

Study on the Blending of Marxism and Chinese Traditional Philosophy

An Investigation Based on Feng Qi's Theory of Human Nature

Jiafeng Shao

China Jiliang University
Hangzhou, China

Abstract—As an ancient country in the East, China has accumulated a philosophical tradition of unique Chinese national spirits in the long history of thousands of years. In the years of modern and turbulent times, Marxism pointed out the direction for China's revolution and construction. However, as far as the modern turn of Chinese philosophy is concerned, it is still necessary to objectively view the blending of Marxism and Chinese traditional philosophy. As a master of philosophical circles, Feng Qi deeply rooted Marxism in the soil of Chinese traditional culture. His theory of human nature is based on the analysis of the good and evil of human nature in Chinese traditional philosophy and the interpretation of essential theory of Marxist theory of human nature. Through the investigation of Feng Qi's theory of human nature, it is available to see the changes and development of Chinese traditional philosophy under the influence of Marxism.

Keywords—*traditional Chinese philosophy; Marxism; human nature; Feng Qi*

I. INTRODUCTION

Chinese traditional philosophy is the spiritual wealth created by the Chinese descendants in the long history. It is also an important guarantee for the Chinese nation to stand in the forest of the nations in the world. Due to the limitation of geographical environment, China's mainland civilization has been impacted by Western maritime civilization in modern times. However, the Chinese people have regained their standing by relying on Marxism. However, in the trend of globalization, Chinese traditional philosophy still has to explore a construction road that suits its own characteristics. It is an unavoidable problem to integrate Marxism as an ideology into traditional Chinese philosophy. "Feng Qi used the basic theory of Marxist philosophy to examine the development of Chinese traditional philosophy and systematically reflected on how to promote the modernization of Chinese traditional philosophy" [1].

Feng Youlan, Jin Yuelin and he took "Tao" as the highest interest. However, he still stressed that "the Marxist philosophy must be combined with China's outstanding traditions to make it a philosophy with Chinese characteristics" [1]. It can be said that the philosophical era of "interpreting the world" has become the history, and practical philosophy has begun to rise. Feng Qi's theory of

human nature is a very representative idea in his philosophical system. From this, the process of blending Marxism with Chinese traditional philosophy can be seen.

II. THE SOCIAL PRACTICE IN FENG QI'S THEORY OF HUMAN NATURE

Feng Qi's discussion of Chinese traditional philosophy is based on the comparison between social practice of Marxist philosophy and social practice of Chinese traditional philosophy.

A. *Combining "Theory of Cultivating Second Nature" with Social Practice*

Feng Qi is a Marxist with a firm political standpoint. The construction of his theory of human nature has always been closely related to high degree of his grasp of Marxist philosophy. He fully borrowed the Marxism theory of human nature and made a more concrete and comprehensive analysis. He believed that "the sum of human nature, labor, and social relations can't be essentially separated from man's spiritual freedom." [2] Feng Qi combines the rationality and practice, and the Chinese traditional mind rationality is banded with the materialism. Therefore, it gets rid of absurd theory that the metaphysical person should be the tool. Finally, human nature is regarded as the purpose of developing itself. The most characteristic of his theory of human nature is to put the theory of "cultivating the nature by continuously doing the good things" in "Yi Zhuan" and Wang Fuzhi's theory of "cultivating the nature daily" in social practice of Marxist philosophy, and to attribute the human development process under the interaction of heaven and humanity to "Marx's all-round personal development and their common productive capacity have been at the stage of free personality based on social wealth." [2]

B. *Materialistic Transformation of Traditional Theory of Human Nature*

Feng Qi is a scholar with strong national consciousness. He is cherished for the traditional culture of Chinese nations. When he constructed the theory of human nature, the first thing he thought of was to draw reasonable factors from the soil of Chinese traditional philosophy. Judging from the writing ideas of "Human Freedom, Truth, Goodness and

Beauty", Feng Qi originally discussed the manpower and density of Chinese traditional philosophy and the struggles of human nature and habits, and then combed the development of two human natures of restored human nature and second nature. However, he also combines the theory of freedom of Marxist philosophy with the theory of human nature to naturally "interpret the Chinese traditional philosophy with the Marxist philosophy. The two parts are in one or two chapters. Feng Qi's opposition to life and power is the line of evolution of metaphysics and materialism. He first began to explore the theory of human nature in the history of Chinese philosophy starting with Confucian views of "similar human nature and different habits". Then, the four-end theory of Mencius's "preserving mental constitution and nourishing nature" first introduced the concept of "restoring human nature" and distinguished the difference between human nature and virtue. Then it enumerates the theory of original evil of human nature of Motse and Xuncius, and then leads to the "theory of second nature" in "Yi Zhuan". Feng Qi strongly agrees with the view of cultivating the second nature by continuously doing the good things, which shows that he has abandoned and reconciled Motse's and Xuncius' biased human nature theory. Thus, he clearly put forward the general argument that human nature refers to the process of developing from nature to virtue. Later, he listed the views of Zen, Li Ao, Cheng Zhu and other idealists and Wang Anshi and others with materialistic tendencies. He affirmed the process consciousness in Wang Yangming's unity of knowing and doing, the unity of noumenon and endeavor, and Huang Zongxi's endeavor. In the end, he regards Wang Fuzhi's viewpoint of "cultivating the human nature daily", "developing the habits and forming the human nature" as the highest achievement of traditional theory of human nature, and elaborates on the process of cultivating human nature daily. So far, he has come to an end to the generalization of the theory of human nature in the traditional Chinese philosophy. On the whole, Feng Qi made proper materialistic transformation of certain viewpoints on the basis of fully respecting the tradition.

III. THE MATERIAL DIALECTICS IN FENG QI'S THEORY OF HUMAN NATURE

A. *The Combination of Traditional Dialectics and Materialistic Dialectics*

The dialectical thinking in Chinese traditional philosophy is simple, but its influence in the history of philosophy is far-reaching. Feng Qi also believes that "the profound philosophical tradition of China's simple dialectics is wise." [2] Based on specific objects, the opposite categories of yin and yang, heaven and earth in Chinese philosophy include contradictory views of the unity of opposites. Mutual promotion and restraint among the five elements also reflect the overall connection between things. The spirit of self-improvement is expressed as the process of development that never stops. These rich dialectic resources are undoubtedly the precious wealth of Chinese traditional philosophy. Compared with the strict logic dialectics in the West, the Chinese traditional dialectical thinking is obviously fragmented and not systematic. Feng Qi examines Chinese

traditional philosophy from the perspective of Marxist philosophy. Therefore, when he interprets the traditional Chinese theory of human nature, he tends to use the materialist dialectics.

Materialistic dialectics mainly divides its methodology into three points, that is, to look at problems from a point of view, a point of view on development, and a point of view from contradiction. Compared with the Chinese traditional dialectics, materialist dialectics is obviously perfect, and the two are almost identical in thought. They are all thought methodologies that are designed for people to better understand the world, to know themselves, and to achieve long-term development. Throughout Feng Qi's theory of human nature, the simple dialectics and the logical methods of class and reason placed in the traditional Chinese philosophy above the materialist dialectics of Marxist philosophy always run through his thoughts.

B. *The Embodiment of Materialistic Dialectics in Feng Qi's Theory of Human Nature*

Feng Qi's theory of human nature based on Marxist philosophy and social practice has a distinctive characteristic of localization of Marxism in China. In addition, he also uses materialist dialectics to systematically and comprehensively examine human nature.

First of all, Feng Qi's theory of human nature contains the point of contact. He believes that when discussing human freedom, "we must grasp things from the inevitable and accidental connections... correctly distinguish essential connections from non-essential connections... If you fully grasp various connections and conditions, people can even create conditions to make some possibilities that are not dominant become the dominant possibility [2]. According to these arguments, Feng Qi saw the complexity and diversity of human nature. He combed the traditional Chinese theory of human nature into two lines of restored human nature and cultivating the human nature. He first linked the struggle between power and endeavor with the struggle between human nature and habits. Then, he divided the human nature into nature and virtue, and the connection between heaven and humanity was established. In the theory of value, he proposed a series of categories related to human nature, showing Feng Qi's emphasis on the point of contact. His development of human nature is also based on the point of connection.

In addition to grasping the human nature from the point of view of contact, Feng Qi also looks at human nature from the perspective of development. He does not think that human nature is a state of static isolation, but always regards human nature as a process of developing from nature to virtue. He opposes the metaphysics of returning to the fate in the theory of restored human nature, and expounds the theory of cultivating human nature by continuously doing the good things. The traditional theory of cultivating the second nature believes that the human nature is a dynamic process of continuous development, emphasizing the "cultivation of nature daily". Feng Qi accepted this view and combined it with the social practice of Marxist philosophy, and then put

forward his own theory of human nature. When constructing his theory of human nature, Feng Qi consciously combines the viewpoint of materialism in Chinese traditional philosophy with the theory of human nature of Marxist philosophy, such as Mozi's viewpoint on the labor, the rational viewpoint of Mencius, and the gregarious viewpoint of Xunzi. Marx defined the essence of human beings as the sum of all social relations. Feng Qi made a more specific interpretation of this statement. At the same time, he emphasized the role of reason specially. He combined Marxist epistemology and believed that the driving force of rational development is social practice. The rationality in Chinese traditional philosophy is essentially idealistic. Here, Feng Qi made a materialistic transformation of rationality, and regarded the rationality together and human nature as the development process of achieving freedom. In short, the developmental view can't be separated from Feng Qi's theory of human nature.

As a general feature of materialist dialectics, the point of connection and development provides a coherent and rigorous methodology for the construction of Feng Qi's theory of human nature. However, Feng Qi pays more attention to the use of contradictory views to examine human nature. The viewpoint that contradiction is the unity of opposites, is the essence and core of materialist dialectics, and is also the most prominent ideological methodology in Chinese traditional philosophy. Feng Qi saw the opposition between the traditional theory of restored human nature and the theory of cultivating the second nature. He mainly supported the theory of cultivating the second nature. And he opposed the metaphysical fatalism, and did not deny the important role of rational consciousness in the theory of restored human nature for the development of human nature. Moreover, he borrowed the term "restoring human nature" and proposed a "return of human nature" with a new meaning, that is, "waking up the inherent freedom of the person" [2]. The subject's grasp of virtue "become natural", which makes people feel that "the virtue is inherent in human nature" [2]. It can be seen that Feng Qi uses the unity of opposites to make theoretical reconciliation of traditional human nature. Feng Qi's discussion of human nature is mainly based on the Marxist social practice, and the essence of human nature is elucidated from the opposite relationship between life and human nature. He abandoned the determinism of cultivating human nature since birth or human nature determining the fate, emphasizing the promotion of manpower and habits for the development of human nature. The natural law in his eyes refers to the humanized nature that does not have a dominant meaning. People can exert subjective initiative to realize the interaction between humanity and natural law. In such an interactive process of transforming thing-in-itself into things-for-us, human nature and habits move from the opposition to unity. He overcomes the limitations of understanding the nature and virtue in traditional theory of human nature, and divides humanity into nature and virtue. Nature is a congenital material condition, and virtue is a spiritual condition gradually acquired in social relations. The two are dependent on each other and complement each other, and they are attributed to harmony and unity on the basis of

social practice. In addition to dialectically examining the process of human development in the vertical dimension, Feng Qi also attaches great importance to using dialectical thinking to look at various aspects at the value level in the horizontal dimension. His theory of human nature has always been carried out around the value system. Based on the humanity, reason and desire and self-discipline of Chinese tradition, the reasonable value principles of humanity, nature, all-round human development, individuality and group are derived. Also, he further refined them into the unity of humanity and nature, the unity of truth, goodness and beauty, the unity of knowledge and meaning, the unity of consciousness and subconsciousness, the unity of reason and irrationality, the unity of existence and essence, the unity of commonality and individuality, and the unity of understanding the world and selves, and finally achieving the state of wisdom in the unity of human and nature. Standing on the standpoint of materialism, Feng Qi talked about human nature. He fully affirmed the materialistic view that existence determined consciousness. However, he also strongly promoted humanity to the ontological meaning. With far-fetched interpretation, Mencius's idealism of "dedication, humanity, and knowledge" and Xunzi's materialistic theory of understanding the distinction between heaven and human are neutralized and unified. Feng Qi used the idea of unity of opposites to construct a theory of human nature that combines Marxist philosophy with Chinese traditional philosophy step by step. In the end, he turned to the wisdom theory of natural law, and the unity of theory and object.

All in all, Feng Qi's theory of human nature can surpass the previous theory of human nature, which is largely due to his accurate grasp of dialectical thinking.

IV. THE INSPIRATION OF FENG QI'S THEORY OF HUMAN NATURE TO THE STUDY ON CHINESE TRADITIONAL PHILOSOPHY

A. *Properly Using Research Mode of "Interpreting Chinese Traditional Philosophy with Marxist Philosophy"*

For the exploration of human nature, people have never been interrupted since ancient times. However, due to the limitations of geographical environment, economic foundation and cognitive ability, there is always a bias. After summing up the theory of human nature in ancient and modern times in China, Feng Qi re-examined the traditional Chinese theory of human nature under the guidance of Marxist philosophy, thus providing a more successful set of research models of "interpreting Chinese traditional philosophy with Marxist philosophy" for the later generations. The traditional Chinese philosophy is dominated by moral metaphysics, and it still retains the fine tradition of paying attention to the practice, which may have laid a historical foundation for the nationalization of Marxism. "The experience of Sino-Western exchanges in history shows that among the strange ideas sent from different places, only those schools and works whose 'intellectual genes' are closer to the Chinese mainland can take root and

survive, and there may be a mating of ideas, producing new species and inspiring new philosophical forms." [3]

When Marxism has become a national ideology, Feng Qi actively localizes the philosophical system originating from the West, making it more and more close to the national heritage, and penetrating into the human blood of the Chinese people. Feng Qi's philosophical vision is broad. He believes that the national characteristics of Chinese traditional philosophy are clearly reflected in the integration of Chinese and Western cultures. He strongly advocates the philosophical revolution, and also emphasizes that the construction of new theories must be deeply rooted in the philosophical tradition of wisdom. Feng Qi's research model of "interpreting Chinese traditional philosophy with Marxist philosophy" is a window for Chinese philosophy to go to the world. In the world trend of various cultures, Feng Qi endowed Chinese philosophy with inner tension.

B. Building a Practical Philosophy with Chinese Characteristics

China's history has opened a new page, and Chinese philosophy in the new era still faces various challenges. Feng Qi made great efforts to interpret Marxism in China. It is rigid at some points. However, his attempt was undoubtedly successful and worth of learning for the later generations. What must be admitted is that if Chinese traditional philosophy wants to connect with the world, it is necessary to rely on Marxist philosophy, and the reasonable elements that can be used for us in Western philosophy. At the same time, according to China's national conditions, we should gradually introduce traditional philosophy into the path of practical philosophy.

Feng Qi's philosophical theory has the quality of advancing with the times. His theory of human nature is compatible with the socialist core value system and the socialist core values. His theory of human nature constructed in the last century has greatly enriched the theoretical basis in the construction of human nature in the new era. Feng Qi's emphasis on patriotism and the recognition of national spirit, as well as the advocacy of the philosophical revolution and the innovation of philosophical theory, reflect the national spirit with patriotism as the core and the reform and innovation as the core promoted by the current society. As the essence of the socialist core value system, the national spirit and the spirit of the times have injected ideological impetus into the construction of human nature for Chinese people. The socialist core values are highly concise expressions of the socialist core value system. The twenty-four words concentrated in the three levels of the state, society and individual are also the generalization of Feng Qi's theory of human nature in the new era. Compared with the value system proposed by Feng Qi, the value system of the new era is more popular and easy to practice. This can be said to be the new construction mode of human nature of "a learning both sound in theory and practice". Chinese philosophy has shown Chinese-style wisdom. In the course of going to the world, we have enough ground to build up cultural self-confidence and unremittingly strive for the

Chinese dream of realizing the great rejuvenation of the Chinese nation.

V. CONCLUSION

All in all, the exploration of Marxism in China is always on the road. The modernization of Chinese philosophy will never be a thing that can be accomplished only with economic development [4]. Feng Qi's theory of human nature is just a sample that can be referenced for us, and many of the subsequent works still needs us to improve and complete. Against the background of the new era, Chinese philosophy will inevitably develop towards the direction of practical philosophy. However, it is still inadvisable to ignore the conservation of spiritual realm. In the social practice, it is available to experience the wisdom of traditional Chinese philosophy, actively integrate Chinese and Western culture, and penetrate into the world, pushing traditional Chinese philosophy to a new height.

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