of reflecting on the "civilized people" is to make a tentative analysis of the research theme or direction from the perspective of "interpretation" (theoretical perfection) and "transformation" (practical exploration). From the perspective of theoretical improvement, the future research theme is likely to focus on the following aspects: primarily exploring the theoretical premise and revealing its main contents and rationalities. Then, investigating the logic of the cultural shaping process and the hidden regularity. Thirdly, analyzing the relationship between culture, practice and human behaviours and summarizing a set of methodologies that can be used to shape human behaviours on this basis. Meanwhile, from the perspective of practical exploration, the analysis of typical cases, the extraction of practical experience, and the construction of quantitative models will become its focus. Perfecting the theory is not an end in itself. It is an end in practice. Therefore, how to better reflect the cultural impact of practice on human behaviours and better shape or strengthen human behaviours in practice must be the two central topics of future research (Jin et al., 2013).

3. Conclusion

The "civilized people" is a theoretical hypothesis that is constantly evolving and has relatively stable properties. In the whole process of transformation, its content, methods, conclusions, etc. have undergone apparent changes, and only the main line of research, that is, exploring the relationship between culture and human behaviours, has been running through the entire development course, and has never undergone significant changes. Practice is the basis for developing the "civilized people", and it is also the ultimate destination. The emergence of the "civilized people" stems from the reflection on social problems, while its development benefits from promoting social practice, and the continuous improvement is to solve practical problems better and guide social practice. Shortly, practical exploration and theoretical perfection will become the "civilized people" 's main directions".

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