

Reflections on the Sinicization of Marxist Literary Theory Since the New Period

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Abstract—Since the new period, the research on the sinicization of Marxist literary theory has been complicated and rich in research results. In this research process, scholars are also exploring the way forward. Looking at the process of sinicization of Marxist literary theory and taking problem discussion as the starting point, in addition to the reflection Chinese people should have when discussing a specific issue, it is necessary to reflect on the sinicization of Marxist literary theory as a whole. Insufficient construction of academic discourse system as well as inadequate theoretical description of "how to Sinicize" is the result of reflection. With correct methodology and based on Chinese conditions, diversified development is the countermeasure for future development.

Keywords: *Marxist literary theory, sinicization, research reflection, development prospects*

I. INTRODUCTION

In the more than one hundred years since Marxism was introduced into China, its development in China has continued to grow, and Marxist literary theory has also continued to grow and develop in accordance with its own trajectory. With the reform and opening up and with the continuous introduction of western literary and artistic thoughts and the increasingly obvious development of globalization, "Sinicization" and "localization" have also become people's concerns, and research on the Sinicization of Marxist literary theory has gradually become more important.

The Sinicization of Marxist literary theory is the application and practice in the context of Chinese history and realistic culture. It is the use of Marxist literary theory to guide and solve the practical problems in the development of Chinese literature and literary and artistic theory. It is also a re-implementation of Marxist literary theory. Insufficient construction of academic discourse system and inadequate theoretical description of "how to Sinicize" are problems and shortcomings in the process of Sinicizing Marxist literary theory. On this basis, based on the prospect of the study of the Sinicization of Marxist literary theory in the new period, this article holds that the inquiry into the problem of Sinicization of Marxist literary theory is of great significance in contemporary academic circles. It is necessary to adhere to

the path of Sinicization of Marxist literary theory and shoulder the historical task of Sinicization of Marxist literary theory.

II. REFLECTIONS ON THE RESEARCH

In China, the spread and development of Marxist literary theory have a certain foundation. In addition to China's special national conditions, the Marxist literary theory and the process of sinicization interact and promote each other. In the process, considerable achievements have been made, but some problems have also appeared. Therefore, it is extremely important to reflect on the study of the sinicization of Marxist literary theory.

A. Insufficient construction of academic discourse system

The academic world believes that there are three theoretical forms of the sinicization of Marxist literary theory, namely the "discourse of translation and introduction", "leader's discourse" of Mao Zedong's literary thoughts and so on, and the "academic discourse" of the theoretical world.¹

Earlier studies focused on the study of leaders' discourses with Chinese characteristics in Marxist literary theory, but lacked deep reflection on academic discourse. In the academic world, the thoughts of Mao Zedong and Deng Xiaoping and other great leaders are called "leader's discourse." This theoretical form, like Mao Zedong's "materialization of Marxism in China", is not an elaboration of the classics, but the result of the combination of literary and Marxist literary ideas brought about by the Chinese revolution, which is a good theoretical innovation for China itself. As the basis, Marxist literary theory analyzes the main practical issues in the development of Chinese society and literature and art, and highlights the characteristics of Chinese socialism. Chinese literary theorists have studied Marxist literary viewpoints and methods separately, and called the academic rational exploration of literary and artistic issues as "academic discourse". This kind of academic rational exploration can be analyzed from the original source of Marxist literary theory, or from the

¹ Dong Xuewen. Reflections on the Sinicization of Marxist Literary Theory. [J]. *Literary Theory and Criticism*, 2008 (01).

combination of Marxist literary theory and practical problems. There are many complicated theories involved in this form of discourse. Especially since the new era, under the influence of the trend of globalization, the impact of foreign literary theories on Chinese academia has become more obvious, and some misunderstandings and misuses of the theoretical analysis have also occurred. There are even some theories that can't be "Sinicized" at all.

And they all come from Marxist thought. They use the main points of Marxism to understand and analyze literary and artistic forms, and reveal the broad scope and laws of literary and artistic activities. In the process, they also conform to the actual situation of Chinese social development, especially the phenomena that appear in literary and artistic life. So why does the academic world explain the "leader's discourse" in a more comprehensive and in-depth manner, but there is a lack of systematic construction of the "academic discourse"? This is determined by the characteristics of their two theoretical forms. "Leader's discourse" focuses on political ideology. It provides a guiding ideology, a guiding policy, and requires literature and art to adapt to the development of Chinese nation and society, and to conform to the banner of China's socialist culture, so as to develop Chinese literature and art. "Academic discourse" is an academic and rational theoretical discourse. It pays more attention to the basic principles of Marxist-Leninist literary theories. It is a theoretical exploration. Its ultimate goal is to form a complete set of scientific theories based on the specific national conditions of the literary theory in China. The construction of a scientific theoretical system is inherently quite difficult and can't be constructed overnight.

Judging from the existing research results, the study of the "leader's discourse" in Chinese academic circles has been more concentrated due to the influence of ideology. The discussions have been enthusiastic, including Xi Jinping's speech at the "Art Forum" in Beijing in 2014 and the "Speech at the China Federation of Literary and Art Associations and Writers Association" in 2016, which have been warmly echoed by people. The discussions continued for a while. Therefore, the research results of the "leader's discourse" are more obvious and richer, the research level is deeper, and the understanding is more thorough. However, the study of "academic discourse" is difficult due to its intricate characteristics. Most of them only describe the superficial phenomena of some new thoughts, without in-depth discussion of their internal laws or deeper connotations. They do not know where they should go in the future, nor do they know whether they conform to the law of the development of literature and art, nor whether they adapt to the "sinicization". Therefore, from an academic perspective, less research and shallow research on "academic discourse" is not conducive to the development of China's literary theory.

B. The theoretical description of "how to Sinicize" is not deep enough

At the beginning of the article of Dong Xuewen's "Reflection on the Sinicization of Marxist Literary Theory", it argued that since the introduction of Marxist literary theory to China, there are controversies about "how to Sinicize" and "how to Sinicize." He believes that in order to explore the road to the sinicization of Marxist literary theory, it is necessary to lift the rigidity of understanding of classical Marxist literary theory and the understanding of the relationship between western literary theory and Marxism. Of course, Dong Xuewen gave his specific method on how to Sinicize in China. He felt that the first thing that needed to be clarified was the current major problem in the development of literature and art in China. If this was clear, the problem of sinicization of Marxist literary theory could be fundamentally solved. Thirdly, he believes that the process of sinicization of Marxist literary theory has great enlightenment for people. He also made a small statistic and found that China's academic circles are a bit alienated from Marxist literary theory. This statistic reflects from the side that the theoretical circles pay insufficient attention to Marxist literary theory. The study of Marxist literary theory is "ignored" and "excluded", so it is impossible to talk about the question of "how to Sinicize."²

At the same time, Dong Xuewen proposed that "the phenomenon of pan-Marxist literary theory in China" appeared. Indeed, in the process of sinicization of Marxist literary theory, various "sinicization" have appeared. For example, some literary theories and viewpoints love to impose a prefix on the sinicization of Marxist literary theory. In fact, it is not clear whether it is the true meaning of sinicization of Marxist literary theory in China. Moreover, each person has different understandings of "sinification". One person has one statement and there is no mainstream "sinification" concept to guide everyone, so there is a "sinification" statement everywhere.

For example, at the 24th annual meeting of the National Marxist-Leninist Research Association, Tan Haozhe believed that the practical character of Marxist literary theory should be rebuilt; Wang Youjiang believed that to realize the sinicization of Marxist literary theory, it is necessary to do a good job of "five always adherence";³ Yu Yun held that the road to the future development of Marxist literary theory in China is to adhere to the globalization dimension and so on.

These studies indicate that the question of how to Sinicize Marxist literary theory in China is only stated in a few words. There is no detailed and complete discussion, and most of them talk to themselves, let alone forming a systematic theory.

² Ma Chi, Zhu Yin Hai. A Difficult Exploration of the Sinicization of Marxist Literary Theory — A Summary of the "Symposium on the Sinicization of Marxist Literary Theory" and the 24th Annual Meeting of the National Marxism-Leninism Literary Theory Research Association [J]. Heilongjiang Social Science, 2007 (06).

³ Yu Yun. On the Sinicization and Globalization of Marxist Literary Theory [J]. Oriental Magazine, 2006 (04).

In general, the research direction of the sinicization of Marxist literary theory is based on "adhering to the sinicization of Marxist literary theory", but there is no clear direction or guidance on how to form the "sinicization" of a systematic Marxist literary theory. When studying these issues, it is necessary to know exactly what "sinicization" is. Because there is a situation in the academic world, people like to "Sinicize" all problems, but for some problems, it is not appropriate to "Sinicize", so there is a phenomenon of "pan-sinicization". This expression of putting a "sinicization" hat on all issues is inaccurate. Most people don't understand the slogan of "adhering to the sinicization of Marxist literary theory" that is called out at any time and at any time. Most people are not completely clear about what should be "Sinicized", what should not be "Sinicized", and what kind of situation should be Sinicized under certain circumstance. The academic community has also worked hard to make some definitions and put forward some insights in this regard, but this issue itself is complicated and can't be generalized. Most of the specific explanations of "how to Sinicize" advocated by some scholars are not practical, giving a sense of empty words and stereotyped speaking.

III. PROSPECTS FOR THE FUTURE

Faced with the sinicization of Marxist literary theory, what is more worthy of discussion is how to develop it in the future. It is necessary to not only grasp the overall situation from a macro perspective, give the overall development direction, but also point out a clear path from a specific method.

A. *The direction of the sinicization of Marxist literary theory*

After generations of Chinese people's continuous efforts in a century, the Chinese Marxist literary theory gradually perfected and is accepted by people. However, Chinese Marxist literary theory are still under development, which determines that it must continuously contribute its own strength to the problems arising in the development of Chinese literature and art, and lead the continuous development and improvement of Chinese literature and art. In this regard, in-depth practice from the following aspects needs to be carried out.

First of all, it is necessary to understand the basic principles of Marxist literary theory and establish its basic discipline principles. The central meaning, direction, and principle of Marxist literary theory are important indicators for judging whether it is scientific, and a combination of humanity and historical spirit that regards human autonomy and overall social development as the main significance. The humanistic theory and the application of the humanistic spirit have clarified the central meaning of Marxist literary theory, and have made the inherent meaning of Marxist literary and artistic theories and the advantages of scientific theory prominent. This not only provides theoretical basis for the modern creation and modernization of Marxist literary theory in China, but also makes the connotation and concept of Marxist literary theory for modern literary and artistic

activities prominent. The development of the sinicization of Marxist literary theory is in line with the core values of the current world and echoes the core spirit of creating a socialist theory with Chinese characteristics. It is the connotation theory and behavior orientation taking the people as the fundamental. The combination of humanism and historical spirit originally reflects that the humanistic spirit is formed by historical development. It is ideal and practical, and its intrinsic value keeps pace with the development of the times. The humanistic spirit of Marxist literary theory particularly reflects the progress of the times and the outstanding style of facing the masses.

Second, it is necessary to make full use of multiple theoretical resources. In the most recent 100 years of the sinicization of Marxist literary theory, the natural and philosophical social sciences all over the world have gained strong theoretical advancement and knowledge expansion. The world's leading culture and China's own cultural activities have also experienced various changes. It is necessary to integrate resources with Marxist literary theory, and study the research from a global perspective. If the exploration of Marxist literary theory naturally follows the traditional conservative ideas, so that the exploration of Marxist literary theory is focused on itself without the contrast of multiple resources, it will not only fail to fully highlight the inherent meaning of Marxist literary theory, but also make Marxist literary theory tend to be onefold.

Third, it is necessary to pay attention to the practice of contemporary literature and art development. One of the outstanding and prominent features of Marxist ideology and theory is practicality. Classic Marxist writers pay attention to understanding and changing the world through people's practical activities. Only practicality, the most essential characteristic, can promote the development of Marxist literary theory in today's academic world. It is necessary to create Marxist literary theories, study modern literary and artistic phenomena through theory, continue to modern cultural activities, and perfect the theoretical structure in the practice of cultural activities. Attaching importance to the development of Marxist literary theory in China has provided a favorable situation for enriching and enhancing the connotation of Marxist literary theory and modern literary and artistic activities.

B. *Specific countermeasures for the development of Marxist literary theory in China*

The current inquiry into the sinicization of Marxist literary theory should explore the archetypes of Marxism, and fully understand the various requirements of literary and artistic activities, and develop based on existing achievements. At this level, introspection of the development of Marxist literary theory in China is the meaning of creating a Marxist literary theory with more disciplinary theoretical value and activity value.

First, it is necessary to ensure that the methodology used is correct. The smooth development of Marxist theory in China is inseparable from the correct methodology and the

correct specific methods. As far as methodology is concerned, it is necessary to take materialist dialectics as the basis of Marxist literary theory. This is because the laws of materialist dialectics reflect the general connection between human society and the field of human thinking in nature. The law of materialist dialectics is the general law of nature, human society, and human thinking. However, it should be seen that materialist dialectics as a methodological foundation must also be combined with specific methods in order to exert its great guiding role, otherwise it will be suspended and eventually lose its important position as a methodological foundation.

The adoption of specific methods for the sinicization of Marxist literary theory is restricted by various factors. These factors must be carefully studied in order to use the most effective methods to achieve goals. The Marxist literary theory itself is worthy of attention because it is the object Chinese people want to localize in China, and its basic characteristics directly restrict the direction, approach and method of sinicization in China. Marxist literary theory is the result obtained by Marxist theorists using Marxist positions, viewpoints, and methods to study literary and artistic theoretical issues. This shows that to make the theory Sinicized, it is also necessary to stand on the Marxist stand, apply basic Marxist viewpoints, and conduct it under the guidance of materialist dialectics. At the same time, it is necessary to fully understand the tradition and current situation of Chinese art. What Chinese people have to do now is not only to inherit Marxist literary theory, but also to combine it with the actual development of China as a standard for the development of Marxism in China. Chinese people must find a development path that is suitable for China; because once it deviates from China's basic national conditions it will lead to the failure of the sinicization of the theory. When respecting and studying the history and current situation of Chinese literature and art, it is necessary to carry out specific analysis and reveal what has great value and vitality, including specific methods, so that it can better serve Chinese culture.

Second, the specific approach to the sinicization of Marxist literary theory should be based on China and suit China's national conditions. The starting point should be to solve the problems raised in the practice of Chinese literary and artistic creation and appreciation. Chinese culture is different from western culture. In the long history of development, the Chinese nation has formed its own unique splendid culture, which is very different from other nations in the world, containing breathtaking art culture. Chinese contemporary literature and art, along with the continuous and in-depth development of reform and liberalization, has also shown a flourishing scene. The sinicization of Marxist literary theory should be based on the uniqueness of Chinese classical literature and modern and contemporary literature and art, and combine this theory with the essence of China's current cultural foundation to illustrate and explain the uniqueness of Chinese literature and art, solve problems in the evaluation, criticism and inheritance of Chinese classical literature and art, and solve various problems in the

appreciation and creation of contemporary Chinese literature and art. Then the adoption of specific methods must take into account this status quo, otherwise, it will make the sinicization of Marxist literary theory like the moon in the water and the flower in the mirror, which is within sight but beyond reach.

Third, the specific method of Sinicize Marxist literary theory should advocate pluralism. The specific methods are means, tools, bridges and rafts that cross the river. In this case, there is no need to be limited to a specific method. Any method that can more effectively achieve the purpose can be used. Based on this thinking, it is believed that the use of plural specific methods can better achieve the goal of sinicization of Marxist literary theory.

The problems of Chinese literature and art are very complicated. They involve both the study of literature and art in a long history and the research of various issues arising and emerging in contemporary Chinese literature and art. Among these issues, different basic aspects are touched upon: there are both creative and critical issues. From another point of view, these issues can be examined both from the inside of literature and art, and from the relationship between literature and other parts of ideology, the history and culture of society, and the economic foundation. This shows that in the face of a variety of specific problems, any specific method has both its powerful aspects and weakness. For example, as a specific method, psychological method can be used to analyze the psychology of creation, psychology of appreciation and psychological activities of characters in works and other related problems in Chinese literature and art, but it is difficult to deal with many other problems, such as the change of versions and the relationship with social and economic forms. Another example is to use sociology to explain the relationship between art and politics in China's literature and art, and the relationship with socio-economic forms. However, when answering questions about the creation techniques and performance methods of Chinese literature and art, it can do nothing.

At the same time, the specific method of sinicization of Marxist literary theory advocates pluralism. Attention should also be paid to absorbing various research methods of western literary and artistic theories outside the category of Marxist literary theory. Especially since the 20th century, the study of western modern and contemporary literary and artistic theory has presented a complex pattern of rapid genre changes, multiple research methods, and diverse research issues, which has greatly deepened the study of literary and artistic theory, showing unprecedented good posture in terms of the breadth and exploratory of the research. In terms of specific research methods, various methods have come one after another, which have played a huge role in promoting the deepening of research, such as: psychoanalytic methods, semantic methods, phenomenological methods, semiotic methods, structuralist methods, hermeneutics methods and deconstruction methods and so on. The use of these methods can promote the development and innovation of the cultural field, and then form different cultural factions, which play a huge role in deepening most theoretical issues. For the

development of the sinicization of Marxist literary theory, it is very useful to conditionally borrow or even introduce these specific methods.

IV. CONCLUSION

In short, the sinicization of Marxist literary theory has a long way to go. Taking materialist dialectics as the basis of methodology as well as extensively absorbing ancient and modern Chinese and foreign methods worthy of reference and learning, is conducive to the maximum realization of the sinicization of Marxist literary theory, and has important research value.

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