THE CHINESE MATRIX

by

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ABSTRACT

The paper is an investigation into the Chinese cosmology in an attempt to understand the culture. It was noted that there is something particular in the Chinese art of making. The strong presence of an ordered modular system seems to be pervasive in aspects of their daily life. Matrices were found devised by the Chinese way back to the Book of Change to explain philosophy, time and space. The way the matrices were devised provided an opportunity for us to take a glimpse into how the Chinese sees the universe and how they applied that knowledge. Tracing back to the Book of Change, it was understood that the Chinese sees the world in a space-time continuum that is very much concrete - here and now, there and then. There is an absence of abstract thinking that is the mark of Western philosophy that isolates Man and nature. Chinese philosophy, however, had been based very much on sharp observations of nature and seeing Man's position as part of the cosmos. In this way, the Chinese see things in multiple connected relationships rather than a segregated entity, resulting in a holistic and systemic view of the world. This worldview is in a constant flux, hence, there is constancy in change, and change in constancy. It is exactly this elastic nature of the world that is sustaining it, shifting and balancing itself in space and time.

The whole is greater than the sum of its parts. This particular view in things is strongly reflected in their daily applications. In their methods of production, the strong systemic combinations of parts to form the whole seems to provide a certain flexibility to the systems that stabilises itself exactly by being flexible. The study looked into two particular systems - the script and building. The Matrix displayed a double function by being a model of a system itself, a microcosm of the macrocosm; and functioning as a holistic organising tool for its user, catering to Man's multiple conditions [as a living and social being].

The Chinese approach to things are rather passive, tuning oneself in accordance to the rhythm of the cosmos in their ultimate belief in attaining harmony. And it is probably this worldview and consequent methods of handling things that sustained China in a state of stasis all these years. The last part of the paper looked at the contribution of such matrix system in providing quantity and variety and consequently in shaping and stabilizing the society and the issue of creativity in norms and passivity. The paper concluded in looking at the appropriateness of such a worldview in today's world state where new knowledge seems to suggest an urge towards interconnected spread rather than isolated depth.

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