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Essay---On Common Spirit

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In this essay, I plan to discuss the concept of “common spirit” from several aspects. In Greek, it is called *koinê aesthesis*; in Latin, *sensus communis*; in English, common sense or common spirit; and its corresponding German concept is “*der Gemeinsinn*.” The essay is divided into the following several parts: Part 1: review of some discussions on common spirit in the Chinese tradition; Part II: significance of common spirit in modern society; Part III: connotation of common spirit of economics; and Part IV: the principle of common spirit as economic ethics.

Part I

Re-reading the past important classics will discover that there are lots of discussions on common spirit. We can therefore easily draw a conclusion, believing that the discussion and elaboration on common spirit is a very important aspect of conceptual work of our forefathers, and their discussion on this issue has reached a height that is worth our commendation. In view of these achievements, we cannot but feel a kind of shame, because for a quite long period of time, we have been casting more criticism and denial, or even laying the blame upon them rather than carefully reading or studying their discussions and elaborations. Until the 1980s, this kind of scorning and detesting attitude and atmosphere still existed and were popular among some scholars.

However, in subsequent years, the situation had undergone considerable change as people began to render relatively more affirmative judgment and set to study and expound them. Meanwhile, a tendency among quite a few scholars also started to emerge, partially in stressing on characteristics of the Chinese tradition, and emphasizing at large that the Chinese tradition is different from other traditions, and as a matter of fact, even higher than them, in particular, the so-called western traditions. This indicates that when dealing with different traditions, we lack a kind of common spirit. This in turn shows that we have paid inadequate attention to much of the great brilliant thoughts of the Chinese tradition on common spirit, we lack understanding, and we have not mastered them. Given this situation, I believe that we need to review once again discussions in the Chinese tradition on common spirit. In the following, I will just bring forth a small portion of it, to arouse public interests on the one hand, and to make further studies by myself on the other.

As we all know that “I-Ching”, or the “Book of Changes”, has different systems. “Zhou Yi”, being one of the systems, is considered classics of Confucianism, and this has its basis. However, whether it can be considered as only classics of Confucianism still needs discussion. As far as our problems here are concerned, “Zhou Yi” is certainly one of the foundations of common spirit. In “Zhou Yi · Xi Ci Xia”, there is such a saying: “Confucius said: what are people under the heavens thinking about? Though they share the same ultimate end, their approaches are nevertheless different, with therefore many varying thoughts and actions”.

Here, it talks about not only “difference”, but also “commonality”, as well as the relationship between them. Once it mentions commonality, immediately it talks about “difference”; and once it mentions one, immediately it talks about one hundred. It identifies with its commonality, distinguishes from its difference, and retains one and one hundred respectively at the same time, which is not only comprehensive but appropriate. This is no doubt a kind of daring and resolute thinking, a kind of magnificent and yet subtle spirit.

In “Zhou Yi · Shuo Gua”, we have seen the significance stressing on the “commonality”, as it is written: “Everything follows that which is common to the people, and therefore it is conferred with greatness; and those being endowed with greatness should not be sufficient, and therefore it is conferred with modesty.” Being great lies in that one makes oneself common to others, for only when one reaches commonality with others, can people turn towards to and things follow. By so doing, one can reach greatness, and the condition being great is insufficiency. In “Zhou Yi · Xi Ci Shang”, it is also written: “With two people sharing the same spirit, its benefits can even break off the gold”, and “words coming out of the same spirit, its odor can resemble that of orchid”. The first sentence affirms that different people may reach uniformity in spirit, which approves the enormous power emanating from the uniformed spirit; while the second speaks of the kind of beautiful attributes and impacts the speech conforming to the common spirit will possess. However, the more important diagram or divisionary symbol that officially and especially set up in the 64th Divisionary Symbols of “Zhou Yi” is the “Qian Shang Li Xia”, which is expressed as “tong ren” or “person of the same belief or conviction”. In the divisionary symbolic expression, there is a saying that “only gentlemen or man of honor can identify with or conform to the will of the universe.” It is worth noting however that in the “liu er yao yao ci”, or “explanations of the six and two lines in eight trigrams for division”, it is pointed out that “identifying with or conforming to the person of the same belief or conviction of one’s clan is shameful”. The reason, according to the explanation of Hou Guo, is that “one cannot identify with or conform to the grand commonality”. It is clear therefore that long time ago there had already been great people in the ancient past who distinguished the clan sort of minor commonality from the grand commonality above clans, just that the grand commonality is taken as the highest measure, while the sort of minor commonality as the highest criteria is refused.

The ideal of Confucianism is “Da Tong”, or “Great Harmony”, and its classical expression is found in “Li Ji · Li Yun”, or ‘Li Yun’ of the ‘Book of Rites’. Thus expressed Confucius: the Great Tao is everywhere in the world and all people under the earth treat each other with equality. They select really capable men to serve them, and all are very honest and harmonious. Therefore, they care not only their own people, love not only their own children, but also others, so that the aged can enjoy their later life and the strong contribute to their services, the young be well-bred; those widowed, lonely, handicapped, and sick are fed and well taken care of; male has suitable job, female a home to return. Goods are plentiful and everyone can have a share without wasting any; they don’t grab nor reap where he has not sown; there is no selfishness and cunning, no scheming and stealing; and going out at night is even not necessary to close doors, and this is called the Great Harmony.” This looks like the golden age of humankind. However, subsequent changes had turned everything towards the opposite, as the Grand Tao or Principle began to withdraw, and all under the heavens became

privatized. Even though Zhou Gong, or the revered Zhou, together with six others, came to the public to point out the mistakes and correct, it could only reach “xiao kang”, or comparatively well-off. It must be pointed out that the concept of Da Tong, or Great Harmony, speaks about various aspects of ethics, as it speaks not only of politics, society, but also of economics as we understand it, for it has provided us with almost a comparatively perfect compendium of ethics. Moreover, according to “Analects·13th of Zi Lu”, Confucius had once said that: “the man of honor values harmony, not uniformity; while the small man or ville character values uniformity, not harmony”. This is what we call the “he tong theory”, or the “theory of harmony and identity”, which is of fundamental significance in dealing with one’s own relationship with others. Of course, it is not a concept unique to Confucius and therefore not exclusively owned by Confucianism in its narrow sense.

In the discourse on common spirit, the most downright and most comprehensive one is by the Taoist thinker Laozi (also called Lao Tzu), who proposed the “xuan tong shuo”, or the “theory of mysterious harmony”. If we say that now people know more of the “he tong shuo” or the “theory of harmony and identity” of Confucius, but do not pay much attention to it in practice, then fewer people know about the “xuan tong shuo”, or the “theory of mysterious harmony” of Lao Tzu, still much less who really pays attention to it. Chapter 56 of “Dao De Jing” (or Tao De Ching) of its universal edition gives a collective elaboration on the concept of “xuan tong” or the “mysterious harmony” as it written: “who understands does not preach, who preaches does not understand. Reserve your judgments and words; smooth differences and forgive disagreements, dull your wit and simplify your purpose; accept the world”. Here, Lao Tzu is explaining what is “Xuan Tong”, or the “mysterious harmony”. He is not proposing an abstract definition, rather enumerating a series of behavioral pattern. This concept correlates to the whole spirit of the classic of Tao De Ching. Here, I’d like to repeat a few points that I’ve mentioned in one of my articles:

First of all, Lao Tzu said in Chapter 49 that: “the sage does not distinguish between himself and the world; the needs of other people are as his own”. Even if people interpret by all means the concept of “sheng ren” or sage mentioned here as the supreme ruler of slavery or feudalism, they should still recognize that what is referred to here by Lao Tzu are those kind of rules who take not the will of his own but of the common people as the principle; and even if people interpret by all means the concept of “bai xing”, or the “common people” mentioned here as the privileged nobles, they should still recognize that by “common people”, it refers to a kind of universal thing. However, if we admit that Lao Tzu made his point for the sake of “Dao”(also called “Tao”), then we must, according to the inner logic of things, interpret the concept of “sheng ren”, or “sage” mentioned here as the man of wisdom, the just statesman, and the concept of “bai xing”, or the “common people” as the people concerned with all, while the concept of “bai xing xin”, or the “mind of the common people”, the will of all these people. Then, the meaning of this sentence will be: the wise man and the statesman do not have their own will to adhere to, as the will of all the people constitutes the basis of his own. Not only that, we have also the reason to believe that “bai xing”, or the “common people”, also includes those of evil intentions, because immediately after our derivative sentence there is such an especially appealing sentence: “he is good to those who are good; he is also good to those who are not good, thereby he is good”. What a great kind of spirit is this! Here, there are

lots of contents. The simple point is that, one should not go beyond the principle of “suitability” and “appropriateness”, even to those with real mistakes and offenses. Transgressing this principle, virtue will turn to its opposite and becomes evil.

Secondly, Lao Tzu emphasizes orientation from below, which is a very important aspect of the doctrines of Lao Tzu. In Chapter 66 of “Tao De Ching”, Lao Tzu explained this concept also using the conduct of a sage. For the sage, to be on top of the common people, he must put himself under; to be ahead of the common people, he must place himself after. The result is that, although the sage is on top of the people, they do not feel the burden, and even though the sage is ahead of the people, they are not harmed because of it. The orientation from below is a kind of careful protection to the people, and it leads “tian xia”, or the “heavens below”, to be willing to recommend him. Lao Tzu thus believes that because the sage does not contend with people, and therefore no one will be able to contend with him.

In this regard, the form of language has already become a very important thing. The form of language must conform to the dealings with the lower class, and must also make even after the dealings. The sage’s taking of himself is based on the principle of modesty. In political ethics, this principle has its unmistakable function, and has also once been embodied in system establishment. The way of calling themselves by the supreme rulers is certainly not accidental, nor arbitrary. The alternative callings, such as “gu”, “gua”, or “bu gu”, have the following respective meanings: “I, this lonely man”, “I, a man with insufficient virtue”, or “I, the man in want of virtue”. Its intrinsic meaning however is that he himself lacks sufficient morale, with little goodness and virtue, rather than calls himself great, lofty, wonderful, respectful, noble, and lording over all. The issue is exactly the same as connoted in the writings of Homer, where “apolis” implies the people without a city, the people without one in the same camp, and the people without legal rights, in a word, people with insufficiencies and shortcomings.

Nevertheless, Lao Tzu had unremittingly provided argumentation for orientation from below. In Chapter 39, he proposes a kind of principled conclusion, saying: “therefore nobility takes lowliness as its root, and highness takes lowness as its foundation. That is to say, the issue involves fundamentals and basics, rather than new problems cropping up unexpectedly. There are also some other explanations by Lao Tzu, and one of which is the image of deep valley. Here, once again we see a kind of special thing there in Lao Tzu. When people often consider the mountain as noble and lofty, Lao Tzu praises highly of the valley instead. In Chapter Six, it discusses “gu shen”, or the “spirit of the valley”. Lao Tzu believes that the “spirit of the valley” is immortal, with the significance of longevity, for as translated by R. Wilhelm, the great German sinologist, gu shen, or the spirit of the valley, is the “dim and deep female body”. This is a kind of door or gateway, where not only humankind comes from, even heavy and earth also takes as its source. Practically speaking, the reason that heaven is high is that the valley is deep. Perhaps, through inference and deduction, we may say that the earth is a kind of blue plant, and its root is in the great valley of the universe. And this should have a determinant significance as far as morality is concerned. From this great valley, virtue should be formed, through which adjustment is made. To virtue, gu shen, or the spirit of the valley, is a kind of sample, the source of vitality of morality, and also a kind of criteria. In Chapter 28,

Lao Tzu talks about “wei gu tian xia, chang de nai zu”, or “being the root of the world, you complete harmony”. Moral actions should resemble that of the great valley under heavens. For Lao Tzu, this is the supreme morality. Thus in Chapter 41, he said in a straightforward manner: “shang de ruo gu”, or “the finest harmony appears plain.”

Part II

What then is the significance in reviewing these discussions? Our objective is to review the spiritual or cultural connotation of the course of history of China's modernization. This involves many issues. One is that, the course of history of China's modernization is an extremely complex evolutionary process. As such, it is not, neither possible, just a process of spiritual or cultural evolution. Accordingly, it is not, neither possible, just a process of understanding and elucidation to the “common spirit”. Another issue is that, classical tradition, including the thinking and discussions on common spirit, has not evolved out of itself directly a modern society, it is more like that the reality it lives in is a pre-modern society, and as a matter of fact, it has failed to transform this pre-modern society into a modern one. It is because of this situation that these classical traditions have been neglected by many people in the course of China's modernization, and forgotten by many people, or even cursed by some. They believe that the ancients should have already turned themselves into modern people, and that the classical spirit should have already transformed the traditional Chinese society into a modern one, and also the most advanced one in the world. Since the ancient people have in fact failed to accomplish this, they are therefore not only backward, but also criminals of history; on the other hand, as traditional spirit also failed to achieve this pursuit, they therefore should also be overthrown with a firm hand, and be down away with downright.

Notwithstanding, like any other traditional spirit, the classical spirit of China has its own connotation, with also its own argumentation, and therefore its own influence. If we say that this classical spirit of China has not evolved out of itself a society that can be called modern, then after the western tradition has evolved out such a kind of society, it is precisely this classical spirit of China that has provided the possibility, enabling the Chinese to interpret and make comment of this enormous evolution of the western society, and at the same time explain its own circumstances and situation for self-criticism and self-orientation. In conducting all these, naturally, it is not the traditional spirit of China alone that plays this role, as there are also other spirits and thinking, especially the modern western spirit and thinking, but we cannot deny the role that the classical spirit of China plays. Here, at least one point is certain: it is through the concepts and language originating from the classical spirit of China that we translate and express the modern western thinking, and the conversion of classical Chinese into vernacular Chinese cannot invalidate this argument, a point that seems to have been determined by fate. When conducting these, the orientation of thinking and the route of practice we select are certainly not uniform either; rather they are distinct, opposing to each other, or even antagonistic. However, between this situation and the understanding and attitude towards the distinct, opposing or even antagonistic traditional spirit, there is a kind of complex correlation.

It is in the west that the earliest form of modern society has emerged. Why is this so? This has still yet to be explained, and the opinions vary. But one point is clear that the emergence of a

modern society presupposes many conditions. As far as the topic we are currently discussing is concerned, the west has all the while been discussing and expounding the common spirit. In pre-modern period, and in the ancient Greece, Aristotle had already been explaining the common spirit, though his explanation had failed to churn out directly a modern society, as the society of his time was of a slavery system. In the middle ages in Europe, St. Augustine had also expounded the common spirit, though likewise he also failed to create directly a modern society, for contrary to being a modern society, his was a feudal one. Nevertheless, we cannot assert, in reverse, that their elucidation had nothing to do with the creation and development of the modern western society, nor with the understanding and interpretation of relevant characteristics of modernity. Quite the contrary, the understanding and interpretation to the common spirit came from their elucidation, and at the same time transcended their elucidation. This double process of evolution is displayed in such determinant stages as Renaissance and Enlightenment and by such names as Rousseau, Thomas, and Scottish School etc., which, in the Declaration of Independence and the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, has gained a brand-new significance and status, becoming therefore an epoch-making constitution that can be called fundamental law.

It is worth noting that, in this grand historical transformation, it is precisely the spirit of the ancient Chinese classics that the west had absorbed, which is first of all manifested in absorption of the Confucian spirit represented by Confucius by the Enlightenment thinkers. That was an age deserving our attention as Chinese. The reason is not that we may pour out our sentiment as descendents of the Chinese race, rather we should, taking this opportunity and with a sober mind, reflect and ask ourselves the question: Why is it the westerners who gave Confucian thinking a modern interpretation when establishing the modern society, rather than we ourselves? Why is it during the French Revolution that the Confucian spirit, such as “do as your would be done by others”, was incorporated into the general principles of the “Universal Declaration of Human Rights”, rather than by ourselves? No doubt, there are also a series of conditions here that are playing a role.

However, we can't say that this has no relation at all with our mere indulgence in worshipping or overthrowing Confucius rather than devoting to the understanding and interpreting of his spirit. It is precisely the intelligentsia who mystified Confucius that has emasculated his spirit. They are not willing to be straying dogs like Confucius, not even teacher to the emperor as Confucius, but rather industriously modeling themselves humbly and submissively after the emperor. They became the watchdog and participants of the jia tian xia and the si tian xia (one family dominates the whole nation, nepotism). Many intellectuals who champion themselves as fighters and critics of Confucius have not developed his spirit of humanism into concept of human rights, let alone have it legalized. On the contrary, what they pointed their spearhead at is to completely overthrow humanism. In their argument, it has actually developed to the point as to deny that in Marxism there is also the idea of humanism, or Marx had at least once taken the spirit of humanism as a point of support of his thinking.

If we say that one of the spiritual or cultural foundations of modern society is the development of humanism, modern society is created and developed from the spirit of humanism, and it itself is maintained and corrected by relying on humanism, then opposing

humanism implies opposing the modern spirit and modern society, and therefore modernization. China had finally, albeit with difficulties, marched towards the direction of modernization, the credits should go to some other intellectuals, and their achievements lie in that they come to understand and interpret the modern spirit and modern development with the concept of “Da Tong”, or the “Great Harmony”, and that they remolded the past politics and social structure, designed and built a modern society based on the spirit of “tian xia wei gong”, or “all under heaven are equal”. In their thinking and design, the classical common spirit is evolving towards the modern common spirit. What we are doing here is a grand historical work of annotation, and it is now still in the process.

The Scottish School had called common spirit the source of ethics, and Stuart believes that common spirit is the fundamental principle of belief of humanism, and we may call it the soul of modernity. That is to say, common spirit is likewise the standard concept of modern man, and individual autonomy, social freedom, national democracy, and even culture, all are related to it. According to common spirit, we must understand each and all individuals as man. The reason we speak of all individuals is that we prevent from excluding some individuals and a certain individual; the reason we speak of each individual is that we prevent the substitution of certain individual by he himself or some others (1). In this regard, common spirit is not to deny the difference of each and every individual, rather to affirm that they are all men, with no exception, with human dignity on the basis of the affirmation of their differences. It is in this point that they are denied of their distinction, and of the claim of their difference.

As each and every individual is different, one can therefore say that the differences are many (“shu wan”, or ten thousand differences); and on the other hand, as they are all men, one can therefore say that the principle is but one (“li yi”). To make this point more specific, I’d like to quote a passage from Hegel in this “Philosophy of Right”: “The self is understood as the **Universal individual**, in this regard, **all people** are the same. This pertains to the issue of upbringing, pertaining to issue of **thinking** – the individual consciousness that adopts the form of universality. **The reason man is man is precisely that he is a man**, rather than that he is a Jew, a Catholic, a protestant, a German, or Italian etc. This consciousness with **thinking** as its standard has immense importance.” (Hegel: Elements of the Philosophy of Rights, Section 209. Beijing 1979, p. 217. Here, there is a slight change to the translated Chinese version).

Different from Hegel, in his attitude towards the Jews, J.G.Fichte had deviated from his spirit of philosophy, because to our surprise he said in 1793 when expressing his objection to giving the Jews freedom: “As to granting the Jews the right of citizenship, the only means is to cut off the heads of all the Jews in one night and put on some other heads, for at least I can’t see any other means; and of these new heads, we hope that there isn’t any Jewish concept inside either.” He also said that: “For protection of us in front of them, neither can I see any other means, what we can do only is to conquer the land of their praise, and send all of them back there” (Dortmund, 1983, pp. 89, 176). The thoughts of Hegel is comprehensive, while the sayings of J.G.Fichte is exclusive and prerogative; the thoughts of Hegel conforms to the modern common spirit, while the sayings of J.G.Fichte, expressed with a poignant and mocking tone, is a kind of dangerous racism and a kind of dreadful anti-Semitism.

Part III

Concerning the relationship between economy and common spirit, we believe that common spirit has constituted the connotation, the basis, and the value of economy. An economy without common spirit is a kind of economy without meaning, an economy without value, a kind of harmful economy, and as such, it cannot be called economy. The essence of economy is to deal with the times and to assist one's generation. Common spirit treats all people with equality as people, and considers all human-related activities as common activities. Economy is a kind of human activity, and a kind of means of man, the purpose of which is man himself. This relationship cannot be reversed, for we cannot treat economy as the objective and man its means. In this sense, man constitutes a community, and this community is a whole; while relative to this community, economy is just a part. Although we say that economy is also a whole, relative to the human community, it is also just a small whole. In this sense, economic supremacy does not exist, and it is equally false as playing down the status of economy.

Economic activity has to be an activity jointly conducted between people, and this is manifested in gathering economy and hunting economy, in animal husbandry and agricultural economy, in handicraft economy and industrial economy, and more so in post-industrial economy, in individual economy, in collective economy, state-owned economy, and also in multinational economy. The more developed an economy is, the more is the commonality of economic activity, and the more it is apparent. In this connection, it is as if the degree of commonality of the activity can indicate the degree of economic development. Compared to pre-modernity, the development of modern economy is an epoch-making development, and its outstanding characteristics are embodied precisely in the unprecedented development of this commonality. People are talking about globalization, but a global economy should be defined as a global common economy. The development of the situation displays approximately that in reality economy has already been an activity jointly conducted and completed by mankind.

However, this kind of commonality is still more of reciprocity of economic activities, and still the further development of reciprocity based on the further development of division of labor. Because of this reciprocity, in economic activities, a chain has been formed, and the entity of this chain is the interrelationship between men. Here, it is a kind of complex relation between the independent individuals and the independent groups, a kind of network interweaved with countless ties. In the language of classical philosophical ethics, it is a system that all men depend on all men, which is relatively more apparently embodied in commodity exchange. Here, none of the product manufactured by each producer is to satisfy the needs of himself, but the needs of others; nor the commodity held by the exchanger of each commodity is for the direct needs of himself, but the needs of others.

Put the other way round, if he leaves another producer and exchanger, he himself will no longer be able to carry on the production of his own, thereby having nothing to exchange with another exchanger; whereas if he refuses to transfer the commodity of his own to the other and therefore give up this commodity, he will not be able to get from the other what he wants. Hence, needs becomes mutual needs, and commodity exchange becomes mutual exchange, transfer is mutual transfer, and acquisition also mutual acquisition. The benefits here is mutual benefits, and in the words of Mo Zi (also called Mo Tse), it is exchange for mutual benefits

(jiao xiang li). The principle of commodity exchange is exchange at equal values, and this principle is equally effective to both parties, and neither party can change it.

Modern economics interprets exchange value as the average amount of social labor. This interpretation has connected the value of commodity with the entire labor. Commodity exchange has also another dimension, that is, to recognize that the parties of exchange are owners of their respective commodities, and their exchange implies the exchange of their ownership, and each gives up to the other the right of ownership to his own commodity, and at the same time obtain the ownership of the other to its commodity according to the equivalence principle. However, one dimension more important than these circumstances is that commodity exchange must take mutual voluntariness or consent as its premise, and each party must acknowledge and respect the free will of the other, and admit that the other party is entitled to determine the will of the other party itself, just as the party itself is entitled to confirm the will of its own party. And this in fact implies respect of the human rights and personality of the other party, just as one respects his own. This example should be able to explain the significance and status of common spirit in the economic sphere. We may say that economy is penetrated with common spirit, and without common spirit, economy will necessarily result in mistakes, in crime, in disorder, in crisis and collapse, not only within one's own sphere, but also affecting the whole society, and in the modern times with rapid economic development, it can even affect the world society.

Part IV

As a branch of ethics, economic ethics must put forward for itself a task, to clarify the ethical meaning of human economic activities from the ethical point of view and establish the basic ethical standard of economic activities, for in nature it is a kind of ethics, and not economics. However, we cannot but see that economic ethics is faced with a kind of danger: to reduce ethics to economics, similar to that economics being reduced to its direct state of current existence pertaining to economic operation. This kind of situation may well be called dissimilation of economic ethics and dissimilation of economics. Some years ago, we heard people criticizing "economics imperialism". This kind of criticism has neglected one point, that is, what is reflected by the so-called "economics imperialism" is the economic "imperialism" in reality. The partial expansion of economy in reality and the ruling of this force over the life-world of man is always an enormous problem of the modern times, regardless of its direct induction factor and the aspect of its expression. The retreat of economics and economic ethics in front of this force of deformed development is only self-denial, and if they distort themselves to drive this force, it would be self-betrayal.

The discussion of the meaning and criteria of economics is a component of traditional ethics. This component's becoming of a branch of ethics – economic ethics - a relatively independent discipline of ethics, is a kind of intrinsic development of ethics. As far as its external necessity is concerned, this intrinsic development is precisely because of the partial expansion of economics in the modern times. In this regard, economic ethics is not adaptation to this trend, rather a reaction, a confrontation and contraposition to this trend. Hence, whether from within or without of this discipline, it has its own scale, structure and method, and it must adhere to its own scale, structure and method, and adhere to its clear demarcation from the vulgar

economics. The core issue here is to expound the ethical criteria of economic activities and demonstrate these ethical criteria.

Just as general ethics is always diversified in its demonstration to ethical criteria, so too is economic ethics in its demonstration to the ethical criteria of the economic field, because the work in this topic is cooperative, rather than exclusive and arbitrary. We believe that common spirit is a standard concept of economic ethics. As we have presented before, this view is not unique of our own, it has rather been discussed since the time of the traditions. What we can do here is nothing but a kind of collective expression and whether this expression can exist still needs to be demonstrated. Here, our discussion will be limited to the following several aspects.

First, this standard concept cannot be demonstrated from the experimental facts alone, because it is a rational concept. If we say that it is related to experimental facts and therefore may be generalized from experimental facts, then we must say at the same time that this kind of generalization is a transcendence of the experimental facts. In an article published in "Geo Wissen" 1st Issue 2005, there was an example on vampire bat. It says that to sustain life, a vampire bat has to extract blood every three days, and if it has failed to hunt up blood within this period, its kinsfolk and colleagues will share with it their hunted blood. With this example, the author explains that vampire bat is not sanguinary only, as it has also "sympathy", and also practices "solidarity". In the same article, the author mentioned the Dutch biologist Frans de Waal who discovered a kind of ape in South America that has a "sense of justice and impartiality", because when the breeder reward the two monkeys that have the same behavior with one a cucumber and the other a sweet grape, the former will throw away the cucumber with anger.

These examples are very much like the example of distributing money to two persons given by some neo-economists. The rule of the game prescribed by the money-giver is this: if both of them agree with his method of distribution, then both of them will receive their respective share, or else none of them will receive, not even a penny. The result is that, none of them have received any, because one of them has received less amount of money than the other for no reason, and this man would rather receive nothing than get a small share, because he does not accept this kind of injustice in distribution. These examples are not only interesting but inspiring, and they are interpreted precisely by or according to the concept of common spirit, or designed based on the concept of common spirit. They conform to, though not equal to, the concept of common spirit.

Secondly, as a standard concept of economic ethics, common spirit is not naturalistic, nor spontaneous, but cognitive. Both naturalism and spontaneity pertain to traditional demonstration of ethics. In the age of natural economy, they seem to be sufficient, but not so in modern society, because modern society, as an unprecedentedly complex society, cannot but rely on knowledge. Such saying is not to deny the relationship between ethics and nature; on the contrary, we believe that ethics is still the second nature. However, we cannot help but explain common spirit from the point of view of cognitivism. In the book of "Pian Mu" written by Zhuang Zi, there is a passage: "Everything under the heavens has its natural state

of existence. If its natural state is curved, it is not because of hook; if straight, not because of rope; round, not because of compass; square, not because of rules; if conglutinant, not because of glue and lacquer; bonded, not because of cord. And therefore, things under the heavens happen and yet not knowing the reason; they gain and yet without knowing the cause. Hence, the principles are the same regardless of the time and space, and one should not damage the true nature of things. If so, why then still to exploit the benevolence and uprightness, as if the Tao is molded by using glues or ropes.”

The purpose of this passage is to criticize the evil acts of glorifying oneself by making use of the name of virtue and morality, and the suppression and distortion of the innate quality of man through the stolen right of interpretation of morality and virtue, rather than simple denial of virtue and morality and simple abandonment of the established rules and practices set up by the heavens and the earth. On the other hand, we cannot deny either the flavor of exaggeration of this passage, as if in an ideal world and heaven, people really don't know, neither is it necessary to know, the rights and wrongs, nor imperative to understand, the rules and regulations and established practices of ethics and morality. However, if we were to advocate today the “consistency of the Tao between the past and the present” according to the words and expressions, then it would imply that we don't have any sense of when it is now. Today, we can only deny the hypocritical virtue and morality, deny the distorted human ethics, but not, without distinction, the criteria of ethics and morality; on the contrary, we must explain that in ethics and morality, it is necessary to learn and continually to re-learn by all generations, so as to transform moral conscience into rational cognition, and therefore into a self-conscious will of morality. Like general ethics, economic ethics is a rational discipline. As such, it must demonstrate common spirit from the point of view of cognitivism, so as to provide economic ethics with a standard notion, to enable it to establish legal and moral concept in economic activities.

Third, one of the problems of the traditional theories of ethics and morality is to discuss the language behavior of man. Today, this discussion has already formed a new branch of ethics, i.e., discourse ethics. Economic activity is a human activity, and the economic field cannot but involve the language behavior of man. As a matter of fact, “business” is not simply a matter of the field of circulation and distribution, which can only mark the characteristics of commodity circulation; the other way round, it can and should be expanded for understanding, to comprehend the entire economic activity as a consultation of undertaking and a negotiation of business, and therefore it has to deal with discourse ethics. Here, it needs to have an intermediate link, which could be the place of economic ethics. At this point, we also need to explain at the same time that in discourse ethics, common spirit has also extreme significance.

Finally, I would like to end this report with a passage by a great founder of modern ethics. Kant said: Das einzige allgemeine Merkmal der Verrücktheit ist der Verlust des Gemeinsinns (sensus communis) und der dagegen eintretende logische Eigensinn (sensus privatus). ----- Kant: Anthropologie, §.53 (the only universal mark of being lunatic is to lose common sense and the emergence of its logical adversary private sense – Kant: Anthropology, Section 53).

Notes

(1) An article entitled “The Loss Resulting from History May be Compensated from Subsequent Greater Progress” written by Du Runsheng was published in the “*Yan Huang Chun Qiu*” magazine, 8th Issue of 2006, p. 79. This title is also the main argument of this article, except a qualifying statement in the text, saying: “The disintegration of USSR witnesses the failure of Stalinism. The loss caused by the complications of history may often be compensated from the subsequent greater progress. The splendid achievement of China’s reform is an example.” This argumentation is not applicable to the loss of human lives, for there is no progress in this world that can resurrect a life that was lost because of cruelty, and they had only one life as that of anyone else, and no matter how great a process that has been made by the living and the subsequent generations, their lives are not that of those who are lost.