THE VALUE "AXIS" IN CHINESE CULTURAL COMMUNICATION AND ITS FOCAL POINTS

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Abstract： *The content of Chinese cultural communication should not involve a comprehensive and equal dissemination at all levels, such as instrumental rationality, values, and customs. Instead, it should conduct a detailed analysis of various cultural layers centered around an axis of communicative value, thereby identifying the focal points for dissemination. This value axis for communication content includes dimensions such as value to the subjects and cultural commensurability. Overlapping consensus at the levels of instrumental rationality and values, as well as at the level of customs, should primarily serve as background context rather than the primary focus of appeal. Value aspects such as Chan Buddhism and Daoist culture, which can compensate for recipients' cultural deficiencies, address the value demands of both communicating subjects. They also act as a bridge in constructing a deep sense of community and should thus become the focal points of communication.*

Introduction

Surveying the millennia-long development of Chinese culture, and particularly linking the explorations of the recent century with the preceding traditional civilization, leads to a conclusion: civilization should not be simplistically divided based on the ancient-modern dichotomy and its corresponding backward-advanced binary. Each generation uses the resources available in its surroundings and its historical legacy to address the problems of its own time. "Modern" resources do not possess inherent superiority over traditional ones, and vice versa.

Elements of Chinese civilization, such as emphasis on tradition, advocacy for cooperation, and reliance on intuitive comprehension through mental insight, have persisted, despite fluctuations, within our cultural bloodstream, even playing significant, often unconscious roles. It can be said that the Chinese culture we inhabit today is both a modern civilization and one rejuvenated from ancient tradition. How future developments of this civilization can effectively leverage the strengths of both and strive to integrate them seamlessly is a question that requires prudent consideration today. The mainstream world culture in modern times has been permeated with issues such as anxiety, excessive utilitarianism, and an imbalance between instrumental and value rationality. Certain traditional resources within Chinese culture hold potential as entry points for addressing these issues; at the very least, promoting these cultural elements constitutes a beneficial attempt to rectify the aforementioned maladies. Therefore, identifying and disseminating these resources within Chinese culture is a prerequisite for constructing a more resilient new world culture.

However, regarding the content of its intercultural communication, a problem exists: we harbor a persistent idea of transmitting the complete panorama of Chinese culture to the world in an all-encompassing manner. This leads our communication efforts to lack consideration for value-based categorization of content, consequently depriving the intercultural communication of Chinese culture of effective focal points, thereby hindering its efficacy. Hence, finding these focal points for the intercultural communication of Chinese culture has become an important contemporary task.

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I. Stratified Analysis of Culture Based on the Communicative Value "Axis"

Like other complex human creations, the classification of "culture" has yielded dozens of definitions, reflecting scholars' varying research objectives. For instance, dividing "culture" into Eastern and Western cultures is based on geographical/ethnic groupings. In recent years, an analysis gaining relatively wide acceptance in Chinese academic circles categorizes culture into material culture, social culture, and expressive culture, based on how cultures relate to nature, others, and the self (Li, 1999, p. 70). This analysis focuses on the functions of culture within the same ethnic group. Other relatively accepted classifications include Cassirer's fan-shaped functional classification, among others. These classification methods largely operate within the logical framework of Daniel Bell's "axial principle," which involves "a conceptual scheme [that] selects particular attributes from a complex reality and, following certain common conventions, classifies them." (Bell, 1997, p. 8)

Based on the research objective of selecting content for cultural communication, this paper aims to establish an "axis" centered on the content's significant communicative value. Based on this axis, an appropriate classification of culture can be proposed. In selecting content for focused communication, three factors need primary consideration: first, the parts that hold value for the subjects of communication; second, cultural parts whose communication is necessary but requires enhanced effectiveness; and third, cultural elements whose communication significantly influences the communication of other cultural elements.

1. The Relationship Between Communicative Value and the Subjects

Undoubtedly, the very occurrence of cultural communication acts stems from the value these acts hold for the subjects involved. Cultural communication is divided into two types: the sender and the receiver. Content that holds value for the sender motivates the willingness to communicate, while content that holds value for the receiver enables effective communication. Therefore, content that holds value for both the sender and the receiver should be considered the focal point for dissemination.

The value of intercultural communication for the sender is highly subjective and thus difficult to exhaustively list. However, generally, the most common and readily acknowledged value is content that fulfills the sender's need to be understood and respected. To gain understanding and respect, two natural choices often emerge: either comprehensively communicating one's entire culture or communicating the aspects one takes pride in. However, both choices, or a combination thereof, often lack detailed consideration of the receiver, thus tending to be sender-centric and reducing the receiver to a mere object.

The most easily achievable value of intercultural communication for the receiver is satisfying the need to increase "knowledge." However, this need of the receiver can be met by any foreign culture and therefore lacks specificity. If the sender can identify cultural elements absent in the receiver's culture but desired by the receiver as a subject, and which are simultaneously unique to the sender's culture, then this communication holds extremely high value for both types of subjects. This is because the sender's need for understanding and respect becomes tightly linked with the receiver's need for cultural self-transcendence, thereby forming a positive intersubjective relationship.

Within this intersubjective relationship, for the sender to realize its value, it must identify its irreplaceable value *for the receiver*. Instrumental rationality with obvious commensurability lacks this value due to its universal applicability, whereas the sender's unique value choices often possess irreplaceability. Thus, considerations regarding the content that should be the focus of intercultural communication inevitably lead to the layer of cultural values.

2. The Relationship Between the Focus of Communication and Cultural Universality

When disseminating a piece of content is effortless, the disseminator does not need to painstakingly consider the encoding process. However, for content that is difficult to disseminate and requires dissemination, the disseminator needs to think carefully about how to encode it to improve dissemination validity. For example, the research results of Chinese mathematicians can be widely disseminated with little effort in encoding, whereas the dissemination of Chinese classical poetry requires careful consideration of encoding and decoding. Actually, encoding efforts aim to overcome the inefficiency of dissemination. In terms of dissemination difficulty, the difficult parts should be the focus. This necessitates introducing the concept of cultural uniformity, which is the core factor determining the difficulty of cross-cultural communication.

The strength of cultural uniformity is inversely proportional to the difficulty of dissemination. Cultures with strong cultural uniformity do not need to consider the conversion between encoding and decoding, whereas cultures with relatively weak cultural uniformity need to carefully design an encoding scheme so that recipients can understand the information as well as possible during decoding.

In the late 20th century, the cultural theory community engaged in discussions on "cultural universality". Some important cultural theoretical categories were mentioned, but no in-depth exploration was carried out. The issue of "cultural universality" was treated as a qualitative one and approached with an either-or mindset. The underlying idea was to treat culture as a dense whole and to seek a once-and-for-all solution to the question of whether it can be universal and, if so, how. This broad qualitative thinking was overly abstract and metaphysical, and most debates ended without resolution. In terms of literature, there were very few studies specifically dedicated to "universality." Most of them were merely touched upon as incidental topics in other thematic papers. Some studies directly took "universality" as a premise for their arguments. From today's perspective, perhaps we need to adopt a different approach: In a given culture, are there any unique aspects that are easily universalizable, and others that are difficult to universalize? In other words, we need to reconsider the classification of culture based on the ease or difficulty of universality. Clearly, objects that can be directly perceived and measured have the strongest universality. These objects are generally associated with material civilization, while, in terms of culture, they more belong to the instrumental-rational part. And the cultural part mentioned above, at the level of value rationality, has relatively weaker universality.

Therefore, when considering the value needs of the communication subject, we need to explore the value aspect of culture; when focusing on the ease of achieving universality, we first need to examine the instrumental rationality aspect of culture, then explore the value rationality aspect, and other related aspects as well. In the commonly accepted cultural meaning, there is also a customary aspect parallel to instrumental rationality and value rationality, and it cannot be bypassed. If this aspect is excluded, the definition of culture would be incomplete. Therefore, this article also needs to conduct an examination centered on the communication value.

3. The interconnection among various levels of culture and its impact on cultural dissemination

There is another issue that needs attention regarding the dissemination value of various aspects of culture: they are interrelated. The most obvious example is that instrumental rationality promotes the other two aspects. That is, when a group's culture is highly developed in instrumental rationality, it often attracts the envy of other groups, thereby promoting the dissemination of its unique values, rationality, and cultural customs. There might be a basic psychological assumption here: people may believe that the specific customs, beliefs, etc., of a certain group's culture will lead to the development of an instrumental-rational culture and, subsequently, to the abundance of material wealth. Those who hold this view are relatively representative, such as Marx and Weber. However, Marx and Weber's research is limited to specific cultural concepts and may overlook other unknown factors. Because the cause of a

result may be a complex combination of factors, it is difficult to attribute it to a single factor. Nevertheless, people more often start from intuition and believe that specific customs, value concepts, etc., are integrated with instrumental rationality, so the value, customs, etc. of cultures with relatively less developed instrumental rationality in the receiving group are more likely to be disregarded. On the other hand, if the value aspect of the disseminating culture contains too much content that conflicts with the value aspect of the receiving culture, it will also lead the receiver to distrust the other aspects of the disseminating culture. The situation is similar in the customs aspect. For example, the

The "foot-binding" custom in ancient China easily led Western cultural groups to distrust Chinese traditional culture as a whole. Moreover, the emphasis on and identification of the "overlapping consensus" in the disseminating and receiving cultures will also strengthen the receiver's understanding and tolerance of the other aspects of the disseminating culture.

In conclusion, this article's discussion needs to anchor cultural stratification in instrumental rationality, values, and customs. Meanwhile, the thoughts on communication value have been transformed into three specific perspectives: the value of communication for the subject, the strength of universality, and the importance of its linkage at each level.

II. Cultural Aspects to Be Shown in Cross-Cultural Communication without the Need for Explicit Emphasis

In terms of cultural universality, the instrumental rationality aspect of culture is relatively simple and most universal. There are almost no instances of instrumental rationality that cannot be universally applied. Therefore, the instrumental rationality aspect of culture does not require significant dissemination efforts because it is nearly transparent in itself. The evaluation of instrumental rationality across subjects is also nearly uniformly positive, so its value for the subjects is unquestionable. The situation at the value level is very complex. The cultural values of different ethnic groups often share both similarities and contradictions. Its universality fluctuates, and the value it holds for the recipients of the dissemination behavior is not self-evident and requires careful discernment. The universality of cultural customs is often poor, and the value they hold for recipients of cultural dissemination is often limited to expansion. At the level of perspective, however, it serves to gain understanding and support for the disseminators. In summary, all three levels of culture need to be carefully analyzed to clearly understand their communicative value and the mechanisms that shape it.

1. The extremely strong commensurability at the level of instrumental rationality and its underlying competitiveness

The results of material production, due to their practicality, often win the approval of the entire human race. People even consider them to be unrelated to the spirit. Although the most extensive cultural concept encompasses material culture, when people talk about culture, they often exclude the most tangible material aspect because it is too closely linked to practicality, and thus, its acceptance can be achieved without the need for value judgment. Even on the noses of the extremely exclusive Qing Dynasty old-timers, we can see Western-style glasses, although they are very incompatible with the long gowns and horse jackets, they did not encounter fierce resistance. Therefore, in the process of cultural dissemination, material culture is almost equivalent to the real gold and silver in the currency, and consequently, culture with instrumental and efficiency measurement standards of instrumental rationality has an inherent cultural congruence advantage. This identification and even welcome of the tool often do not stop at mere recognition. The pursuit of material tools will bring about changes in the mode of production. The emphasis on efficiency resulting from the pursuit of profit, the bureaucratic

system in management, the pursuit of market environment, and the reliance on scientific research that follows are all implied by material production (Weber, 1947, p. 32). That is to say, instrumental rationality is embedded in the production of tools and spreads widely along with their production. People may not necessarily realize the existence of instrumental rationality at the beginning, nor will they consciously develop and apply it, but the recognition of material tools and the subsequent development of material production will naturally bring about the recognition and construction of instrumental rationality, and in this way, people have already entered the logic of instrumental rationality. Even further, people will unconsciously be alienated by instrumental rationality. This alienation has created a thinking mode of the same pattern, and this thinking mode will further intensify the congruence of instrumental rationality.

This extremely strong compatibility leads to simple, direct encoding during dissemination, with little effort required to achieve smooth dissemination. This extremely strong compatibility does not mean that dissemination focus is unnecessary, because the power of instrumental rationality is regarded as the most important indicator of a group's strength and its contribution to world culture. And for the current mainstream world civilization, the advanced material production of a certain group and the corresponding contribution to instrumental rationality are also important reasons for promoting the cultural dissemination at other levels of this group; that is, the culture at the instrumental rationality level will drive the dissemination of the value and customs levels of the culture of this group. Therefore, the dissemination of instrumental rationality is also necessary.

However, behind instrumental rationality lies the competition among different ethnic groups. A highly uniform belief in modern instrumental rationality can lead to conflicts over the expansion of the identities of different ethnic groups, not only because of the obvious exclusivity of possession of objects, but also because these objects are the common "beliefs" of different ethnic groups. This further intensifies competition among ethnic groups, thereby promoting the development of instrumental rationality. Clearly, although groups with different beliefs and values will have ideological conflicts, the differences in values will alleviate many of these struggles, while the possession of instrumental rationality is the demand of all ethnic groups, so when instrumental rationality expands to an extreme degree, the competition among ethnic groups will become even more intense. For instance, nations strive to protect their instrumental rational cultural achievements through measures such as patent applications and the safeguarding of military and commercial secrets. Moreover, entities driven by instrumental rationality tend to objectify others, yet other groups resist this objectification and strive to become the sole subject, thereby objectifying others in turn. Thus, the struggle becomes endless. This is a natural consequence of instrumental rationality overstepping its bounds. In this sense, when cultural communicators excessively emphasize their own material culture and advanced instrumental rationality, it provokes aversion among recipients. Consequently, content that flaunts material production and instrumental rationality becomes an obstacle to the cultural transmission effectiveness of a particular group.

In summary, while culture at the instrumental rationality level exhibits exceptional communicative efficacy due to its high degree of commonality, enabling smooth transmission without elaborate encoding, the underlying competitive nature of group dynamics impedes the communicative effectiveness of the transmitting culture. Consequently, it should neither be deliberately emphasized nor prioritized as the primary level of cultural transmission. However, its value dimension is uncontroversial, and advancing this dimension within a group can garner recognition for other dimensions. Thus, the cultural dimension of instrumental rationality possesses a necessary value for display.

2. The Display Value of "Overlapping Consensus" and Customary-Level Culture

Whereas instrumental rationality often achieves exceptional universality through its association with tool ownership, material production, and even social management efficiency, the value dimension of culture lacks such universality. Its universality is far more complex.

The common "overlapping consensus" (Rawls, 2000, p. 141) shared across cultures is

roughly comparable to that of instrumental rationality. This paper contends that "overlapping consensus" is a superficial concept in cultural value, as consensus development requires deeper foundations. Consequently, it introduces another concept—the "common sense" (sensus communis)—to describe communication at the level of cultural values. As an academic concept, "common sense" has been extensively discussed by scholars such as Aristotle, Kant, Vico, and Gadamer. This paper adopts Vico's most widely accepted and concise definition: "Common sense (sensus communis) is the unreflective judgement shared by a class, a collective people, a nation, or even the whole of humanity." (Vico, 1986, p. 87) In studies of common sense, the most influential figure, Gadamer, emphasized its potential for universal human application: "The possible foundation for what we commonly call universal communicability or universal communicability lies in this common sense." (He, 2015, p. 33) In studying the cross-cultural transmission of culture, we too prioritize this sense of common ground. The "overlapping consensus" represents the existing, superficial layer of this common ground. Vico briefly outlined its general content as "the concordance between primitive and modern peoples concerning religion, marriage, and burial rites" (Vico, 1986, p. 135). However, Vico's discussion remained largely descriptive of external ritual phenomena, not yet delving into the substantive content of an "overlapping consensus" grounded in concrete, intrinsic human common ground. We may venture some preliminary, common-sense explorations.

These broadly encompass: First, the pursuit of fulfilling fundamental human needs—wealth, liberty, love, dignity—and the associated value aspirations, representing the most universal concerns for the individual; Second, the necessity for cooperation and altruism arising from the reality that human individuals, lacking natural competitive advantage, must form societies to ensure collective survival; Third, the fusion of individual pursuits of wealth, freedom, love, and dignity with societal values of cooperation and altruism, giving rise to aspirations for fairness, justice, and rationality. Fourth, the interpretative "cognitive" cultural underpinnings supporting this value system—such as religion and philosophy—alongside corresponding aspirations for devotion and piety. These value aspirations foster a shared respect among all communities for values such as wealth, freedom, love, dignity, cooperation, altruism, fairness, justice, rationality, and devotion. These principles become universal positive values. Correspondingly, poverty, servitude, selfishness, injustice, and profanity become universally negative values.

Like the culture of instrumental rationality, this layer of value-based culture is universal in its applicability. Its dissemination should be unimpeded; indeed, it requires no deliberate propagation, for "all men share the same heart, and the heart shares the same reason." However, disseminating this value-based culture carries an indispensable benefit: the communicator gains recognition from the recipient, fostering a degree of shared community that forms the foundation for continued exchange. Thus, while this aspect requires no deliberate promotion, it should be appropriately showcased.

Conversely, certain extreme elements within the communicator's cultural values may encounter resistance during transmission due to their contradiction with this "shared sensibility," carrying negative communicative value and thus requiring exclusion from the content. Furthermore, elements that, while not conflicting with the "shared sensibility," clash with significant value principles of the recipient culture and thus cannot foster consensus should also be excluded from communication due to their lack of universal applicability.

The communicative potential of cultural customs is relatively weak. The transmission of rituals supported by customs is inherently challenging, as they rarely receive practical endorsement from other cultural groups. For instance, the American government does not grant public holidays for the Qingming Festival. Even if individuals from other groups mimic the festival's practices, this lacks cultural communicative significance because they do not share

the ritual's underlying beliefs. Naturally, if the ritual proves compelling and individuals come to understand its underlying principles through imitation, developing identification, or even belief, then cultural transmission at the customary level can occur. Furthermore, the transmission of customary culture fosters recipients' understanding of the cultural distinctiveness of the transmitting group, while simultaneously prompting reflection on the conventional nature of their own cultural customs. In this sense, the display of customs also facilitates intercultural exchange.

In summary, culture at the instrumental rationality level possesses exceptional universality. The transmission of culture at this level drives the dissemination of other cultural layers, though it inherently carries inter-subject competition. The extraordinary universality of "overlapping consensus" renders its deliberate transmission unnecessary, yet it facilitates consensus-building between transmitters and recipients, thereby establishing a foundation for continued communication. Customary-level culture exhibits weaker universality, yet its display enhances recipients' understanding and recognition of the communicator. Both possess value for display, though neither should be deliberately emphasized.

III. Cultural Dimensions to Prioritize in Cross-Cultural Communication

Regarding communicability, elements with excessive communicability require no deliberate dissemination because they are self-evident. Conversely, those with insufficient communicability are difficult to disseminate, as achieving consensus is hard. However, elements presenting communicability barriers that can be overcome through effort should be actively disseminated if deemed necessary. For cross-cultural communicators, comprehensively conveying one's own culture is most conducive to gaining recipients' understanding and recognition of its underlying logic. However, overly complex information may diminish communication effectiveness. Moreover, as noted above, the instrumental rationality-based cultural elements of the communicator may provoke resistance from recipients due to their competitive nature with the recipients' culture. At the cultural value level, elements of shared "overlapping consensus" require no special emphasis in transmission. Similarly, cultural customs, being less amenable to common ground, should not be prioritized. Consequently, the cultural content requiring focused transmission is that which is more concise, capable of being encoded through effort to gain recipient recognition, and even that which the recipients themselves desire.

1. Value Alignment Between Communicator and Recipient

The most compelling aspects of the sender's culture are precisely those that the receiver urgently needs. It is this urgency of need that amplifies the perceived value of the sender's culture.

For a cultural group seeking to expand its influence or enrich world culture, it is precisely this aspect of its own culture that requires dedicated dissemination. This cultural element simultaneously meets the needs of both the sender and the receiver, making it most conducive to achieving the intended purpose and effectiveness of communication. Consequently, cultural transmission necessitates a profound understanding of the receiver's cultural aspirations, which demands an inquiry into what the receiver most urgently requires. Before addressing this question, one must further consider who the recipients of cultural transmission are. They may be a very specific ethnic group or category of people, such as post-development communities, or they may encompass humanity as a whole. For post-development communities, emulating the modernization pathways of pre-development communities may constitute their cultural aspiration. As this paper does not examine cultural transmission targeting specific ethnic groups or categories, it focuses solely on contemporary global mainstream cultures—encompassing not only Western cultures but also Eastern cultures undergoing modernization.

Given the dominant trends in contemporary global culture, the expansion of instrumental rationality and the decline of certain ancient values may be among the most pressing issues.

The expansion of instrumental rationality has led to the reification of human beings, the proliferation of secularism, the erosion of richness, and, consequently, anxiety, excessive competition, and one-dimensional development, all of which inflict tremendous harm on cultural subjects. Instrumental rationality is not merely a pursuit of truth; it is also a demand for efficiency. In modern societies, this demand has produced not only social progress but also an obsessive, modern "catastrophe of speed." Moreover, because of its strong commensurability, instrumental rationality readily induces imitation among marginalized cultural groups. In short, because instrumental rationality most readily becomes the symbolic marker of intergroup competition, it spreads most readily, thereby exerting suppressive pressure on the dissemination of other cultural dimensions. For this reason, human life guided by modern mainstream culture often drifts away from freedom, richness, and well-being; reflecting on these losses is vital for the future of human welfare. In summary, recipients of cultural dissemination often possess a strong desire to transcend their existing cultural frameworks. Identifying these desires is the prerequisite for locating leverage points in cross-cultural communication.

Exploring the possibility of transcending the culture of a given group—or even of humanity as a whole—requires profound and meticulous thought. One essential step is to examine the characteristics of existing cultural traditions and draw on them to address current problems. At least in theory, the unique cultural components of a particular group may better align with the latent well-being of other groups, and even of humanity at large; thus, they may supplement or surpass the cultural systems that consciously govern other groups' lives. Consequently, the world's diverse cultural traditions may constitute important resources for remedying the defects of mainstream culture. It should be added that abandoning or neglecting existing cultural resources in pursuit of entirely new creations is also a possible path. However, given human history, the limits of rationality make such novel explorations excessively costly, whereas cultural resources tested by time may be safer and more effective. Put simply, identifying the ailments within the recipient's culture, then turning to the rich array of existing traditions to find elements capable of correcting or healing these ailments—and using the latter to refine the former—is one of the most important avenues for enriching and restoring the health of cultures involved in cross-cultural communication. It is also one of the highest values of cross-cultural exchange. For the dissemination of Chinese culture, this represents a necessary effort to draw on our traditional cultural resources to contribute to a more resilient global mainstream culture. Naturally, this requires a deep understanding of both the recipient's culture and the unique strengths of our own.

2. The Relationship Between Deep Commonality and Cultural Transcendence

When a cultural system formed by a group's unique understanding and choices benefits other groups—or even humanity as a whole—it indicates a shared element between the two systems. This shared element transcends their surface differences, and understanding it requires careful analysis of the intricate relationship between commonality and non-commonality.

Carl Jung proposed concepts such as the "collective unconscious" and "archetypes," which concern these hidden dimensions of human commonality precisely. Jung believed that the shared life of early humans before their departure from Africa laid the foundation for such commonality and the collective unconscious (Meng, 2011, pp. 50–51). His perspective suggests that primordial memories far older than literate civilizations may connect humanity to a more abundant and natural original mode of existence. In many respects, the restoration of this richer, more organic, primordial nature constitutes an important pathway toward human happiness. Certain unique elements within particular cultural traditions may be closer expressions of this collective unconscious; they function as bridges to the vastness and richness of the past, and even as remedies for the distortions of modern civilization.

Jung's insights are illuminating, yet they may also lead to misunderstandings. One might conclude that because pre-African-dispersal life established human commonality, the cultural differences that later emerged as human groups adapted to diverse natural and social environments no longer contribute to commonality and therefore belong to the realm of the non-common.

At first glance, the enclosed existence of individual groups, each shaped by specific environmental and historical contingencies, seems to have produced diverse cultural value systems—systems that appear to create barriers to commensurability. Yet, analogous to biological evolution, the unique cultural elements of one group may, under transformed historical conditions, come to align with the latent well-being of other groups or even of all humanity. In such cases, these elements may supplement or transcend the cultural systems that consciously regulate the lives of other groups. When the unique understandings and value choices of one group benefit others, it must be because this cultural particularity resonates with something shared among other groups—or among humanity as a whole—such as common existential aspirations, common sources of suffering, or common paths out of collective misjudgment. In this sense, even after dispersing from Africa, human groups, through parallel life experiences and internal needs, continued to generate new shared feelings and new forms of collective unconscious, which can also serve as the basis for cultural commensurability.

Thus, the Jungian "collective unconscious" is not identical to the collective unconscious of contemporary humans. Under modern value systems, many impulses, emotions, and imaginations deemed "untimely" are similarly repressed into the unconscious, becoming part of a new collective unconscious. Correspondingly, certain cultural values widely upheld in our conscious life may themselves be unconscious forms of escape or self-deception; those values that they reject may, in fact, better protect deeper dimensions of human well-being. This also applies to values that impede the unchecked progress of instrumental rationality. In this light, even "overlapping consensus"—cultural values validated by human reason and explicitly articulated—may not always be correct, nor aligned with present or future developmental needs. They may instead become unnoticed obstacles to human advancement (just as certain elements of a group's own culture may fail to serve its well-being).

In short, both group-specific and global commonalities involve older layers that persist and newer layers that need to be built. The relationship between commonality and non-commonality, therefore, requires continuous transformation.

Within the diverse forest of human cultures, some long-standing but neglected value concepts serve as effective antidotes to the inertial tendencies mentioned above. On the surface, they differ greatly from widely endorsed cultural values and lack strong commensurability. However, they may represent a deeper form of commensurability—one that, through the act of transmission and sharing, enables recipients to transcend the weaknesses of their own cultural frameworks and move toward broader forms of well-being. Cultural transmission thus becomes linked to a longing for deeper communication and the possibility of a richer and more beautiful world. For example, the principle of "forgetting words and abandoning deliberation" (juyan wanglü) in Zen Buddhist tradition may serve as a valuable supplement to Western cultures, which are constrained by the "prison of language" (Huo, 2004, p. 247).

Therefore, the deeper potentials for commonality—those pointing toward cultural transcendence—should be the focus of cultural transmitters. Meanwhile, elements within the transmitting culture that directly address the inertial limitations of the recipient's culture should become critical leverage points in cross-cultural work. Conversely, because transcending the obstacles of commensurability is necessary for forming a new consensus, those cultural elements that initially appear less commensurable may actually deserve greater efforts in encoding, as well as in enhancing the recipient's willingness and ability to decode.

Conclusion

In summary, this article divides culture into three components based on the stratification of

instrumental rationality, value rationality, and custom: those unsuitable for dissemination, those requiring no deliberate promotion but deserving adequate presentation, and those requiring focused transmission. This is merely a directional proposition; concrete implementation must be grounded in extensive, case-specific analyses of Chinese culture and the cultures of various recipients. At present, the most urgent task is to identify within Chinese culture those value-level elements capable of remedying the deficiencies of major existing cultural traditions. Understanding the ailments of contemporary mainstream culture is thus a necessary starting point. This paper argues that, within a modern civilization dominated by instrumental rationality, value rationalities capable of counterbalancing—or even healing—the obsessions it produces are an urgent global need.

While the Western tradition certainly contains elements of such therapeutic value, the corresponding resources within Chinese culture are arguably even richer. Regarding such cultural content, the author cannot yet provide a satisfactory list; compiling it in detail would require the arduous efforts of many researchers. Undoubtedly, this is a direction worthy of endeavor. From the author's perspective, compared to the widely emphasized Confucian culture, Daoist culture, and Buddhist Chan (Zen) philosophy might be better choices. This is because the core themes of Confucian culture, such as enterprising spirit and engagement with the world, share similarities with the emphasis on secular utilitarianism in mainstream Western culture. Daoism, however, can alleviate anxiety caused by mainstream Western culture to some extent. At the same time, Chan philosophy may help transcend the arrogance of reason and the intellectual stagnation that developed in Western culture after the linguistic turn by promoting the dissemination of Daoist culture through intercultural communication. Figures such as Lin Yutang achieved some success in the last century. Among the various cultural elements Lin promoted, mainstream Western civilization showed particular interest in the values and ideals of Daoist culture, such as leisurely contentment and self-reflection. Concerning Chan philosophy, the Zen teachings of Japanese scholar D.T. Suzuki garnered significant attention in the West during the last century. Many Western scholars, such as Carl Jung and Erich Fromm, had already become aware of Chan philosophy. However, we still lack sufficient attention, exploration, and research into the treasures within traditional Chinese culture, including Chan philosophy. These are key to transcending the linguistic constraints of current mainstream Western culture and fostering a deeper human understanding. Simultaneously, it is undoubtedly a worthwhile undertaking for China's own cultural heritage.

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