



Key Concepts in Chinese Thought and Culture : History

| Chinese-English |

中华思想文化术语 历史卷

—中英对照—

《中华思想文化术语》编委会编

外语教学与研究出版社
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前言

韩震

作为莎士比亚所说的“万物的灵长”，人与其他动物的区别，也许就在于思想的有无。人也是一个物种、一种动物，但却是一种有思想的动物。当然，从动物意识发展到人的思想，之间肯定不是没有丝毫联系的绝对鸿沟。但是，在漫长的进化史中，人类意识逐步符号化，让人的情感、欲望、冲动、想象获得了标识，有了这些标识，人们就可以把零碎的意识形成某种系统的思想。

在动物那里，如鹿的眼中看到的是作为食物的各种草本身，而老虎眼里看到的是作为猎物的鹿本身，但人则变得越来越经过“草”这个词语来理解草本身，经过“鹿”这个词语来理解鹿本身，经过“虎”这个词语来理解虎本身。人在思想意识中失去了与世界的直接性，但却获得了超越具体性的抽象能力。正是这种抽象能力让人获得了越来越宽广的思想空间。

最初的思想空间是靠声音符号构筑的。代际之间的口口相传就成为思想延续的途径。再加上远古时代人的寿命的短暂，因而思想与知识的积累非常缓慢，甚至许多知识和思想往往因为有思想的个体生命的消失而消失。

有了文字之后，人类思想的发展呈现出一个不断加速的过程。这是因为有了文字对思想与知识的标识性固化：一方面有了文字的标识，人相对容易思想了。就像行路者有了地图，更容易理解自己

在什么方位上，应该朝什么地方走。正如维特根斯坦所说的，文字表达的命题图示着世界。另一方面，即使掌握思想与知识的某个人因其生命的结束在肉体上消失了，但有了文字的记叙，思想仍然可能被其他人激活。只要这种文字仍然被使用，后人就可以通过阅读来激活这种知识与思想，甚至不再被使用的死语言也可以破解，古代许多文明的成就就是通过这种方式被重新认识的。在人类语言中，那些最重要的概念就是我们所说的“思想文化术语”。

有了对文字的阅读，我们不仅可以理解几千年前先辈们的智慧结晶，如《道德经》《论语》《庄子》《孟子》《韩非子》，而且可以理解地球对面我们从未谋面的欧美人的思想。这就是阅读的力量，人们通过阅读在不断拓展着思想的空间。一个人阅读的空间，就是这个人思想的空间，而这个空间是由许许多多的思想文化术语支撑起来的。显然，正是这些思想文化术语引导着人们的思想运思，支撑着越来越广阔的思想空间。在欧洲文化中，像德谟克利特的“原子”、柏拉图的“理念”、亚里士多德的“形式”、孟德斯鸠的“法的精神”、康德的“先验理念”、黑格尔的“绝对精神”……就是支撑西方思想文化运思的术语。

同世界上其他民族的思想文化和知识体系一样，中国的思想文化和知识体系也有自己的特殊的术语。正是这些术语构成中国特色的思想文化和知识体系。在历史上，中国的先贤一直通过基于中国时空体系下的学术话语表达中国人对世界的认识，因此就有了源远流长、博大精深的中国思想文化和知识体系。今天，任何人要理解中国学术思想的文脉，理清中国学术演化的谱系，就会迎面碰到许多特殊的或非常具有中国特色的术语，如“阴阳”“中道”“和”“义礼”“厚德载物”“自强不息”“知行合一”……只有理解了这些术语，才能正确地把握中国的思想文化。

在漫长的中华文明演进历史中形成的中国传统思想文化术语，

对于理解当代中国思想文化、知识体系和中国的现实具有基础性的意义。

首先，中华思想文化术语蕴含着中国文化传统和思想意识的精髓。面对不同时空体系下的挑战，不同的民族在生产方式和生活方式上就有了特定的差异。譬如，在人们生产活动和生活方式上，热带和温带肯定不同，平原为主的地域和山峦为主的地域当然有差异，沙漠地带和沿海地区显然有别，牧区和农耕区也会有许多迥异之处。这些生产活动和生活方式的特点逐渐积淀凝结，就必然影响到民族的文化样式、行为习惯和精神特质。民族的文化样式、行为习惯和精神特质反过来又阐释、维护和强化着其赖以出现和发展的特定生产方式和生活方式。例如，作为以农业为主的古代中国，必须靠一定规模的水利工程才能保证民众的安全和生产，因此，中国自古以来就强调人际关系之间的和谐与秩序，所以就有了具备中国特点的思想文化术语，譬如，“家国天下”之中的“家”和“国”就有了特定的精神内涵。英语中的国家有nation、country、state等表达，但nation更倾向于以国民、民族的角度谈国家，country则倾向于从国土的视角去看国家，state是从制度的侧面看国家，所有这些表达都与“家”没有半点关系，但中国一提到“国家”就会想象到家庭的温暖，国家与作为社会细胞的家庭之间的内在联系就得到了很好的确证。

其次，中华思想文化术语体现着中国人特有的文化传统、思维方式和理解结构。中国的“中道”概念与中国人的理智密切相关，这有效地消解了时常出现的思想极端化的倾向；“和而不同”在理性处理人际关系方面有明显的中国特色。实际上，即使中国人在学习外来的理论和思想时，也是按照中国人的理解结构和文化想象力来理解外来的东西的。譬如，中国人民在进行中国特色社会主义市场

改革时，就不搞什么“休克疗法”，而是摸着作为中国社会现实问题的“石头”过河，这种中道、理智的方式保证了改革开放和经济发展沿着稳妥的道路高速前进，从而取得了举世瞩目的成就。另外，在科学技术和人文社科学术方面中国也有新的进展，在世界学术界的影响开始提升，这就说明中国有自己特殊的文化传统和学术理解结构，这种结构把外来的思想和理论进行消化、转化，从而有利于学术上的自主创新。显然，中国是根据中华民族长期认识世界、改造世界过程中形成的“理解结构”，自主地、有选择地汲取和消化外来学术成果的。

最后，中华思想文化术语是构成中国特色学术体系和话语体系的基本表达方式或特定符号，或者说，是构成中国话语体系中链接思想观念的关节点。很多思想文化的学术理论或学说，都有普遍的世界意义。但是，不同的理论或学说却各有自己的表达方式，理论的独特性往往是由不同的术语或概念来体现的。譬如，约瑟夫·奈提出所谓“软实力”和“硬实力”的区分，但在中国，几千年前就有了“王道”和“霸道”的分野。所谓“王道”，就是统治者要按照当时通行的人性理解、价值观念和社会道德标准进行治理；反之，如果统治阶级依靠武力，蛮横无礼、颐指气使、巧取豪夺，就表现为“霸道”。另外，像处理相辅相成的事物或关系时，各国都有保持某种平衡的观点，但中国阴阳平衡的思想就更加积极，中国认为阴柔胜过刚强，“阴”不仅不是消极的，而是在特定条件下更加积极的力量。西方在看待竞争时，往往采取的是“零和思维”方式；而中国人持有关于阴阳之间你中有我、我中有你及二者相互转化的思维方式，因而更加愿意采取双赢、多赢、共赢的方法。由于同样的原因，中国的术语“礼”就包含有英语propriety等词语所无法表达的文化及人际关系制度性的内容。

总之，在漫长的历史中，中国形成了自己的文化传统和学术理解

结构，中华思想文化术语就是这种传统和思想结构的结晶，这些术语蕴含着中国文化传统和思想意识的精髓，体现着中国人特有的思维方式和理解结构，并且构成中国话语体系和思想表达方式。只有准确理解这些术语的微妙内涵，才能真正在深层意义上理解中国的社会和文化，理解中国人的思维方式和行为。因此，在考察、思考和理解中国问题时，必须理解中国本身的概念和术语，弄清楚这些概念和术语的特殊内涵和规定性。鉴于此，对内涵丰富、多姿多彩的思想文化术语进行整理、研究和翻译，就成为特别有意义的工作。

为做好中华思想文化术语的整理和传播工作，2014年经国务院批准，设立“中华思想文化术语传播工程”（以下简称“工程”），并建立了由教育部、国家语委作为召集单位，多个部委（单位）为成员的部际联席会议机制，负责统筹协调中华思想文化术语传播工作。教育部、国家语委委托北京外国语大学和外语教学与研究出版社具体承担项目的推进。奉献给读者的《中华思想文化术语》（哲学卷、历史卷、文艺卷）就是这些研究工程的成果，图书的出版必将有利于中外文化的交流互鉴，促进中外人民之间的相互理解，推动世界更好地走和平与发展之路。

Foreword

Han Zhen

Human beings, described by William Shakespeare as “the paragon of animals,” probably differ from other species in that they are able to think. Yet there can be no absolute gulf between animal consciousness and human thought; it is certainly not true that nothing connects them. However, in the long history of evolution, human consciousness has gradually evolved a system of symbols, so that emotions, desires, impulses, and imaginations have acquired markers, and with these markers people can form fragmentary consciousness into systematic thought.

In the eyes of animals, such as the deer, grass is seen as food, while to the tiger the deer is identified as prey. Humans, however, increasingly understand the word “grass” as an identifier of the plant itself, and the word “deer” as identifying the deer itself, and ditto for the word “tiger.” Through their thought process humans have lost their sense of immediacy in relation to the world, but they have gained the ability to abstract beyond the concrete. It is this ability that allows humans to obtain an ever-widening space of thought.

Initially the space of thought was constructed by sound symbols. Therefore oral transmission between generations was the main means by

which ideas were passed on. This, plus the short lifespan of the ancients, slowed the accumulation of ideas and knowledge. Indeed, knowledge and ideas often got lost upon the death of the individuals who held them.

With the advent of written language, the development of human thought has become an ever-accelerating process. This is because written language makes solid records of ideas and knowledge possible. With the help of written language, people find it easier to think, just as a traveler with a map finds it easier to understand where he is and where he should be heading. As Ludwig Wittgenstein put it, the propositions expressed in words map the world.

In addition, with written language, even if someone who holds ideas and knowledge disappears physically at the end of his life, his ideas may still be accessible to others. As long as that written language remains in use, future generations can access his knowledge and ideas by reading his works. Even if a language is no longer in use, it can still be deciphered, and this has made it possible to recapture the achievements of many ancient civilizations. The most important conceptualizations in human language are what we call “key concepts in thought and culture.”

With the ability to read words, the Chinese people could not only come to fathom the wisdom of their forefathers going back thousands of years, expressed in works such as *Dao De Jing*, *The Analects*, *Zhuangzi*, *Mencius*, and *Hanfeizi*, but also gain an understanding of the thoughts of Europeans and Americans across the oceans, whom they may have never encountered. This is the power of reading, through which people are constantly expanding the space of their thought.

The space in which one reads is the space in which one thinks, and this space is supported by many concepts in thought and culture.

Obviously, it is these concepts that guide people's thinking and support their ever-widening space of thought.

In European culture, concepts such as Democritus' "atom," Plato's "doctrine of ideas," Aristotle's "form," Montesquieu's "spirit of laws," Kant's "*a priori* knowledge," and Hegel's "absolute spirit" are what underpins Western thought and culture.

As is the case with other nations in the world, China's system of thought, culture, and knowledge possesses its own distinct concepts. It is these concepts that constitute the knowledge, culture and thought with Chinese characteristics. Throughout history, Chinese scholars expressed their understanding of the world through academic discourse based on the Chinese system of time and space, thus giving rise to the longstanding and profound Chinese thought.

Today, anyone who wishes to understand Chinese academic thought and gain insight into the genealogy of Chinese academic evolution will be confronted with many concepts specific to Chinese culture, such as yin and yang, the middle way, harmony, righteousness and propriety, having ample virtue and carrying all things, striving continuously to strengthen oneself, or unity of knowledge and action. Only by understanding such very Chinese concepts can one correctly grasp the essence of Chinese thought and culture.

The concepts in traditional Chinese thought and culture formed during the long evolution of Chinese civilization are of fundamental significance for understanding contemporary Chinese thought, culture, knowledge, and indeed China itself.

First of all, such concepts contain the essence of Chinese cultural traditions and thought. Faced with the challenges of different systems

of time and space, different peoples have different modes of production and lifestyles. For example, in terms of people's production activities and lifestyles, there are different characteristics between tropical and temperate zones; between the plains and mountainous regions; between deserts and coastal areas; and between pastoral and agricultural areas. These characteristics of production activities and lifestyles gradually accumulate and coalesce. They inevitably affect people's culture, behavioral habits, and spirit which, in turn, explain, maintain, and strengthen the specific modes of production and lifestyles on the basis of which they have emerged and developed.

For example, in ancient China, where agriculture was the mainstay, a certain scale of irrigation works was necessary to ensure the safety and production of the population. Therefore, harmony and order in interpersonal relations has always been paramount, which has found expression in the language. For instance, the words "family" and "state" are brought together in the concept "family, state, and all under heaven," and imbued with a specific cultural connotation.

In English, the Chinese word *guojia* (国家) can be rendered variously as nation, country, or state. "Nation" generally denotes the people, "country" denotes its land mass, and "state" emphasizes the administration system. None of them has anything to do with family. However, the Chinese term *guojia* (literally national family) reminds people of the warmth of a family and proves the intrinsic link between the country and the family, a cell of society.

Secondly, concepts in Chinese thought and culture reflect the unique cultural traditions, ways of thinking and structures of understanding of the Chinese people. The Chinese concept "the middle way" is closely