The Understanding About "Reflexivity" In the Risk Society: Based on the Interpretation of Giddens's Modernity Theory

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Abstract

It is universally acknowledged that the risk society has occurred. In this era which is filled with modernity, we see a different outline of the social order of the past one. Under the vision of risk society, Giddens has pointed out, "We are living in a more reflective age than ever before, and the reflexivity was put with various characteristics. As a result, he has regarded the modernity as "risk society". Furthermore, he rethought and reconstructed the modernity that is different from the traditional, which is based on the sociology theories of Marx, Durkheim, Weber and other classical theorists. In Giddens's view, three kinds of force drive the modern social transformation to be finished, such as the separation and recombination of time and space, the disembedding mechanism and reflexivity for social structure. This paper attempts to analyze the modernity problems through Giddens's social theory system and lays emphasis on the reflexivity on a social and individual level. What's more, the author will discuss how to deal with the relationship between the individuals and the society, which may lead to a happier and safer social order.

Key words: Risk society; Modernity; Reflexivity; Impact of Globalization

1. THE MODERN CHARACTERISTICS IN THE RISK SOCIETY

It is obvious that we have been already involved in the risk society as Beck said, and it has been endowed with the characteristics of the times. Compared with the premodern society, the basic characteristics of modern risk society mainly include:

Firstly, the unique disruption.Giddens has pointed out that the disruption is the primary characteristic of modernity. And the disruption refers to the modern social system which are different from the traditional order in the form. It is a kind of the disruption based on the non-continuous modernity theory and differentiating from all the phases within the development of premodern society in these three aspects: Firstly, the coming speed of the disruption in the modern society.Under the condition of modernity, the society is changing so rapidly so as to stimulate the development of the new technologies and orders, which make people anxious and hard to adapt to their lives. Secondly, the disruption is reflected in the range of the social changes."When the corners of the world have begun to interact with other areas, the wave of social changes'upheaval has swept the whole level of the earth." (Giddens. 2006) With the separation and extension of space and time, the rapid development of the media such as newspapers, television, new media and communication technologies have led to the separation between people's actions and particular scenario, which makes social interaction and social relationships expanded with the modern social change. Thirdly, the fragmentation is embodied in the uniqueness of the modern system. "Some organizational forms of the modern society cannot to be found easily from history, such as the formation of the nation states' political system" (Giddens, 2006). It is thus clear that we are hurled from traditional social order's track of the fragmentation under modernity condition. And there is a specious continuity between the previous

and present social order, which has become a special age of fracture. On one hand, they established social contacts across the world, making social life beyond the specific regional relationship and the dimensions of local scope. On the other hand, they are changing the most familiar and personal field in our daily life.

Secondly, the highly globalization. Globalization is the intrinsic nature of the modernity. In other words, globalization is both the nature and the consequence of modernity so that the arrival of the globalization becomes an important historical marks. What's more, "It marks the radicalization and generalization of modernity, and also a new stage of modernity which is changing from the simple modernity to reflective one, embodying in the formation of the risk society, the emergence of post-traditional order and the transformation of the daily life" (Zou, 2004). Thus, globalization triggered a holistic change in today's world so as to make the presence and absence intertwined, make the social events and social relations over a long distance and local scene intertwined, which lead to increasing abstractioness of social relations, and forming the institutionalization on modern reflective level.

Thirdly, the dualism of shape. In Giddens' opinion, modernity is a double-edged sword, so the development of modern social system and their extension around the world created life opportunities for people to constantly discover and understand the world. At the same time, it simultaneously exposed its dark side. The reason is, "Modernity always come down to risk conception" (Xu, 2005). In other words, the dark side of modernity is the arrival of the risk society. In the early development of modernity, the risk can be calculated accurately. In modern society, however, "the different attitude towards modernity will form different views and knowledge concept" (Calinescu, 1987), the uncertainty brought by the science will be more and more big, and the risk will also become more and more difficult to estimate, forcing people to live in the society there are many uncertainties and variabilities. In fact, "Even though the reflection on modernity means the use of complete knowledge and close monitoring and planning for the actions, its development inevitably will lead to the difficulty in forecasting the future" (Zhang et al., 2002). It is because reflectivity is unpredictable and difficult factor to control in the process of social development.

2. THE DILEMMA OF SOCIAL ORDER UNDER THE RISK SOCIETY: THE CONSEQUENCES OF REFLEXIVE MODERNITY

In structuration theory, Giddens mainly stretches his points from a personal perspective. However, the reflexive modernity that is regarded as the internal feature of the modernity launches from a social perspective.

2.1 The External Risk: The Impact of Globalization

Firstly, Giddens has defined globalization on the perspective of dialectical relations between local and world. It is the inevitable consequence of modernity extension, which is rooted in modernity and huge power. With the mechanism of the seperation and extension of time and space, global social relations have been strengthened and expanded, some local events have been much inflated in the field of globalization. Secondly, globalization emphasize the integrity, it covers all aspects of social life, which includes politics, economy and culture, etc.. Thirdly, the deconstruction of globalization from the dimension of system. Corresponding to four major institutional dimensions of modernity, globalization system also can be summed up in four dimensions: The capitalist system of the world, nation-state system, international division of labor and military world order. Fourthly, understand globalization from the perspective of risk. Globalization means a kind of the universal fate, which is caused by modernity risk across the national boundaries. Thus, "In some areas and ways of life, modernity has reduced the overall risk, but it also has imported some new risk parameters compared with the previous era at the same time." (Li & Shen, 2010) To conclude, Giddens used the scene of risks to conceptualize seven kinds of risks and dangers in the modern world, in which he specially emphasized the serious consequences of four kinds of risks caused by modernity on the system level:

The collapse of the economic growth mechanism and the scarcity of resources makes that the capital accumulation cannot be infinite to proceed;

"The rising of totalitarian politics makes the monopoly violence's tools dominate the political power possible." (Giddens, 2006) It is because of these disadvantages in the modern social system have given rise to the risks so that they lead to the highly rationalization and precision of the system which is built around politics and covers the risks hidden in the system;

Natural ecology-crisis such as earthquake, flood, plague, have become the main threats that have influence on the survival and development of human beings;

Nuclear war that makes the human beings faced with the destructive consequences. Thus, the risk society let the human beings get involved in the situation that "the more we want to colonize the future, the more likely we may trigger the unexpected things" (Tao, 2014).

2.2 Internal Risk: Self-Suffering and Struggle

The modern society has been placed into the space and time with disorder and fracture, so the contradiction and conflict as well as the unprecedented crisis and the risks

have emerged. In the chaotic world, people cannot tell the past, present and future, and they lost the direction of self at the same time, so the sense of "powerlessness " and "deprivation" would follow.

Firstly, sufferings brought by pure relationship. Under the mechanism of separation for space and time, the modern social life has been beyond the boundaries of time and space and it has been parted from the traditional, so in the traditional society "blood relationship" and "intimate relationship " have been turned into "The social relationship which has been pulling away and putting in infinite space and time, and even restructuring in specific situations" (Jiang, 2012). It is a kind of pure relationship. In Giddens's view, this is a kind of social relationship which can interrupt at any time and it is so fragile and unpredictable. Thus, modernity stimulates the transformation of people's daily life and of self-identity to a certain extent on the microscopic level. In the open world full of uncertainties, social trust makes the social relationships get out of its regional intercourse and gain wider networks, but it also affects the modern people's self-identity. It is worth to pay our attention to the fact that "If there is not enough reciprocal factors, the pure relationship would not exist." (Yang & Zhao, 2008) As a result, promises and trusts are playing a more important role in the pure relationship.

Secondly, the suffering of the impact of globalization. Under the growing influence of globalization, through the extension of time and space and disembedding merchanism, selves will be facing a constantly coming open world with the complexity, diversity and fragmentation, and they will also be taken into an infinitely complex field where deliver the endless information to them. On one hand, in many modernistic cases, each scenario may be required to maintain the appropriate way of action when individuals are taken into the scenarios with different experiences and environments, and "self-presentation" must be carefully adjusted at any time. Therefore, distant events may become very familiar with, or have much more impact than direct influence, and it may also be fully integrated into the framework of personal experience. On the other hand, selves are compelled to keep them away from the changing environment by the advent of network, filter various information deliveried by environment, keep individuals real motives of the original thinking and emotion and grasp the world in their own position. Go back to the source, "Problems exposed by these technological revolution are closely connected with deep cultural ideas behind modernity" (Zhang, 2013). So selves should find the foundation for the tide of cultural, not only pay attention to inherit Chinese culture, but also adapt to other countries' culture, which is also the breakthrough to dissolve the crisis of modernity.

Thirdly, the sense of self-powerlessness and deprivation brought by high risks. Individuals are helplessly in the face of "anthropogenic risks", such as ecological disaster, nuclear war or the destruction of humanity, and these risks are spreading to the whole world along with the expansion of globalization. And with the development of modernity, the social risk parameters for the individuals, the risks are so great that are completely beyond their ability to resist and resolve on their own, so they have formed a "impotence" and "deprivation" sense of self-powerlessness and deprivation. In the same way, "The process of deprivation is a part of the modern system, and it not only gets into the field of people's daily life, but also it enters into the core of self." (Guo, 2005)

Fourthly, the expert system has become the root of self-uncertainty. There are very big differences between experts (professionals) and the traditional "authority", it is the same as expert's advice to a certain degree, in addition to the authority appointed by power. In risk society, " the routine way highly with expected life style " has been transformed into " a unknown and confused daily life", so each of us needs to reframe daily life through the abstract system, aiming to eliminate the uncertainty of the future. On the contrary, with the development of science and technology, barriers between various professional knowledge are more serious, which leads to dilemma that when the professional development breaks the traditional authority or in the process of trying to become the certainty of authority, it will become a source of uncertainty, so selves have been put into the position of ignorance with helplessness.

Fifthly, the self suffering formed from the experience of commercialization. The expanding of capitalism market set impact on the traditional market, and behaviors of market operation are incompatible with free exchange. Market economy is a kind of commercial economy, the individual demands are becoming the interests' target of the market pursuit, then market on the aspect of personal choice dominant freedom has formed a kind of framework that it contains individual expressions and selves' projection has become the pursuit of choicing lifestyle. Thus it can be seen that the plight of self is mainly reflected in two aspects: On one hand, "The narrative of self must be build under the scenario where the personal possession from spending is around by the forces of standardization" (Zhao & Fang, 1998). In other words, in the market economy system of commercialization, selves as a commodity consumer, we are not needed to have independent consciousness. On the other hand, in this era of commercialization, in order to keep a kind of subjectivity existence, it must be reflective to resist the interference of external commercialization, and keep the natural state of self-consciousness.

Thus it can be seen that "Social reflexivity refer to the world which it consists of information rather than

the given behavior in advance." (Wang, 2010) So, it refers to the reflexivity for knowledge, which shows the characteristics of the time.

3. THE CONSTRUCTION FOR "SELF -IDENTITY" IN THE RISK SOCIETY

3.1 The Reflective System

There is no doubt that we are living in high-modernity time. Faced with four kinds of risks caused by modernity and along with serious consequences on the institutional aspect, Giddens regarded positive life value as possible export to dissolve the risk, constructed the contours of a post-modern order. It is namely called utopia which consists of four dimensionalities: beyond the resource system, multi-level democratic participation, technology of humanity and demilitarization.

We have realized that since the pursuit of capitalism with the limited resources can't be self-sustaining, the accumulation can't proceed without limit, so how do we go beyond capitalism? Therefore, Giddens has put forward the concept of beyond the resource system, allowing us to get over the dilemma of the development of the market, and place it in the global scope to coordinate the information provided by the parties. For example, through the intervention of global social economic organizations, which may effectively coordinate the economic exchanges around the world and achieve a harmonious global order. In addition, the coordination is also reflected in terms of citizen's political participation. The effective governments of modern states are always eager to get active default from citizens, so they call for and fulfill new types of democratic participation patterns of political pluralism, by fostering a large number of social intermediary organizations and developing multivariate, orderly, open and transparent political participation way, resolving the conflicts and contradictions in the process of social development by coordinated local political order, and thus maintain the smooth running of society. In my opinion, the risk of institutionalization under the risk society, reverse confirmation of system is very necessary. In modern society, the basic meaning of reflexivity refers to "self-reference", namely is pointed to themselves. "From a philosophical point of view, it consists of three aspects: self-refutation, reflection and hermeneutic circulation. Among these three aspects, there is a basic relationships: reflection and reflexive" (Xiao, 2010). It needs good interactions between government and citizen cooperation, a reflective forecasting and monitoring the development, operation, risk of system itself, so as to realize the rational reflection and comfirmation of system. In the high modernity era, the expansion of the territory has lost the meaning once had. A world without war imagined by Giddens has its own basis because the interdependence between countries is more and more obvious on a global scale and all countries have similar interests. Technology which acquires motive power from capital accumulation and military rules are the same. So will the rich source of innovation be unlimitedly last? According to my opinion, in order to avoid environmental damage brought by the unlimited development of science and technology, "human-based technology should be timely introduced and internalize the moral problem into theory framework of our own development and humanization environment's maintenance, put it into politicization and moralization by institutionalization, rather than let it become the source of uncertainty" (Tao, 2014). At the same time, let the system reflect a rational consciousness to a great extent, promoting the return of value rationality.

3.2 Trust Network

Faced with the self-suffering, "Self-reflectivity has to be developed in some particular situations which limit the individuals to get involved in the basic problems related with human existence," (Zhao & Fang, 1998) and it is obtained in the social environment where lay more emphasis on rational tools rather than value rational ones.

"Especially in the second half of the 20th century, in the wave of informatization, the Internet contact which is a new form of communication is very popular. It not only broadens spacial scale of interpersonal interation but also radically changes the traditional forms of interpersonal communication based on kinship or occupations, making personal communication instant, wide-open and wide" (Bai & Ma, 2008). As a result, full extension of social relations on the depth and breadth , on one hand, it creates opportunities of the liberation from traditional " social egoism " and natural relief; On the other hand, it puts forward new requirements for how to maintain its significance sense of personal and social communication-- basic trust. In addition to the basic trust among individuals, it is more dependent on "trust" system based on the social system arrangement, so the governments need to reflectively build modern model of trust system, namely a kind of triple "individualization"--self-separation, self-suffering and self re-embedding, which are to eliminate the anxiety by exchanging "acquaintance society" into "stranger society", and expand Communication Space, reduce the communication cost, improve the efficiency and effectiveness of the social activities so as to enhance the vitality of society. From a personal level, due to the penetration and spread of abstract system, many details from everyday life can be calculated accurately, offset the potential problems via certain control. This is the emerge of individual reflectivity on adjusting the relationship between the self and social world. For instance, under the condition of modernity, the rise of the new forms of social movement, emphasized the basic characteristics of social existence, it also created the pressure of a social nature transformation, and give the unlimited power to

modernity. Of course, there is one thing what we cannot ignore, basic trust needs to be taken for granted to regard everything "correct and suitable" in the society. As a result, the individuals will feel at ease with social arrangements so that individuals and social main subjects will trust each other and guide the stable social order.

3.3 The Way of Political Participation: Institutionalized Life Politics

It has been the ultimate goal in Giddens' book that he is always looking for the positive meaning and value of life, which may be a possible way to resolve the contradictions and conflicts in the risk society. To avoid the dilemma of emancipatory politics, he puts forward the related concepts of "life politics", guiding the people to make rational choices. "Life politics refers to the fact that reflectivity got from the process of self-realization has some influence on the globalization strategy under the post-graduate traditional background" (Zhao & Fang, 1998).

However, "the risks in the risk society are diverse, and thus facing the risks of diversification, must be guaranteed by organic life politics. From home to work and leisure time, our daily life is inevitably controlled by the administrative country consciously. As Habermas has pointed out, the nationalization of the society and the socialization of the state are synchronized critically. Therefore, it is the ideal model that individuals, civil societys, market and the functions of the countries need to be clearly defined and the risks are allocated when keeping national effectiveness, making multiple governance with multicenters and cooperation possible." (Tao, 2014) In the process, "the structure and function of public life are creatively reconstructed with "reflexivity", and they are in the cycle of differentiation—integration—redifferentiation—re-integration." (Zhu, 2012) In Chinese social reform and development, the diversification of interest subjects, the diversification of their interests, making people no longer constrained by governmental structures for the public to express and they call for the faster, easier, more effective public opinion expression. Individuals in the convergence of areas, they are also struggling to maintain their self-consciousness. And it is such an individualization which may bring the concern of modernity under the modern information age. Facing the risk of social conflicts and contradictions in the transition period, the government must make individuals in social networks to create and share the self values, And it wins the self recognition of individuals so as to realize the organic integration of the society via the power of identity, "Through the incarnate construction of the moral landscape and operational codes of conduct" (Zhang, 2013). For example, the transformation of the mode of democratic consultation, makes the citizen participation in the public discussion effectively to ensure the scientific, democratic decision-making.

Combined with traditional Chinese thoughts, China's current practice of democratic consultation needs to highlight the importance of individual reflection which connects "reasons" with "heart". Due to different level of negotiators' education and expressive ability, so the individual negotiation ability also exists difference. Thus, before starting formal negotiations, we might as well set aside some time for negotiators to study the material for consultation in order to avoid negotiators changing their policy preferences easily for seditious speech, to guarantee the quality of public discussion. In addition, for decision-making and implementation, negotiators' reflective thinking is also quite vital. Rational thinking not only needs to be expressed and discussed, but also needs to introspect and reflect, which is more important. In the link of open expression during the public discussion, negotiators can absorb diverse information independently to enrich and improve their own ideas. However, But in China's democratic consultation, the rhythm of the meeting arrangement is often tight, so the negotiators lack the time for reflective thinking, which results in the fact that sometimes the decision-making strategy is not a real expression of themselves. It is unfavorable to form a scientific and democratic decision-making mechanism, and has difficulty in maintaining the social fairness and justice. Therefore, in public discussions, we can add time to provide conditions consultation for their internalization so that they may reflect, collect information independently and then form their own view." And internalization means not only absorbing the views of others, attitude completely into their own value system, but also believing in and accepting the views of others from the heart." (He, Wang, & Robert, 2012) Only negotiators turn the views of others, attitudes into their own value system after rational thinking, they can help to make a persuasive political decisions for the citizens, reflect the will of the people most, protect the rights of the people and use a series of system and mechanism to provide the fundamental guarantee for the existence of the individual. "We have reason to believe that the organic public life brought by the development of deliberative democratic politics has further developed, and the public awareness will gradually gain the demonstration of the rational." (Chen &Ye, 2011)

To sum up, just as Descartes said, "I think therefore I am". In the face of contradictions and conflicts in the risk society, individuals need to constantly pursue beautiful imagery of "self-liberation" rationally in the "self sufferings". And the society also needs to reflectively construct the complex system of gomultiple governance and set up some platforms for the equal dialogues between the individuals and society, promoting the reconstruction of the social relationships and social value so as to realize the stable development of the society under the multiple interaction.

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