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**The Semiotic Principles of Ethical  
Reconstruction**



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- **The world is made up of signs, and all signs have meanings.” Semiotics is the study of the activities of meanings (Zhao Yiheng, 2011:2). In a certain sense, "Sign is meaning. If there is no sign, there is no meaning. Semiotics is the science of meanings (Zhao Yiheng, 2011:3).**

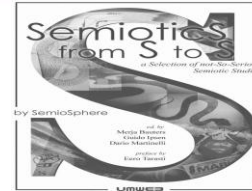


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Professor & Writer



- In the mean time, " semiotics is mainly concerned with social behavior" (Bouissac,2012). Social behavior, on the other hand, is connected with meaning and more or less determined and controlled by cultural concepts. Cultural signs which express cultural concepts, are the core of semiotic studies.





- **Ethical signs which consist of cultural semiotic systems constitute the core of cultural semiotics as cultural signs are more or less related to ethical concepts and ethical concepts can guide and control social behavior.**



**Ethical signs, like other categories of signs, have the characteristics of dynamic changes, as ,according to Saussure,” The continuity of signs through time, involving as it does their alteration in time, is a principle of general semiology“ (Saussure,1972,2001:76):some ethical signs die, others come into being.**

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- **Ethical signs follow the law of "getting rid of the stale and taking the fresh", which is regarded as symbol of the vitality of the ethical system, while the reconstruction of ethical semiotic system is the process of the major adjustment of its system, which generally occurs in a period of radical cultural and social changes .**

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- **The author ventures that the change of ethical signs accompanies the change of culture and social formation, and the reconstruction of ethical signs, is, therefore, the objective law independent of human will, and the demand of the age.**



- **The reconstruction can be achieved either through the absorption of the similar cultural signs, or through borrowing from alien cultural signs so that the ethical system of a country can be enriched as cultural achievements are owned by all humans , and human ownership of such achievements is not deprived of by the limit of borders.**



- **To strive for honesty , sincerity and universal fraternity is the core of modern ethics, a crucial dividing point between ethics in agricultural civilization and that in commercial civilization: agricultural civilization stresses in-group culture in which honesty, sincerity and universal fraternity exist only among relatives and special friends and persons in out-groups are treated with coldness and indifference ;**



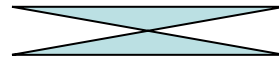
- **Honesty or sincerity is not applied to out groups and the principle of "there can never be too much deception in war" in dealing with foreign nations, is closely observed ,etc., all these obviously violate modern ethical criteria.**



- **The ethical system which is based on agricultural civilization appears extremely weak and feeble as this kind of ethics is narrow and limited and it is not applicable to the whole people and it is, therefore, incompatible with commercial civilization.**





- **Commercial civilization, on the other hand, requires honesty and sincerity applied to all social members and all humans. The thorough collapsing of the ethic system in agricultural civilization is ,therefore, historically inevitable.**



- A large number of facts also indicate that the Chinese traditional ethical system based on agricultural civilization is moving towards the through collapsing and it is an indisputable fact.

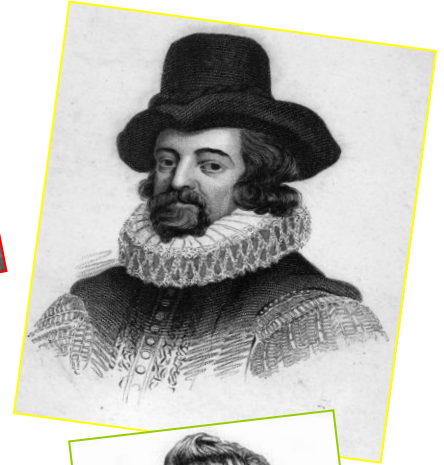
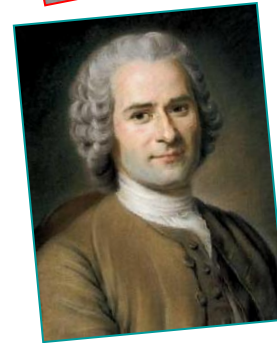
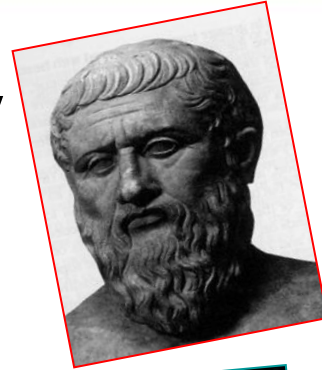


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- **It is admitted that in Chinese traditional ethical system , we have ancient scholars such as Confucius , Laotse and Zhuangzi. However, they only represent the ethical ideology based on agricultural civilization as they advocate the practice of "making an exception in somebody's favor at the expense of legal justice .**



- **Confucius ethical concept is obviously full of ideological dross such as the discrimination against women . It is unrealistic to make their thoughts serve modern commercial civilization and most probably an unrealistic fantasy.**

- **The author holds that based on the important position of honesty and sincerity and a long history of market economy in the West, we should bravely learn from the ethical ideology and tradition of the modern Western thinkers. In order to really learn from the West, we should have adequate ethnical courage to admit the weak aspect in our own cultural tradition and draw what is beneficial from foreign ethnical elements .**







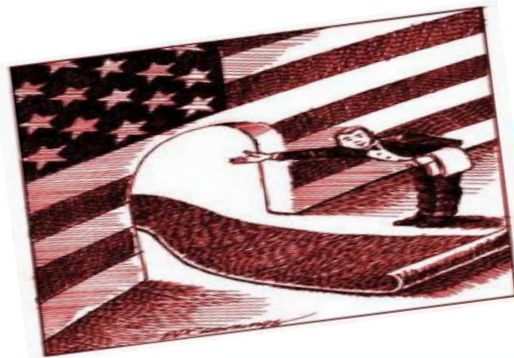
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- **In our interaction with foreign nations, we should learn from their strong points to offset our own weaknesses in our own ethical tradition just like borrowing words from foreign language to enrich our mother tongue so that the inadequacy in our own ethical tradition can be counteracted, our own nation becomes stronger in the world and consequently wins more respect from other nations.**
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- **As ethics and law are closely related, we should, in the course of learning from foreign ethical ideology , pay attention to the introduction of advanced ethical ideology into the law so that the reconstructed ethical system can be strengthened and consolidated.**

- In short, in the process of reconstructing a nation's ethical system, a nation should assimilate foreign ethical signs and adopt open-door policy in stead of closed-door policy.



**Thank you !**

