

The Cultural Differences from the View of Chinese and Western Religions

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Abstract: After a long period of historical evolution and development, religion has created a rich and colorful culture. A correct understanding of religion helps us to better understand western thoughts, worldviews, values, and behaviors. The author analyzes the cultural differences from the following three parts: the relationship between Buddha, God, and human beings; the cognition of "I" and the influence on interpersonal communication. By comparing the differences between the different religions and cultures of China and the West, we can inquire about the thinking styles and unique qualities of different cultures in the world. It is hoped that religious culture can play a positive role in the realization of cross-cultural communication.

Keywords: Religion, Culture, Buddhism, Christianity, Difference, Cross-cultural communication.

1. Introduction

In the cross-cultural communication between China and the West, cultural differences are multi-layered, and the reasons for these differences are also multifaceted. Among these factors, religious consciousness is an extremely important aspect, which means that there is an indispensable relationship between religion and culture. Religions have played a role in the transformation, co-construction, and promotion of human society. All religious concepts are created by human conscious thought and are served to achieve the purpose of discussing humanities. In the end, it can achieve the purpose of transforming people's minds and promoting the harmonious development of human society and the whole world. Most Westerners believe in Christianity, because it is the Christian culture that constitutes the background of Western culture, making any part of Western culture more or less Christian since the Middle Ages.[1] The Chinese people have been deeply influenced by Confucianism for a long time. The religious beliefs are a mixture of Buddhism, Taoism, and other folk religions with the dominant precondition of Confucianism.

Christianity is one of the important ideological sources and spiritual foundations of Western civilization. It provides internal vitality for the inheritance and development of Western culture. Buddhism, with localization in China, brings a new spiritual mood and new life to Chinese culture. It is an important source of the unique charm of Chinese culture. The author aims to compare the differences between Eastern and Western cultural concepts from the different religious views of Chinese Buddhism and Western Christianity.

2. The Relation of Buddha, God, and Human Beings

From the perspective of the moral relationship of religious ethics, people-oriented Buddhist culture believes that all sentient beings have a Buddha nature. The relationship between man and Buddha is embodied as Buddha is man, man is Buddha; Buddha is an enlightened man, and man is an unenlightened Buddha. Such statements abound in the classics: "The Tathagata says that all sentient beings have Buddha-nature." "All sentient beings themselves have

Buddha-nature, immeasurable goodness and solemnly illuminating wisdom"; "All beings have Buddha-nature, and Buddha-nature is the essence of all beings." [2]The "representation" relationship between sentient beings and Buddha nature shows that all sentient beings have the possibility of becoming a Buddha, that is, all sentient beings cannot be independent without Buddha, and neither can the Buddha. It is precise with this equal Buddha nature (or human nature) that all beings have equality. Buddhism emphasizes "benevolence" and "compassion" and treats all beings as equal, and all beings who are predestined or unfavored should be converted and accepted. As the meaning of the two terms, benevolence means to give happiness to all beings and compassion is to extricate all beings from suffering, together, that means to save all beings. People are the subject of extrication as well as the object. Christianity, as the Bible reveals, owns a completely theistic belief. God is the only true omniscience, whose existence is only for his glory. The existence of man, whether good or bad, can neither increase nor decrease the glory of God. Without God, the existence of human beings is meaningless. God indeed loves the world, but it is never because the world can be loved, nor is it because God must love the world ("Who else can he love if he doesn't love me?" etc.). He loves and saves the world because love is the essence of God on behalf of himself. The Bible also declares that God is the ruler of the universe and the master of nature. "He awakens my soul and guides me on the path of righteousness for his name." "We are only his creation products." Among these ideas embodied the absolute sovereignty of God. In this way, God has mercy on whomever he wants to be merciful to and hardens whomever he wants to make strong. The differences between Chinese and Western religions have profound cultural roots. Chinese religions are influenced by the Confucian theory of good nature and hold a positive view of human nature. It is admitted that everyone favors good deeds and hates evil deeds. There is an optimism in the ethical life that "everyone can be a sage." [3] On the contrary, Christianity holds a negative view of human nature and believes that people have original sin. Therefore, the Christian theory of human nature mainly emphasizes humanity's imperfection and the inherent evil tendency. This difference also has a profound impact on Buddhism and Christianity respectively. Buddhism is polytheistic on the

surface, but atheistic in reality. Buddhism does not worship any idols and gods, gains insight into nature and wisdom, and consciously perceives oneself and others. "The great way is proved by the mind, and the unsurpassed Bodhi can be attained by self-enlightenment." The Buddha is in my heart".[1] Christianity is a monotheistic religion, worshipping only "god". "You cannot believe in other gods except me", and "God is with me". People only recognize themselves through God.

3. The Cognition of "I"

A great contribution of the Western Renaissance is to liberate people from God, and people begin to have the rights and freedom of "I". An important clue to the development of modern Western civilization is the continuous strengthening and realization of the rights and freedom of "I". This is certainly a major advancement in human civilization, but excessively strengthening the rights of "I" and ignoring the obligations and responsibilities of "I" will result in intolerant individualism.

This is the root of many social and moral problems in the West today. For example, in the United States, once legislators proposed to control the spread of violent or pornographic images on television or the Internet by law, they would arouse protests from intellectuals, who invoked freedom of expression. For the sake of the narrow interests of the individual, regardless of the damage to the interests of others, this is the protection of the rights of the so-called "I"! [4]. Overemphasizing the rights and freedom of "I", which leads to the lack of obligations and responsibilities of "I", can result in conflicts between people and nature which is beyond the limitation.

If we examine the nature of "I" and related issues from the perspective of Buddhism, there will be differences. According to Buddhism, all sentient beings are driven by karma, bound by defilements, persecuted by impermanence, and trapped in the Three Realms and Six Paths, so it is difficult to escape and extricate. Why can't life be free from troubles and pains? The final analysis is because of the consciousness of "I". The attachment to "I" is the root of all hardships and sufferings. Buddhism has always emphasized awareness of oneself. One who realizes self-awareness can become a Buddha. Buddhism emphasizes self-reliance. All the sufferings of sentient beings are caused by avidya (incorrect understanding). To achieve fundamental liberation, one must work hard on the treatment of his or her body and mind. All phenomena are illusions caused by the karma of sentient beings. Suffering is not imposed by the Buddha but by the shackles of the attachment to oneself. Therefore, Buddhism has a belief system that teaches people penance, suppresses all evil desires, and has hard-working self-restraint and self-training. Buddhism's understanding of "I" is of great significance for mediating the contradictions and conflicts between individuals and groups, and between humans and the environment in contemporary Western society.[5] It abandons the differences in phenomena between one and others and pursues essential consistency.

4. The Influence on Interpersonal Communication

Due to the different cultural concepts and cultural backgrounds of China and the West, there are also great differences in interpersonal interactions. Chinese culture is a culture with a relatively strong group cultural character.

People have a relatively close relationship with each other, and they have a strong affinity. Since ancient times, "human affection" has occupied an absolutely important position in traditional Chinese culture. It not only expresses the affection of the world that extends from "family affection", but also has the element of "emotion" in human relations, which is similar to the "kindheartedness" claimed by Buddhism." The "kindheartedness" by Buddhism is the inherent righteousness of the idea of equality among all beings. As a result, Buddhism places special emphasis on benefiting self-interests and others, laying equal emphasis on others and self, being compassionate, making good connections with others, helping others, and saving all living beings. Chinese Buddhism speaks highly of the two words "roundness and fusion "[6](meaning wisdom and integrated harmony) "Roundness" is to use a more perfective method rather than the sharp method. Only in this way can you be rational, with the fusion of everything and having a harmonious relationship with others.

In interpersonal communication, Chinese people tend to emphasize emotion but not reason, while Westerners emphasize reason but not emotion. The philosophical saying "I love my teacher, but I love the truth more" fully reflects the Westerners' emphasis on reason. Because of the importance of human affection, westerners believe that there is a contractual relationship between people, and people are only linked together by contract. Just because Christianity advocates individual liberation and individual freedom, Christians regard God as an almighty and transcendent legislator, whose beliefs in God exceed any other social authority. They regard God's commandments as the universal standard. The Christian conscience movement gives individualism a positive connotation. Especially in the United States, the concept of advocating freedom and publicizing individuality has a profound impact on Americans' interpersonal communication. Americans regard individualism as a nearly perfect character, which represents the spirit of independence and self-improvement. The American celebrity Abraham Lincoln was born humbly and lived a difficult life. Through constant self-improvement and hard work, he eventually became the president of the nation. Since then, he has been promoted as the first model of success by self-struggle.

Looking through the above-mentioned comparisons between China and the West in terms of interpersonal communication, it is obvious that Chinese people emphasize "emotion" in interpersonal communication, while Westerners emphasize "reason". Just as the famous master of Chinese culture Liang Shuming said: "Westerners are reasonable, Chinese people tend to be intuitive and emotional." Literary writer Lin Yutang also said: "Westerners can recognize a point of view as long as it is logically understood. [6]For Chinese people, It's far from enough that an opinion is logically correct. It must also obey the rule of human relationship. In fact, human feelings, or relating feelings is more important than logic." Therefore, according to the different cultural backgrounds and different communication habits between Chinese and Westerners, communicators should understand each other's cultural habits in cross-cultural communication to avoid conflicts and contradictions in the communication process.

Religious beliefs reflect and influence the cultural concept of the nation to a large extent. For Chinese culture and the psychological structure of Chinese people, the Buddha's

thoughts can purify people's minds and enhance their spiritual realm. For Westerners, Christian ideas such as freedom, equality, and fraternity are also deeply rooted in the hearts of the people and guide the thinking and concepts of Westerners together with God. In short, the influence of religious beliefs on cultural differences between China and the West is diversified and is reflected in all levels of social life. The comprehension of different religious beliefs between China and the West with mutual respect and mutual understanding is conducive to promoting peaceful coexistence and safe coexistence among nations.

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