

Chinese Ethics, Mass Media and the Global Development

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This chapter will first include a condensed introduction to the major concept of Chinese philosophy that is the core of traditional Chinese ethics. Chinese philosophy covers a lot of dimensions, but the chapter will focus on the discussion on the way of traditional Chinese systematic thinking including Circular Theory of Tao, the Unity of Human and Divinity, and the Mind of “Jen.”

Secondly, Chinese ethics will be introduced and with the explanation of the Chinese philosophy carried underlying in Chinese ethics. Then, the Buddhist ethics will be discussed here for it has been a part of Chinese philosophy before Tong dynasty (more than 1500 years ago). Indeed, Chinese ethics carry some of Buddhist thoughts and ethics for years.

Then, this chapter will introduce how the ancient Chinese elites are like Confucius looked at communication media (in his age, the media are oral and written). Mass media to the society are like teachers who are supposed to be good, not become evil. In Chinese culture, teachers are guidance to students, moral figures to the general public.

Conclusions include a discussion on the Chinese ethics with some ideas of Buddhism and global ethics, the ancient ethics with fresh eyes without prejudice but with the Mind of “Jen,” Purity, and Equanimity, and Selfless Love to all the Creatures.

Chinese Philosophy

Western people usually feel China is a mysterious country that is hard for them to imagine how Chinese people behave, how the Chinese thinks and after all, they might feel that they don't understand Chinese people and their culture at all. Apparently, Chinese people have their own unique culture that is somehow not in common with westerners'. Hence, before a discussion on the Chinese ethics system, the authors think it is necessary to introduce the fundamental classic philosophy developed by ancient Chinese people including the way of how the Chinese people think and how they perceive the world, comprehend and interpret things as they see, face, and confront in daily life.

Also, please note that there is no science at that time. The methods used by ancient Chinese are mainly qualitative approaches that are still in use nowadays. By saying this does not mean the ancient Chinese approaches are not scientific. In stead, scholars nowadays hardly find any one of the ancient Chinese approaches which are considered superstitious or against the scientific spirit. Qualitative approach is an open process; usually the outcomes are always keeping updated or improved over time. Fortunately, in this case, the ancient Chinese people take this advantage from thousands of years to develop their own ethics system.

Traditional Chinese Thinking and Concept

It is very important to keep this in mind that the traditional Chinese thinking in systematic, holistic way has a long term impact on Chinese people, on the ethics of society and on the morality of personal life. In other words, Chinese ethics is developed by the system thinking/concept in philosophy with the holistic world view. "System thinking/concept, also called as the world view of holism, is the major part of traditional Chinese thinking... The whole traditional Chinese culture is in the unity with a system thinking/concept of Chinese medicine," (Liu, 1992, pp. i-ii) To look at

things/the world as a whole system is the core of a systematic way, which is developed by Chinese people in a very early stage at ancient time, has become a well-developed philosophy before Yi-Ching was published (over 3000 years ago). Yi-Ching is the book showing Chinese thoughts and belief in the nature and humans, a philosophy of holism in the system thinking/concept.

An exact exemplified case of the holism of system thinking/concept in Chinese philosophy is Chinese medicine. In Chinese medicine, unlike the western doctors, doctors look at the patient's body as a whole system instead of a fraction and separate parts, such as teeth, heart, lung, liver, etc., separately. Western doctors are specialized as dentistry, periodontosis, cardiology, and so on. But, Chinese doctors usually are specialized in the treatment of "Pien" (a stone probe, using a tool to scratch the patient's skin on a certain area of the body with the understanding of the inside body's "Jing Law" in Chinese pronunciation), acupuncture and cauterize with needles and herbs, and Chinese medicines to cure patients. "Jing Law" goes through inside of the whole human body connecting all the organs and vessels, the circulation system of human body with "Chi," the same character of Chi Kon's Chi. (Chi Kon is a kind of Chinese Kon Fu with the exercise of Chi's power in human body along with the conformity of outside human body like the surrounding environment.) "Jing Law" is like the blood vessels in the whole human body but can not be found by anatomy, it only exists in a dynamic status when the human body is alive. To the Chinese medical students, "Jing Law" is the basic and great lesson to learn and memorize at the right beginning.

As we can find from the world history that the traditional Chinese medicine is still the only one of traditional science in nowadays. (Liu, 1992, p.136) As Liu mentioned that the basic method and principle of Chinese medicine has three major points: (1) to look at and to observe the human body from the whole environment of the nature and society, (2) to study of physiology, pathology and the cause of disease from focusing on the point of a dynamic function and the whole structural relations, and (3) to focus on the information gathered from the connections and relations of the inner human body, human body, and the outside of environment. (1992, pp.136-169)

Most of the eastern culture such as Japanese, Korean, and south eastern Asia in ancient time are deeply influenced by Chinese thinking. As we know, the eastern culture and the western culture are different from each other for the way of people's thinking and perception of the world and things, and even in religion are very different from each other. In recent days, the misunderstanding between each other caused fights and wars, even severe critics on the international/global media without the basic concern of Chinese ethic including a mind of "Jen," this will be discussed later in this chapter.

In a large sense, the way of traditional Chinese thinking has high relations to the development of the morality and ethics in Chinese society. Chinese system thinking/concept mainly includes three parts of philosophy (Liu, 1992, pp. 1-58): (1) Circular Theory of Tao, (2) Unity of Human and Divinity, (3) Mind of "Jen" (Mo, 1985, pp.13-19) including the Mind of Purity and Equanimity, the Mind of Selfless Love to all the creatures. These three parts will be elaborated as follows.

Circular Theory of Tao

Circular Theory of Tao is the basic idea in traditional Chinese culture, also the basic belief of every Chinese carried deeply in his life. In Chinese language, "Tao" means "the way," everything has the root of nature way involving relationships of its proper role with others including people, animals, environment, the earth, the universe, and any other spiritual if there is. Circular Theory of Tao is the theory of circular that means the universe, the nature, the world and the humans are always in a movement of circle constantly, a dynamic relational circle of happening, developing, ending, decay and death. In this theory, the cause will always be followed by an effect with consequences of other impact on those whom involved within the circle. As the Buddhist believes if there is the chain of conditional arising, then there must be the chain of conditional ending. This is like birth, decay and death are always together as a life circle. In fact, before the birth of Buddha, Yi-Jing, a book of Circular Theory of Tao, has been made already in China.

It is believed that at very early stage in Chinese history, approximately 4000 years before, some saints/intellectuals have already discovered that everything on the earth is moving on in a periodical way. All living forms are moving periodically so that their species can keep on existing on the earth generation by generation such as climates and seasons keep on cycling on a yearly basis. And, even the stars in the sky are also repeating their patterns year after year. Thus, the ancient Chinese observes and memorizes a lot of the dynamic repeating patterns, so called as cycles, of the world they live. As a consequence, when time goes on, the ancient Chinese people compare cycles and cycles, and conceptualize the commons among cycles, then create a conceptual model of the universe. They believe this model governs all dynamic behaviors on the earth, and even more.

Now, we call this model as “Circular Theory of Tao”. The Circular Theory of Tao creates the basic characteristics of Chinese ways of thinking. These basic characteristics are: used to apply system concept/thinking to look at things, interested in the dynamic pattern of events, used to look at thing and its context in a very large scope (the holistic world view), used to apply both analogical and associative ways to think things in an abstract sense, used to compare different cycles and figure out some information of one cycle from another because cycles are not existing alone always along with the interaction to each other, and finally, Chinese has their systematic procedure of thinking to the world.

In other words, any change of things or events of the nature, the world, and human beings in conformal or not conformal to the model, respectively, will bring a good (“Jyi” in Chinese pronunciation means good luck) or evil (“Shiong” in Chinese pronunciation means bad luck) outcome to the people. For example, any change of the spring time, farmers will gain a bad luck from other three seasons or the change of weather in next year, or some unnaturally outcomes. In ancient time, Chinese farmers know that to follow four seasons to plow and not to use a land year by year instead to take each land in turns within three years. And, the fish man knows the guideline to catch fish without the baby fish. Otherwise, both farmers and fish men will get bad luck in the future. Through this, Chinese people developed their unique way of thinking and unique way of understanding and interpretation

of the world. Therefore, Chinese people are always thinking things as a whole involving the consequences, relationships with the nature and their families in a long run.

The outcomes of Circular Theory of Tao are vividly demonstrated in agriculture, and fishing, also in Chinese medicine as discussed previously and in Chinese ethics (will be introduced later).

The Unity of Human and Divinity

Unlike the modern science developed in western society less than 400 years ago, Chinese people have invented the techniques of making papers, gun powder and compass far beyond the modern science about thousands of years, but the development of modern science in China is far behind the westerns'. Hence, since late Ching Dynasty many scholars including Chinese and westerns blame/accuse the traditional Chinese thinking of the Unity of Human and Divinity is the obstacle to stop the progress of science. From traditional and knowledgeable Chinese scholars' view points they argue the accusation is a misunderstanding of the Unity of Human and Divinity in a short sight also with a narrow mind. The philosophy of the Unity of Human and Divinity shows Chinese people see the nature, the world and the universe and humans are highly related to each other whom are living in the same environment as the co-existing system in a dynamic movement of circle. In fact, the Unity of Human and Divinity do not against science or any scientific thought but disagree to the changing with any destruction to the environment, and the nature or any way or technique to against the natural rules as the Circular Theory of Tao says.

Chinese people see there is conformity and consistency between the natural rules and the happening, ending of human affairs, i.e., a linkage of the nature and human morality/personality. Some philosophers like Lou-Tze, Chon-Tze, and Confucius, the oldest, famous and influential philosophers in ancient China, always look at humans and things with a reference to the nature or to the universe followed by the Circular Theory of Tao. Therefore, Chinese people believe that all things happen in their daily life, such as happiness, anger, sadness, and joy, or fortune or luck, and bad luck, are never detached

from the nature or the environment they live with. Lou-Tze, Chon-Tze, and Confucius often like to use the mountains, rivers, trees, clouds, fishes in the pond, as a metaphor to explain happenings in humans life, to point out the relations between the nature and humans (“Us”). Chinese people have been immersed in this idea of Unity of Human and Divinity distributed by Lou-Tze, Chon-Tze, and Confucius for thousands years from generations to generations. The belief of the Unity of Human and Divinity even is carried by the Chinese to other countries while immigrated to outside China, such as Southeast Asia, Japan, Korea, etc., and Confucianist even now becomes widely known to people in Singapore, Korea and Japan. But, we will stop the detail introduction to Confucius here because there is much more pages of his philosophy on Chinese ethics later.

Usually within a Chinese society, people prefer to get harmony and peace in stead of fighting and hatred if there is any argument or big difference.

The Mind of “Jen” (Purity and Equanimity, and Selfless Love to all the Creatures)

In Chinese, “Jen” means benevolence, humanity, mercy, charity, magnanimity, and kindness; i.e., always mentioned in Chinese ethics which will be discussed later in Chinese ethics. Here, we wish to talk about the “mind” of “Jen” for it is much care about the level of cognition, psychology though “the mind of Jen” is also the same as the “Jen” in Chinese ethics.

Chinese Ethics

In Chinese, the term of ethics has two meanings in English, one is as moral codes and the other is called as “Lun Li” (in Chinese phonetic translation). The moral codes are the guideline for the individual to behave in a society, and Lun Li means the normal relationships among people with comparison, classification, and order. In short, moral codes and Lun Li combine together in Chinese are equivalent to “ethics” in English.

In Chinese, “Lun” character shows the relationship among people, also carries the meaning of the right way to deal with people, called as “Lun Chan,” the constant and natural way to get along with human beings in a proper role of different relationship. Lun Li can be explained as the rationale of Lun. When people say Lun Chan usually they refer to the five most important items/perspectives of ethics. Indeed, they are: Tien (the heaven), Di (the earth), Jun (the emperor, the king), Ching (parents), and Shi (the mentor or teacher). These five items sometimes are called Five Lun, Five Superiors or Five Ethics.

Five Superiors or Five Ethics

Almost every Chinese has been told to live according to the Five Ethics in Chinese culture for thousands of years. Tien talks about the relationship between people and the heaven including gods, divinity and anything beyond our physical world. Di talks about the relationship between human beings and the earth, especially on the environment we live with. To include Tien and Di into ethics is a result from the system concept of “wholeness” and the thought of “the unity of human and divinity” as mentioned before. In fact, as those concepts were adopted by the elites, the political power that obtained from the Divine Beings had already faded away in the Chinese history. This is the major reason why Chinese developed a system of ethics without the help from any religion. And, the authors believe the Chinese ethics is the only existing ethics system that can surpass religious ethics systems.

People think Tien, Di and human beings are within a system. They are not standing against each other in the system. Instead, they should coexist harmonically because they have something in common for they are all existing (going on) periodically or cyclically in dynamic ways. Thus, the scope of ethics should be extended large enough to include them all.

Scholars consider including Di in ethics system is the beginning of environment protection idea in ethic system. In fact, many written records show that the ancient Chinese do have strong environment protection codes and actions back in the history. For instance, the book Mencius advises fishers don't put their fishnet too low in a pond in order not to break the live

cycle of the fishes in the pond so that people may have fish forever. Another example is logging is permitted only within certain time period of a year in order not to exhaust timber resources. These are typical ethical codes for environment protection around 2500 years ago.

In practice, Chinese people carry this belief in everywhere, such as in agriculture, medicine, science and technology, life and death, and literature. Chinese people dislike overcome or fight the nature, instead, they prefer to live with the nature in harmony. It is much true even in nowadays.

Jun (the emperor, the king), Ching (parents), and Shi (the mentor or teacher) are three kinds of human Superiors. We will talk about these items more in the following.

Talking about Chinese ethics, Confucius, an ancient philosopher in the early 6th century B. C. in China, and his followers like Mencius, must be the first one or two brought out by every Chinese no matter how much education he had.

It is said that what Confucius said are the principles of how to be human beings, how to live with the nature, how to behave with people. Most of Confucius' sayings and philosophy are collected in his Dialogues, Lun Yu (Chu, 1996) by his students. Confucius even taught his students with the wisdom of assistance to his emperor and others. This is much elaborated and emphasized by his follower, Mencius, a well-known scholar in Confucian after Confucius. Mencius not only pays much attention to giving advices to the ruling government and the emperor, but also elaborates Confucius' thoughts of "Hsiao" and "Jen," the two "characters" in Chinese (like "words" in English). In short, "Hsiao" carries the meaning of filial piety or devotion to parents and elderly relatives.

As previously said in the Mind of "Jen," "Jen" means benevolence, humanity, mercy, charity, magnanimity, and kindness. To Chinese people, "Jen" is toward people in society, the ethical principle for the individual to get along with others that is the relationship between one and another. "Jen"

is the most frequently mentioned in 110 times in Lun Yu and 158 times by Mencius. “It also often includes concepts of philanthropy, love, love and justice, and benevolence and generosity.” (Hsieh, Hsieh and Lehman, 2003, p.270) In Chinese, the character of “Jen” to everyone at the first glance is two people together with the meaning of being kindness to each other. So, “Jen” tells the basic ethics for Chinese people to get along with others.

Hsiao

Every Chinese is educated and cultivated to be a person with filial piety to his parents and elderly relatives in his lifetime. In Chinese culture, people are much concerned about their parents, brothers and sisters, grandparents (both father’s and mother’s side), uncles and aunts (both parents’ sides), and other relatives, because these people are in the closest circle of the human relationships with them. This is reflected in Chinese language with specific kinship terms that have no equivalent words in English or other European languages. (See details in Hsieh, Hsieh and Lehman, 2003, pp. 271-272)

“Hsiao” is also emphasized by Buddhism. In this aspect, Confucian and Buddhism are completely compatible. This is one of the reasons why Chinese can quickly adopt a foreign religion Buddhism from an unknown country India about 2000 years ago.

Some people nowadays think the requirements of traditional “Hsiao” may not fair to the son, because “Hsiao” asked a lot from youngsters to serve their elderly ones. But, from the system point of view in the long run, every one has equal chance to be father as well as to be son. So, as time goes by, “Hsiao” is fair to everybody. Besides, “Hsiao” do enhance people helping each other. Therefore, a society with the practice of “Hsiao” is indeed much better than a society without “Hsiao”.

倫理的實踐

One very important aspect of ethics is how to bring ethics theories as well as codes are understood, followed and keeps on practicing by people. In other words, an implementing system must come along with ethics theories in order to bring the ethics theories into reality. Following this point of view, while we are planning a global ethics system hoping to improve our living quality and living environment, an implementation system of global ethics is indispensable. In fact, the implementation system of global ethics is far more

difficult to figure out than the theories and codes of global ethics system.

In ancient time, Chinese people have a unique practical way to implement their ethics system. Firstly, the ethics system is conducted and enhanced by the government not by religious leaders. This approach has been implemented from approximately 200 B.C. to 1911. For instance, the examination system is equally opened to every male citizen designed for selecting and recruiting government officers in each dynasty, is tightly bounded with ethics by all the emperors **back in the history**. (Chi, 2007) The authors believe this approach is more powerful than the ways of training people serving for religions. We will not go any further for the details of implementing the ethics system in China. **For readers interested in this topic may refer to (Mo, 1985).**

Secondly, the practice of Chinese ethics has a way of systematic order.

Confucius said that to educate oneself well, to take good care of families, to manage people in harmony, and then to rule the world in peace. (Chu, 1996, p. 6) The core concept of Chinese philosophy is: one should exercise one's mind as clear, straight (without craving, aversion, and mental and physical sluggishness) first, then, he can educate himself as a good person. Then, he can start to help his family, his people including his relatives, his country and the world. "In Confucianist philosophy, ethics aims to address the individual and his relationships with others, but also includes the practice of ethics in society. In other words, one's ethics serve not only for the individual's guidance in living with others, but also as society's norm to ensure that society runs harmoniously." (Hsieh, Hsieh and Lehman, 2003, p.272)

Professor Sheng said, "Things being investigated, knowledge becomes complete. Their knowledge being complete, their thoughts were sincere. Their thoughts being sincere, their hearts were then rectified. Their hearts being rectified, their persons were cultivated. Their persons being cultivated, their families were regulated. Their families being regulated, their states were rightly governed. Their states being rightly governed, the whole kingdom was made tranquil and happy." (1993, p. 112) This explains that the practice of Chinese ethics has a way of systematical order, from a person's

self of knowledge and mind to his family, people, states, and the whole kingdom/the world. And, of course, all those thoughts and approaches mentioned in here are also derived from the system concept of “wholeness” and the thought “the unity of human and divinity” as mentioned before.

費孝通的人際關係同心圓

A contemporary Chinese anthropologist and sociologist, X.T. Fe explained an individual's role in Chinese society according to his study in Chinese rural areas for years (over 40 years) that the “gradient relationships” (Hsieh, Hsieh and Lehman, 2003, p. 273) are the Five Ethics in Chinese culture. “The core of ethics is the relationship between people, and people are the core of ethics. The relationship begins with the individual, who should always obey social rules and requirements inherited from his ancestors. If the individual stands in the center, the first and closest circle around him is his family, the second is his village or community, the third is his country, then the world, nature, and heaven.” (Hsieh, Hsieh and Lehman, 2003, p.271)

Many people think Chinese look at ethics as relationships between people instead of with a task. This statement is partially correct. This saying denies the understanding of the rationale of task or indicates the ignorance of the importance of the rationale of task by Chinese people. In fact, when a Chinese is going to make a decision, he usually will consider three aspects/consequences of his decision, including (1) the relationships as well as the feelings among people, (2) the rationale of doing a task, and at last (3) what the law stated. This three-aspect approach of making decisions, of course, is also derived from the system concept of “wholeness”, the principles of “Hsiao”, “Jen” and the importance of the rule that family plays in the implementation of Chinese ethics. So, the relationships as well as the feelings among people might come first for many people while they are going to make a decision.

Five Precepts in Buddhism

To abstain from killing any living creature, to abstain from stealing, to abstain from all sexual misconduct, to abstain from telling lies, and to

abstain from all intoxicants are the five precepts that are the codes of ethics for people living in a peaceful, harmonious and happy life. People need to practice meditation daily with a mind of awareness on his body and his thought. This is similar to Confucius' advice to intellectual people as a gentleman /well-educated person that is elaborated as "I check my conducts/behaviors three times daily." In Buddhism, people ask for harmony, happiness, and peace as the priority instead of money, living well in their lifetime. In daily life, they practice meditation on awareness of each one's desires like craving, aversion, and mental and physical sluggishness. The way of Buddhists' living with the code of Buddhism ethics is similar to Chinese intellectual people following the Chinese ethics in their daily with "I check myself and my behavior three times a day," also the same as Catholic's self-examination daily.

Confucius and Communication

Confucius is the first great teacher in Chinese history. He always teaches students in dialogues with the form of "questions and answers." At the end of his age, he didn't have any publication that means without any written book of his sayings though he is a well-known philosopher at his time. He said "depiction, without writing," because "writing and written staff can not express the whole spoken language completely and exactly, and spoken language cannot convey the idea and meaning completely and exactly." (Yi-Jing, Si-Tsi) (Note: "Lun Yu" is the collection of his dialogues by his students, not written by him.)

Besides, Confucius also shows his belief in "Li" (ethics). He said that "no words if it is unethical, no viewing/looking if it is unethical, no listening if it is unethical, and no action if it is unethical." This is the guideline for intellectual people in ancient time, also for the media in the present. In ancient China, intellectuals and elites are like teachers in community. The media is seen as intellectuals and elites, are supposed to be "speaking cautiously and behaving carefully."

Media with Chinese Philosophy

Intellectuals as Teachers for Society

In Confucius philosophy, everyone has the potentiality to become a great intellectual if he follows the “Li” and “Lun Li” including “Jen” with the underlying meaning of purity and equanimity, and selfless love to all the creatures.

In Chinese society, intellectuals, farmers, workers/labors and businessmen are used to be categorized in order as the four-status jobs of people. It shows that intellectual people are the most respected class in the society because they are much like Professor Sheng’s saying with a great practice of ethics involving self esteem and the ability of governing a kingdom. Intellectual people are educated and cultivated not only for self but for others also, not only for self living but also for better life for other people or for all the human beings. Especially, intellectuals are never like businessmen care for their own profits/money as the first priority. In return, Chinese people carry the belief to pay their respect to teachers and professors for thousands years. People believe that education can change their social status in generations. Therefore, poor families try their best to send their kids to school, there are thousands of stories in the history, also in the present.

Western people live with God in religion for their spiritual life and with law in social order. Many eastern people live with their own religion and with law governed by spiritual leaders. In traditional Chinese society, Chinese people live with Chinese ethics, Chinese philosophy to behave instead of with religion.

Intellectuals as media people

The advent of Chinese press is in Ching Dynasty (around 1815), the first modern newspaper, Chinese Monthly Magazine established by Robert Morrison (a missionary priest from London Missionary Society) in Malacca, not in China. (Thomas Lee, 1969, pp. 125-128) With the concept of Chinese philosophy, the press/the media should run by intellectual people for educational purpose as the first concern, not by the businessmen in capitalist society. Chinese people believe that the media will always take the people’s (the audiences’) right/benefit/welfare as the first concern followed by the code of ethics in stead of the media’s profit without any intellectuals’ ethics

but rules of competition and survival in marketing. Without the intellectual's ethical concern, media will never reach the level of good, and the bad or evil one like the devil is there waiting for everyone.

Chinese Ethics and Global Ethics

Without the information technology or the new communication technology, the globalization of mass media cannot be so close to the general public. In other words, in the information age, we are now facing a new media world including news media, commercial films especially produced by Hollywood, and the internet/world-wide web. In a broad sense, the new media world forces all of the audiences to face a singular, unity value of programs, such as American democracy, Hollywood's entertainment, Christianity's religion. This is widely argued on the internet and in the international arena after the Danish Cartoon published on a Danish newspaper in 2006. (Ali Mohamed, 2007, p. 2) The Danish Cartoon controversy brought out the problem that the new media are facing a diversity and variety of values and belief system, such as Muslims and Christians. The boundaries between nations, ethnics, races, religions, groups, and cultures, even geographical surroundings are become vague with the old ethics, especially not as clear as before.

It is urgent to have new professional ethics for the global media otherwise the case of Danish Cartoon might happen again and again, the more deep the hatred and hostile feeling toward each other, the vicious circle brings no ending of fight/war. According to the Chinese ethics, media people will never claim that to scorn or to speak bad things of others publicly is human right or the right to speech because not only people but all the creatures in the world should be treated with the mind of "Jen" and equanimity, and selfless love. Therefore, the traditional Chinese ethics as mentioned previously should be good guidance for new global ethics of mass media. Besides, to educate and to ask for media people with the new global ethics is much feasible than to ask all the people in the world to change their religion, political belief, or ethnic habit. At this moment, media people really need to aware the severe change by information technology caused much trouble if without any new media ethics in professions is concern.

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