

Seminar examines affect in cross-cultural dissemination

By DUAN DANJIE
and JI LI

WUHAN—The 12th International Conference on Intercultural Communication under the theme of “Emotional Communities in Intercultural Communication in the Age of Digital Communication” took place in Wuhan, Hubei Province, on December 9. Participating experts and scholars engaged in dialogues on topics such as the concepts of affect and emotion, the formation of emotional communities, emotional conflict and resolution in cross-cultural communication, the impact of digital technology on inter-cultural emotional communication, and the issue of empathy in China’s external dissemination.

Affective concepts

Affective studies have grown rapidly at home and abroad in recent years. However, whether there is an emotional community in cross-cultural communication and how to employ basic concepts such as affect, emotion, and sense have yet to reach consensus, said Zhou Shuhua, former president of the Chinese Communication Association (CCA). Research on the construction of emotional communities in cross-cultural communication enables people to live in an empathic world and better

understand mutual differences.

In an era of de-globalization, the absence of trust relationships has resulted in a surge of exclusive self-centered emotions, said Shan Bo, a professor from the School of Journalism and Communication at Wuhan University (WHU). This underscores the urgent need for academic reflection on rebuilding emotional communities to open a new path for cross-cultural transmission in the era of digital communication.

If the concept of an emotional community exists, the key issue to address is how to maintain collective emotions within that community, noted Jens Allwood, a professor at the University of Gothenburg in Sweden. Allwood further highlighted the necessity of clarifying the relationship between the general emotions of individuals and collective emotions. Positive emotions sustained by the community can provide the conditions for cross-cultural communication and collaboration.

“At present, ‘emotional community’ is chiefly applied as a strategic concept in cross-cultural communication,” said Ji Li, a professor from the School of Journalism and Communication at WHU. This academic research path has its shortcomings, as it fails to establish the conceptual validity of emotional community based on historical and real-world contexts.

Participants also elaborated upon the concept of emotional community from the perspectives of interculturality and the “community of feelings” in the digital age. Wang Jinli, a professor from the School of Communication at Fujian Normal University, emphasized that the key to interculturality is to acknowledge the heterogeneity of different cultures. In cross-cultural communication, intercultural thinking can trigger the affective instinct of human beings to accept diversity, effectively dissolving the conscious rejection of others through shared emotional mechanisms, creating a sense of shared meaning among individuals or groups.

Yuan Guangfeng, a professor from the School of Journalism and Communication at Nanjing University, believes that the subject of affect emerges in the tangible digital space, connecting individuals into collectives by dint of linguistic and symbolic systems. This calls for greater attention to the national communities formed by feelings and emotions in the study of emotional communities.

Emotional communication

In response to the widespread influence of social media, scholars at the conference examined the emotional dynamics of various subjects. Considering the emergence of the “companion economy” and the “audio economy,” Jiang Ling, an associate professor from the School of Media and Communication at Shanghai Jiao Tong University, investigated

ethical issues surrounding emotional empathy in audio broadcasts, which contain a wealth of empathetic values. The governance of emotional empathy in audio broadcasts calls for introducing a legal governance system for audio platforms and strictly obeying legal and ethical bottom lines, with platforms and anchors conscientiously upholding moral principles.

As the connection between empathy and communication is extended in virtual space, it also continues and transcends social relations due to the infinite openness of virtual space, demonstrating characteristics approaching spatial justice, added Xin Jing, an associate professor from the School of Journalism and Communication at Central China Normal University.

Tang Jiamei, a professor from the School of Journalism and Communication at Guangdong University of Foreign Studies, has discovered that expatriates utilize the simultaneous construction of multiple spaces in physical and virtual realms to aid in their cross-cultural social and psychological adaptation, thereby mitigating negative emotions. New media is embedded in this process and becomes a subsystem of cross-cultural adaptation and maintaining emotional communities.

Empathetic research

The topic of empathy has inspired discussions within cultural circles on how to effectively tell Chinese stories in the new era. Wang Yuan, an associate professor from the School of Journalism and Communication at Sichuan International Studies University, proposed that the international communication practice of Chinese discourse has shifted towards interpreting the involvement of communities with diverse interpretive goals, strategies, and meanings.

Liu Jihong, an associate professor in the School of Media Science at Northeast Normal University, suggested fostering cross-cultural understanding by cultivating intimacy, increasing emotional awareness, and building trust based on his research on the cross-cultural empathy strategies of China’s international aid.

Ye Wang, a professor at the University of Missouri-Kansas City in the United States, revealed the possibility of using natural language processing (NLP) models in cross-cultural communication research. Cutting-edge NLP technology has opened the door to vector space, which is expected to venture into uncharted territory and deepen the understanding of cross-cultural complexity.

The conference was hosted by the Center for Studies of Media Development and the School of Journalism and Communication at WHU.



Legal Enforcement of Morality: Principles and Limits

By Zheng Yushuang
The Commercial Press
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Intricate relations between law and morality

By XIE XIAOYAO

The relationship between law and morality represents a major issue in jurisprudence and the philosophy of law. Superficially, the differences between the two seem clear, primarily in terms of the degree of concern for interests, relationships, or behaviors, the enforceability of norms, and the forms of pressure they entail. The connection between them is mainly evident in the content of norms and the evaluation of outcomes.

However, when considering certain specific issues, the relationship between the two is quite complex. How does law interact with morality as ideas? Are actions considered immoral usually illegal? *Legal Enforcement of Morality: Principles and Limits*, by Zheng Yushuang, an associate professor from the School of Law at China University of Political Science and Law, attempts to respond to these challenges.

In political philosophy, the classical theory of political perfectionism is often cited to analyze the “legal enforcement of morality.” Political perfectionism means that the state protects or promotes the goodness of people as subjects in a positive way. Two classical arguments in this regard are Joseph Raz’s perfectionism, which favors “autonomy,” and Steven Wall’s mild perfectionism, which emphasizes value pluralism. However, an excessive emphasis on either side may lead to the quagmire of value dogmatism or nihilism.

Zheng attempts to reshape the theory of political perfectionism from connotation and structure. Connotatively, the question of which or what kind of goodness the state should protect and promote cannot simply rely on empirical reasoning or the solidification of empirical facts, but should adopt an evidential manner. Structurally, political moral practices involved in political perfectionism are divided into a two-tier structure: the first tier consists of the various objective values that constitute individual well-being, and the second tier consists of the institutional practices of political moral principles such as rights, freedom, and fairness.

Political perfectionism represents the political philosophy in the book, with the common good underlying its legal philosophy. According to John Finnis, the common good is the most fundamental and important aspect of human well-being, such as knowledge, life, practical rationality, aesthetics, and friendship, serving as the basic motivation for actions and choices. Diverse value stances make moral disputes difficult to settle. To properly address these disputes, the guiding function of the value of the common good becomes apparent.

The author identifies four orders of occurrence for the common good: natural order; logical, methodological, and epistemological order; ontological order; and artificially created order. The pursuit of the common good in practice is often accompanied by the construction of political and legal systems, permeating the four orders of social life. Meanwhile, Zheng makes clear the self-restraint of the common good. The law directs people to participate in the common good, and is itself constrained by practical rationality, thereby obtaining unique second-order values such as the rule of law, fairness, and procedural justice. As such, the common good can play a role in shaping culture and maintaining social order.

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The top-ranking cross-talk programs on Himalaya, an audio streaming app. Photo: Yang Lanlan/CSSST

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In comparison to the initiatives outlined at the 2022 Central Economic Work Conference, the 2023 session prioritized supporting the development of a modern industrial system by promoting technological innovation among the nine tasks it formulated. To be more specific, efforts will be made to “promote industrial innovation through technological innovation, especially by using ground-breaking and cutting-edge technologies to foster new industries, new models, and new growth drivers, and develop new productive forces.”

Ouyang Hui, deputy director of the institute of market and price studies at the National Development and Reform Commission, remarked that supporting the development

of a modern industrial system by promoting technological innovation reflects China’s push to inject new vigor into the Chinese economy by reinforcing the construction of a modern industrial system, ensuring the security of industrial and supply chains, creating new growth drivers, and spurring the transformation and upgrade of traditional industries.

Bai held that the prioritization of building a modern industrial system not only underscores the CPC’s determination to put supply-side structural reform first, but is also aimed at continuously boosting national competitiveness. “To a nation with a large population of 1.4 billion, a complete and solid supply system is the precondition for national economic security and the cornerstone for expanding demand,” he said.

The meeting also reiterated the development of “*xinzhì shengchánlì*,” meaning “new productive forces,” a term General Secretary of the CPC Central Committee Xi Jinping coined during his inspection tour of north China’s Heilongjiang Province. The reiteration at this Central Economic Work Conference has further clarified the close connection between new productive forces and high-quality economic development, since developing new productive forces represents a significant move to consolidate the material and technological foundations for building a modern socialist country in all respects. The “new” nature of new productive forces stems from sci-tech innovation, indicating productive forces with sci-tech innovation as their primary engines and inherent drivers.