

Neo-Essentialism: Regulation and Commonality in Subjective World

Yong Duan

College of Engineering, China Agricultural University, Beijing, 100083, China

Keywords: Ontology, Essentialism, Science and Philosophy, Anti-essentialism

Abstract: What we call national character is not an abstract thing that exists in the objective world, but understanding that is abstractly summarized after we observe the thoughts and behaviors of one by one specific person. Abstract things can transcend particular time and space and apply to a very large scale, so abstract things have great value. Regulation and commonality are abstract things. There are two kinds of regulation and commonality: one is in the objective world and one in the subjective world. Regulation and commonality in the objective world are not the source of knowledge, nor are they the criteria for testing truth. Theories about the regulation and commonality of the objective world are dogmatic. Essence often refers to abstract regulation and commonality. Dialectical Dualism holds that the essence in the objective world has no value, while the essence in the subjective world has high value and is the main contents of human civilization and culture. The main task of philosophical Ontology is to establish the essence in the subjective world, including the Origin, noumenon, regulations, concepts, commonalities, world views and so on. This is the Neo-essentialism.

1. Introduction

Is the essence more real or the phenomenon more real? This has long been a major issue in the history of philosophy. Essentialism holds that science and philosophy should see essence through phenomena, which are changeable and false, while essence is stable and real. The theories of Plato and Hegel are the representatives of Essentialism. However, Anti-essentialism has occupied the mainstream position in modern philosophy. Marxism also holds that we should seek truth from facts. Taiji Evolutionism holds that both Essentialism and Anti-essentialism have serious problems. This paper will criticize them thoroughly and expound whether essence is true and its value. On this basis, Neo-essentialism is constructed.

2. The Source of Abstract Things

2.1 National Character

Before the start of the Korean War, MacArthur thought the Chinese national character was servile, timid and selfish. As a result, MacArthur, who was widely regarded as a God, ended his military career with the biggest fall. Now we can proudly say that the national character of Chinese people is brave, tenacious, intelligent and industrious. The world's perception of the Chinese national character was completely changed by the Korean War.

Why can the same people have two completely opposite national characters? Which of them is true? Both are true, so to speak, and neither is true. What we call the national character is not an abstract thing that exists in the objective world, but a kind of understanding that is abstractly summarized after we observe the thoughts and behaviors of one by one specific person. The observation of different thoughts and behaviors leads to different understandings. Therefore, what we call national character is only a kind of consciousness existing in the subjective world of human beings. People often mistake the consciousness in the subjective world for the real thing in the objective world.

MacArthur's assumptions about the national character of Chinese are based on many objective facts of the past. Although the facts had changed by 1950, MacArthur's assumption had not, but he could only base his decisions on that assumption. Each of us has many assumptions about the world

around us, and many of these assumptions are wrong. But the decisions we make every day can only be based on these assumptions. We cannot base our decisions on the objective world itself. However, these assumptions may become more objective, more complex and more orderly, allowing us to make more and more correct decisions. The regulation, commonality and essence of what philosophers say are complex and orderly assumptions. Because they are assumptions, they may be false, but our decisions and practices need them.

2.2 Tao is in Shit

When we say pencils can write, we mean that all pencils can write. When we say people have emotions and desires, we mean that all people have emotions and desires. People, pencils, and other things are abstract concepts.

Starting with Laozi and Plato, philosophers had constructed abstract objective worlds. Plato believed that abstract things are real and objective beings. An abstract pen exists just like a concrete pen. But this abstract pen is neither in your hand nor mine. So where is it? Plato didn't know, but he was convinced that it was somewhere, probably up in the sky. In fact, the abstract things he talked about were all in man's imagination, in man's mind.

Human beings first recognize many kinds of concrete things, and then with the increase of knowledge, people gradually abstract them, thus producing abstract things. This abstract process has never left the human mind, so these abstract things cannot be in heaven, nor in the objective world. But because the knowledge of concrete things is also in the mind, so both concrete things and abstract things become the object of people's talking and thinking. Concrete things exist outside man, so it seems that all abstract things exist outside man.

Zhuangzi said, Tao can be everywhere, even in shit. The Tao said by Zhuangzi can refer to either the Tao of the objective world or the Tao of the subjective world. The Tao of the subjective world is a thought product, and all thought products belong to the subjective world. Taiji Evolutionism holds that the subjective world and the objective world are mutually inclusive, and the objective world is a part of the subjective world, [1] so Tao, as a product of thought, can be everywhere.

Just like Faye Wong sang in *Legend*, when I miss you, you are in the sky, when I miss you, you are in front of my eyes, when I miss you, you are in my mind, when I miss you, you are in my heart. What is in the mind may be projected on all kinds of spatial positions and all kinds of objective things, as if it really exists and occupies a real spatial position. It's all fake. It's all imaginary.

2.3 Abstract Regulation and Commonality

The greater the scope of application of a theory, the greater its value. Concrete things only exist within a specific space and time, abstract things can transcend a specific space and time and apply to a very large scope, so abstract things have great value. The national character, spirit and quality mentioned above are abstract things of great value.

Philosophers love to talk about the most abstract things, which became more and more mysterious. The philosopher's description became more and more bizarre, until it became something that no one could understand. Laozi calls the most abstract thing as Tao, the *Book of Changes* calls it as Taiji, the Confucianist as Li, Plato as the Idea, Hegel as the Absolute Reason or the Absolute Spirit. They all mean the regulation and commonality of all things.

What do philosophers like Parmenides and Heidegger mean by Existence? A table is a concrete existence, a person is a concrete existence. But Parmenides was not talking about this kind of concrete existence, but abstract existence, that is, abstract law and commonality. Plato's Idea is the commonality of things. When Aristotle talked about "Entity" or "Being", he was in the same way as Plato talked about the Idea, both are objective Ideas, except Aristotle is more thorough, and what he means by Entity is the Idea of all things, the Idea of all Ideas.

3. Two Kinds of Dao Li

3.1 Objective Dao Li and Subjective Dao Li

There are Shi, Wu, Dao, Li and relations in the objective world. Shi is event, Wu is substance, Dao is regulation, Li is commonality. There are two kinds of Dao and Li: Dao Li of the objective world and of the subjective world. The Dao Li of the objective world, like the concrete things of the objective world, exists objectively and truly outside the consciousness of human beings and is not diverted by human will. The Tao, Li, Idea, Reason and Essence mentioned by the Objective Idealism all refer to the Dao Li of the objective world. The Dao Li of the subjective world is not outside people's consciousness, being a part of consciousness, a kind of human cognition. People first get to know many kinds of concrete things, produce concrete experience, and then people abstractly think on the basis of concrete experience, and produce a variety of abstract cognitions. These cognitions are the Dao Li of the subjective world. All scientific and philosophical theories arise in this way, and all truths are Dao Li of the subjective world.

If we analyze relationship between Shi Wu and Dao Li by the base and the use, they should be said to be base and use of each other. We must first observe concrete things, and then abstract the Dao Li from them. Therefore, Shi Wu are bases, the Dao Li are uses. Then we use Dao Li to carry out logical thinking and reasoning, predict concrete things in the future. At this time, Dao Li are base and Shi Wu are use.

Dao Li in the objective world may be real and can dominate the movement of the world, but they are not sources of knowledge, nor are they standards for testing truth, and we cannot know their exact content. We can only get experience from concrete things, can not directly perceive the abstract Dao Li in objective world. Objective Idealists said that people can perceive the Dao Li of the objective world through rational intuition, that is completely nonsense. The only thing people can see intuitively is their own fancies or scientific innovations. The difference between fancy and scientific innovation is not whether they are objective, but whether they are valuable.

The Dao Li of the subjective world is man's knowledge, which is often wrong. Consciousness has limitation. The Dao Li of the objective world is out of human consciousness, and will not be wrong because of the limitations of consciousness. Neither the truth of science nor philosophy is the absolute truth and may be overturned in the future. Therefore, neither the Dao Li of science nor philosophy is the Dao Li of the objective world.

Laozi said: "Dao can be described, but it is not Constant Dao." He believed that Dao was different from Constant Dao. Constant Dao is the abstract Dao Li in the objective world, while Dao is people's understanding of Constant Dao in the subjective world. Then Laozi said: "Heaven learns from Dao, Dao learns from nature." Was the Dao here the Constant Dao in the objective world or the Dao in the subjective world? It is impossible for heaven to learn from man, so the Dao in the "heaven learns from Dao" must be the Constant Dao, not the Dao in the subjective world. The Constant Dao of the objective world is the cause and dominant force of the concrete things in nature. The Constant Dao can only dominate nature, but does not need to learn from nature. Therefore, Dao in "Dao learns from nature" can only be the Dao in the subjective world, not the Constant Dao. It can be seen that Laozi confused Dao with Constant Dao.

3.2 The Onion of r.Barthes

Structuralism postulates that there is a transcendental underlying structure that determines the meaning of a sign or becomes the meaning basis and center of a sign system. This is the common belief of structuralism since Saussure, and it is also the goal of all Structuralists including Barthes. But Barthes later fiercely opposed this Structuralist postulate. Barthes said, Literary work is like an onion, is composed of many layers. In the end, there is no heart, no core, no secret, no irreducible origin, some just layers of envelope.[2]

Barthes was both right and wrong. The underlying structure of Structuralism refers to the abstract Dao Li and concrete things that cannot be observed directly in the objective world. These things maybe exist. Barthes said there's no such abstract Dao Li, so the argument of Barthes was Anti-essentialism, he was arguing against the dogmatism of Objective Idealism. This

Anti-essentialist view was worthy of affirmation, because the abstract Dao Li in objective world is not the source of knowledge, nor the standard and basis for testing truth, and has no value. But there can be valuable underlying structure in the subjective world, and that structure can determine the meaning of signs. If the underlying structure that Structuralism referred to was the structure in subjective world, then Structuralism can be on the right track.

The Dao Li of the objective world have no value. So the Subjective Idealists and Anti-essentialists say that there is no Dao Li in the objective world. Wang Yangming said, "There is no Li outside the heart, there is no Wu outside the heart." G. Berkeley said, Existence is to be perceived. Berkeley's Existence is only the existence of concrete substance, he only said that there is no Wu outside the heart, but did not say that there is no Li outside the heart. Wang Yangming was not only more than 200 years earlier than Berkeley, more than 100 years earlier than Descartes, but also more comprehensive than Berkeley and Descartes. In fact, we can admit the existence of the Dao Li of objective world, because we have no hard evidence for their existence or non-existence. Objective Idealism says they exist, which is dogmatic. And the question of whether they exist is not important. The important thing is that the Dao Li of the objective world have no value.

3.3 Dogmatism

According to the Buddhist sutras, the foot of Mount Xumi is divided into four continents -- East Shengshen continent, West Niuhe continent, South Shanbu continent and North Julu continent. Three thousand Xumi Mountains are called a Small Thousand Worlds, three thousand Small Thousand Worlds are called one Medium Thousand World, and three thousand Medium Thousand Worlds are called one Large Thousand World. The world we live in now is within the three thousand Large Thousand Worlds ruled by the Sakyamuni Buddha.

Each religion has its own interpretation of the world, and these interpretations are dogmatic. The Objective Idealist philosophers have also put forward many explanations of the world, most of which are dogmatic. For example, Laozi said that Tao gave birth to heaven and earth, ancient Greek philosophers said that water, fire, ideas, etc. are the origin of the world, and so on. Religious dogmatism cannot be doubted, philosophical dogmatism can be doubted. So the dogmatism of philosophy has been criticized.

I. Kant said, "In Metaphysics, reason is constantly in trouble. Here, people have to retrace their steps countless times. This field seems to have been set up solely for the exercise of its various forces in the game of battle. Never before has any combatant been able to win so much as an inch of ground, and establish some secure occupation on the basis of his victory." Kant was frustrated: "What, then, is the reason for the failure to discover reliable way of a science in this respect? Is this path impossible? By what means does nature indulge reason in this indefatigable effort to trace this path as one of her most important business? What is more, if reason, in one of the most important parts of our intellectual curiosity, not only abandons us, but confuses and ultimately deceives us, why do we have to trust our reason? Either that path has not yet been reached, and by what omen can we hope for our next quest, that we shall be luckier than others before us?" [3]

The solution to this problem is simple. Dogmatic theories has no foundation, so they are denied, and had been going back countless times. Dogmatism can not be discussed. The objective Dao Li is not the truth that we use to guide practice. The Dao Li that we use to guide practice is the logical structure of the subjective world. Reason in the past was addicted to looking for objective Dao Li, so it was deceived. Only by finding out the essence as consciousness and the value standard of Metaphysics can we put an end to dogmatism and finally establish solid Metaphysics and Essentialism fortunately.

4. What is Essence

4.1 Concrete Essence

Essence can refer to concrete things or abstract Dao Li. The definition of essence in Section 4.4.1, Chapter 4, Part 7 of *Taiji Evolutionism* is that essence is attributes of things related to interests of

people.[4]

For example, the actual flight path of the Malaysia Airline plane MH370 before it crashed is unknown, and investigators have only been able to draw a possible range for the plane based on the time it exchanged data with satellites. The flight path of the plane is related to the interests of the families of the victims, so this route is the essence. The actual flight process of the plane is a specific event in the objective world, which belongs to the internal structure of the objective world. The picture drawn by the investigators is a model of the world structure in the subjective world.

According to Barthes, the actual flight route of Malaysia plane did not exist, which is certainly not true. But this actual route is not the source of our knowledge, nor is it the basis for testing truth. The test of truth is based on direct experiences, such as the time records of the Malaysia plane and satellite data exchange, the location of the Malaysia plane wreckage was found and other direct experience.

The Malaysia plane is a substance(Wu), and its flight is an event(Shi). There are substances and events that we can observe directly, and others that we cannot. Whether concrete things can be observed or not, as long as they are relevant to our interests, they can be regarded as essence. When you can't directly observe, the artificial model is the essence.

In many cases, essence refers to those things that cannot be directly observed, such as electron, meson and other microscopic matter and distant celestial bodies, as well as people and objects in the past such as the First Emperor of Qin and Epang Palace. Our understanding of them depends largely on reasoning and conjecture, then making models. They may be regarded as objectively existed, but since they cannot be directly observed, they are not the direct source of knowledge, nor the basis and standard for testing truth. The artificial model of them are the essences.

4.2 Abstract Essence

When we begin to understand something, we observe only a few phenomena, and take these phenomena as its attributes and essence. Then we observe more phenomena of it, such as a lot of phenomena of a person growing up. In our subjective world, we group all these phenomena and attributes into a set, which corresponds to this person. The essence of the person is the generalization of these phenomena. There may be contradictions between these phenomena. For example, Jone has done a lot of good things and some bad things, so we say that the essence of Jone is both a good person and a bad person. The essence of him can contain contradictions. The person's essence is no longer a concrete thing, but an abstract commonality, which is Li.

No abstract things of objective world can be observed directly. The generalization, description, or model of these abstract things are the essences. These essences are the Dao Li in the subjective world. The greater the scope of application of a theory, the greater its value. The scope of application of abstract things are greater than concrete things. So the essence as abstract thing is much more valuable than the essence as concrete thing. The essence mentioned by Essentialism mostly refers to the abstract essence, that is, the abstract Dao Li.

Taiji Evolutionism holds that what we call abstract things are abstract things in people's minds. Therefore, abstract essence is imagined by human beings, it is abstract generalization of various phenomena. Today's generalization is not the same as yesterday's generalization, so the essence changes. This should have been a simple matter, but since Hegel treated essence as an objective and real thing like an iron block, and it can change itself, so the change seemed mysterious, and the relationship between essence and phenomenon became complicated.

Hegel said,"The essence is not behind or outside the phenomenon, it is in the phenomenon, is that which is manifested as the phenomenon." At the same time, he said, "To regard the intuitive material as all true confuses the distinction between essence and appearance." Hegel's claims were so contradictory that he could only deal with them with mystical Dialectics, and could not really solve the contradictions. Hegel said: "Essentialism is the most difficult part of logic." [5] Marx considered Hegel's Dialectics to be headstand, but Marx still regarded essence and objective law as the existence of objective reality, rather than as the existence in human mind. Hegel babbled on about essence in a complex and mysterious way. In fact, as long as we had regarded essence as our

own generalization of phenomena, as stable subjective existence in the mind, it would have been neither complicated nor mysterious.

5. Neo-Essentialism

5.1 Anti-Essentialism in Modern Philosophy

The building of classical Western philosophy takes Metaphysics and Essentialism as the main body, and German classical philosophy is the peak of its development. Later Western philosophy resembled late Greco-Roman philosophy, tinkering within classical Metaphysics. However, even at the height of Hegel's philosophy, Kierkegaard had begun to challenge Hegel and his Essentialism. By the end of the 19th century, the movement of "Overcome Metaphysics" represented by Nietzsche occupied almost half of the philosophical stage. In the 20th century, Anti-essentialism gradually replaced classical Metaphysics and Essentialism and became the mainstream of Western philosophy. Postmodernism and Deconstruction were more thorough in overcoming Metaphysics. Thus, Western philosophy once again entered the "intermission" state. But the defeat of Essentialism does not mean the bankruptcy of philosophy. On the contrary, Anti-essentialism enriched philosophical thought, on which a new Metaphysics and New Essentialism can be built.

5.2 What is Neo-Essentialism

The Ontology of Taiji Evolutionism is Dialectical Dualism. The Essentialism in Dialectical Dualism holds that philosophy needs to research many abstract things such as Origin, Noumenon, laws and concepts, while science also needs to research abstract things such as laws and concepts, which are all essences. However, these essences are different from those of traditional Essentialism. These essences do not belong to the objective world, but only exist in the subjective world. Theories such as Objective Idealism and Realism belong to traditional Essentialism. They believe that essence is the real thing in the objective world. The Essentialism in Dialectical Dualism holds that the essence in the objective world has no value, while the essence in the subjective world has high value and is the main contents of human civilization and culture. The main task of philosophical Ontology is to create the essence in the subjective world, including the Origin, Noumenon, laws, concepts, commonalities, world views and so on. This is the Neo-essentialism.

The Anti-essentialism in modern and contemporary philosophy is wrong to oppose all essences. We should only oppose essences in the objective world, not in the subjective world. Anti-essentialism pours out the dirty water and the child after bath, while Neo-essentialism advocates pouring out the dirty water and leaving the child behind.

It is difficult to create correct philosophical theories. Although all philosophical theories in history have mistakes, they provide the foundation for creating correct philosophical theories. The creation of a correct philosophical theory requires the foundation of three aspects: dogmatic Metaphysics, Epistemology and Meta-ethics. Only after these three aspects have been fully developed can Metaphysics be rebuilt. The subject of this Metaphysics is Neo-essentialism.

The essence believed by the old and the new Essentialism is completely different, so the truth view of the old and new Essentialism will be completely different. New Essentialism holds that essence is artificial and therefore fallible. In this way, essence is not a supreme principle of action or a standard of truth, but a tool by which we understand and transform the world. Neo-essentialism is pragmatism, the ultimate principle of behavior is value maximization, the ultimate standard of truth is usefulness, which means valuable. Value is embodied in practice, so the standard of truth is practice. The old Essentialism regarded the Dao Li of the objective world as supreme, so it must take these objective Dao Li as essence, and take these essence as the ultimate principle of action and the ultimate standard of truth. If these principles contradict people's interests, then we must preserve objective principles and destroy human desires. All kinds of man-eating legal institutions in history were the inevitable result of the development of old Essentialism. Old Essentialism was also the theoretical source of many religions, such as Christianity from Plato's Essentialism, Daoism from Laozi's Essentialism.

5.3 Existence Precedes Essence

J.P.Sartre said, existence precedes essence. Human existence is passive and preordained. For example, the birth of a man or a woman cannot be decided by oneself. But people can use his ordained existence to create his own essence. Therefore, human is free, and the value of human lies not in his preordained existence, not in his historical background, not in his family, not in the position of his birth, but in the freedom to choose to transform his own nature. How he chooses to be who he wants and what he wants to do is the essence of people.

Sartre's theory was right, but Sartre's belief that the essence of things other than human precedes existence was wrong. Like people the existence of everything precedes its essence. The existence of everything is its concrete properties, and existence preceding essence means that people first know these concrete properties, and then they know its essence according to these properties. The content of essence is determined by the knowledge of these concrete attributes, but the value of essence may be greater than existence. The essence here is that of the subjective world. The question as to whether the essence of the objective world precedes existence is not worth discussing because it is worthless.

Laozi believed that Tao was the essence of all things, and Tao produced all things, that is to say, essence preceded existence. Plato said that the concrete was the imitation of the Idea, which means that essence preceded existence. These theories were old Essentialism.

5.4 Doing Right Thing and Seeking Faults

The major premises of logical reasonings are all the abstract understandings of regularities and commonalities. The biggest major premise is the spire of the theoretical pyramid, which is the Origin. All of the Origin and regularities and commonalities are essences. So essences are of great value. Seeking essences is the main task of philosophy.

The Dao Li in the subjective world is what we can get to know, is the source of knowledge, and can also test truth to a certain extent. The most abstract of them constitutes a Metaphysical Worldview. The Metaphysical Worldview offered by philosophy is a general view of the world. The content of this Worldview will gradually become more complex and orderly. While improving the most abstract part, it will develop a lot of more specific content and form an increasingly large theoretical system.

Objective Idealism has been looking for these essences, sticking to the original goal, so Objective Idealism has been doing the right thing. Although Objective Idealism has serious faults, it cannot be denied that it is doing the right thing, that is, doing something of great value.

Anti-essentialism, Subjective Idealism and Materialism pointed out the faults of Objective Idealism, but failed to see the advantages of Objective Idealism, not seeing the Origin is not general consciousness, but only the most abstract consciousness of regularity. So Descartes and Hume failed to knock down Objective Idealism, but it was later carried forward by Hegel. The Anti-essentialists had just been finding faults with Objective Idealism instead of doing the right thing. Philosophical theories need to be constantly overthrown and renewed, but Anti-essentialism only overthrew without renewing anything. To overthrow and renew is to establish new Essentialism while opposing old Essentialism.

References

- [1] Duan Y., "The World View of Dialectical Dualist: The Dialectical Relation View of the Subjective World and the Objective World," in *International Journal of Philosophy*. Vol. 9, No. 2, 2021, pp.78-84.
- [2] Zheng H.S., *Major Schools of Modern Western Philosophy (In Chinese)*. Beijing: China Renmin University Press, 1988:344
- [3] I.Kant. *Critique of Pure Reason (In Chinese)*. Translated by Deng X.M. Beijing: Renmin Press, 2017, 2nd Edition:11.

- [4] Duan Y., Taijievolutionism Second Part. Hong Kong: Siji Publishing House, 2017:208.
- [5] Hegel. Small Logic (In Chinese). Beijing: The Commercial Press,1980, 2nd edition :246.