



The Historical Logic of the Ideological Changes of Chinese Learning as Substance, Western Learning for Application of Modernization

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Abstract. Since the late Qing Dynasty, the idea of "Chinese Learning as Substance, Western Learning for Application" has had a great political and social impact, but the debate on this idea has never been interrupted. During the period of the Foreign Affairs Movement, "Western learning from the Chinese source" and "Chinese origin from the West" coexisted, and the officials of the Foreign Affairs School relied on the authority of their saintly ancestors to promote modernization and reform, and actively introduced advanced Western technology, which became a compromise accepted by all parties at that time. At the time of the Hundred Days Reform, the idea of "Chinese Learning as Substance, Western Learning for Application" was divided into two paths: Westernization and Restoration which constituted two important poles that shaped the political fate of the late Qing Dynasty. By sorting out the historical changes of this ideology, we can clarify the influence of social trends in the late Qing Dynasty on the choice of modernization and its limitations.

Keywords: Chinese Learning as Substance, Western Learning for Application; Chinese Learning First, Western Learning End; Self-Strengthening Movement; Hundred Days Reform

1 Introduction

In the modernization process of the late Qing Dynasty, the idea of "Chinese Learning as Substance, Western Learning for Application" was regarded as the action idea of the Self-Strengthening Movement, which occupied an extremely important role and position. [1] The outbreak of the first Opium War in 1840 had a powerful external impact on the Qing Dynasty's "Celestial Empire" system and opened the beginning of modern Chinese history. A small number of educated people began to realize the strength of Western ships and artillery, and believed that Western had merit, advocating the application Of Western while maintaining the substance of China. At the end of the Second Opium War, in order to cope with the new international situation, Prince Gong Yixin, together with Guilian and Wenxiang, submitted the "Six

Articles of Discretionary Regulations on the Overall Situation of Barbarian Affairs", which marked the beginning of Self-Strengthening Movement.

In the following three decades, three major reform groups were formed in the late Qing Dynasty: first, the central government headed by Prince Gong; second, local governors represented by Zeng Guofan, Li Hongzhang, Zhang Zhidong and Zuo Zongtang, who set up a series of government-run enterprises aiming at the modernization of military industry and naval defense; third, the nationalists who pursued "self-improvement" and "seeking wealth", including Chong Hou, Shen Baozhen and Liu Kunyi, advocated learning Western electricity, chemistry, ships, trains, machines, guns, newspapers and schools, etc. With the rise of the foreign affairs movement, the idea of "Chinese Learning as Substance, Western Learning for Application" was also gradually known to the court. What is "Chinese Learning as Substance, Western Learning for Application"? Generally speaking, it means "the Chinese Learning is the body, and the Western Learning is the application" [2]. In other words, the core idea of "Chinese Learning as Substance, Western Learning for Application" was to maintain the traditional Chinese bureaucracy to the greatest extent possible while borrowing as much technology from the West as possible to achieve economic and military power.

However, at the very beginning of the emergence of this idea, the controversy over the cultural view of "the Chinese Learning is the body, and the Western Learning is the application" never ceased, and a group of enlightened scholars who adhered to traditional Chinese rites and rituals and a group of enlightened scholars who were in close contact with Western civilization had fierce arguments. In order to clarify the historical status of the idea of "the Chinese Learning is the body, and the Western Learning is the application", it is necessary to sort out the basic connotation of this idea and its historical transmutation process, and then analyze the role of this idea in the modernization exploration of the foreign affairs movement and even the late Qing Dynasty.

2 Self-Strengthening Movement: the Coexisting of “Chinese source of Western learning” and “Chinese Learning First, Western Learning End”

If the guiding ideology of education in the late Qing Dynasty was finally fixed on "the Chinese Learning is the body, and the Western Learning is the application", there was an evolutionary process during the period. With the continuation of time and the deepening of understanding, the connotation and extension of "the Chinese Learning is the body, and the Western Learning is the application" were gradually clarified. As early as the 1840s, influenced by Lin Zexu, Wei Yuan compiled *Haiguo Tu Zhi*, meaning *Illustrated Treatise on the Maritime Kingdoms*, and put forward the idea of "mastering the yiji in order to control them", and "mastering the yiji" was the original expression of "western learning for application"[3]. In his view, the strengths of "yiji", meaning the skills of the barbarians, were mainly reflected in warships, firearms, and the method of raising and training soldiers. The "yiji" was included in

the imperial examinations in order to select talents who knew Western military technology. However, both Wei Yuan and Lin Zexu, did not mention Western learning, their understanding of the Western "better technology" is still quite superficial, shallow, it is impossible to rise to the level of "Western learning".

As the Self-Strengthening Movement entered, the country's understanding and learning of Western Learning continued to expand. In 1861, Feng Guifen proposed in his "Cai Xi Xue" that "the original Chinese ethical and famous teachings should be supplemented by the techniques of wealth and power of various countries", which became an early expression of the relationship between "Chinese Learning" and "Western Learning" [4]. This became an early expression of the relationship between "Chinese Learning" and "Western learning" [4]. He not only gave a clear definition of Western learning for the first time, but also elaborated on the relationship between Chinese Learning and Western learning, that is, "to take the Chinese morals and teachings as the origin, and supplement them with the arts of wealth and power of various countries". When talking about the relationship between Chinese Learning and Western Learning, Li Hongzhang distinguished between the "clear reasoning" of Chinese Learning and the "refined art" of Western Learning, and believed that Western Learning were only "taught by its method" in order to maintain The "Chinese civil and military system", which was "far superior to the Westerners in everything", was the root, and the "Chinese civil and military system" could not be shaken, which was the foundation; while Western learning could not be said to be It is the end of the "way to turn danger into peace and weakness into strength", just as the prescription for the symptoms of an acute illness has to be used [5]. In order to deal with the opposition, from the main representatives of the foreign affairs faction to the general foreign affairs officials, they all took the "Chinese Learning First, Western Learning End" as the basic criterion for the relationship between Chinese Learning and Western learning. Therefore, the theory of "Chinese Learning as Substance, Western Learning for Application" as the guiding ideology of the Self-Strengthening Movement actually does not completely match with historical facts.

In order to trace the authority of the theory of "Chinese Learning First, Western Learning End", we have to mention the theory of "Chinese source of Western learning". The scholars who first proposed the "Chinese source of Western learning" theory were also trying to reduce the gap between Chinese and Western academics and facilitate the introduction of Western learning; since then, the "Chinese source of Western learning" theory has become an academic viewpoint representing the official Qing dynasty and has spread rapidly. Since the "Chinese source of Western learning" was decided by the "holy ancestors", it was naturally regained by some people. For example, in 1868, during the controversy over the establishment of the Tiansuanguan in Tongwenguan, when Wesin and others argued that learning Western methods was "to abandon Chinese methods and follow Westerners", Prince Gong used this argument to refute the attacks of Wesin and others, arguing that Western methods originally originated in China, and that China and the West were originally one family, with China creating its methods and Westerners innovating on the basis of them. Therefore, both the theory of "Chinese Learning First, Western Learning End" and the theory of "Chinese source of Western learning" were important theoretical

weapons for the reformist officials to deal with the opposing forces at the early stage of the Self-Strengthening Movement.

3 The Hundred Days Reform Period: Two theories of “Chinese Learning as Substance, Western Learning for Application”

Although the idea of "Chinese Learning as Substance, Western Learning for Application" was put forward in the early days of the Self-Strengthening Movement, it had nothing to do with the foreign affairs school. In the 1880s, it was argued and further developed by other early reformists. Nevertheless, up to 1894, there were still not many people who mentioned "Chinese Learning as Substance, Western Learning for Application", and it never replaced the idea of "Chinese Learning First, Western Learning End" as the programmatic slogan of the Self-Strengthening Movement. It was not until 1895, when the trend of revitalization rose, that "'Chinese Learning as Substance, Western Learning for Application" gradually became a popular slogan. In the following years, it seemed that "Chinese Learning as Substance, Western Learning for Application" became a universal principle acceptable to all kinds of people. By the time of the Hundred Days Reform, it gave people the impression that the entire imperial court had unanimously adopted "Chinese Learning as Substance, Western Learning for Application" as the guiding ideology of the change. However, due to the difference in focus, the understanding of the foreign officials and the reformist officials on the idea of "Chinese Learning as Substance, Western Learning for Application" diverged into two paths.

The reformists borrowed the theory of "Chinese Learning as Substance, Western Learning for Application" to guide the reform movement, focusing on the word "Huitong", meaning the "combine" of Chinese Learning and Western Learning, with the aim of finding a theoretical basis for the political and institutional reforms they wanted to implement. The aim was to find a theoretical basis for the political reforms they wanted to implement. From Guangxu Emperor to Kang Youwei, when they were determined to carry out the legal reform measures and express their arguments, they often put forward the slogan of "Chinese Learning as Substance, Western Learning for Application" as a natural slogan to serve as a protective talisman. In fact, Kang Youwei advocated and was basically adopted by the Guangxu Emperor to change the law based on Peter's reform and the Meiji Restoration, and his intention to change the ancestral system had become common knowledge. Accordingly, there was no way to conceal the breakthrough of the "Chinese Learning as Substance, Western Learning for Application" theory in Kang Youwei and Liang Qichao's "new school", and it was difficult to believe in the "Chinese Learning as Substance, Western Learning for Application" idea as a theoretical veneer anymore. Therefore, the reformists often criticized the "Westernism" theory. Therefore, the Westernists were often criticized by the Modernists for learning only the branches of the West, but not its fundamentals, so they "only knew how to change things, but not how to change the law", which was not helpful to the cause of saving the country.

In 1895, when the Self-Strengthening Movement was declared a failure, the contradictory relationship between the foreign affairs school and the conservative was eased, and the two tended to merge. On the one hand, the main tone of the cultural concept of the conservative gradually shifted from "xenophobia and rejection of foreign countries" to "Chinese Learning as Substance, Western Learning for Application"; on the other hand, the cultural concept of the foreign affairs school of "Chinese Learning as Substance, Western Learning for Application", though unchanged in form, gradually shifted from emphasizing the "Western application" against the old guard to emphasizing the "Chinese Substance" against the reformists [6]. Especially with the arrival of the climax of the change, the old ruling order was fatally shaken when the reform and foreign affairs were in a separate position, with Zhang Zhidong as the main representative of the foreign affairs officials were openly out and the reform to draw a line, and became the defenders of the law against the reform. This approach of theirs was certainly a strategy to protect themselves from the contrast of real political forces, but it also revealed that they had essential differences in cultural concepts and value orientations from the Kang and Liang's "new school".

Although the foreign affairs schools and conservatives constituted an important force in the opposition to the reformists, they still realized that it was an important and urgent imperative to study Western learning. At the same time, learning from the West and running foreign affairs were the necessary ways to determine the future of the country and to save it. Therefore, the "Chinese Learning as Substance, Western Learning for Application" in the Hundred Days' Reformation period divided into two ideological currents with tension, and in the radicals of the Reformation movement, the idea of "Chinese Learning as Substance, Western Learning for Application" had some meaning of total Westernization, which also attracted the criticism and cross-examination of the foreign affairs officials.

4 Conclusions

In the late Qing Dynasty, due to the massive influx of Western doctrines, scholars at that time invariably advocated the theory of Chinese source of Western learning and the theory of Chinese Learning First, Western Learning End, which also became a relatively eclectic solution for salvation and survival during the period of social transformation. It can be said that these two doctrines helped the Qing dynasty to take the initiative to learn Western science and technology and thus integrate into the world system during the Self-Strengthening Movement. However, with the development of reform, the shortcomings of this idea gradually emerged, and was quickly abandoned by reformers in the early 20th century. After the failure of the Self-Strengthening Movement, the idea of "Chinese Learning as Substance, Western Learning for Application" advocated by the foreign affairs school was severely criticized by the reformers of the Hundred Days Reform, and comprehensive learning of western political system gradually took the mainstream.

It should be said that the historical changes of the idea of "Chinese Learning as Substance, Western Learning for Application" reflect the internal logic of exploring

the modernization path in the late Qing Dynasty. The evolution of "Chinese Learning as Substance, Western Learning for Application" and its contradictions and conflicts reflect the contrast of power within the political elite group committed to promoting reform and development, and this group's interpretation of the relationship between China and the West determined the ultimate direction of reform in the late Qing Dynasty.

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