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Origin and Expansion of Chinese Sociology



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Foreword

Now, there are quite a few libraries, and there are several sociology libraries. Commissioned by the China Renmin University Press to host a sociological library under such circumstances, I have to ask myself: Is this library simply a number in quantity, or should it be provided with its own characteristics in quality as far as possible? This is an issue of positioning that this set of libraries will inevitably face. After consideration, the positioning of this library involves at least the following four aspects:

First, it is a research library. That is to say, the works in this library must be research and exploratory. If it is a research and exploratory library, the essential elements are associated with something new, that is, it is somewhat innovative, and therefore they are different from general informative, introductory, and compiling works. This is not to say that the latter is unimportant, but that the latter should have its own publishing channel because it is a different category.

Sociological research undoubtedly involves many aspects, including theoretical research and empirical research, qualitative research, and quantitative research. There are studies of social phenomena and sociology itself; and so on. This library welcomes all works that really have made research achievements; also, according to the requirements of the combination of internationalization and localization of sociology and the national conditions, it is focused on the following aspects:

- Research works that have deepened the understanding of the Chinese society in transition.
- Research works contributing to sociological theories with Chinese characteristics.
- Research works that are sure of the new development and trend of world sociology.

Second, it is a high-quality library. That is to say, in the research work, we value high-quality works. The so-called high-quality works should conform to at least one or all of the following items in terms of content: First, it can make a convincing analysis of social hot spots and focal issues of common concern from a sociological perspective, and it is recognized that it has insights and can stand the test of time

and history. Second, it can contribute to the realization of the deep concept of sociology that “enhances social progress and reduces social costs.” Third, it promotes the subject construction and theoretical innovation of sociology. Fourth, it promotes the internationalization and localization of Chinese sociology. In terms of form, it is necessary to have a narrative form that matches the content, have better readability, explain the profound in simple terms as far as possible, enjoy both elegance and vulgarity as much as possible, and be loved by everyone.

Third, it is a library that breathes new life into sociology. That is to say, through the research-oriented masterpiece, those “nobody” with little or no fame in the social circle, the new forces and the rising stars have increased their popularity to different degrees, and are introduced to the academic circle and society so that they can become academic celebrities as soon as possible. In this sense, this library may become one of the effective channels for training sociological talents. As we all know, there is no hope for subjects and academic circles without or lack of new forces. Of course, this is not to say that we can ignore the current academic celebrities in any sense. They are our most important force to rely on, and bear the responsibility of helping the backward. We sincerely hope that the existing academic celebrities and those who are about to stand out will make this library a veritable library of celebrities and play a greater role in academic circles and society.

Fourth, it is a library for different schools of thought to contend. An academic world without different schools of thought contending cannot be said to be mature. I have stressed many times in the social circle that “more schools and less sects.” Because the school dispute is about academic issues and academic viewpoints, using academic standards, they can fiercely argue with each other, but they are still friends. Sectarian disputes are based on nonacademic standards, uniting with those of the same views but alienating those with different views, showing the “spirit” of “whoever does not sing with us is our enemy.” Therefore, the disputes between the schools contain good intentions, and they compete with each other to promote academic studies; however, the disputes between sects contain bad intentions, and they attack each other, hindering academic studies. If this library has played its due positive role in promoting the formation of sociological schools with different views and the fruitful contention of different schools, we will be very pleased. This library will treat all schools with different views equally.

In short, we sincerely hope that this library can produce research results, excellent products, famous people and schools. In short, we regard the “Four productions” as the orientation of the sociology library of China Renmin University Press.

The ancients once said such a meaning, positioning on a “high level”, you may achieve a “middle level”; positioning on a “middle level”, you may achieve a “low level”. This positioning of “Four Productions” in this library should be at a “high level” from the target, but there are still two possibilities for the results: “High level” or “middle level”. We hope to be able to fight for the former possibility and avoid the latter. Finally, the readers and time will have the final say.

It should be noted that this library was published at an unusual time.

First of all, in terms of policy environment and institutional conditions, or in terms of domestic atmosphere and international environment, Chinese sociology is in its best promising period of development since the founding of New China. Now, sociology, which is one of the basic subjects of philosophy and social science to be strengthened, has been confirmed. People are more and more aware of the importance of social factors, i.e., noneconomic factors, to reform, development, and stability, thus realizing that sociology with noneconomic factors as its starting point, like economics with economic factors as its research object, is a science closely related to everyone's real life, and is a science to promote reform, development and stability. It is felt that there are many problems that need to be looked at and interpreted from the perspective of sociology, and realized that theoretical research and empirical research of sociology are the basic links for formulating social policies in line with the actual situation. People gradually understand sociology from zero. Some sociological terms (such as community, socialization, vulnerable groups, social transformation, benign operation, etc.) have become increasingly popular, some of which have also been adopted and used by the government departments. This provided top-down institutional conditions and bottom-up social atmosphere for the development of Chinese sociology. After fierce competition, Chinese sociologists won the right to host the 36th World Sociological Congress by the Institute of Sociology of the Chinese Academy of Social Sciences in Beijing in July 2004, the theme of which is "Social Changes in the Context of Globalization". At present, European and American sociologists are very concerned about the change of Chinese society and the research of Chinese sociology. There is no doubt that in the pattern of world sociology, compared with the strong sociology in Europe and America, Chinese sociology is still weak sociology in terms of scale, investment, achievements, and influence. The power sociological circle pays so much attention to the study of Chinese society, which is both a heavy pressure and a powerful motive force for further development for the Chinese sociological circle rooted in the local society. Under such circumstances, it should be said that it is the right time to publish this library. We hope to live up to such good conditions.

Secondly, this unusual nature also shows that the world sociology is in the process of self-reflection and reconstruction. This trend of self-reflection and reconstruction is not developing with no reason, but is based on reality. This is the decline of old modernity and the rise of new modernity. In my opinion, the decline of the old modernity and the rise of the new modernity not only affect the internationalization of Chinese sociology, but also the localization of Chinese sociology. I would like to say a few more words on this point.

The so-called old modernity is the modernity that centers on conquering nature and controlling resources and is based on the disharmony between society and nature, society and individual, and society and nature. During the transition period from the twentieth century to the twenty-first century, the landscape of global social life showed signs of a major turning point, witnessing: Human's adverse action on nature has resulted in more and more serious "green punishment" and tension between man and nature, even "the war of human being on nature has become a war of human self-destruction." The competition for resource control power caused by

the stimulation of human desire and the shortage of resources cannot but lead to the distortion of value standards, the distortion of ethical standards and the deterioration of the relationship between individuals and society. The old modernity has entered an obvious crisis period. In this way, exploring new modernity has become an imperative trend in the world and in China.

The so-called new modernity refers to modernity that is people-oriented, win-win between man and nature, win-win between man and society, harmonious between the two, and reduces the natural cost and social cost to the minimum. From the tremendous social progress made and the various social costs paid during the acceleration of China's social transformation, we can personally understand the profound meaning of the new modernity from both positive and negative aspects.

As far as the relationship between the two types of modernity and sociology is concerned, the old modernity forged the previous sociology—its sensibility and imagination, questioning and vision, and even the limits of its theoretical aspirations and expectations. When modernity is facing a major turning point, it must also be the day of social reconstruction, personal reconstruction, and the reconstruction of the relationship between individuals and society. Sociology is inevitably involved in the process of fundamental change of presupposition, major adjustment of vision, theoretical recasting, and regeneration.

In response to the old modernity, there are not only new modernity but also post-modernity. If the new modernity is a positive reflection on the old modernity, the post-modernism advocating post-modernity is generally a negative and negative response to the old modernity. Postmodernism is right to criticize the malady of old modernity, but its solution is not to eliminate the malady, but to abandon even modernity, and thus go to extremes. Its so-called “deconstruction” of society and knowledge base does not help to promote social harmony.

Therefore, in such a historical period when the old modernity is declining and the new modernity is booming, Chinese sociology must conform to the requirements of the times, keep up with the pace of the reconstruction of world sociology, and opens up new theoretical space in theoretical research combined with China's reality. And through the edification of our unique experience in the rapid transition period, the subjectivity, consciousness, and sensitivity of the Chinese sociological circle have been greatly improved and will help to achieve this goal.

We also sincerely hope that this library will play its due role in promoting the above goals.

As a preface to this library, I would like to share my thoughts with you.

August 2003

Zheng Hangsheng
Qihe Wenxuan

Value Pursuit and Theoretical Vision of Chinese Sociology: Preface

Since Yan Fu and Kang Youwei talked about sociology, Chinese sociology has experienced a history of more than 100 years. An in-depth study of the formation and historical evolution of Chinese sociology will reveal that although Chinese sociology is closely related to Western sociology, it is very different from Western sociology in value pursuit, academic mind, and theoretical vision because of the particularity of Chinese sociology in ideological origin, realistic basis, and facing problems. Clarifying the basis and inevitability of these differences, we can not only grasp the historical status and academic value of Chinese sociology, but also draw useful enlightenment for the contemporary construction of Chinese sociology.

Value Pursuit of National Rejuvenation

Both Western sociology and Chinese sociology were born by facing the social crisis. The social crisis faced by Western sociology when it was born is mainly social disorder caused by class struggle; therefore, Comte's fundamental task for empirical sociology is to rebuild social order. The social crisis faced by Chinese sociology was mainly caused by the invasion of foreign powers; therefore, Yan Fu, Kang Youwei, et al. proposed the fundamental task for Chinese sociology to call for national unity and self-improvement and realize national rejuvenation.

There is no doubt that the reconstruction of social order and the realization of national rejuvenation are clear values. As far as this is concerned, Western sociology has not been value neutral since its birth, and Chinese sociology has also shown a strong pursuit of value. In the later development history of Western sociology and Chinese sociology, no academic school or sociologist can be found to treat the real social or social problems in which he is in a position of value neutrality, so Weber's idea of value neutrality in sociological research is just an unrealizable academic illusion.

The pursuit of value was originally the extension of the principle of subject, but it was considered to be obedience to the law of object in Comte's opinion. Because

Comte believed that social order is as inevitable as the laws of stars,¹ the essence of pursuing the reconstruction of social order is to understand and obey the objective laws. Although Comte also acknowledged that there are people in the social order as an element of order,² he finally determined the task of empirical sociology from the scientific perspective of physicists. The Western sociology introduced by Yan Fu is Spencer's biological sociology with more strict objectivity or scientificity than Comte's pursuit. Influenced by Spencer, Yan Fu also used objective laws to explain the value ideal that China should reform and strengthen.³

However, not only does the disaster of the national crisis make Chinese sociologists feel the seriousness of the problem, but also the fact that they are indifferent to the national consciousness in the face of the national crisis makes Chinese sociologists feel the most serious is the subjectivity of the national dullness or even numbness. Therefore, early Chinese sociologists, including Yan Fu, soon developed a humanistic spirit focusing on subjective enlightenment from the scientific spirit focusing on objective laws. Related to the humanistic spirit focusing on education, sociology was first translated by Yan Fu as Qunxue and spread in Chinese academic circles. Sociology was translated into Qunxue, not only because Xunzi talked about Qunxue, but more importantly because he expressed the Chinese sociologist's desire for unity and self-improvement. Therefore, Yan Fu, Kang Youwei, Liang Qichao, et al. had different ways of disseminating and studying Qunxue from Spencer's. Their main focus was not on the analysis of Qunxue, but on calling on Chinese people to synthesize groups, exert group strength, unite against enemies and revive China.

Unity and gregariousness are a strong call to the Chinese nation from the beginning of Chinese sociology and a strong humanistic spirit that Chinese sociology has just emerged. The humanistic spirit of Chinese sociology and the scientific spirit of Western sociology are not antagonistic relations like those in modern Western academic circles, but a fusion relationship mediated by the practical spirit of Chinese cultural tradition. Or in other words, Chinese sociology combines the scientific spirit of Western sociology with the humanistic spirit rooted in China, with the practical Chinese academic tradition.

The spirit of practical application in the Chinese academic tradition began in the late Ming and early Qing Dynasties, and developed rapidly through the school of textual research during the Qianlong and Jiaqing reigns to the late Qing Dynasty's studies of the new text of Confucian classics. Gong Zizhen, Liao Ping, Kang Youwei, et al. inherited the academic pursuit of returning to classics and focusing on objective evidence in the textology during the Qianlong and Jiaqing reigns, combining it with Zhuang Cunyu and Liu Fenglu's tradition of the studies of the new text of Confucian classics to form the studies of the new text of Confucian classics in the late Qing Dynasty. However, the studies of the new text of Confucian classics in the late Qing Dynasty can be regarded as one of the direct sources of

¹Comte (1996).

²Comte. *On Positive Spirit*, p. 41.

³Yan (1981).

modern Chinese scholarship. Although it has not yet reached the level of modern academic subject, that is, it has not been clearly divided into such subjects as literature, history, philosophy, politics, economics, and law, it has clearly contained some basic principles in modern subjects. As far as sociology is concerned, many basic principles and methods clearly identical to sociology can be found in the studies of the new text of Confucian classics in the late Qing Dynasty. For example, Gong Zizhen, et al. advocated the methods and principles of objectivity and factualism, inductive reasoning and focus on practicisim, which are consistent with those of empirical sociology.

However, in the late Qing Dynasty, the principle of practical application in the studies of the new text of Confucian classics was different from the empirical principle of pure worship of scientific spirit, and it also contained the affirmation of humanistic spirit. From Gong Zizhen and Wei Yuan's launch of the studies of the new text of Confucian classics to Kang Youwei's collection of the studies of the new text of Confucian classics, the positive spirit in the studies of the new text of Confucian classics is not only a scientific spirit, but also a political spirit or a national spirit. Wang Guowei criticized Gong Zizhen and Wei Yuan for not only academic but also academic, thus diluting academic pursuit with political demands.⁴ Liang Qichao held a positive attitude toward the tendency of politicizing academic studies in the late Qing Dynasty. He clearly pointed out that Kang Youwei's contribution lies not only in advocating pragmatism, but also in politicizing the studies of the new text of Confucian classics, that is, integrating the academic research in the studies of the new text of Confucian classics directly with the national crisis and revival. This is not only the demand of Chinese academic studies from the contradiction of Chinese social reality, but also the unshirkable mission of Chinese academic studies and a sign of Chinese academic progress beyond emptiness.⁵

The national spirit and political spirit in the studies of the new text of Confucian classics in the late Qing Dynasty are a concrete and true humanistic spirit. The humanistic spirit started from the Renaissance, when humanists faced the mission of the abstract noumenon of confronting divinity with human nature and God with the survival value of the individual. Therefore, humanists called for human nature to be individual; The studies of the new text of Confucian classics in the late Qing Dynasty attached no less importance to the survival value of human beings than humanists, but the problem they faced was not the suppression of personality by the general body, but the destruction of the Chinese nation caused by foreign invasion. In short, the issue of Chinese people in the late nineteenth century was not a personal one at first, but a whole issue of the Chinese nation that embraces all Chinese people. Therefore, if we care about the Chinese and save them, we must first care about the survival of the Chinese nation, which was the true and concrete humanistic spirit on the Chinese soil in the late nineteenth century.

⁴Wang (1983).

⁵Qichao (1989).

Human nature is the unity of individuality and sociality. The human nature called by the Renaissance Movement is individuality, while the human nature called by the late Qing Dynasty's studies of the new text of Confucian classics and even the early Chinese sociology is collectivity and nationality, that is, the sociality of human beings. In this sense, the humanistic spirit of the studies of the new text of Confucian classics in the late Qing Dynasty and the early Chinese sociology are complementary to the humanistic spirit that emerged in the Renaissance. In fact, it is one-sided to emphasize only individuality and only sociality. This truth was recognized after the further development of Chinese sociology. Liang Qichao's idea of reforming national character and educating new people from calling for social integration clearly shows that he had a unified understanding of human sociality and individuality.

Since Gong Zizhen and Wei Yuan, the studies of the new text of Confucian classics in the late Qing Dynasty has been an open academic tradition, and therefore, the dominant scientific spirit in Western academic circles has had a strong impact on the late Qing Dynasty's studies of the new text of Confucian classics. Gong Zizhen attached importance to induction and verification; Kang Youwei studied mathematics, physics, and chemistry and followed geometry in writing the *Pandect of Practical Reasoning and Public Law*.⁶ However, no matter how much they attach importance to and study Western science, the national crisis cannot but become a serious fact that they must face up to first. Only by saving the nation and protecting the species first, and then learning Western science and technology, can it have practical significance to the Chinese nation. Therefore, saving the nation and protecting the species and reviving China are the first essence in the studies of the new text of Confucian classics in the late Qing Dynasty, and paying attention to demonstration and learning science are only ways and means to realize this essence.

The late Qing dynasty's studies of the new text of Confucian classics represented by Kang Youwei incorporated the thinking about social systems, social actions, and social structures into the political program of their reforms. The rich research on social life aims to support their social reformist politics. Therefore, the late Qing Dynasty's studies of the new text of Confucian classics were introduced to Chinese sociology, which is a clear political purpose and a strong value requirement rooted in the major changes in Chinese society. This political purpose and value requirement is precisely the root of Chinese sociology, at the time of crisis, to become the root cause of the new academics that Chinese intellectuals are keenly concerned about. In the late Qing Dynasty and early Republic of China, a large number of outstanding intellectuals such as Tan Sitong, Liang Qichao, Zhang Binglin, Wang Guowei, Li Dazhao, Qu Qiubai, Li Da, Zhou Gucheng, and Liang Shuming actively participated in sociological research, which is inseparable from their expectations for the value of sociological research. Suppose, if sociological research does not have political goals and values closely related to social life at that time, how can it attract a large number of enthusiastic intellectuals to actively participate in the national crisis?

⁶Kang (1998).

Collection of Academic Mind

Chinese sociology has an academic mind that gathers different views, and this broad mind was developed by Yan Fu and Kang Youwei at the beginning of its creation. There are different opinions about who was the founder of Chinese sociology. Some people think that Yan Fu first introduced Western sociology, so Yan Fu is the pioneer of Chinese sociology; others think that Kang Youwei taught Qunxue at Wanmu Caotang in Guangzhou in 1891, so the founder of Chinese sociology should be Kang Youwei. It can be seen that both statements are well founded. In fact, Yan Fu and Kang Youwei were the founders of Chinese sociology, but they started Chinese sociology from different angles. Kang Youwei mainly carried out sociological research according to Chinese academic tradition, while Yan Fu mainly promoted the dissemination of sociological theories by introducing Western sociology. The former represents the endogenous nature of Chinese sociology, while the latter represents the exogenous nature thereof.

The academic beginning of internal and external introduction shows that the establishment of Chinese sociology is not only a simple introduction to Western sociology, but also shows that Chinese sociology inherited the academic essence of the Chinese cultural tradition from the very beginning. On the one hand, the dualistic beginning of Chinese sociology requires people to consider the influence of Western sociological thoughts and methods on Chinese sociology when studying the history of the formation and evolution of Chinese sociology, and at the same time to examine the formation and development of Chinese sociology in the evolution of Chinese modern academic history.

It is very important to recognize the dualistic beginning of Chinese sociology. This first shows that Chinese sociology is not only an imported product, but also has a local origin of Chinese sociology. It should not unilaterally investigate the origin of Chinese sociology in terms of translation or introduction of Western sociology, as most of the current writings on Chinese sociology have done, but should also explore the local basis for the formation and development of Chinese sociology in the course of the changes and evolution of Chinese modern academic studies. Secondly, the dualistic beginning of Chinese sociology also shows that Chinese sociology should not only be evaluated and explained by the conceptual framework of Western sociology, but should also pay attention to finding out the questions and answers of Chinese scholars to Chinese social problems with non-Western concepts rooted in Chinese social reality and derived from academic tradition, and should evaluate the sociological thoughts of Chinese thinkers who did not appear in the conceptual system of Western sociology in connection with Chinese cultural tradition, academic tradition and social reality.

It is precisely because the beginning and development of Chinese sociology are only linked with the introduction of Western sociology that some writings only use the concept of Western sociology to examine and edit the history of Chinese sociology, while the research achievements on Chinese society were inherited from Chinese academic tradition, which are not directly related to Western sociological

viewpoints and methods and are excluded from the history of Chinese sociology, so that the history of Chinese sociology seen by people is a history of academic transportation for the introduction and dissemination of Western sociology. At present, a common phenomenon in Chinese social circles is: When it comes to new or more important sociological concepts, it is a must to pursue its Western source and indicate its Western vocabulary, otherwise its academic legitimacy will be questioned. It seems that Chinese scholars will not speak or even should not speak without the Western language.

History is not only a selective memory of past experiences, but also a restrictive expansion of future prospects. A subject is like a nation. How it chooses, records, and compiles its own history is not only a recognition and negation of the large number of events it has experienced, but also means that it will design and expand its future with certain figures, events, and examples that have been confirmed. Because there has never been such a pure and objective history as Ranke said, the historical texts and legends that people can see are indeed, as Colin Wood said, just the understanding of the predecessors by later generations, and this understanding contains the value principle of the reader.⁷ Therefore, history is not a mere statement, but an evaluation of the past, the present, and even the future.

As a simplified positivist principle is used to select, understand, and evaluate the history of Chinese sociology, many sociological thoughts that were originally Chinese sociologists' rich understanding, explanation, and criticism of Chinese society are confined to the history of Chinese sociology. For example, Kang Youwei's institutional sociology thought of "seeking common ground while eliminating boundaries" and Liang Qichao's theory of "historical group theory" and "new people's education" are all direct in-depth thinking and profound exposition of China's social system, social organization, and social modernization, but these sociological thoughts or theories rooted in China's mainland cannot be described and commented on in the research literature on the history of Chinese sociology.

The interpretation principle of Chinese sociology on the history of Chinese sociology is consistent with its understanding principle of contemporary Chinese society, and its consistent basis lies in the sociological view of the Chinese sociologist. Hegel once pointed out that any philosophical view can write its own history of philosophy. The same argument applies to sociology. Chinese sociology is writing a simplified history of Chinese sociology with limited Western sociological concepts, and it also faces the current social reality of China with limited Western sociological concepts. If we do not look back on how Chinese sociologists studied and answered Chinese social problems in history, it is difficult to find the limitations of this field of vision only by observing the limited empirical concepts and methods used by Chinese sociology to study Chinese reality. If we face up to the actual historical evolution of Chinese sociology, we will clearly find the drawbacks of this vision.

The early Chinese sociology, which was started by Yan Fu and Kang Youwei and laid the foundation for by Liang Qichao, was a notable doctrine in Chinese

⁷Collingwood (1986).

academic circles at the end of the 19th century and the beginning of the 20th century. It was a leading discipline that had a great impact on the social development and changes in modern China, had a public right of discourse and led Chinese academic circles and even the spirit of the whole era. The reason why early Chinese sociology had such an important position and great influence was not only Yan Fu's introduction of Darwinian, Huxley, and Spencer's theory of evolution, but also Kang Youwei and Liang Qichao's further role in China's enlightenment spirit since modern times. It is precisely in the pluralistic unification of thoughts of Western learning and tradition of Chinese learning and the equal emphasis on scientific spirit and humanistic spirit that early Chinese sociology infiltrated all levels of Chinese society in various forms and through various channels, contributing to the reform and reconstruction of Chinese society at that time and leading the voyage.

After the Revolution of 1911, Chinese sociology entered a period of diversified development. Positive sociology, cultural sociology, and Marxist sociology displayed their own style vigorously in Chinese academic circles almost at the same time. Chinese sociology developed itself with a broader academic mind. In the 1920s, Yan Enchun, Yi Jiayue, Pan Guangdan, Chen Changheng, et al. carried out research on family population according to the methodological principles of empirical sociology, while Li Jinghan, Tao Menghe, Chen Hansheng, etc. carried out field social investigation and research, all of which were earlier empirical sociological studies. However, these empirical studies also had different characteristics. Yan Enchun and Yi Jiayue's studies on family issues are similar to Kang Youwei's criticism of the Chinese family system in his *Datong Shu*. Pan Guangdan, on the other hand, carried out an empirical study on population fertility from the perspective of physiology or eugenics; Li Jinghan, Tao Menghe, Chen Hansheng, et al. not only went deep into the streets to carry out on-the-spot investigations, but also learned more specific situations through questionnaires and conducted quantitative statistics.

In 1921, Liang Shuming's *Eastern and Western Cultures and Their Philosophies* was published, which can be regarded as the beginning of Chinese cultural sociology.⁸ Between 1927 and 1929, Sun Benwen successively published a series of works on cultural studies from a sociological perspective, such as *Cultural Theory in Sociology*, *Culture and Society*, *Cultural Basis of Society* and *Social Change*. Liang Shuming's study on cultural sociology has strong local characteristics, which not only emphasized the difference between Chinese cultural tradition and Western cultural tradition, but also made an in-depth discussion on the basis, form, and special functions of Chinese culture. Sun Benwen's study on cultural sociology focused on academic research, and made a theoretical summary of Chinese cultural

⁸People usually call Liang Shuming the representative of China's rural construction school and his sociological theory the rural construction theory, which does not properly summarize Liang Shuming's sociological thought. It should be said that Liang Shuming's rural construction activities are the practice of his cultural sociology theory based on China's mainland. His theory of rural construction is only part of his broad vision of cultural sociology.

phenomena by using the concepts and methods of Western sociology and social psychology, showing a strong Western style.

Around 1920, Li Dazhao wrote articles such as *My View of Marxism* and *Value of Historical Materialism in Modern Sociology*, which set off a boom in the spread and development of Marxist sociology in China. After a few years, Qu Qiubai published *Modern Sociology* (1924) and *Introduction to Social Sciences* (1924), Li Da published *Modern Sociology* (1926), Mao Zedong wrote *Analysis of the Classes in Chinese Society* (1925) and *Investigation Report of the Peasant Movement in Hunan* (1927). These works not only played an important role in spreading Marxist sociology, but also directly guided the revolutionary practice led by the Communist Party of China, and also had a very deep influence on the emerging empirical sociology and cultural sociology.

By the 1930s, a community school represented by Wu Wenzao and Fei Xiaotong had arisen. The community school integrated the theories and methods of sociology and anthropology, and carried out a more in-depth study on China's social structure, social system, and social stratification and change. Fei Xiaotong conducted an on-the-spot investigation in Kaixiangong Village, Wujiang County, Jiangsu Province in the mid-30s, and later wrote the paper *Kaixiangong: An Economic Life in a Chinese Countryside* (in 1986, the paper was translated into Chinese by Dai Kejing, which was combined with and *Three Visits to Jiangcun* into one book, and named *Economy of Jiangcun* by Fei Xiaotong and published by Jiangsu People's Publishing House. In the late 1930s, Fei Xiaotong conducted a field survey in Lufeng County, Yunnan, and later wrote *Farmland in Lucun*. Although the community school, like the academic school represented by Sun Benwen, et al., has less influence on society than Yan Fu, Kang Youwei, and Liang Qichao, as well as Marxist sociology, cultural sociology, or rural construction school, it occupies an important position in the academic history of sociology due to its emphasis on in-depth and detailed community investigation and systematic theoretical explanation.

The purpose of presenting these historical facts here is to show that Chinese sociology started a situation of blending Chinese and Western cultures and various emerging academic schools. The prosperous and active situation of early Chinese sociology is the result of Chinese scholars inheriting the tradition, looking to the world, absorbing all kinds of talents and integrating all kinds of views with their profound academic background and broad academic mind. In the various documents of early Chinese sociology, we can not only find the sharp criticism between scholars based on different traditions, but also see their mutual tolerance, accommodation, and rich reference. Although early sociology also had differences of sects and traditions, there was no opposition and identification between orthodox and unorthodox in early sociology. Various academic sects gave different explanations to Chinese society at the same time, showing the richness of sociological understanding of real problems and the broad scope of vision. These are the basic conditions for early sociology to be established in the academic center of China and to play a significant role in China at the end of the nineteenth century and the beginning of the twentieth century.

Theoretical Vision of Reflection and Reconstruction

Unfortunately, the academic center status of early Chinese sociology has gradually declined since the 1940s, and the marginalization of sociology has quietly formed. Fei Xiaotong thought deeply about the marginalization of sociology at that time. In his view: “Whether sociology can become a special social science or not is still an unsolved problem. This involves the division of social sciences. If we admit that political science and economics have their special fields, we also admit that social science can be divided into social systems: Political science studies political system, economics studies economic system, etc. As many systems can be separated from social phenomena, many social sciences can be established. From this standpoint, the current social science is only a hometown that has not grown up. Once it grows up and becomes mature, it can split up and build its own home. This parable does illustrate a trend in modern sociology”.⁹

Fei Xiaotong’s comments do reflect a universal problem in the development of sociology, not only in Western sociology, but also in Chinese sociology. In the documents written by Yan Fu, Kang Youwei, Liang Qichao, et al., sociology has no clear boundaries with political science, economics and even philosophy, historiography, and other similar subjects. Many of their discussions, such as Kang Youwei’s criticism of hierarchy, race system, gender system and family system, Liang Qichao’s discussions on gregariousness, group governance, group evolution, national development, and education of new citizens, and Liang Shuming’s discussions on cultural orientation, ethical society, and social system, are all carried out from a comprehensive perspective of various disciplines. Moreover, it is this comprehensive vision that has enabled their discussions to make rich, concrete, and influential explorations of various aspects of China’s problems.

As far as the general development history of modern social science is concerned, the higher the degree of disciplinization of social science research is, the higher the academic status and academic influence of this discipline is, and so are economics, political science, legal science, and other disciplines. However, the situation of sociology is different. The history of sociology at home and abroad for more than 100 years shows that with the continuous improvement of the disciplinization level of sociology, the academic status and influence of sociology have not increased but decreased. Western sociology has transferred its academic center from Europe to the United States since Durkheim, and American sociology has begun the process of emphasizing normative discipline since the 1920s. At the same time, sociology has gradually lost the glory of classical sociologists such as Marx, Comte, Durkheim, and Weber in Europe. Besides Parsons’ theory, which is called grand discourse, other theories that the discipline considers more elaborate, such as symbolic interaction theory, exchange behavior theory and the study of street corner communities and workshop teams conducted by Chicago School, are all very

⁹Fei (1998).

limited sociological studies, not only in society. In the history of sociology, it can only be said that it occupied a very limited position.

The disciplinization of economics, political science, legal science, etc. is a deepening process in which research objects are further defined, research methods are more standardized and research contents are deeper and richer, while the discipline of sociology is a marginal process in which some important research contents are divided out, research methods are experienced, technical, and research contents are superficial. It can even be said that while the disciplines of economics, political science, legal science, etc. are developing into disciplines, sociology has been marginalized. Because, as Fei Xiaotong said, sociology originally existed as a parent discipline, and many studies of economics, political science, legal science, etc., were directly included in sociology. When these disciplines began to be disciplinized, it meant that some of the original important contents of sociology had to be separated from their own disciplines.

Needless to say, social phenomena such as economy, politics, and law are the center of modern social life, and the research object to be studied is bound to occupy the central position in social science research and will inevitably have a central effect on social life. When the study on these aspects is still included in sociology, sociology may maintain a central position and produce a central effect. Yan Fu, Kang Youwei, Liang Qichao, and early Marxist sociologists' comprehensive study on China's social life has established an undisputed central position in China's academic and social life, thus clearly proving this truth. In the meantime, China's social science research had achieved a relatively clear disciplinization by the 1940s. Economics, political science, legal science, etc., were separated from sociology, and Chinese sociology began to move from the center to the edge.

During the division of disciplines in Chinese sociology, it is also the process of Chinese sociology learning from American sociology, especially the Chicago School, emphasizing empiricism and metrology. The experience-based learning of sociological research can easily limit sociology to certain levels, regions, and even certain corners of social life, easily neglect the concern and thinking about the universality of social life, and despise the generalization of social problems from the ideological and theoretical point of view; Although the measurement of sociological research can make sociological research methods more delicate and make sociological research have quantitative indicators and mathematical models, thus showing strong standardization, the measurement of sociological research is also the beginning of narrowing the horizon and weakening the influence of ideas. From this point of view, the experience-based learning, and measurementization of sociology are bound to lead to the marginalization of sociological research.

The disciplinization, experience-based learning, and measurementization of Chinese sociology should also lead to excessive worship of scientific spirit and simple rejection of humanistic spirit. This situation not only manifested itself in the 1940s, but also became more evident after the reconstruction of Chinese sociology in the 1980s. In connection with the political confinement of Chinese sociology from the 1950s to the 1970s, most Chinese sociological researchers claimed to carry

out empirical scientific research from the beginning of the rebirth of Chinese sociology in the early 1980s, emphasizing empirical research and quantitative statistics, trying to promote the scientific spirit and downplay the humanistic spirit of early Chinese sociology to pay attention to political issues and pursue value ideals in an attempt to avoid political risks.

This research method, which emphasizes experience and measurement, does make sociology show a strong scientific spirit, but at the same time it also submerges the strong humanistic spirit at the beginning of Chinese sociology. Chinese sociology is motivated by scientific spirit and humanistic spirit, both of which should be carried forward. Whatever the old China during the Sino-Japanese War or the new China during the reform and opening-up period, the historical situation of Chinese society determines that it cannot rely solely on scientific spirit to dilute the humanistic spirit. The reconstructed Chinese sociology, which started at the same time as the reform and opening up, is faced with social contradictions that cannot be clearly understood and explained only by scientific principles and methods, and a large number of social contradictions arising from the profound changes in the social structure. Only with deep humanistic care and clear values can it be clearly explained, evaluated, and even criticized.

In the face of the tendency of Chinese sociology to emphasize only scientific principles and one-sided pursuit of experience and metrology since the 1980s, Fei Xiaotong has repeatedly advocated in his later years that sociological research should combine scientific spirit with humanistic spirit, not only to see the objectivity of social life and carry out empirical research, but also to pay attention to the subjectivity of social life and carry out evaluation and interpretive approach. Fei Xiaotong reflected on the experience and lessons of Chinese and Western sociological research, inherited the cultural tradition of the Chinese nation based on the social reality of China, and made a breakthrough exploration of the theoretical vision and methodological principles of Chinese sociology.¹⁰

Fei Xiaotong summarized his claim as an extension of the traditional boundary of sociology, which is the boundary of empiricism, objectification, and scientificity, the boundary of trying to study social phenomena as crops, and in the end, the research method of viewing and describing a society composed of human beings as a non-human society is a simplified academic tradition of positivism. As Fei Xiaotong said, social life has a physical side, but social life, more importantly, is to distinguish the personal side of a thing, that is to say, social life is the unity of physical property and human nature. Therefore, placing too much emphasis on studying society from the perspective of scientific objectivity and physics can only lead to a one-sided study of social life, and may even lead to the conclusion of dismembering and castrating the society.

¹⁰Fei (2004).

As far as Chinese sociological research is concerned, it is not only of great practical significance but also of deep historical foundation to pay attention to the subjectivity of social life, to carry out moralizing, explanatory and internality research on social problems, and to carry forward the humanistic spirit of sociological research. Because the traditional Chinese society is a society,¹¹ which is a structure of differential pattern formed by ties of kinship, and is an ethical society [*] “emphasizing reason” rather than “emphasizing physics”.¹² The way Chinese communicate with each other is not mainly based on objective scientific understanding, but an inexpressible understanding of “meaning” and “comparing oneself to another”. The long-term stability of China’s social structure for thousands of years depends not on the legal principles of conceptualization and logicalization, but on the order of etiquette and customs inherited from experience and tradition. All this shows that Chinese society has different existing structures and operating mechanisms from Western society, and requires that Chinese society be understood in terms of methods and principles different from Western sociology. All these reasons were discussed repeatedly by Fei Xiaotong in his later years.

Chinese sociology should not only base itself on the reality of contemporary China, but also take into account Chinese history. In the overall vision of the development and evolution of China’s real social changes and historical and cultural traditions, it should study the problems of contemporary China’s economic and social development with the ideological theory rooted in the reality of China’s experience. To realize this academic pursuit, it is not only necessary to learn but also necessary to create. Since the reconstruction of Chinese sociology, it has gone through a restless learning process for Western sociology, which is necessary for Chinese sociology that has been closed for more than 20 years, but should not be consistent. Learning is imitation, but learning without innovation can only be repetition. Chinese sociology should pursue innovation in ideological theory and research methods while studying advanced Western academics.

In short, no matter from the academic reflection and outlook of the older generation of Chinese sociologists, or from the development requirements of Chinese cultural tradition and social reality, Chinese sociology should break through the limitation of pure pursuit of scientization, empiricism, and metrology, develop a broader academic mind and theoretical vision under the banner of both scientific spirit and humanistic spirit, and give a deeper and more realistic creative answer to the historical evolution, realistic development, and future trend of Chinese economy and society.

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¹¹Fei Xiaotong, *From the Soil. The institutions for Reproduction*, p. 26.

¹²Liang (1994).

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Chapter 1

Introduction—Nature and Origin of Sociology



A clear disclosure of the origin of Chinese sociology is a prerequisite for understanding the historical evolution and future development of Chinese sociology. In order to clearly reveal the origin of Chinese sociology, we have to find out the answer to an inevitable and more prerequisite question, i.e., in what sense do we define the nature and boundary of sociology. The Western classical sociologists have made rich discussions on the nature and boundary of sociology, which provides us an important theoretical basis for us to answer this question. Therefore, before revealing the origin of Chinese sociology, we have to find out what discussions the Western classic sociologists have made on this question. Without clearly defining the nature and boundary of sociology, we cannot determine the starting point and scope of Chinese sociology. We cannot break through the existing narrow definition of sociology, and are thus impossible to give specific answers to the profound questions hidden in the origin of Chinese sociology unless we could understand the in-depth discussion by the Western classic sociologists on nature and boundary of sociology.

1.1 Concrete Beginning

What is the nature of sociology? It is an issue which has been discussed but abandoned from time to time, therefore still causing confusion today. The reason is: The variability and extensiveness of the subject of sociology in nature caused the widening of development horizon and theoretical scope. As a newly emerged discipline concerned with social life as a whole, sociology overlaps with the disciplines with clearly defined boundaries. Some sociologists have been trying to draw a clear borderline between sociology and other disciplines. As a result, they tend to define it with a relatively narrow concept, thus causing a contradiction between conceptual definition and horizon expansion. Therefore, people have been confronted with the puzzle—what on earth is the nature of sociology?

People generally turn to the classic sociologists for an answer to what sociology is. The first thing people should do is to make it clear that Auguste Comte is the founder

of sociology, and therefore Comte's definition of sociology becomes unquestionable, which is justified. However, the problem is that many scholars simplified the definition of sociology. As proposed by Comte, sociology should objectively study social order and progress with the methodology of physics. Therefore, sociology is essentially a positivistic science. Comte clearly defined the word "positivistic".

First, in its oldest and most common sense, the word *positivistic* means *real*, as opposed to *visional*..... Another meaning is similar, but not the same, meaning *useful* as opposed to *useless*..... In the third common sense, this ingenious word is often used to express the contrast between *affirmative* and *doubtful*..... The fourth common sense referring to *accurate* is mainly in contrast with *vague*. Finally, special attention should be paid to the fifth sense of the word, which, though equally universal, is less commonly used; People use the word *positive* as the opposite of *negative*. In this respect, it represents an outstanding attribute of modern true philosophy, while showing that, by its very nature, its mission is primarily to *organize* rather than to *destruct*.¹

Indeed, as Comte pointed out, people are familiar with the first four meanings of the word "positivistic". Therefore, when people try to understand sociology from the positivistic point, they tend to understand sociology from the first four meanings, ignoring the fifth meaning deemed by Comte as the most important concept of "positivistic". "The four general characteristics we have just mentioned distinguish it from all possible modes inherent in early philosophy regardless of whether they are theological or metaphysical. The last meaning indicates the lasting tendency of the new philosophical spirit. Now it is used to illustrate one of the main differences, which is of great significance. It is differential in terms of the so-called metaphysics (which has been merely critical) rather than theology (which has long been constructive)."²

These statements by Comte were published in 1844, by which time he had developed the concept of sociology. It can be clearly seen from Comte's discussion that he clearly defined sociology in the sense of revolutionary transformation in the history of human spirit. In other words, Comte believed that sociology is a new philosophy which is different from all the theologies and old philosophies. And its debut brought forth a revolution in the history of human spirit. For Comte, philosophy is not a discipline but wisdom, whose core is mode of thinking. Therefore, the positivistic sociology what Comte pursued, as a new philosophy, is a new mode of thinking, which is directly opposed to the German classical philosophy that emphasizes negativism or dialectical criticism. It treats the social reality it faces with the positive mode of thinking, that is, it does not focus merely on the change of reality as the dialectical philosophy does.

The positive mode of thinking is to look at social life with an integrated perspective, whose mission is to organize social life, i.e., integrating social life which has been split up to make it develop gradually in a stable and harmonious order. It is clearly distinct from the various class struggle theories and revolutionary theories of the Comte era in terms of attitude toward social life. It is on this principle that Comte put forward the basic task for sociological research: to reveal relatively the social

¹Comte. *On Positive Spirit*, pp. 29–30.

²Comte. *On Positive Spirit*, p. 30.

progress and order by observing and thinking over empirical facts. In addition, order overwhelms progress, where the latter is not practically meaningful unless it is integrated into order of various social conditions, otherwise it can only be a destructive change pursued by revolutionaries.

Accordingly, Comte treated the relativity of sociology as its fundamental characteristic. He said, “The only characteristic of the new philosophical spirit that isn’t indicated by the word ‘positivistic’ includes the inevitable tendency to replace absoluteness by relativity. Such an important scientific and logical attribute matches well with its basic nature of real knowledge. After overall investigation, one may easily associate the attribute with various senses hidden in the term. At that time, the modern intelligent model (so far still partial and positivistic) would gradually become systematic. The fifth sense we have just discussed is particularly appropriate to define the final new philosophical language; From then on, the new philosophical language was fully formed in line with the obvious connection between the two attributes.”³

Comte’s exposition about the relativity of sociology is of profound significance.

First of all, sociology, as a new philosophy, should replace the traditional philosophy in pursuit of absolute knowledge by that in pursuit of relativity, which means fictitious and superficial speculative philosophy will be replaced by life-oriented real thinking. In the positivistic study conducted in reality-oriented sociology, the knowledge acquired is not only scientific and logical but also consistent with the nature of real things which exist in specific conditions.

Second, the reality-oriented sociological studies conducted in the particular conditions will not be partial or restricted to empiricism. On the contrary, in sociology, systematic knowledge will be established which is based on both positivistic facts and nature of object. Sociology will effectively guide people with this systemic knowledge to pursue the social life in an organized manner, namely pursuit of social order and progress. Systematicness is not about a system but a specific and relatively complete understanding of the contingent and specific phenomena after investigating and thinking under specific conditions, thus having a general understanding of objects as a whole. Real things always exist in complex connections. When sociology conducts the relativity research in a down-to-earth way, the integrity of the real thing inevitably requires it to overcome the one-sidedness.

Third, sociology is organized and relative. The combination of these two fundamental characteristics marks the birth of sociology as a new mode of thinking. Based on the new mode of thinking, new knowledge different from traditional knowledge will be formed, which was named “new philosophical language” by Comte. This seems to indicate that Comte has realized that by adhering to the principles of organization and relativity, sociology will undergo a series of changes in terms of expression, conceptual framework, knowledge model, and so forth, i.e., the traditional academic research in sociology has undergone linguistic turn, which is not a linguistic turn that causes academic vision to shift to language in general sense, but a change in mode of discourse or knowledge mode and presents people not only a new knowledge system but also a new meaningful world.

³Comte. *On Positive Spirit*, p. 31.

As discussed above, Comte defined the essential characteristics and historical mission of sociology in the sense of thinking mode transformation and history of human spiritual revolution. However, it is regrettable that the essential characteristics and historical mission of sociology defined by Comte have been gradually forgotten in the process of historical evolution of sociology. Today, people not only have forgotten the essential characteristics and historical mission that Comte endowed sociology, but also imposed what had been denied by Comte on sociology. It seems to be self-evident that sociology is an empirical discipline. Therefore, sociology is expected to investigate and clearly describe the empirical facts to distinguish it from those so-called theoretical disciplines.

Comte did not define sociology as an empirical discipline, but repeatedly emphasized that sociology could not remain merely empirical. Comte's discussion on sociology basically justifies people's treatment of sociology as an empirical discipline. However, Comte's discussion of sociological relativity does not mean that he aimed to emphasize that sociology must be maintained in the empirical sense, but that sociological thinking, limited by social living conditions, is actually the theoretical thinking rooted in the social and historical conditions. He said, "In order to prove the inevitable relativity of all the real knowledge, it is a must to understand it philosophically as follows: if any of our ideas is regarded as a human phenomenon, such phenomenon is not purely personal but primarily social, because it's actually the result of the continued evolution of the collective, and the all factors of evolution are basically associated with all stages."⁴

That is to say, the relativity of sociology as understood by Comte is firstly its social historicity, i.e., it should carry out sociological reflections amid the connections of specific historical conditions. Otherwise, sociology cannot take human's social phenomenon as its subject or offer the understanding of the essential connection of human's social life. Moreover, it is precisely because of its adherence to social historicity that sociology cannot be separated from social life but stay in the abstract metaphysics of individuals, and must put individuals into social and historical conditions for sound and profound thinking. "Therefore, if on the one hand, people admit that our speculations must always depend on the fundamental conditions of our individual existence; on the other hand, they have to acknowledge that it is also subject to social progress and is in no way as absolutely stable as envisaged by the metaphysicians."⁵

The stability envisaged by the metaphysicians is the abstract logic separated from the constraints of specific historical conditions, while positivistic sociology pursues the social science that studies human's social phenomena in historical conditions. "Science lies in the laws of phenomena, and facts, regardless of truth and quantity, provide only the necessary materials for science. However, by reviewing constant functions of these laws, we can say without exaggeration that true science is formed by far more than observation. It seems that it always evades from immediate explorations and is replaced by reasonable prediction, where the latter forms the main

⁴Comte. *On Positive Spirit*, p. 11.

⁵Comte. *On Positive Spirit*, p. 11.

characteristics of positivistic spirit as the whole astronomical research association will clearly offer us.”⁶ Although astronomy must be based on observation, it does not focus on the description of astronomical phenomena, but on disclosure of the necessary laws in these astronomical phenomena and predict the future evolution of astronomy. “Such prediction is the inevitable result of the constant discovery of the relationship between phenomena, and it will never mix up true science and false erudition. The false erudition merely builds up facts mechanically without making any deduction.”⁷

Comte repeatedly claimed that sociology is science. However, the science he claimed is not the science that absolutely rejects value evaluation and moral judgment as commonly understood, but a new science that integrates scientific facts and value evaluation. “In the future, all timely and systematic practical discussions will continue to contribute as much as possible to the universal advantage of morality, as moral views are bound to become the scientific bond and logical regulator of all other positivistic issues,”⁸ he said. How could moral views become the scientific bond and logical regulator of positivistic research? The reasons are not complicated. Sociology takes human social life as its subject and considers the promotion of social progress and order as its own mission, which means that sociology cannot avoid value evaluation or moral judgment. And sociology has to warn the researchers that we cannot reach the consensus of sociological research unless we have the same moral conscience to observe the social reality. Therefore, the moral views not only serve as a link in the formation of positivistic science knowledge, but also communicate and regulate people’s recognition of social life, thus it is also a logical regulator.

It is quite clear that, rather than excluding value evaluation and moral judgment, Comte regarded them as an integral part of scientific spirit and scientific research. Comte emphasized the coordination of scientific spirit and moral evaluation, and believed “Such coordination develops at any time the concepts of order and harmony closely related to human beings, when it inevitably tends to offer profound moral education to the elite and also educate a large group of wise people. The latter gets more or less involved in this great enlightenment according to the corresponding system of universal education.”⁹ Comte’s humanism can be clearly seen here. Furthermore, for Comte, the scientific spirit and the humanistic spirit do not absolutely contradict each other, both of which are included in the theoretical pursuit of positivistic sociology.

However, we cannot conclude that Comte did not object to value evaluation and moral judgment, because he did criticize value evaluation and moral preaching many times. However, it must be made clear that Comte did not go against value evaluation and moral judgment in the general sense, he rejected the abstract value ideals and moral preaching based on the metaphysical speculation. According to Comte, metaphysics is divorced from social reality, so social care is missing in the value principle and moral norm that it advocates, which is self-interested. “The metaphysics has

⁶Comte. *On Positive Spirit*, p. 12.

⁷Comte. *On Positive Spirit*, p. 12.

⁸Comte. *On Positive Spirit*, p. 50.

⁹Comte. *On Positive Spirit*, p. 50.

never offered any valid theory on the moral side, but only the lousy system of egoism.”¹⁰ Therefore, such moral norms could not promote social progress and improve social order, but will obstruct social progress and disrupt social order with egoism.

Comte held that “sound morality”, which is both theoretical and practical, should be used to replace the imaginary morality on the basis of abstract metaphysics. Only in this way can it be associated with positivistic sociology in pursuit of social progress and order, and can it truly play the role of integrating society and enhancing social feelings. “A deeper and more extensive evaluation which is both theoretical and practical characterizes the positivist spirit as the only spirit, by its very nature, capable of directly enhancing social feelings which are the primary basis of all sound morality.”¹¹

To sum up, it is not difficult to conclude that: positivistic sociology, described by Comte as the revolution of human intellectual history, aims to pursue the progress and order of human’s social life in the specific historical conditions. By its nature, it is a new science that derives from positivistic reality but must be upgraded to a height of theoretical thinking, but a positivistic science as generally considered. As a new philosophy different from metaphysics, it, by its nature, is a new thinking mode from abstractness to concreteness, which not only contains the observation and thinking of objective facts, but also contains the value evaluation and moral judgment of social life. It integrates scientific spirit and humanistic spirit.

However, sociological origin from abstractness to concreteness as proposed by Comte has gradually become differentiated in the further evolution of sociology, namely opposition between positivistic description and theoretical speculation, objective reflection and subjective evaluation, scientific spirit and humanistic spirit. Many scholars have noticed this differentiation and opposition and summarized scientific positivistic sociology represented by Durkheim and humanistic interpretative sociology represented by Max Weber in the history of sociological evolution. However, such a clear distinction cannot actually be made. A little research into the literature by these sociologists will show that the situation is much more complicated than it is stated in some textbooks on history of sociology. From Durkheim and Weber, only these two founders of sociology, it could be discovered that there are many academic phenomena with differentiation and fusion and apposition and overlapping.

1.2 Differentiated Succession

No one could doubt that Émile Durkheim is the one who inherited the positivistic sociology created by Comte. Therefore, few have analyzed the differences between them. It is generally believed that although Comte is the founder of positivistic sociology, he did not systemize the principle and methodology employed in sociology

¹⁰Comte. *On Positive Spirit*, p. 51.

¹¹Comte. *On Positive Spirit*, p. 51.

or establish the sociology as a discipline system. It is Durkheim who completed what Comte did not. As the founder of sociology as a discipline, he not only clearly defined the subject for sociology, but also explored the research methodology of sociology and elaborated on the connections and differences between similar disciplines and sociology. All these efforts are indispensable to the establishment of sociology as a discipline. Thus, Durkheim is highly commended because he has laid the foundation for sociology.

However, people pay excessive attention to Durkheim's inheritance from Comte while ignoring his modification to Comte's Principles. As discussed above, though Comte proposed to establish the sociology as a down-to-earth positive science, he did not consequently reject value evaluation and moral principles rooted in social life. Furthermore, Comte's objective principles are not thorough enough since his subjective pursuit is still significant in his research. Just because of this, Herbert Spencer once criticized Comte that, "What does Comte advocate? It is a complete reply to the progress of human beings' conception. What is my intention? I intend to offer a comprehensive answer to the outside world. Comte believed that there is an inevitable and solid inheritance relationship in all kinds of thoughts while I believe such inheritance relationship exists in all kinds of objects. Comte hopes to clarify the origin of natural knowledge while I aim to find out the composition of all the natural phenomena. He studies the subjective side while I focus on the objective aspect."¹²

Durkheim gave Comte a similar criticism as Spencer did. He pointed out that, "Actually till now, what sociology specially studies are almost concepts rather than things. Well, Comte said that social phenomena are natural facts subject to natural laws." Judged from this sentence, we could infer that he has implicitly acknowledged social phenomena as things because what exist in nature are solely things. However, when he attempted to apply his theories and caused the science separated from such generalization after getting rid of the philosophical generalization, he still took concept as his subject. As a matter of fact, the theme of his sociological research is the progress human beings have made since ancient times."¹³ According to Durkheim, the progress human beings had made was just a concept rather than a fact. It was a concept as well as a value concept that expressed subjective desire, which should not be included in the objective subject of sociology.

Durkheim, like Spencer, insisted on the principle of complete objectivity. In order to clearly define the objective principle, he took social facts, the subject of sociology, as things. He said, "My proposition that social facts should be regarded as things is what my methodology is based on and has triggered the greatest arguments... Actually, I 'm not taking social facts as objective things but considering social facts as things with equal position as objective things though expressed in different ways."¹⁴ The position of objective things is actually the exterior objectiveness, which forms

¹²Spencer (1904). *Autobiography*, p. 570. New York. Lewis A. Coser. *Masters of Sociological Thought*.

¹³Durkheim (2004).

¹⁴Durkheim. *The Rules of Sociological Method*, p. 7.

the basic principles repeatedly proved by Durkheim that the subject of sociology should be treated as the exterior objectivity.

According to Durkheim, the humanities, such as literature, history, and philosophy, did not treat social phenomena as exterior things, and the social science similar to sociology did not regard social facts as objective things either. Durkheim believed that the concepts in our mind, such as country, sovereignty, and freedom, are vague concepts rather than social facts. When they are taken as the research subjects of social science, what is expressed are in essence the researchers' desires, namely, the researchers' subjective assessment, rather than observation and reflection on the facts. "Our existing knowledge level is far from enough to offer us a fair idea that what the country, sovereignty, political freedom, democracy, socialism, communism and so forth mean. As long as these concepts have not been established scientifically, we should avoid using them. This is what we expect in methodology. However, words symbolizing these concepts often appear in the arguments of sociologists. These sociologists have showed confidence in using them as if they were definite things well known to people. Actually, they only trigger vague and confusing concepts mixed with faint impression, prejudice, and emotion."¹⁵ Durkheim, with this viewpoint, criticized scientific principles, such as ethics, politics, economics, and psychology, in which subjective concepts are used to take place of the research of objective facts, and the principle is visionary subjective desire and judgment should be excluded and the objective facts should be dealt with directly.

Durkheim characterizes sociology as strict objectivity in the disciplinization of it and regards this as the basic guarantee that distinguishes sociology from other disciplines and helps get a scientific understanding of social life. Although Durkheim demonstrated strict objective principles in defining research subject and methodology of sociology, such principles are not well maintained as he goes deep into sociology when confronting extensive social life. On the contrary, subjective judgment is reflected in different aspects both explicitly and implicitly. Durkheim gave far more than a completely objective description of the social integration of all the nations while analyzing different types of social unity and gave a clear definition of the value evaluation: the society integrated with moral ethics and collective conscience is superficial, inefficient, personality repressive, and unstable, while the society integrated by means of functional dependence is not only firm, efficient, personality valuing but also can maintain social stability, which is one of the symbols of human society when marching towards modernization from tradition. Hence, Durkheim called the former Mechanical Unity, and the latter Organic Unity. Both "mechanical" and "organic" are evaluative expressions. When Durkheim uses the word "mechanical" to modify the integration of traditional societies based on low-level labor division, and the word "organic" to describe the integration of modern societies based on high-level division, does not this apparently show his approval or disapproval? Is not he conveying his subjective assessment?

Qu Jingdong, from discussing Durkheim's sociological theories concerning anomie, corporatism, and analogy as well as classification, pointed out Durkheim's

¹⁵Durkheim. *Sociological Methods Criteria*, p. 42.

attempt to build up individualism from the perspective of social determinism, and disclosed that positivistic sociology attempted to rebuild theoretical pursuit by means of morality.¹⁶ Qu Jingdong's interpretation of Durkheim's sociology further shows Durkheim has had clear value pursuit through such pursuit and moral judgment has been hidden within his objective principles. However, value and moral issue cannot be excluded due to social life. Therefore, it is impossible for him to ignore value and ideal. He cannot avoid demonstrating his pursuit of value in his theories. Therefore, we cannot determine whether sociologists observe and reflect on social phenomena in a purely objective manner only based on their immediate proposals. More importantly, we have to check how they widen their theoretical vision and what theoretical viewpoints have been conveyed.

The contradiction between Weber and Durkheim is well known to the public in terms of research subject and methodology used for sociology. But their relationship cannot be perceived simply as explained by the general public. Weber does oppose to Durkheim's proposal of sociology that merely focuses on objective excluding subjectivity and scientific cognitive method in physics to investigate social life. Besides, he proposes to study sociology from the perspective of social action by human beings and understand and explain sociology characterized by humanism by means of the theoretical framework used in hermeneutics. Weber emphasizes that social action, as the research subject of sociology, is characterized basically by the bond in people's subjective desire. Otherwise, even an action performed many people cannot be viewed as a social action. Weber pointed out that:

Sociology (endowed with a vague meaning), here in this sense, should be regarded as a science aimed to interpret social behavior and to explain its cause regarding process and effect of social behaviors. Meanwhile, "behavior" should be a conduct of a kind of person (external or internal, inactive or tolerated) if and only when an actor or the actors associate it with his or their subjective intention. However, a "social" behavior should be based on the intention of a behavior as deemed by the actor or the actors, which is associated with others' behaviors and is regarded as the orientation in behaving.¹⁷

This paragraph mainly covers Weber's fundamental views on methodology and subject of sociology. Weber admitted publicly that he conducted the research on sociology from the perspective of hermeneutics and interpreted scientifically social behaviors connected with subjective intentions in the way in hermeneutics. These clear expressions contain the contradiction that Weber cannot get rid of, namely, the contradiction between the subjectivity of hermeneutics and the objectivity of scientific research. Weber has accomplished plenty of works, and has contributed a lot to scientific development. However, he did not get rid of the contradiction between objective interpretation and objective pursuit.

Looking back to the Renaissance, we could find out that the Italian thinker Giambattista Vico's traditional hermeneutics established himself by opposing scientific epistemology. Vico rejected René Descartes, et al.'s overestimation on the power brought by scientific epistemology and argued that scientific epistemology

¹⁶Jingdong (1999).

¹⁷Weber (1998).

used for natural subjects cannot be transplanted to human's social life. Vico highly advocated a new discipline and encouraged people to study human life and history with the methodology employed in humanities. Vico's proposal was further developed later on by Johann Gottfried von Herder, Johann Wolfgang von Goethe, Egon Schiller, etc. Apparent subjectivism and historicism oriented hermeneutics' tradition was developed by Johann Gustav Droysen and Wilhelm Dilthey. Weber's proposal on conducting explanatory research on social behavior and attaching great importance to its link with the actor's subjective intention are the further promotion of hermeneutics' tradition.

Undoubtedly, Weber's proposal to involve hermeneutics in sociological studies is of great significance, because social life cannot be simply summarized as the existence like natural things. The social life developed by human behaviors is bound to be a historical process with abundant subjective desires. It cannot be perfect to study human's social life by using the methodology of natural science in lifeless and insignificant pursuit of natural things. The introduction of hermeneutic methodology into sociology will help overcome the restraints of positivistic sociology. The problem is that when Weber involves hermeneutics in sociology, he did not realize that he could not objectively and fairly observe social life, and thus the sociology what he pursued to study human's social behavior could not be a social science with external objectivity.

Weber did not notice that the study on value evaluation concerning subjective willingness is different from the study on objectiveness. He said, "The scientific discussion of value evaluation can help us not only understand and emphatically analyze the expected goal and the ideals that form its foundation, but also make a critical 'judgment'. Of course, the critique is just dialectical, and it can be only a historical judgment on value and a conceptual formal logic judgment. It is the verification on an ideal based on the assumption of internal consistency of expected goal."¹⁸ When hermeneutic methodology is only verification on the ideal by internal consistency, it becomes a new science which is different from positive science as mentioned by Vico but not an external consistency-oriented science in pursuit of objectivity as mentioned by him. It is in essence subjectivity-oriented humanities in pursuit of subjective significance or "Kulturwissenschaft" proposed by Heinrich John Rickert.

In pursuit of an objectivity-oriented science, Weber put forth the Value-Free Principle. As he pointed out, "Researchers and teachers should unconditionally distinguish the determination of empirical facts (including 'value oriented' behaviors of individuals he investigated) from their own actual judgment, i.e., if they are satisfied with the evaluation on these facts (including the evaluation from the empirical individuals as the object in these facts). The two are logically completely different. Seeing them as the same thing is actually mixing up the completely different things."¹⁹ Here, Weber conveyed a principle different from hermeneutics, i.e., the explanatory judgment runs against the descriptive human being.

¹⁸Weber (1999a).

¹⁹Weber (1999b).

Both Dilthey and Hans-Georg Gadamer see an interpretation of subjective sense as the essential feature distinguishing hermeneutics from scientific epistemology. Even when dealing with external objective things, it needs to disclose their subjective senses. It can be summarized as follows: Scientific epistemology objectively describes and explains the objective prescription of the research subject while hermeneutics explores subjectively into the subjective sense of the subject. This is the essential difference between scientific epistemology and hermeneutics. It is just this difference that demonstrates the rich sense and boundless vigor of hermeneutics. If Weber uses methodology and principles through his sociological research, he will bring dynamic vigor to the sociology. However, Weber proposed to distinguish the subjective judgment from objective interpretation, and repeatedly stressed that sociology should follow the Value-Free Principle, it means he has deviated from hermeneutic traditions, striding back toward scientific epistemology.

Durkheim, based on strict objectivity, frequently involved subjective issues in sociological research and expressed a lot of theoretical viewpoints containing moral judgment and education. Weber rejected the view of treating social life as a purely objective thing. He proposed to study sociology based on human's subjective intention, which clearly shows his subjective stance. However, this is merely his original intention. When Weber conducted further sociological research, he stressed the objectivity of sociological research when insisting on the Value-Free Principle. Durkheim went from objectivity to subjectivity while Weber returned from subjectivity to objectivity.

From the reciprocal evolution in scientific theories of the two sociological founders, we can find out that in sociological research, subjectivity and objectivity cannot be separated or excluded. Human being is subjective while the things are objective. Objectively, we need not only notice the external thing, but also observe and describe human being as the thing. The sociological perspective based on such stance contains theories on lifeless physical phenomena like laws, structure, and objective necessity. Subjectively, what the sociologists discover first is human being, and therefore, they will give priority to human and their activities and take humans' volition and activity and experience and judgment into consideration. The sociological perspective in this stance covers theoretically vital phenomena such as meaningfulness, value, moral ethics, etc.

Subjectivity and objectivity are indispensable to social life. Although subjectivity stresses humanity, judgment, and idealism of social life and objectivity emphasizes physical properties, laws, and existence, it does not mean the social life can be separated like this. The contradictory statements by sociologists show just different perspectives in theory and ideology. When proposing the fundamental sociological principles, Comte not only expressed integrity concerning social life, but also conveyed totality on research of social life. Such integrity and totality are limiting the relativeness in specific historical conditions, and are also the concreteness rooted in real social life.

The concreteness pursued by Comte is directly associated with human's sensibility. It does not refer to the common concreteness of visible things but the thinking concreteness as described by Georg Wilhelm Friedrich Hegel. According to Hegel, when human beings form their empirical knowledge by observing and experiencing

the phenomena, i.e., after cognition of perceptual concreteness and generalization of theoretical thinking, the essential links of things can be understood. After thinking masters the natures of various things, they have achieved the purpose of thinking concreteness.

Actually, thinking concreteness is not only what a discipline goes for but also something that discipline begins with. On the one hand, observation and reflection without a goal of thinking concreteness cannot be graded up to theoretical generalization. On the other hand, a study which is not theoretically generalized cannot make accumulative and promotive contribution to the corresponding discipline that, therefore, will be difficult to develop and may even die away. Moreover, a study without certain thinking concreteness cannot be an independent discipline. That is to say, if no concrete theoretical knowledge on some basic issues is formed, it is unreasonable to claim that a discipline is created.

Comte established sociology owing to twofold. On the one hand, he gave a clear account of certain basic issues in sociology, such as the nature of discipline, thinking mode, way of development, basic mission, and theoretical pursuit and sociology has been bestowed with a starting point of thinking concreteness. On the other hand, Comte opposed to abstract mystical metaphysics and encourages a solid study on social life. Also, he kept resisting the simple description based on experience and phenomena and advocated concrete theoretical generalization of social essential links. Based on this, a profound revolution, which is the basic pursuit of sociology, can be achieved. That is to say, Comte built the starting point of sociology and disciplinary goal on the basis of thinking concreteness.

A discipline's pursuit of thinking concreteness is continuous progress which goes deeper and deeper and develops more and more concrete, which is typical of the two-century development of sociology. Comte viewed social progress and order as the two basic subjects of sociology. Social categories, developed by contemporary sociologists like Durkheim, Max Weber, Georg Simmel, Talcott Parsons, Peter Michael Blau, even James S. Coleman, Pierre Bourdieu, Anthony Giddens, can be viewed as the further interpretations of social progress and order. These categories include unity type, action type, social form, social system, social structure, choice behavior, transition of field and horizon, disassociation of time and space, and so forth. In other words, sociology goes further into a more concrete level through continuous theoretical thinking.

Although sociology goes through empiricism and technicalization, pursuit of thinking concreteness has fainted to a certain extent. Besides, although empiricism and technicalization are still very common in the dominative sociological study, this fact cannot distort sociology's pursuit of thinking concreteness from starting point to the goal of discipline. Because it is a fact that has been proved by the birth and evolution of sociology and it is the essential constant pursuit of the construction of a discipline or academic research contributing to a discipline. On the contrary, a study not aimed at or based on thinking concreteness is insufficient in academic level and theoretical depth, and will be finally excluded from academic studies and restrained to experience and common sense. They will definitely leave no trace in the history of the discipline.

1.3 Methodological Definition

Although sociologists have conducted in-depth discussions on sociological research subjects, the research subjects of sociology have not been clearly defined. On the contrary, more and more dissensions have made the subjects even more indefinite. The uncertainty of the subject of sociology does not lie in the sociological research itself, but in the boundary between sociology and other similar disciplines. In specific research activities, sociologists have clear ideas of their research subjects. However, almost all of the specific subjects in sociology can be seen in other disciplines regarding interpersonal relationships, social actions, social groups, social organizations, social institutions, social rights, and social changes. These subjects are also frequently mentioned in the fields of law, politics, ethics, economics, and history. Especially since the late twentieth century, the humanities and social sciences have presented an increasingly obvious and comprehensive inter-crossing trend, during which the difference between sociology and other disciplines has become more blurred.

Hence, some sociologists began to methodologically define the difference between sociology and other disciplines. Generally speaking, methodology tends to be discussed from the technical level in the circle of sociology, such as sampling survey, case interview, follow-up survey, and social network analysis. The method at this level is the technical specification or operational procedure for people to carry out effective positivistic research or field research, and a necessary means for sociology to go deep into positivistic facts and form a concrete understanding of social phenomena and avoid abstract discussion. However, these methods at the technical level cannot distinguish sociology from other disciplines, but strengthen the intersection of sociology and other disciplines. A closer examination of similar disciplines in sociology reveals that almost all the methods considered by some scholars to be sociologically exclusive are used in other disciplines. Moreover, some methods that sociologists are keen to use are not naturally sociological. For example, follow-up survey and social network analysis are introduced from anthropology. Therefore, it is not feasible to define the boundaries between sociology and other disciplines and explain the nature of sociology.

The methods at the technical level are insufficient to define the difference between sociology and other disciplines because there is overlapping with other disciplines in terms of sociological research subject. The technical methods are all aimed at the research subject. Regardless of social action or social organization, we have to select and design effective research methods according to the nature and characteristics of the object itself. Otherwise, the misuse of methods that are exclusive to the nature and characteristics of the subject will hinder sociological research. This simple rule determines that the methods of sociology cannot be overlapped by different disciplines, because the subjects of sociology are not unique to sociology. Therefore, the corresponding methods are not only applicable to sociology but also applicable to other similar disciplines.

The emphasis on the importance of sociological research methods at the technical level should be attributed to the efforts of Malinowski and Parker in the 1920s. P. Burke, a cultural historian at the University of Cambridge, has conducted an in-depth examination of the causes and processes of sociological technicalization. He believed that the technicalization of sociology occurred after the death of Durkheim and Weber, when sociology was influenced by econometrics, experimental psychology, and social anthropology. Economists who study marginal utility and economic balance are increasingly keen to constructing mathematical models so that they attempt to explain economic behavior and market transactions through sophisticated mathematical calculations; in the field of psychology, Jean Piaget's Genetic epistemology and Wolfgang Köhler's research on Gestalt psychology have marked the remarkable achievements of experimental psychology through sophisticated technical methods. Social anthropologists such as Franz Boas, Radcliffe Brown, and Malinowski conducted in-depth and fruitful field research on Aboriginal people and concluded that we could not effectively carry out social anthropological research without close contact with communities and daily lives of indigenous people. These studies focusing on the positivistic process and technical analysis were very tempting for sociology at that time.²⁰ Robert Burke described the changes taking place in American sociology as follows:

By the 1920s, under the auspices of Robert Parker, Chicago sociologists turned to study on the contemporary society, especially their cities, such as slums, Jewish areas, immigrants, underworld gangs, tramps, and so on. Parker said, "Anthropologists such as Boas and Lowie studied the life and behavior of American Indians through meticulous observations. If such a method is used to study the customs, faiths, social conventions, and general life concepts of Little Italy and the Lower North in Chicago's, it may be more effective." Another alternative is to conduct a questionnaire survey and selectively interview respondents to make technical analysis on this basis. Survey became the backbone of American sociologists. These sociologists came up with their own data and believed that history "essentially has nothing to do with understanding why people do that."²¹

From P. Burke's description, questionnaires, case interviews, data analysis, etc., which are still the main research methods of American sociology and Chinese sociology, were borrowed from social anthropology in the 1920s. It is true that these research methods are sometimes effective to a certain extent. But they should not be exaggerated or generalized, especially that they should not be used as the only effective methods while denying other social research methods. The effective research methods used by Malinowski, etc., to study indigenous peoples may not be effective in studying modern residents in modern society. Even if the research methods used by Malinowski are effective in studying Aborigines at the underclass, it cannot indicate the universal applicability of these research methods.

The effectiveness of a method lies in its application to its subject. Especially the methods at the technical level deserve our attention to this limitation. As discussed

²⁰Burke (2001, p. 13).

²¹Burke (2001, p. 14).

by Comte, sociology acquires its identity in its opposition to abstract philosophy. The only characteristic or the most essential characteristic of sociology is relativity, which means that the subject of sociology varies from time to time not only in terms of space and places but also in terms of time and process. Correspondingly, sociological research methods must also be adjusted due to changes in their research subjects. If the research subject of sociology has changed, but the research method remains constant, the research method and the research subject will not be matched, leading to a false result. In the contemporary sociology, people still use the methods borrowed from social anthropology in which indigenous people are studied, such as questionnaires and data analysis, used as the main research methods which have shown increasingly obvious limitations. Due to intricate components, variability and rapidity of the change, complexity of contradiction, especially that various factors tend to appear in a distorted or false form, the research methods used to study Aborigines seem to be undoubtedly simple and powerless.

Before the 1920s, although classical sociologists paid attention to defining the status and nature of sociology, they almost did not discuss sociological research methods from a technical perspective, but developed their views on research method for sociology from the perspective of methodology. Methodology is not just at the philosophical level, and each discipline has its own methodology. Disciplinary methodology is to discuss the thinking mode, theoretical horizon, conceptual framework, theoretical pursuit, and value orientation of a discipline. That is to say, it discusses how the discipline constructs itself and carries out academic research from the ideological principle. Disciplinary methodology is not only a prerequisite for profound thinking at the beginning of the discipline, but also a fundamental issue that is constantly being thought about again in the development of the discipline. The more fully developed a discipline is, the longer its evolutionary history is, and the richer its methodological contents are. Therefore, the methodology of a discipline is an important indicator of discipline development.

Comte made a lot of discussion on sociological methodology. He intended to draw a line between positivistic sociology and metaphysics. As mentioned earlier, positivistic sociology is also a philosophy, a new philosophy that is more advanced than theology and metaphysics. Comte regarded the theology developed on the basis of representation and the metaphysics constructed on abstraction as the initial form of philosophy, and the positivistic sociology he advocated is the advanced form of philosophy. He said: "The inevitable long beginning eventually leads our gradually liberated Shanghai People's Publishing House wisdom to the ultimate state of rational demonstration. This stage should be explained more professionally than the previous two stages. Such preparatory activities make people spontaneously see the inherently useless vague and arbitrary interpretations of the initial philosophy (either theological or metaphysical), since then, human wisdom has given up on the pursuit of absolute knowledge (which is only suitable for human childhood). Human wisdom turned to the rapidly developed field where real observation took place. This is the only possible basis of each discipline which is truly acceptable and practical."²²

²²Comte. *On Positive Spirit*, p. 9.

Defining the traditional metaphysics is the most basic methodological standpoint of sociology. Metaphysics, as a traditional philosophical form, is itself a worldview and methodology. The essence of metaphysics lies in its abstractness and absoluteness. When Comte established the methodology principle for positivistic sociology, he was actually making a decision on the essential characteristics of metaphysics. Specificity and relativity are the most fundamental methodological principle established by Comte for positivistic sociology. The definition of other aspects of Comte's positivistic sociology is derived or developed from these two basic principles. "Our positivistic research basically should be attributed to systematic evaluation of the existence in all aspects, and give up the search for its earliest source and ultimate purpose. Moreover, it should also be understood that this study of phenomena cannot be absolute or constant but be closely related to our body structure and our conditions."²³

What is particularly striking here is that Comte mentioned in very general words the connection between sociological research and structure as well as condition of the human body. It can be said that this shows Comte's thorough adherence to the specificity and relativity of positivistic sociology. Comte's specificity and relativity are all about social life. And in social life, only the social phenomena that people can directly feel through their own bodies and that can directly affect people's living conditions are the most concrete, true, and reliable. These social phenomena exist only in a specific position, place, and environment.

Here, it seems to be signifying that sociology will eventually follow the trend of developing from the pure rational pursuit to the perceptual care like Bourdieu, Giddens, and so forth. The tenet running through the discussion by Bourdieu's on the field domain, position, body, habits, and practical sense is to emphasize that sociological research cannot be carried out only from a rational perspective, but also on people's social interaction and social practice. Only with the help of the perceptual existence can we truly grasp the essence of social life in order to truly implement the study of sociology. Giddens' discussion on the urgency of action, the sense of practice, and the memory traces in the mind as subjective structure is similar to Bourdieu's discourse. In essence, Giddens was denying pursuit of pure rationalism. He stressed that we should pay attention to people's perceptual existence and carry out more specific and more realistic sociological studies on the aspects of physical relevance and the direct existence of daily life.

Comte is a strict scientific rationalist. However, no matter how much he attached importance to scientific principles and thinking logic, as long as he orientated his theoretical pursuit to the concreteness of social life and relativity of social phenomenon, it presupposed irreversibly that he recognizes the sensibility and shows his preference to the sensibility. Comte discussed this point in quite general words. But it shows that issues such as perceptual existence, perceptual awareness, and perceptual order discussed later by the contemporary social scientists from various perspectives had already been connoted in sociological theories when sociology developed its research on the positivistic world.

²³Comte. *On Positive Spirit*, p. 10.

Positivistic sociology is supposed to be the result of reason shifting from absoluteness to relativity. At the level of absoluteness, reason is primarily conceptual logic and notional system. When reason shifts to concreteness and relativity, and turns to the historicity and conditionality of social life, reason goes from conceptual reasoning to concerns over life. Real life must be demonstrated through the perceptual existence. Dealing with the perceptual aspect is what sociology cannot give up. It is the inevitable result of the rational logic of sociology.

Durkheim did not notice this point. While he was talking about his sociology, he said, "I accept that I am a rationalist. Actually, I mainly aim to extend the scientific rationalism to people's behavior, that is, I want the people to be aware that we can get the norms of our future behaviors by finding out the cause-and-effect relationship in our past behaviors and doing rational processing. My positivism people are talking about is no more than a result of such rationalism."²⁴ Durkheim clearly clarified his principles and methodology of rationalism, which is to observe and speculate on the social life as the external phenomenon. These objective and external social phenomena are called "thing".

The "thing" Durkheim talked about was the result of abstraction, not a concrete social phenomenon. Durkheim explained that the "thing" is people's way of act and thinking. He said, "In fact, this is the essence of social constraints, because it recognizes the collective behavior or mode of thinking is the reality existing outside the individuals, and individuals adapt to the social constraints all the time. All the inherent things, such as collective behavior and mode of thinking, are things."²⁵ Durkheim believed that the thing defined by sociology is not directly concrete existence, but the objectivity of way of act and mode of thinking. It is not real or objective but social.

As a social thing which is externally regulative and restrictive or binding on people's behavior, Durkheim defined it more clearly as institution. "We cannot distort the meaning of the word. We can call all the beliefs and behavior patterns determined by the community the 'institution'. Thus, the social community can be defined as the science of institutions and their generation and functions."²⁶ It means that, through rational thinking, generalization, and abstraction of social life, Durkheim, eventually determined the institutions which regulate people's behavior patterns and mode of thinking as the research subject of sociology, which are about collective behavior and mode of thinking. Therefore, Durkheim, when discussing the methodological principle of sociology, determined a clear research subject for sociology—social institutions.

The social institutions discussed by Durkheim are not only at the rational level, but also at the perceptual level. He talked about behavioral patterns or behavioral rules such as customs and habits, fashion, and customs, and listed the way of feeling in the categories of forceful social facts and social institutions that he defined. He said: "These facts are made up of behavior patterns, modes of thinking and feelings that exist outside the individuals, but have the coercive force that individuals can't disobey.

²⁴Durkheim. *The Rules of Sociological Method*, pp. 3–4.

²⁵Durkheim. *The Rules of Sociological Method*, p. 18.

²⁶Durkheim. *The Rules of Sociological Method*, p. 19.

Therefore, they cannot be mixed up with the phenomena of organisms which consist of presentation and actions; nor can they be confused with psychological phenomena that exist only in personal consciousness and rely on personal consciousness. Thus, they constitute a new thing that may only be modified by the word 'social'. It may be called social fact."²⁷

It is shown that Durkheim, like Comte, insisted on the rationalism and sought the rationalization of social life. However, when he dealt with the real social life instead of staying in the conceptual abstraction, he must deal with the perceptual existence of social life. This shows that although the sociological methodology does not necessarily reveal the essence of sociology, nor can it define the boundaries of sociology, it can clarify the theoretical orientation of sociology. The orientation is not necessarily a specific entity or specific existence. It could be a tendency. According to Comte and Durkheim, it evolves from absolute rationality to relative rationality, from abstract concept to concrete existence.

When discussing the methods of sociology, Durkheim repeatedly stated that sociology should oppose the reductionism and reject the reduction of social facts including behavior patterns, modes of thinking or social institutions to individual psychological phenomena or the functional role of organisms. He advocated that a social fact can only be explained by another social fact. In essence, it essentially advocated sociological research in the specific connections in social life. Durkheim said, "Thus, we came up with the following criterion: *the decisive cause of a social fact should be found in the previous social fact, not in the state of individual consciousness.*"²⁸ "*The origin of all the important social processes should be found in the components of the internal environment of society.*"²⁹ These views of Durkheim all express a common point, that is, as Comte advocated, sociological research should be carried out in the specific conditions of social life, namely relativity. This principle is even more obvious in the comparative method he proposed.

In short, through the above preliminary investigation, we can conclude that Comte created positivistic sociology mainly to realize the revolution of human thinking mode. He determined that relativity was the nature of sociology, while the relative manifestation or development of a discipline is the concreteness of academic research and theoretical concept. It integrates human spirit and scientific spirit containing not only the concern for social objectivity, but also the pursuit of subjective willingness. Although Durkheim and Weber tried to advance the sociological research from the perspectives of both objectivity and subjectivity which are obviously contradictory, due to the relative property of sociology, sociological horizon should ultimately converge in the concreteness of social life. The contradiction between scientific spirit and humanistic spirit, objective principle and subjective concern would be finally dissolved on the horizon. Therefore, the essence of sociology is not the limitation of the research subject, but a new mode of thinking shifting from abstraction to concreteness and from absoluteness to relativity. It is this property that brings sociology

²⁷Durkheim. *The Rules of Sociological Method*, p. 25.

²⁸Durkheim. *The Rules of Sociological Method*, p. 125.

²⁹Durkheim. *The Rules of Sociological Method*, p. 127.

vitality. The attempt to define the nature and boundaries of sociology from a technical approach will hinder the development of sociology.

1.4 Origin

The definition of nature of sociology is directly related to the understanding of the origin and development of sociology. Different definitions of the nature of sociology mean that there are different sociologies and demonstrate different perspectives and interpretation of the origin and evolution of sociology. When Higel wrote the history of philosophy, he attached great importance to the relationship between the nature of philosophy and the history of philosophy. He did not attempt to seek the origin of philosophy as the first step as most historians do, but tried to firstly clear up the philosophical concept. Then, he revealed the origins and evolutionary clues of philosophy. Since Hegel regarded philosophy as a rational reflection of its own history, the development of rational logic. He reorganized and rewrote the history of philosophy with a perspective different from other philosophers.

The history of philosophy, the history of thought, the history of disciplines, and even the general history are merely the understanding and recollection of the past events by later generations who develop their own ideas by describing historical events. Robin George Collingwood views history in this way, i.e., there is no objective history as the positivistic historian Leopold von Ranke said. The historical research activities done with scissors and paper cannot reveal the rich significance of history, and it cannot produce result as objective as history requires. Because even some of the historical events recorded by the predecessors in the text are only records filtered by the recorders, these recordings have already deviated from the events and are therefore no way the unbiased reflection of historical facts.

These arguments also apply to the study or compilation of the history of sociology. As mentioned earlier, some compilers of sociological history did not delve into the nature of sociology, but undoubtedly used Comte as the origin for sociology, and then logically listed a string of sociologists based on the commonly understood sociological concepts. That is how the history of sociology is presented to people. Of course, there are also some sociologists with unique insights, which are dissatisfied with those that simply follow Comte's viewing the social concept as the origin of sociological history. The most representative one is Durkheim, the founder of the sociology, who has made some critical thinking on this point.

In his book *Montesquieu and Rousseau—The Pioneer of Sociology*, Durkheim said at the beginning, "Not only a Frenchman named Comte laid the practical foundation for this science, distinguished its essential part and named it sociology—to be honest, this is quite a bad name; moreover, our 18th-century philosophers also pushed us to pay attention to social issues. Among the talented writers, Montesquieu

stood out. He is the one who set the principles for this new science in *De l'esprit des lois* (*The Spirit of Laws* in English).”³⁰

The above discussion by Durkheim means: First, Comte laid the foundation for sociology and revealed the essential content of sociology. Second, Comte's naming of sociology was unsatisfactory. Therefore, Comte's historical origin of sociology is not necessarily correct. Third, the philosophers during the eighteenth century Enlightenment also contributed to the creation of sociology. Montesquieu put forward the basic principles of sociology and thus should also be considered one of the pioneers in sociology. It is in these senses that Durkheim considered Montesquieu a pioneer in sociology. Later, Raymond Aron inherited the view of Durkheim. Montesquieu began to write the history of Western sociology.

The significance of Durkheim's pursuit of the historical origin of sociology lies in his breakthrough in the history of sociological evolution. If we regard Comte's proposal of the concept of sociology as the origin of sociological history, it not only means that the history of sociology has a clear origin and there is no need to think about whether anyone had done some work on sociology before Comte, but also means a narrower scope is defined for sociology. It is well known that Comte believed that sociology should be a revolution in the history of human spirit, and its fundamental mission is to provide a new mode of thinking that is oriented to the concreteness of life. However, Comte named sociology with strong sense of physics. According to him, the research on spiritual revolution or a new mode of thinking is based on physics to carry out positivistic research. Therefore, although Comte believed that moral evaluation and value ideal should be integrated with positivistic research, developing sociology into a science as objective as physics is his basic task in establishing sociology as a new discipline. His proposal to call sociology social physics is the most obvious expression. And if sociology handles research subject as physics does, how can it not exclude value evaluation? How can objective knowledge and subjective evaluation not be separated in the field of physics?

The most prominent feature of physics is to objectively study the nature and rules governing external objects by using the principle of reflection theory. If we examine the social life research according to Comte-defined sociology, the concept as the pronoun of social physics, it means the ideology and theoretical writings contrary to the principles of physics should not be included in the research scope of sociology. Even though some sociological ideas against the principles of physics may sometimes be written into the history of sociology, they are regarded merely as a foil. The mainstream of sociology must be what it is like in the popular versions of sociological history, mainly recording the academic schools or ideas that use the scientific positivistic spirit to study social life. Theories or academic schools that have also made profound reflections on social phenomena, such as modern social theory and the Frankfurt School are often excluded from the history of sociology.

Durkheim is undoubtedly a staunch defender of the principles of physics and a complete executor of the principle of objectivity, whose beliefs and efforts have gone far beyond Comte. However, Durkheim himself does not necessarily realize

³⁰Durkheim (2003).

that when he got rid of the idea that Comte is the origin of sociology, he was actually making an opening in his carefully constructed objective barrier of sociology, which will bring a wealth of heterogeneous factors to sociology. Although Montesquieu also adhered to the principle of objectivity and advocated that human society shares the same external objective laws with the natural world. The law, according to him, is the objective law that human society and the natural world must abide by. These views are similar to positivistic sociology. However, he did not give a clear concept of positivistic sociology as Comte and Durkheim did.

When Durkheim saw a person who never mentioned the concept of sociology as a pioneer of sociology, it means that as Durkheim argues, a person that has set a starting point for sociology essentially establishes or discusses the principles of sociology regardless that he has clear disciplinary consciousness or disciplinary standpoint. Durkheim pointed out, “Montesquieu strictly distinguished the social rules and natural law. He gave it a special name because we cannot infer them through human nature. It is the theme of this book and the real purpose he wanted to explore: these natural laws include international laws, civil laws, political laws, and all major social institutions.”³¹

Montesquieu’s acknowledgement of the principle of objectivity which will never changes with human willingness was the most important reason why Durkheim recognized Montesquieu as a pioneer of sociology. Montesquieu not only believed that there are objective laws in social life, but also believed that these laws are neither granted by God nor personally controlled by personal activities. At the beginning of *De l’esprit des Lois*, Montesquieu declared: “In a broad sense, laws are the inevitable connections produced by the nature of things. In this sense, all beings have their laws. God has his laws; the material world has its laws; the ‘smarts’ above humans have their laws; the beasts have their laws; the humans have their laws.”³² Montesquieu smartly excluded God from his discourse, and as a result he discovered the laws governing human society.

Durkheim is very much in favor of Montesquieu’s view because acknowledging that social life has its own rules is a prerequisite for the objective study of social life. This view is, in essence, the same as Durkheim’s regarding social institutions as the subject of sociology. Therefore, Durkheim praised Montesquieu and said, “According to him, these laws are based on reality. However, they are different from natural laws because they are derived from the nature of society, not human nature. We should search for their roots from social conditions instead of human mind.”³³

That Montesquieu is recognized as a pioneer of sociology is also due to his classification of social life. Durkheim pointed out, “Montesquieu distinguishes three types: republican regime (including aristocracy and democracy), monarchy and authoritarian regimes.”³⁴ “Montesquieu distinguishes specific types of society. If details are taken into account, these characteristics will also be shown in its structural principles

³¹Durkheim. *Montesquieu and Rousseau—The Pioneer of Sociology*, p. 18.

³²Montesquieu (1987).

³³Durkheim. *Montesquieu and Rousseau—The Pioneer of Sociology*, p. 2.

³⁴Durkheim. *Montesquieu and Rousseau—The Pioneer of Sociology*, p. 22.

and all aspects of life. Customs, religious rituals, family, marriage, fostering, crime and punishment are all different in republican regime, monarchy and authoritarian regimes. Montesquieu seems to be more interested in the differences rather than similarities between societies. ³⁵

Social laws deal with the universality and inevitability of social life, while social types deal with individuality and difference in social life. Therefore, Montesquieu's discussion on social laws and social types is a general reflection on social life. Therefore, although Montesquieu did not use the concept of sociology, he actually developed a sociological scope.

Durkheim identified Montesquieu as a pioneer of sociology based on the content of thoughts or the essence of theory. This essentially demonstrates a principle of how to define the essence of sociology and sort out the history of sociology, that is, to determine whether a scholar and his thoughts should be included in the sociological category based on whether the laws and types of social life are studied. Montesquieu's concept of law is actually the institutions, rules, or laws discussed by socialists such as Durkheim and Parsons, and his concept of type refers to the modes of social life discussed by sociologists later on.

Durkheim's interpretation of Montesquieu's views shows that sociologists' understanding of predecessors' ideological theories unifies with their sociological concepts. That is, the sociological concepts determine the sociological thoughts to look for or find in the history of thought. People may not agree to this point of view, because it seems here that sociological thoughts have been extensively elaborated by the predecessors. It is certain that scholars whose theories are based on sociological concepts should come after Comte. But in the history of thought, Montesquieu cannot be alone who had done some sociological research before the formation of the concept of sociology. It is entirely possible to draw on the practice of Durkheim and discover more scholars like Montesquieu in the history of thoughts of various nationalities.

Now, we cannot draw a conclusion here because no further investigation as Durkheim did was carried out. However, this is by no means an unfounded guess. People are the existence of society. Thinkers will inevitably think about the living systems and lifestyles in which they exist. Although people may not necessarily discuss objectively social institutions and classification of societies as Montesquieu, Comte and Durkheim did, similar research would definitely appear. Some scholars in the West traced the origin of sociology to Vico who stated that in the human society there were objective laws different from natural laws. A new science different from natural science should be established to study the existence of human society and process of historical evolution; some Western scholars traced the origin of Chinese sociology to Xuncius who explicitly discussed the concept of "group" or actually society.

In essence, tracing the origin of sociology to Vico and Xuncius is similar to Durkheim's identifying Montesquieu as a pioneer of sociology. They share the same principle. Sociological thought and examination of the history of sociology should

³⁵Durkheim. *Montesquieu and Rousseau—The Pioneer of Sociology*, p. 28.

be judged from the contents of thought rather than the thinker's statement. Here, issues of freedom and consciousness in sociological research deserve our attention. Montesquieu, and even Vico and Xuncius can be regarded as thinkers who have carried out a kind of presence research on sociology. That is to say, they did not have the disciplinary consciousness of sociology, nor did they realize that they were elaborating a view that could be a basis of sociology. However, the effort they made and ideas they proposed have indeed laid a foundation for later sociology as a discipline, or provided some important sources of thought.

After Comte's proposal to establish the emerging discipline of sociology, sociologists such as Spencer, Durkheim, Simmel, Weber, or Parsons consciously started their sociological research. They raised and answered questions from the perspective of the disciplinary tradition of sociology, and also made their efforts on academic accumulation and knowledge enhancement in sociology. As far as the disciplinary consciousness is concerned, these sociologists were actually consciously conducting sociological research. However, we should not limit the history of sociology to those who consciously did their research on the sociological discipline.

In fact, as Western scholars were compiling the history of sociology, they had already abandoned the principle of choosing sociologists or sociological thoughts from the perspective of discipline consciousness. Marx was incorporated into the history of sociology and was considered very important, which is the most convincing. Marx did not boast himself as a sociologist, nor did he consider his theory as part of sociology, but he also criticized and even ridiculed Comte's sociology. However, in compiling the history of Western sociology or discussing general sociological theories, few Western scholars regarded Marx as a sociologist of great importance and significant influence.

When Western scholars treated Marx as an important sociologist, it meant that they had given up on the traditional understanding that sociology is a positivistic discipline represented by merely Comte and Durkheim. Marx also carried out positivistic research, and even Western scholars believed that in Marx's *Das Kapital*, positivistic principles were used. It is undeniable that Marx has done some positivistic research. During his writing of *Das Kapital*, and during the early period of writing the *Rheinische Zeitung*, he conducted many positivistic investigations. However, the academic tradition, especially historical materialism created by Marx, is critical in nature and contradictory to the basic principles of positivistic sociology discussed by Comte. For example, Marx's theory is negative rather than affirmative, critical rather than organizational, and pursues universality rather than relativity. However, in spite of such a clear opposition, in Western sociology where positivistic sociology was the mainstream, Marx was as equally important as Durkheim and Max Weber, and thus was one of the three major contributors to classical sociology.

If we acknowledge Marx as a sociologist regardless of positivistic traditions, can we adhere to this principle, and find out more people like Marx whose thoughts could be included in the sociological category? Can we put forth the fourth, fifth, sixth, or even more new sociological views on sociology which could be in parallel with positivistic sociology, interpretative sociology, and Marxist sociology? This should be possible. In the light of recent advances in the study of sociological history, it

is obvious that the number of sociological researchers is on constant increase, and more and more thinkers who have been ignored before were listed in sociological history.

Sociological researchers should be brave enough to break the restriction of disciplinary consciousness when compiling the history of sociology. That is, the history of sociology should also include the researchers who have not yet formed disciplinary awareness, but have already expressed their sociological thoughts and made contributions to the development of sociology. In fact, economics, politics, law, even philosophy, history, and literature are established as disciplines in modern times. However, these disciplines have gone far beyond modern times, expanded their scope to the human spiritual history in old days and compiled the respective ancient history of these disciplines. Names of disciplines such as ancient economics, ancient political science, ancient jurisprudence, and ancient philosophy seem to be no strange to people, but they are collected, summarized and generalized by later generations in the history of ancient thought.

Why did these disciplines close to sociology extend their history to the ancient times when they had not yet been established? Why were the thinkers who had studied the subject of the discipline and theories but had no consciousness of the discipline written into history? This is not only an issue concerning the definitions of disciplinary historical origin, but also a fundamental issue whether a discipline opens its mind, absorbs the essence of thought in the long human thought history, and sustains itself for better development. Human beings began to think about or study economic, political, and legal issues certainly before modern times. They must have begun to think deeply about the social phenomena and social problems they experienced in ancient times. Therefore, sociology should, like its similar disciplines, actively search for the source from the history of thoughts, sum up the predecessors' observations and reflections on social phenomena before they form the conception of sociology, and incorporate their theory into the history of sociology, so that sociology could boast its profound knowledge as disciplines such as culture, history, and philosophy do.

When we trace the origin of sociology, we should also pay attention to its diversity. In other words, the origin of sociology should not be unique but variable, whose variability is hidden in its nature. As discussed above, Comte believed the unique feature of sociology is relativity. This most fundamental nature determines that sociology should be established and developed in specific historical conditions. The history of human society showed the trend of global integration as a whole in the late nineteenth century, and in the late twentieth century demonstrated the effect of globalization as what we call today.

To be clearer, in the long period before modern times, social development and inheritance of civilization almost exist in the form of relative regionality in every nation. In general, we should at least admit that relative independence can be clearly seen in the development of economy and culture of East Asia, the Indian Peninsula, Mesopotamia, Egypt and North Africa, Europe, and North America. Also, these regions had their own cultural traditions and social development mode shaped in the

history of development. The commonality shown within a region and the difference between different regions are significant.

The history of sociology is formed and developed in different backgrounds of cultural tradition. Even sociology developed in the American and European civilization based on the same tradition, i.e., French tradition, German tradition, British and American tradition, has its own features. In the thought chain of sociologists such as Comte, Durkheim, Michel Foucault, Bourdieu, people could easily notice the trace of French sociology characterized by rich imagination and romanticism. People could easily find that theories proposed by German sociologists such as Karl Heinrich Marx, Max Weber and Jürgen Habermas are profound and precise. From British and American sociologists like Spencer, people could easily find out that British and American sociology embodied pragmatism which emphasized positivistic description and technical application and valued effectiveness.

If three sociological traditions with distinct differences were formed within the European and American cultural tradition, it would not be contingent to have sociological thoughts with different characteristics in other civilizations other than European and American cultural tradition. Therefore, a sociological study of different civilizations should be viewed from various perspectives, and instead of using only one model to tailor the different reflections on social phenomena or social issues in various cultural traditions. Only when people acknowledge this principle can the relativistic nature of sociology be confirmed in its self-reflection. If sociology cannot understand its diversified development in the principle of relativity, and if it does not acknowledge the diversity of sociology in different geographical environments or different cultural traditions, the relativistic nature of sociology will be negated in its self-identity.

1.5 Expansion of the Boundary

If people adhere to the relativistic nature of sociology and recognize the diversity of sociological studies or sociological traditions, then they can not only find different sociological traditions in each nation's history of thoughts, and different origins or sources of sociology, but also rethink about the boundaries of sociology. And also, the sociology will open up a broader space in deep self-reflection. To achieve this, one premise is that the sociological tradition established by Comte, Durkheim, and Weber should be regarded as a special form of sociology. With the changes of the principle of modernity and the foundation of industrial society, this sociological tradition of simply pursuing the objectivity of social life will also encounter challenges, and new forms or new traditions of sociology will surely come into being. The various postmodern sociological schools developed since the 1970s have indisputably proved this undeniable academic fact. More importantly, the emergence of postmodern sociology shows that sociology has different historical forms in different eras.

According to this, for premodern society, there should be the corresponding premodern sociology, which involves a further breakthrough in the traditional boundaries. Mr. Fei Xiaotong has made a thought-provoking discussion.

Comte saw the emergence of positivistic sociology as a major advance made by mankind on the basis of industrial society. Durkheim believed that positivistic sociology is the most authentic and reliable science studying social facts. Although Weber did not fully support the principles of positivistic sociology, like positivists such as Comte and Durkheim, he believed that sociology is a social objectivity-oriented science pursuing objective regulation and promoting the rationalization of social life. When these classical sociologists explicitly defined sociology as a science that studies social phenomena and promotes the process of social modernization, they did not realize their limitations, nor did they realize that the science they have established is no more than human theoretical pursuit formed under specific historical conditions and made in accordance with the requirements of social life. Such theoretical pursuit will inevitably encounter unavoidable challenges brought by changes in reality.

From the early nineteenth century to the middle twentieth century, although human society experienced the catastrophe caused by the two World Wars, and more and more new understandings of some major issues in human society emerged in the academic community, such as voluntarism, existentialism, and Frankfurt School and other new ideas that challenge scientific rationality or modernity, sociology did not change its enthusiastic pursuit of industrialization, rationalization or modernization. The principle of modernity is still the unchangeable belief of sociology. The heated study of modernization in the United States after World War II proved the above point.

In the 1960s, the sociological camp that adhered to modernity was shaken. In 1967, Daniel Bell published *Notes on the Post-industrial Society*, and Harold Garfinkel published *On Ethnomethodology*. They are two epoch-making works in the field of sociology. The former declares that the industrial society is coming to an end, and the industrial society has arrived. The latter expounds a new mode of thinking that is completely opposite to modern sociology—breaking up the objectivity of science and conducting sociological research on ordinary people.

Based on undeniable facts, Daniel Bell announced to sociologists that the social foundation of modern sociology has undergone fundamental changes. Product-oriented industrial production was no longer the main body of industrial structure but the people-centered tertiary industry that serves people. This is the most profound change in human history, because industrial society, agricultural society, and former agricultural society are all dominated by the relationship between man and nature, while post-industrial society is a society with interpersonal relations as the main contradiction; the contradiction between man and nature is in fact the contradiction between subjectivity and objectivity, or that between the subject and the object, while the interpersonal contradiction is the contradiction between subjectivity and subjectivity or that between subject and object. In phenomenology, it is the contradiction between subjects.

Modern sociology is a scientific mode of thinking that observes, describes and thinks about society as an external object based on the industrial society in the

contradiction between subject and object. According to Giddens, it is the thinking mode of “naturalism”,³⁶ which is “single hermeneutic”.³⁷ The “single hermeneutic” of naturalism is a basic indispensable activity for understanding nature, controlling society, and advancing the process of industrialization, and is a necessary prerequisite for material production activities. In the industrial society where the contradiction between man and nature is the main task of social life, there is an unquestionable basis for the naturalistic mode of thinking of naturalism and the sociological model which is “single hermeneutic”.

However, after the post-industrial society approached, industrial production was relegated to a secondary position, the tertiary industry became the main industry, and interpersonal contradiction became the main contradiction of social life, modern sociology, like other social sciences, was unavoidably challenged. In terms of the relationship between subject and the object, the one-dimensional pursuit of the social objectivity by naturalists, including the so-called “single hermeneutic”, becomes increasingly dimmer. In ethnomethodology, it is advocated that in the connections between subjects, researchers should stand in ordinary people’s shoes, encourage the two-way interpretation by means of dialogue and communication instead of the naturalistic scientific thinking mode based on physics and biology. Therefore, a new mode of thinking adapted to such change was formed, which is the necessary choice for contemporary sociology under new historical conditions.

If Daniel Bell’s declaration of the advent of post-industrial society shakes the realistic foundation of modern sociology, then the construction of ethnomethodology by Harold Garfinkel breaks the barriers of naturalistic thinking in modern sociology. The breakthrough that Daniel Bell and Harold Garfinkel made lies in the two most basic aspects of modernity forming the basis of existence and development of modern sociology: industrial society and naturalistic thinking. People have made many explanations to modernity, such as rationalism, utilitarian principles, industrialization practices, cult of science, and reforms in subjective beliefs and social rationalization during the Enlightenment. It should be acknowledged that these are the basic connotations of modernity. But the most basic aspects of these connotations can be boiled down to the industrialization practice and the naturalistic thinking characterized by the opposition between subject and object. It is these two aspects represent the realistic foundation and spiritual essence of modern society after the Enlightenment.

Since the Enlightenment, modern sociology has been the most loyal scientific branch to industrialization and the subject–object dualistic thinking. Giddens clearly stated, “In my opinion, sociology focuses on the changes in the institutions and lifestyle brought about by ‘modernity’—which originated from the modern social institutions made in accordance with various social reforms in Europe (and now all over the world). Today’s modern social system has been created by a large number of social changes that have taken place on a global scale.”³⁸ The changes in institutions

³⁶Giddens (2003).

³⁷Giddens. *Social Theories and Modern Sociology*, p. 32.

³⁸Giddens. *Social Theories and Modern Sociology*, p. 27.

and lifestyles brought about by modernity are mainly manifested in the industrialization of capitalism, the nations or states, military power and war, cultural spirit of rationalism and so on. Giddens believed that the content of modernity is what is covered in sociology. Therefore, the theoretical vision and theoretical viewpoint of sociology are closely related to the “modernity scheme”, and in order to understand modern sociology, we must learn about the demand, the content and the principle of modernity.³⁹

Giddens’ judgment on the close relationship between modern sociology and modernity has been widely recognized by the sociological community because it is a fact that can be proved by the rich literature of several generations of sociologists. The problem is that if modern sociology is indeed closely linked to modernity, and modernity is indeed adversely impacted as claimed by Daniel Bell and Garfunkel, it means it is hard to sustain the existence foundation and thinking mode of modern sociology. Modern sociology must adjust itself to adapt to the profound changes in the real world. In this sense, Giddens pointed out acutely, “Today, we seem to live in a society with accelerating changes. As the 21st century approaches, the social changes we experience will be as remarkable as what happened in the early modern society. There is no doubt that if we try to understand and consolidate this social change, we have to make modifications to the mainstream of sociological theories and concepts.”⁴⁰

By the 1960s and 1970s, many new ideas or new schools emerge in the humanities and social sciences. They abandoned the principle of modernity and turned to postmodernism. Daniel Bell’s theory on post-industrial society and Garfunkel’s ethnomethodology are two clear signs of people’s transition to postmodern sociology. It should be noted that the postmodern turn mentioned here did not lie in whether a certain theory or academic school had publicly declared that it stood on the post-modernist standpoint, but lied in whether it had shifted from the binary opposition between subjectivity and objectivity to the mode of thinking in which we raised and answered questions on the relationship between subjects. To put it in detail, the fundamental sign of a theoretical school which has achieved a transition from modernity to postmodernity is that it has given up the principle of observing and studying social phenomena as objective phenomena like physical phenomena. That means it never makes single hermeneutic of social life as naturalist do, but, as claimed in the ethnomethodology, stands on the standpoint of daily life and gives a two-way interpretation in the interaction between subjects.

The essential point concerning such shift is that sociology no longer regards the social phenomenon as an objective physical object, but as a person with aim and goal in the mind like an observer or researcher. Sociology is not only to explore the exterior and objective structure, but to explore the value and significance of human social life in communication, dialogue, interaction, and mutual construction, and to reveal the construction and generation of social structure. Moreover, sociology

³⁹Giddens. *Social Theories and Modern Sociology*, pp. 28–36.

⁴⁰Giddens. *Social Theories and Modern Sociology*, p. 17.

no longer regards itself as a self-evident acquaintance, but reflects on itself while explaining the subject.

However, this does not mean that there are no objective entities in the field of sociology, or no research activities on objective phenomena. It should be said that when a phenomenon is taken as a research subject, it is objective and can be called an objective entity. In this sense, the objectivity will never disappear from the scope of sociology. What we need to emphasize here is in what connections sociology sees its research subjects. If sociology conducts research activities merely in the relationship between subjects (sociology researchers) and objects (social research subjects), it is a naturalistic mode of thinking with the binary opposition between subjectivity and objectivity; in ethnomethodology, the research subject is placed in the relationship between people, or the interpersonal relationship is used to examine its research subject. An intermediary is added between the researcher and the object. Therefore, sociology has abandoned the simple naturalistic thinking mode characterized by the binary opposition between subjectivity and objectivity. The research subject of sociology has truly become sociality formed by connections between people and is no longer a mere exterior nonhuman thing.

The change of thinking mode has led to a series of major changes in the theoretical framework, academic basis, concept system, and development form and value orientation of sociology. A number of new vigorous theories and new schools have emerged, such as Michel Foucault's archaeology of knowledge, Jean Francois Lyotard's postmodern knowledge, Bourdieu's reflexive sociology, Jean Baudrillard's *Sociologie de la Consommation*, Jürgen Habermas' theory of communication, Anthony Giddens' Structuration Theory, and Norbert Elias' historical sociology. These sociologists and their sociological theories having aroused strong repercussions in contemporary academic fields and even in social life have launched a profound reflection and criticism on modernity and modern society, making a brand new world of infinite vitality.

As academic schools surged in Europe obviously featured by postmodernism or postmodern styles, important changes took place in the American sociological community. Postmodern thoughts with clear views showed strong momentum in American sociology, such as Jeffery. C. Alexander's new functionalism, Fredric Jameson's late capitalist cultural logic theory, Cornel West's multicultural theory, George Ritzer's consumer sociology, and feminist sociology. These sociological schools echoed the European postmodern sociology. A prosperous situation was thus formed.

More importantly, sociological studies claimed to be based on positivistic principles and positivistic methodologies were also influenced to varying degrees by postmodern sociology. The social capital theory represented by Coleman, Lennan, Putnam, and Ronald Burt, the social network theory represented by Mark Granovetter and White, and the neo-rational choice theory and institutional sociology theory, etc., were no longer stuck in strict positivistic principles. They began to use the methodological principles of doing sociological research in the interpersonal interactions as advocated by Bourdieu, Jürgen Habermas, and Giddens, which boosted positivistic sociology and developed a new expansible theoretical scope.

Regrettably, however, despite the obvious changes in sociology, considerable divergence occurred in the identification and evaluation of such changes. A considerable number of sociologists still adhere to the concept of classical sociology and recognize or define sociology merely from the standpoint of positivistic science. They believe that sociology is the science of studying exterior social phenomena on the basis of objective principles. The sociological theories against positivistic principles are excluded from sociology. They are considered as social theories. Even scholars such as Giddens and Habermas who managed to escape from the constraint of positivistic sociological mode of thinking, and who studied social problems amid connections between subjects and objects and finally made significant theoretical achievements often put their own theories outside the scope of sociology, and claimed their social theories were different from sociological theories.

What is the difference between sociological theory and social theory? George Ritzer made abundant studies and summarized Seidman's definition of sociological theory, "Seidman linked modernism to sociological theory and gave sociology a lot of modern features, especially scientism, foundationalism, holism, essentialism, and narrowness."⁴¹ On the other hand, he also quoted Pauline Marie Rosenau's summary of the characteristics of postmodern social theory and said, "The most basic characteristics are its critical attitude towards the modern world, its opposition to various modern grand narratives and totality, and its emphasis of more premodern emotions and feelings. Also it is more touching than full reasoning. It's also characterized by its tendency to shift the focus from the center to the periphery."⁴²

George Ritzer generalized the features of sociological theory and postmodern social theory and revealed the opposition between the two. However, such opposition was based on the firm observance of the principle of modernity, while the postmodern social theory basically rejected the principle of modernity. Therefore, it is inevitable that the two will stand against each other. The question is: Must sociology use the principle of modernity as the basis for its existence? Would it lose its identity of sociology without following the principle of modernity? Therefore, the crux here is whether the concept of sociology can change? Can the mode of thinking, theoretical vision and methodological principles used in sociology be adjusted?

Looking back on the history and current situation of the humanities and social sciences, there are few disciplines that did not make profound adjustments on the mode of thinking, theoretical vision, and methodological principles when research subjects have undergone significant changes. Especially since profound changes took place in human society in the 1960s, there have been some major changes in the mode of thinking, conceptual framework, methodology, and value orientation in the disciplines of literature, history, philosophy, politics, economics, and law. New thoughts and new schools were not excluded from the discipline because their new standpoint and new principles. Instead, they contributed to the theoretical innovations or theoretical development that these disciplines are proud of, so did postmodern literature,

⁴¹Ritzer (2003).

⁴²George Ritzer. *Postmodern Social Theory*, p. 23.

hermeneutic historiography, neo-pragmatism philosophy, neoliberal economics, and theories of contract and law.

Sociology has always been mostly associated with real life and most sensitive to physical changes. Why is it stagnant now? This seems to be a problem. In fact, as long as sociology could break the narrowness proposed by Seidman, open its mind, and stop using the outdated modernity principles that have constrained his vision and boundaries, people will find that sociology is more active and profound than other similar disciplines in embracing the contemporary social changes. Those new thoughts regarded as social theories should be considered to be the new development of sociology in the contemporary era, symbolizing that postmodern transcendence as sociology broke the constraint of modernity principle.

If it is acknowledged the new ideological trend or genre shifting from modern sociology to postmodern sociology, it should be also admitted that modern sociology is not the only form of sociology, and postmodern sociology is another form of sociology adapted to the changes of social reality. Sociology should warmly welcome the birth of the new form of postmodernism, which means that sociology, like other disciplines, has broad room for development and a promising future.

Postmodern sociology, another form of sociology, suggests that sociology may have other forms. The root cause of postmodern sociology lies in the formation of postmodern society, just as the root cause of modern sociology lying in the formation of modern society. However, modern society and a postmodern society are not the only two forms of human society. Whether it is in terms of history or reality, human beings also have a premodern society. The history of premodern society is much longer than that of modern and postmodern societies. There are more forms of premodern society than those of modern and postmodern societies.

We can use the methodological principles of modern sociology or postmodern sociology to study premodern nations or societies that precede modern society, and to construct new theories of modern sociology. However, such studies may not be able to offer a practical and in-depth understanding of the premodern society. Because methodological principles are not absolute, they vary with the research subjects. Postmodern sociology dealing with the postmodern social phenomenon has to abandon the modern sociological research method. Similarly, when dealing with the phenomenon of premodern society, sociology has to adjust the methodological principles. Otherwise, many problems in the premodern society are difficult to explain by using the methodological principles and theoretical perspectives of modern sociology. This problem cannot be concealed. It is directly related to the essential nature of sociology–relativity.

Comte repeatedly discussed the relativity of sociological research which he believed was the only characteristic of positivistic sociology. He pointed out, “The only characteristic of the new philosophical spirit not indicated by the word ‘positivistic’ includes the inevitable tendency to replace absoluteness by relativity.”⁴³ If relativity is the fundamental characteristic of positivistic sociological research, it

⁴³Comte. *On Positive Spirit*, p. 31.

means sociological research must adapt to the local conditions and occasions. Relativity, in essence, is the recognition of the constraint of conditions. It emphasizes that existence and change of things should be judged in specific historical conditions. For this reason, sociologists such as Comte and Durkheim have repeatedly insisted on the specificity of sociological research.

The relativity and specificity are also consistent with the principle that sociological research should be based on positivistic facts. The essential characteristics and principle requirements of sociology determine that sociology has significant spatial-temporal characteristics. That is to say, sociological research subject should be distinguished not only in terms of temporal process but also in terms of space and regions. It means that in different historical periods and different geographical spaces, sociology should adopt different research methods according to the characteristics of research subjects.

Here we are once again facing the issue of sociological regionality and nationality. It not only covers how to carry out the sociological research of different characteristics in different regions and different nationalities, but also how to treat the issues concerning sociological thoughts and sociological theories formed by various nationalities in different time and space. Considering the principles of relativity, specificity, and diversity of sociology, we should not use Western sociology as a criterion to analyze, evaluate, or even tailor the sociological ideology and its evolutionary history of other regions or other ethnic groups. Instead, we should be open-minded to acknowledge and even try to discover ideological theories and methodological principles different from Western sociology.

While studying the history of Chinese sociology, we should adhere to the principle of relativity, specificity, or diversity of sociology. We should also avoid using Western sociology as a model or criterion to simplify the ideological theory and evolution of Chinese sociology. It is certain that Chinese sociology is inevitably influenced by sociology in the Western world. Nevertheless, Chinese sociology is constructed and developed on the basis of Chinese cultural tradition and social issues. There are not only ideas that have not been discussed in Western sociology, but also methodological principles which have not been used in Western sociology. Only on the premise of the relativity, specificity, and diversity of sociology can we appropriately sort out and generalize Chinese sociological theories and the history of evolution in plenty of Chinese academic literature.

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Chapter 2

Beginning of Chinese Sociology



It is precisely because sociology has the essential characteristics of relativity that Chinese sociology developed under certain historical conditions cannot be attributed only to the introduction and dissemination of Western sociology. Only on the basis of the continuation of Chinese cultural tradition, the evolution of academic thought and the changes of real society can we clearly grasp the origin, local characteristics and academic value of Chinese sociology.

2.1 Beginning of Chinese Sociology

To discuss the ideological origin of Chinese sociology, it is first necessary to clarify the starting point of Chinese sociology. As for the starting point of Chinese sociology, there are usually two statements: One view is that Chinese sociology originated from “Qunxue (old translation of Sociology)” taught by Kang Youwei at the Wanmu Caotang in Guangzhou; The other view is that Chinese sociology originated from Yan Fu’s articles such as *On the Origin of Strength* published in Tianjin’s *Zhibao*, in which “Qunxue” was discussed. The former view is based on Liang Qichao’s records, saying that Kang Youwei once opened a “Qunxue” course at Wanmu Caotang in Guangzhou in 1891. However, Liang Qichao only provided a teaching plan, and whether Kang Youwei actually taught Qunxue cannot be verified. However, Yan Fu did discuss Spencer’s “Qunxue” in his article published in Tianjin’s *Zhibao*.

Regardless of Kang Youwei’s or Yan Fu’s discussion of “Qunxue” for the time being, as far as the Chinese sociological pioneers all called sociology “Qunxue”, the rich meaning contained in it is very worth pondering. Yan Fu used Xuncius’ concept to translate Spencer’s sociology into Qunxue, which clearly expressed his political view on the serious social crisis in China at that time, that is, the Chinese nation should unite to protect its race in the face of the partition by the big powers. At that time, most people with lofty ideals believed that the fundamental reason why China could not resist invasion by foreign enemies was that the Chinese people were not united enough. Only by arousing the sense of unity and resistance of the

nation could a strong national force be formed to resist invasion by foreign powers, or else it would only be subjugated and destroyed. Xuncius' "Qun" is not a simple description of social groups and social behaviors, but is used to refer to the fact that human beings are superior to animals and rely on themselves to develop their ability to survive. Therefore, translating Spencer's concept of "society" as an objective description of the life of human groups into a "group" based on "harmony" in it expresses Yan Fu and others' strong political aspirations, which shows that the first step taken by Chinese sociology has already had major differences with Western empirical sociology represented by Spencer and Comte.

As mentioned earlier, Spencer insists on a stricter objective stance than Comte. He regards society as an independent living organism and advocates a naturalistic non-intervention policy towards social competition. Yan Fu, et al. interpreted Spencer's sociological concept and sociological thought with strict objectivity as "Qunxue" with clear political requirements and value ideals, first showing that the sociology understood or pursued by Chinese sociological pioneers is not based on the simple objective principle of excluding subjectivity, but is premised on the clear political requirements of saving the nation from extinction and the value principle of reviving China. This basic standpoint determines that Chinese sociology is neither Comte's ideal social physics nor Spencer's social biology, but a new discipline integrating scientific spirit and humanistic spirit, which plays a role of both scientific research and moral education in the social changes in modern China.

As Liang Shuming said, Chinese society is an ethics-based society. Not only do people put everything into ethics or interpersonal relationships in their daily life, but scholars also consider how to educate life and coordinate society as fundamental or major issues. Therefore, in China's academic tradition, the ideological theory on social problems of the group has occupied a central position since ancient times. In the traditional Chinese academic literature, we can not only find the rich discussion on the issue of gregariousness directly as Xuncius did, Kang Youwei's discussion in the works of *A Study of the 'New Text' Forgeries*, *Study of the Reforms of Confucius* and *Dong Zhongshu's Study of Spring and Autumn Annals*, a direct discussion on the issue of gregariousness and group governance by Confucius, Mencius, Mozi, Guanzi, and other scholars in the pre-Qin period, as well as Dong Zhongshu and other scholars, but also can find a large number of indirect discussions on the issue of gregariousness from different angles in the voluminous books of Confucianism, Buddhism, and Taoism, such as group, mass, and relationship between monarch and group. Therefore, translating sociology into Qunxue has built a bridge or channel between Western sociology and Chinese academic tradition.

Although Chinese sociology was based on the realistic foundation and cultural tradition of Chinese society from the very beginning, and therefore had its own characteristics different from those of Western sociology, this does not mean that Chinese sociology has fundamentally changed from Western sociology. On the contrary, Chinese sociology is based on its own realistic foundation and cultural tradition, striving harder to pursue the historical mission of Comte's commitment to creating sociology—to change the way of thinking and promote the revolution of spiritual history. Because, this historical mission established by Comte for sociology is not only a

strong demand for Chinese society to get rid of the real crisis at the end of the nineteenth century, but also a development trend that Chinese academic tradition has shown in the late Ming and early Qing Dynasties.

Liang Qichao optimistically discussed the new trend of Chinese academic development in *Intellectual Trends in the Ch'ing Period* and called it China's Enlightenment Movement or Renaissance Movement. He said: "What is the result of the 'Qing Dynasty's ideological trend?" "In a nutshell, for one of the great reactionaries of Neo-Confucianism in Song and Ming Dynasties, those who take "restoring ancient ways" as their ambition also have similar motives and contents to Europe's "Renaissance". However, for the new influence that Europe experienced after the Renaissance, China is now witnessing its beginning."¹ Liang Qichao believed that the academic trend of thought in the Qing Dynasty is similar to the Renaissance, while Neo-Confucianism in the Song and Ming Dynasties is the object of negation of the academic trend of thought in the Qing Dynasty. Here, Liang Qichao has linked the new trend of academic thought in the Qing Dynasty with the evolution of the history of Confucian classics.

As Liang Qichao said, the change of academic thought in the Qing Dynasty is not only a theoretical expression of social change, but also an inevitable result of the evolution of Chinese academic history over the millennium. The core of an overview of China's academic history of more than 2000 years is nothing more than the study and interpretation of Confucian classics. In short, the study of Confucian classics, such as *The Book of Songs*, *The Book of History*, *The Book of Rites*, *The Classic of Music*, *The Book of Changes* and *The Spring and Autumn Annals*, is aimed at sorting out, exegeting, and interpreting these Confucian classics. The study of Confucian classics has undergone complex changes in its historical evolution over 2000 years, not only producing rich schools of Confucian classics, but also changing the classics it contains.

The abovementioned "Six Classics" are the most basic classics and are generally considered to have been compiled by Confucius. "Zhuangzi, Tian Yun" describes: Confucius said to Lao Dan that: "I think I have studied *The Book of Songs*, *The Book of History*, *The Book of Rites*, *The Classic of Music*, *The Book of Changes* and *The Spring and Autumn Annals* for a long time." Zhuangzi, *the World* summarizes the contents of the Six Classics: "*The Book of Songs* is used to express thoughts and feelings, *The Book of History* is used to describe politics, *The Book of Rites* is used to express a code of conduct, *The Classic of Music* is used to convey harmonies, *The Book of Changes* is used to illustrate the mystery of the change of Yin and Yang and *The Spring and Autumn Annals* is used to describe the rank and status. Those that are spread all over the world and established in China are often cited by many schools. "*The Book of Songs* is a collection of poems and songs during the Zhou Dynasty; *The Book of History* is a record of historical events; *The Book of Rites* is a record of behavior etiquette or moral norms in the Spring and Autumn Period; *The Classic of Music* is about music score, rhythm, and dance. The Book of Changes is about Yin and Yang divination. *The Spring and Autumn Annals* is a chronicle and occupies the

¹Qichao (1989).

most important position in the classics. According to the records in *Mencius · Duke Wen of Teng* 2, Confucius said during the Spring and Autumn Period that “the world has declined slightly and evil thoughts and atrocities have been committed, and that officials have killed their monarch and sons have killed their father. Confucius feared and wrote *The Spring and Autumn Annals*. *The Spring and Autumn Annals* is also about the Son of Heaven. So Confucius said: Nobody knows me but *The Spring and Autumn Annals*! What sins against me is only *The Spring and Autumn Annals*.” Confucius wrote *The Spring and Autumn Annals*, which is the disorderly officials and villains afraid of.”

It can be seen that in the Six Classics, except *The Book of Changes* is about divination and *The Book of Songs* and *The Classic of Music* are about literature and art, the other three are related to code of conduct, moral ethics, or social life, especially the most important of the Six Classics, *The Spring and Autumn Annals*, which mainly focuses on answering questions about social changes and social order. This means that Confucian classics, as the core of Chinese traditional culture and traditional learning, are targeted at social life directly from their starting point. Later, in the Eastern Han Dynasty, *The Analects of Confucius* and *The Sutra of Filial Piety* were added instead of *The Classic of Music*, and the Six Classics were changed to the Seven Classics, namely, *The Book of Songs*, *The Book of History*, *The Book of Rites*, *The Book of Changes*, *The Spring and Autumn Annals*, *The Analects of Confucius* and *The Sutra of Filial Piety*, while *The Analects of Confucius* and *The Sutra of Filial Piety* talked more about interpersonal ethics and social order. During the Tang and Song Dynasties, the Confucius classics were increased to the Nine Classics, the Twelve Classics, and even the Thirteen Classics. However, in addition to *Er Ya Zhu Shu*, the later Confucius classics were also directly related to interpersonal ethics and social order.

As the content of the Confucius classics is directly related to social life, the Confucius classics, which are annotated and interpreted, are inextricably linked to social life, and even the historical changes of social life will inevitably lead to the development and changes of classics, which have evolved into different factions in the history of more than 2,000 years. In the period of Western and Eastern Han Dynasties, the study of Confucian classics was divided into the study of modern classics and the study of ancient classics. The study of Confucian classics was recorded by scholars in the Han Dynasty in the popular official script at that time. The study of ancient Confucius classics was written by Liu Xin (?–23), a scholar in the late Western Han Dynasty, which was formed by Lin Xin after giving interpretations and annotations based on the Confucian classics written in pre-Qin ancient Chinese characters as discovered by Kong Anguo, the descendant of Confucius, on the old wall of Confucius’ residence. The study of modern Confucian classics during the Western Han Dynasty pays attention to the explanation of the general principles therein, while that during the Eastern Han Dynasty pays attention to the textual exegesis. Since the explanation of the general principles can be given a certain degree of flexibility, while the textual exegesis must be limited to textual research of the original text, the study of ancient Confucius classics appeared relatively flexible at the beginning, while the study of ancient Confucius classics appeared conservative and dull.

In the Han Dynasty, the study of modern Confucius classics and the study of ancient Confucius classics coexisted in opposition, and their positions were mutually growing and falling. Zheng Xuan (127–200) inherited Ma Rong’s tradition in the late Han Dynasty and devoted himself to the integration of the study of modern Confucius classics and ancient Confucius classics, thus promoting the development of Confucius classics. During the Wei and Jin Dynasties, the famous scholar Wang Su (195–256) opposed to Zheng Xuan and started a century-long dispute between Wang School and Zheng School, which eventually led to the decline of Sinology. Pi Xirui made a clear summary of this process in his *History of Confucian Classics*: “If Zheng School grows, Sinology will decline; if Wang Su stands out, Zheng School will decline. Wang Su accepts the views of Jia Kui and Ma Rong but Zheng Xuan. Jia Kui and Ma Rong both studied the ancient literature, but Zheng Xuan created its own. Wang Su agreed with Jia Kui and Ma Rong but disagreed with Zheng Xuan. How did Wang Su and Ma Rong focus on ancient classics and Zheng Xuan on modern classics? Wang Su also studied modern and ancient classics. Wang Su’s father is Yang Ci, who passed on Ouyang’s *The Book of History*; Hong Liangji’s *Zhuan Jing Biao* takes Wang Su as the 17-generation disciple, and Wang Su often studies modern literature. But he also studied Jia Kui and Ma Rong’s ancient literature. Therefore, he refutes Zheng Xuan’s ancient classics with his modern classics or refutes Zheng Xuan’s modern classics with his ancient classics. He did not know that Sinology focuses on specialization. Zheng Jun studies modern and ancient classics. People thought it fought against the family rules. Wang Su was intended to argue with Zheng Xuan, saying it is appropriate to distinguish the family rules and return them to normal, and identified the errors of Zheng Xuan’s views. Sinology revived and Zheng School became obsolete. However, Wang Su did not know the difference but especially followed Zheng Xuan’s views.”²

In the Sui and Tang Dynasties, with the end of the separatist regime between the North and the South, the study of Confucian classics gradually became unified. During the reign of Zhenguan in the Tang Dynasty, Emperor Taizong ordered Kong Yingda (574–638) and others to compile *The Annotations to Five Classics* to identify and clear up various ambiguities formed during the Northern and Southern Dynasties due to the mutual exclusion of the Confucian classics studies by various schools, and to combine the achievements of the Confucian classics studies and realize the unification of the Confucian classics studies. However, in Wu Zetian’s time, the unified Confucian classics formed in Emperor Taizong’s time were sharply challenged.

Wu Zetian supported Wang Yuan, et al. in questioning the previous Confucian classics, and issued a letter to praise Wang Yuan for his “Filling the gap of previous opinions and studying the purpose of sages is what Confucianism is in pursuit of, which is rare.”³ Cai Fanglu believed that the new trend of Confucian classics in the Sui and Tang Dynasties is the beginning of Neo-Confucianism in the Song and Ming Dynasties, “Confucian classics in the Sui and Tang Dynasties are also the intermediate link in the transformation from Sinology to Song Studies, and gradually develop from

²Xirui (1959).

³Fanglu (2004).

the clue of suspecting Confucian classics, giving up preaching and seeking Confucian classics, and attaching importance to the four books, thus opening the way for the emergence of Song Studies that emphasize righteousness.”⁴

Neo-Confucianism in the Song and Ming Dynasties lasted 600 years from the beginning of the Song Dynasty to the end of the late Ming and early Qing Dynasties, and played a very important role in the history of Chinese thought and academic history. In the study of the history of Confucian classics, Neo-Confucianism in Song and Ming Dynasties is generally juxtaposed with the Confucian classics studies in Han Dynasty, referred to as Song Studies and Han Studies for short. Zhou Dunyi (1016–1073) is the founder of Neo-Confucianism in Song and Ming Dynasties. Zhu Xi and other scholars in the Song Dynasty gave Zhou Dunyi a high opinion that “His views are as profound as the infinite Tai Chi, but in fact it is as simple as daily life; He explores the trace of yin and yang and the five elements, which in fact do not depart from righteousness, propriety, wisdom, hardness, good, and evil. As one of the sources, there is no difference, and it has not reached perfection since Qin and Han Dynasties, but it is nothing more than the six classics, the Analects of Confucius, the Doctrine of the Mean, and the Great Learning.”⁵ It can be seen that Zhu Xi believed that Zhou Dunyi’s achievement lies in establishing the ultimate noumenon for Neo-Confucianism, Tai Chi, which explains all things, and has reached the position of “pursuing the root of poor heavenly principles and studying all things from beginning to end.”

Cheng Hao (1032–1085) and Cheng Yi (1033–1107) are the founders of Neo-Confucianism and are generally called Er Cheng. When Feng Youlan discussed the academic thought of Er Cheng, he believed that their discussion on the heavenly principles and Qi, heart, temperament, emotion, and other aspects played a fundamental role in the Neo-Confucianism of Song and Ming Dynasties. Zhou Dunyi called it the noumenon of Tai Chi, and was called by Cheng Yi as Rule, Law, or Heavenly Principles. Er Cheng thought: “The heavenly principles are eternal. It exists for no person. Nor does it increase or decrease with poverty. There is no addition or subtraction for it. Everything is ready.”⁶ They said that: “There is just a principle in the world, so it is applicable to every field”. This principle is not only in line with the nature, but also in line with human society, and does not change with the time and space.⁷ It can be seen that the heavenly principles mentioned by Er Cheng are not only an eternal ontology of all things existing between heaven and earth, but also an absolute essence that runs through life and human nature.

Er Cheng promoted the ethics and morality in the classics to the eternal ontology of absolute universality—heavenly principles, which not only raised the theory of Confucian classics to the level of philosophical world outlook and universal principles, but also made the preaching of Confucian classics more widely applicable, and also expanded the initiative and practice space of Confucian classics research. Cai Fanglu

⁴Cai Fanglu. *Zhu Xi’s Confucian Classics and Chinese Confucian Classics*, p. 128.

⁵Xi (1995).

⁶Cheng and Shu (2004).

⁷*Er Cheng Yi Shu Vol. 2*. Feng Youlan. *New History of Chinese Philosophy Vol. 2*, p. 115.

summarized the four changes of Neo-Confucianism in the study of Confucian classics: “It embodies the general characteristics of interpretation of classics with rules in the Song Dynasty”; “Develop the Confucian Classics toward Neo-Confucianism, and develop the Neo-Confucianism of the Song Dynasty into the Neo-Confucianism”; “The established philosophy of Heavenly Principles Theory represents the main trend of the development of Neo-Confucianism in the Song Dynasty”; “Respecting ‘Four Books’ and replacing ‘Six Classics’ exegesis with ‘Four Books’ as the main body of Confucian classics.”⁸

The Neo-Confucianism of Er Cheng is often called objective idealism, because although they said “heavenly principles” can also be regarded as moral ethics of life, they do have obvious objectivity compared with people’s subjective will. During the Song and Ming Dynasties, there was also Lu Jiuyuan and Wang Yangming’s philosophy of mind, which clearly understood and interpreted the scriptures from the subjective aspect, and formed a complementary relationship between subjective and objective aspects with the heaven principle of “Er Cheng”. When Lu Jiuyuan (1139–1193) was a teenager, he read “The Four Sides Up and Down represent Yu, the Past and Present represent Zhou” and wrote: “The universe is in my mind, my mind is the universe. Before thousands of generations, there were saints with such mind and principle; After thousands of generations, there will be saints with the same mind and the same principle”.⁹ Later, his position of subjective idealism became clearer, and he believed that: “Everyone has his mind that has its own law, and the mind is the law”.¹⁰

Although Wang Yangming (1472–1528) was born in the Ming Dynasty and was more than 300 years away from Lu Jiuyuan, their views were the same. Wang Yangming took the mind as the core and believed that “there is no thing outside the mind, no event outside the mind, no principle outside the mind, no righteousness outside the mind, and no good outside the mind”.¹¹ He argued his point of view in this way: “If you are thinking about an event in your mind, then event is one thing; If you are thinking about a monarch in your mind, then monarch is one thing; If you are thinking about benevolence and love in your mind, then benevolence and love are one thing; If you are seeing, listening, speaking and moving in your mind, then seeing, listening speaking and moving is one thing. Therefore, it is said that there is no principle outside the mind and no thing outside the mind.”¹² Since the mind is regarded as the noumenon of everything, it is crucial to play the role of the mind. The fundamental function of the mind is moral experience and cognition of things. Therefore, Wang Yangming regards “attaining conscience” as a top priority. Since all things are just one mind, conscience is just a heavenly principle in the mind. At the end of the day, attaining conscience is an introspection of one’s own mind. Therefore, Wang

⁸Cai Fanglu. *Zhu Xi’s Confucian Classics and Chinese Confucian Classics*, pp. 149–152.

⁹Jiuyuan (1980).

¹⁰Jiuyuan (1982).

¹¹Wang Yangming. *A Letter to Wang Chunfu* 2. Editor-in-Chief Chen Qingkun. *A History of Chinese Philosophy*, p. 449.

¹²Yangming (1982).

Yangming came up with a very economical principle, that is, as long as he reflected on his own mind, he could know everything from heaven to earth. According to this principle, Wang Yangming disparaged the exegesis of the scriptures and advocated that the six classics should be annotated to me, rather than by me, as Lu Jiuyuan did.

Zhu Xi (1130–1200) is a master of Neo-Confucianism in Song and Ming Dynasties. He further discussed the relationship between principle and all things from the perspective of ontology, believing that “there are principle and Qi between heaven and earth. The principle is the metaphysical way and the biological basis; Qi is a device as deemed by metaphysics and what living being has.”¹³ Here, the principle is not only the objective law of heaven, earth, and all things, but also the moral principle of social life, and is the basis for defining and supporting the universe and life. Qi is the material that exists in concrete form and can be used to create all things. The principle is hierarchical, with the highest being Tai Chi, and all kinds of concrete things also have their own principles. Zhu Xi used the metaphor of “The moon reflects in myriad rivers” to describe the relationship between the principle of Tai Chi and the principle of concrete things, meaning that Tai Chi is like the moon hanging in the sky, and one moon can be seen in every river, that is, the principle of Tai Chi is unique, but it can be reflected in all kinds of things in the world.

Zhu Xi also discussed the view of “Gain knowledge by studying the principles of things”. In his view, although each person has his own principle in his mind, the principle in his mind can only be found through the process of understanding things. This shows that Zhu Xi believed that the understanding process includes two basic links: Study the principles of things and gain knowledge. Although studying the principles of things is an intermediate link to gain the knowledge, gaining the knowledge is the principle of the mind, so Zhu Xi’s gaining the knowledge is no essentially different from Wang Yangming’s attaining conscience. However, the fact that there is studying the principles of things that points to the external things means that Zhu Xi has inherited the objective principles of “Er Cheng”. Therefore, Zhu Xi’s Neo-Confucianism is a unity of subjective principle and objective principle, and is a unity of returning to oneself and understanding external things.

As far as the evolution of Neo-Confucianism in Song and Ming Dynasties is concerned and the negation and transcendence of Sinology in Song studies are concerned, the history of Confucian classics has been deepened both objectively and subjectively. In Sinology, although the former attaches importance to the interpretation of righteousness while the latter attaches importance to the identification of falsehood in exegesis, both of them focus on scripture itself, and their research methods are similar to medieval European scholasticism, both of which are doctrinal interpretations or scriptural identification of classic documents. The Neo-Confucianism of Er Cheng and Zhu Xi and the philosophy of mind of Lu Jiuyuan and Wang Yangming in the Neo-Confucianism during the Song Dynasty, by contrast, although they have the difference of emphasizing objective externalities and subjective internalities, not only have the Neo-Confucianism emphasizing Tai Chi and heavenly principles directed their vision to the vast universe life outside the scripture, but

¹³Xi (1982).

also the Neo-Confucianism that regards everything as self-centered has gone beyond the scripture itself. As for Zhu Xi's achievement in gathering Neo-Confucianism, it has more clearly realized the two-way deepening of subjective introspection and objective cognition in the study of Confucian classics.

The two-way deepening of Neo-Confucianism in Song and Ming Dynasties is the two-way development of epistemology and ontology, which, in terms of its nature, is equivalent to the development of epistemology in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries after the European Renaissance and French materialism in the eighteenth century. If the European epistemology represented by Bacon, Descartes, Locke, Hume, and others is used as a yardstick to evaluate the theory of "Attain consciousness", "Gain knowledge by studying the principles of things", etc. of Neo-Confucianism in the Song and Ming Dynasties, it is difficult to give a fair evaluation of these cognitive theories in Chinese classics, because it is not only carried out with a conceptual system different from that of European epistemology, but also, more importantly, its aim is different from that of European epistemology. If European epistemology pursues how to know the laws and essence of external things, regardless of empiricism and rationalism, their ultimate theoretical orientation is the understanding of the nature and laws of external things, despite the differences between perceptual facts and rational logic. Then Neo-Confucianism in the Song and Ming Dynasties is different from European epistemology in that it pursues not the laws and essence of things outside life, but the moral ethics of the unity of heaven and man and the emphasis on the reality of life, which is also the thoughts alteration on entering political stratum or ethical pursuit of Confucianism.

The Neo-Confucianism of Song and Ming Dynasties talks about heaven, but this heaven is not the natural world opposite to life, which is essentially the objectification of the reality of life. Therefore, the heavenly principle and Tai Chi discussed by Neo-Confucianism of Song and Ming Dynasties are not the laws of nature, but the moral ethics of regular life. Liang Shuming once compared the principles of Chinese learning with those of Western learning. He called the principles of the laws and essence of Western learning physics and the principles with moral ethics as the basic content of Chinese learning reason. "Reason cannot be understood without the subjective likes and dislikes; Physics cannot be understood with subjective likes and dislikes. Physics comes from physical observation; Observation depends on human feelings and reasoning; People's feelings and reasoning were originally the product of human beings' detachment from instinct after calm down, and it is also necessary to remove all feelings and then make the best use of them. Therefore, scientists are known for their calm. But on the contrary, there are still the same points. That is, although reason is seen in feelings, it must be selfless feelings. Selfless feelings are also the product of human being's detachment from instinct and calm down."¹⁴ It can be seen that reason and physics not only have subjective and objective differences, but also transcend the commonness of personal emotions, because only in social-ethical relations can there be the so-called reason, so reason and physics are universal.

¹⁴Shuming (2000).

Universality is also objectivity. Universality has externalities to individuals because it transcends individuality. Although this externality is not a natural externality but a social externality existing in individuals, it is still objectivity. If reason is the universality existing in social relations, it is the objectivity rooted in the Chinese society characterized by ethics. If the Song and Ming Neo-Confucianism pursues this kind of social objectivity and the “principle” of ethics, it means that the Song and Ming Neo-Confucianism has shifted from classics annotation to social reality. Although this shift is often included in the abstract discussion of Tai Chi and heavenly principle, it has already shown a major turning point in the history of Chinese classics—facing the reality of life and entering an ethical society.

Wang Hui discussed the views of Japan’s Kyoto School when evaluating the status and significance of Neo-Confucianism in Song and Ming Dynasties. From the 1920s to the 1940s, the Kyoto School, represented by Naito Konan and Miyazaki City, put forward such important propositions as “Tang-Song Transformation”, “Capitalism in the Song Dynasty”, and “Modern Times in Japan” and made a rich exposition of the modern transformation beginning in the Song Dynasty. Wang Hui summarized four points: “First, although the world was unified by force in the Song Dynasty, the relationship between its rule and commercial or economic rule has been strengthened as never before.” “Second, accompanied by economic changes is the decline of aristocratic social structure and culture centered on the nine-rank system of selecting officials; Instead, it was a mature county system, a central dictatorship and a bureaucratic system, among which the rise of gentry-bureaucrat class due to the regularization of the imperial examination system has greatly affected the Chinese culture since the Song Dynasty and laid a foundation for the formation of a political culture different from that of the Han and Tang empires.” “Third, unlike the cultural identity of the Han and Tang multi-ethnic empires, the society in the Song Dynasty represented the emergence of early nationalism (the combination of state and nation and cultural xenophobia).” “Fourth, in line with the above-mentioned conditions, Neo-Confucianism took the place of Confucian classics in Han and Tang dynasties, establishing a new Confucian world outlook that combines the ‘modern’ orientation of ‘nationalism’, populism (anti-aristocratic egalitarianism) and secularism, and constitutes a symbol of ‘early modern’ or ‘modern’ in the field of ideological history.”¹⁵

If Wang Hui’s summary of the Kyoto School conforms to the historical facts of the Song Dynasty, it can indeed be acknowledged that the economic, political, and cultural structural transformation of Chinese society took place in Song Dynasty. Here, the most interesting thing is the “modern” orientation of the new Confucian world outlook established by Neo-Confucianism. Hu Shizhi, Feng Youlan, and Mou Zongsan called this new world outlook the pursuit of “secularization” and “rationalization” from the perspective of new Confucianism. Secularization and rationalization are ideological tendencies or academic trends in the European Enlightenment. The antithesis of secularization and rationalization is the surreal unreality of religious theology, which requires people to return to the real world and use scientific

¹⁵Hui (2004).

principles and logical thinking to dominate their life in pursuit of real interests. If the concept of secularization and rationalization of the Enlightenment is used to explain the changes of Neo-Confucianism in the Song and Ming Dynasties, it is obvious that there are some questions about the conformity of concept and entity. Because, as Liang Shuming puts it, the so-called reason for Neo-Confucianism in Song and Ming Dynasties is ethics or reason, not physics pursued by science. As a result, the same rational noun has very different connotations.

During the Enlightenment, secularization and rationalization are the products of the same historical era, both of which are a negation of religious theology, but they have opposite and mutually exclusive orientations. Secularization requires people's pursuit of returning from heaven to earth, fully affirming the real life belittled by religious theology, and carrying out observation, understanding, and evaluation in the life world or in the process of experience. Rationality put forward during the Enlightenment was initially the overall rationality with value rationality, but later the concept of rationality was gradually simplified into scientific principles and logical thinking. When reason is understood as scientific principles and logical thinking, rationalization is merely to define society with scientific principles and logical principles, and its essence is merely to require social life to define itself according to the objective principles that are more abstract than it is. As a result, some social activities that have been rationalized are separated from people's daily life and are developing toward a non-secular direction of specialization and theme. Therefore, this rationalization must be a negation of secularization.

On the contrary, since the heavenly principles of Neo-Confucianism in Song and Ming Dynasties are social ethics and moral principles based on family life and aimed at interpersonal relations, the social rationalization promoted by Neo-Confucianism in Song and Ming Dynasties is not the separation and abstraction of social life, but the standardization of social life with emotional relations and obligation relations as its core. The result of this rationalization itself is the process of secularization of the study of Confucian classics. It is in this sense that Fei Xiaotong made the following comments on Confucian ethics and Neo-Confucianism in Song and Ming Dynasties:

In China's local tradition, the ancient hundred schools of thought and Confucianism and Taoism are one of the basic knowledge for us to know Chinese society, and cannot be ignored, especially the many things of Neo-Confucianism in Song and Ming Dynasties, which are very worthy of attention. Neo-Confucianism can be called the quintessence and epitome of Chinese culture. It is actually an indispensable key to explore the spirit, psychology and behavior of Chinese people. An important feature of the evolution of Chinese traditional thought is its practicality; the content of Neo-Confucianism is not the result of the speculation of ordinary scholars, nor is it a purely theoretical discussion. All its concepts and all its internal logic are actually closely related to the essence of the relationship between Chinese people in the social reality—status, birthright, rights, etc. It is a summary and guiding strategy of the actual political, social and cultural operation in ancient China and has a strong practicality. The essence of Neo-Confucianism is to talk directly about how to communicate with “people”, how to treat “people”, how to govern “people” and how to shape “people”. These things actually directly determine the so-called “mechanism”

and “structure” of sociology today, that is, the social operation mechanism and social structure. If we can re-examine the achievements of these predecessors at a new level, it will provide us with many new inspirations in today’s exploration and will be very helpful in opening up the exploration field of Chinese sociology.¹⁶

These discussions by Fei Xiaotong are of great significance to understanding the relationship between the Neo-Confucianism of Song and Ming Dynasties and the whole Confucian classics and the study of Chinese sociology. First of all, these discussions show that Neo-Confucianism in Song and Ming Dynasties is the research result on the interpersonal relationship, operation mechanism and existence structure of Chinese society and it is the knowledge base and method principles for sociological research at a deeper level. Secondly, these discussions also clearly point out that Neo-Confucianism in Song and Ming Dynasties is not only the result of scholars’ speculation, but also has strong practicality. Many of its ideas have been integrated into Chinese social life and become the mechanism and structure that directly restricts the operation of Chinese society. Therefore, the study of Neo-Confucianism in Song and Ming Dynasties is essentially a study of Chinese society. In addition, Fei Xiaotong also believed that studying Song and Ming Neo-Confucianism and absorbing its academic essence can promote sociology to break through the old boundary and open a new horizon. Fei Xiaotong’s exposition strongly proves that Neo-Confucianism in Song and Ming Dynasties and Confucian Classics in Han and Tang Dynasties are important ideological sources of Chinese sociology. Their rich thoughts not only have a profound impact on modern Chinese sociology, but also need to be further explored. Their ideological essence helps Chinese sociology to expand its theoretical space in a broader academic field based on profound cultural background.

2.2 Western Element in Chinese Sociology

Chinese sociology has a profound deposit of Confucian classics. And also, its formation and development were directly influenced by Western academia. In terms of sociological discourse in university forums and academic forums, Western sociology imposed a greater influence on Chinese sociology, especially positivistic sociology. People also paid enough attention to the influence of Western studies on the origin of Chinese sociology. However, when discussing the influence of Western learning on the origin of Chinese sociology, people tend to focus only on Chinese sociological pioneers’ introduction of evolutionist sociology and empirical sociology, ignoring the great influence on Chinese sociology in the mid-nineteenth century when great changes occurred to Western academia. As a result, the complex influence of Western academia on Chinese sociology is just simplified.

From Yan Fu’s translation of Spencer’s *Study of Sociology* and the influence of Chicago sociology on Chinese sociology in the early twentieth century, we can see

¹⁶Fei Xiaotong. *On the Enlargement of Traditional Boundary of Sociology*, *China Sociology Yearbook* (1999–2002), p. 16.

that Chinese sociology was undoubtedly influenced by evolutionist sociology and empirical sociology. However, the problem is that Western sociology is not alone in imposing an impact on China. It entered China at the time when various Western academic trends had a wide impact on Chinese academic circles. And since mid-nineteenth century, Western scholars have entered a period of reconstruction with complex and profound changes. Therefore, when we discuss the influence of evolutionist sociology and empirical sociology on Chinese sociology, taking into account the historical changes of Western trend of thought, we can clearly understand the significance of Chinese sociology when it accepts Western theories, clearly explain why gradually marginalized sociology played a central role at the beginning of the modern Chinese academics and deeply reflect on what Chinese sociology has missed out on due to lack of thinking in this field.

In the middle of the nineteenth century, rapid and complex changes occurred to Western academics. One of the most prominent changes was that German speculative philosophy represented by Hegel lost its dominance in European academic thoughts, and the abstract questioning of metaphysics was gradually ignored. Reality-oriented social theories attracted people's attention. In *Reason and Revolution*, Herbert Marcuse explained clearly the evolution trend and development logic of social theories after the disintegration of Hegel's philosophy. He pointed out: "The transition from philosophy to the national and social field has become an essential intrinsic part of Hegel system. His basic philosophical views have been realized in the special historical forms assumed by the state and society. The latter has become the center of excitement of a new theory. Philosophy has been transformed into social theory."¹⁷

As is known to all, Hegel regarded people's reflection and pursuit of reason as the core or mission of philosophy. And the rationality he advocates is the dialectical reason, affirming development and change, and devoting to truth and human freedom. Hegel pursued reason on the logic level from the perspective of speculative philosophy. In other words, Hegel expressed his revolutionary wish for the rational pursuit of freedom with dialectical logic, "The content of rationality has been achieved. It is no longer the mission of philosophy to realize rationality. It can no longer indulge itself in the illusion of Utopia. As a real component, society has met the material conditions for transformation. And the truth contained in philosophy is real."¹⁸ It is said that the rational philosophy or rationalism that Hegel represents is essentially the pursuit of social progress and individual freedom. It only expresses the revolutionary requirements of the French bourgeoisie with abstract concepts. Since rational philosophy inherently contains revolutionary passions for truth and freedom, it will never stop at the level of logical deduction. It will ultimately be confronted with specific unreality and non-freeness—social existence. And when philosophy progresses to this realm, social theory has emerged as a substitute for philosophy. Therefore, the replacement of speculative philosophy by social theory is essentially the result of the development of speculative philosophy. Social theory is a new philosophical form that represents the spirit of the times.

¹⁷Marcuse (1993, p. 229).

¹⁸Marcuse (1993, p. 166).

According to Marcuse, there are three main paths from philosophy to social theory: the existentialism and humanism initiated by Søren Aabye Kierkegaard, the social criticism founded by Marx, and the positivistic sociology pioneered by Comte. Based on an individual's perceptual existence, Kierkegaard denies Hegel's rational principle. In his view, the universal rational principle is just a logical abstraction. The only real existence is the personal existence presented by perceptual consciousness. The existence of individuals consisting of emotions such as pain, trouble, loneliness, despair, desire, and enthusiasm is real. Therefore, Kierkegaard opposed traditional metaphysics which stayed at the level of conceptual deduction and logical speculation. He advocated facing the individual's actual living conditions and immediate life experience, expressing concerns over the hardships and confusions of life, and helping human beings to escape from endless suffering.

Although Kierkegaard's philosophy was inclined to negative pessimism and mysticism, he showed his resistance to rationalist philosophy by adopting a perceptual individualist stance. Although Hegel's philosophy also includes his concern over the survival of human beings and the pursuit of freedom, equality, and democracy to promote social progress, Hegel expressed these ideas in abstract philosophical concepts. And Hegel believed that the value pursuit such as freedom, equality, and democracy is the actualization of absolute concepts. Only on the universality of human social life can a clear understanding be reached. Therefore, Hegel stressed the universal existence of human beings and the historical process of society rather than the specific existence of the individuals. However, if the rational care for human beings merely floats on the universality, individuals and their living conditions are doomed to be despised, and rationality will be emptied by it. Although Kierkegaard's philosophical concept has obvious mystical tendencies and eventually turned into religious theology, it contains the true pursuit of overcoming the abstraction of rationalism and the specific existence of social life.

Kierkegaard's insistence on perceptual existence not only affected Martin Heidegger's existentialism, Maurice Merleau-Ponty's *Phenomenology of Perception*, but also immediately influenced Edmund Gustav Albrecht Husserl's late phenomenology. They returned to people's daily life and studied social life issues from the perspective of individual's daily living conditions and interpersonal relationship, which showed that reason became more specific. The philosophers included in such academic evolutionary are often blamed for the anti-rationalism it showed. In fact, they should not be simply considered as people who opposed to anti-rationalism. Although they pungently criticized and resisted German rationalism philosophy represented by Hegel, they did not generally negate human reason. What they rejected were the reason abstraction divorcing from the objective existence of human beings—perceptual individuals and the exaggeration of logics and blamed the denial or degradation of the perceptual consciousness of individuals. Affirming sensibility does not mean negating reason. On the contrary, the affirmation of personal perceptual consciousness and perceptual existence helps rationality to rise to a higher level.

Kierkegaard also influenced Ludwig Andreas Feuerbach's materialism. Feuerbach's materialism, unlike French materialism, is also a social theory based on the critique of Hegel's philosophy. Although he insisted on materialist ontology,

his views are based on humanism. Like Kierkegaard, Feuerbach also believed that both personal perceptual consciousness and perceptual existence are real, while the abstract concept regarding reason, like theology, is divorced from the reality. He also held that philosophy should turn to individual perceptual life so that philosophy could exercise its role in understanding life and promoting social happiness. Feuerbach, who was a materialist according to Marx, essentially continued Kierkegaard's pursuit of social theory.

Feuerbach's humanistic social theory gave rise to Marxism. Marx's emphasis on human values, perceptual existence, and humanity liberation are directly influenced by Feuerbach. However, Marx also explicitly criticized Feuerbach's theory of individualistic sensibility. "The main shortcomings of all previous materialism (including Feuerbach's materialism) is that object, reality, perception is studied merely in terms of intuition rather than treating them as activities of human perception." "Feuerbach is not satisfied with abstract thinking and likes to be intuitive. But he didn't regard sensibility as a practical perceptual activity of human beings."¹⁹ Marx not only denied the abstractness of Feuerbach's humanistic social theory based on human intuition but also affirmed the specificity and reality based on human perceptual activities, i.e., labor practice. Based on this, Marcuse made the following summary of Marx's social theory:

Marx concentrated his theory on the labor process, and through this he completed Hegel's dialectic principle, that is, the structure of the content (reality) determines the structure of the theory. He made the foundation of civil society the basis of civil society theory. Such a society moves in accordance with universal labor principles, because the labor process determines human existence; labor determines the value of all things. The constant exchange of labor products brings constant existence of society. Therefore, human relations are governed by immediate economic laws. The extent of individual development and individual freedom depends on the extent to which labor meets social needs. All people are free, but the structure of the labor process rules the freedom of all individuals. In short, the study of the labor process is necessary, which allows us to discover the conditions of reason and freedom. The critical analysis of the labor process thus forms the ultimate subject of philosophy.²⁰

Indeed, as Marcuse said, Marx's social theory was based on the study of labor practice. Marx regarded labor as the *Gattungswesen* and the realization of *Gattungswesen*. It was the labor that created human beings and their society. The basic relationship and basic structure of human society was constructed by labor practice. Only through the continuous development of labor practice can human beings realize a leap from the realm of necessity to the realm of freedom. This is a general exposition made by Marx based on the essence of labor. It contains certain ideality and logical inference. Marx's exposition based on labor is concerned with the theory of labor alienation or

¹⁹*Collected Works of Marx and Engels* (1995). 2nd Ed. Vol.1, pp. 54, 56. Beijing: People's Publishing House.

²⁰Herbert Marcuse. *Reason and Revolution*, p. 248.

labor exploitation under the capitalist system. It includes civil society theory, economic and social structure and theory of its movement or change, basic contradictions of social forms, and class struggle which boosts the advance of history. Marx's labor-based social theory transcended Kierkegaard and Feuerbach's social theory which focused on individual perceptual existence. It not only recognized individual perceptual existence, but also attached greater importance to the study by putting human's perceptual existence into labor practice. By doing so, the understanding is achieved on the overall structure of human society and the general law of movement. Hegel's principle of reason pursuing universality develops concrete forms and realistic contents in the interpretation and criticism of labor practice.

Concurrent with the social theories of Kierkegaard, Feuerbach, and Marx is the positivistic sociology represented by Comte. The positivistic sociology founded by Comte is also a result of the theoretical shift of traditional philosophy. Comte was constantly criticizing German philosophy and expounding the basic views of empirical sociology. Comte had always been regarding his sociology as new world outlook or newly established philosophy with innovative thinking mode. Comte pointed out, "positivist spirit can spontaneously and systematically conclude the order and progress which coexist as sound concept; it is stated that this fundamental property is sufficient to show, in a nutshell, the superior social efficacy of all new philosophies. In this aspect, the value of the new philosophy depends in particular on sufficient scientific facts. That is, it tries to maintain a balance between principles and facts regardless of whether they are social phenomena or not. Only comprehensive reconstruction can put an end to major modern crisis. Such reconstruction, from a spiritual point of view (which should be prioritized) is mainly establishment of a sociological theory that is sufficient in explaining the entire human history."²¹

Comte clearly stated the essential characteristics and basic mission of positivistic sociology as a new philosophy. In his view, order and progress are the two basic tasks of positivistic sociology. In order to promote social progress and social stability, sociology should study theoretical principles based on facts, rather than logical inferences from principles to principles as in Hegelian philosophy. If we use empirical facts-based scientific view and the future-oriented values and views to guide the reconstruction of human society, we can build a brand new society and have an understanding of the whole human history with such a mode of thinking or new philosophy. This is what Comte pursues theoretically by establishing positivistic sociology.

The successors of positivistic sociology tend to forget about the sociological objectives determined by Comte in their empirical research. Some positivistic sociologists ignored the revolutionary significance of sociology as a new world view, a new mode of thinking. They even believed that Comte's views are not the principles of positivistic sociology, but the social philosophy that has not yet been freed from the philosophy. In essence, they first empiricalized and superficialized sociology and then used shallow sociological views to distort or dispel the fundamental features and basic missions of sociology.

²¹ Comte. *On Positive Spirit*, p. 43.

It can be seen from the history of sociological development that the vitality of sociology mainly lies in the fact that as a new mode of thinking it offered lots of novel social theories to human beings. Later sociologists after the time of Comte, such as Durkheim, Simmel, Weber, Vilfredo Pareto, Parsons, Robert King Merton, Karl Mannheim, and Blau, Coleman, Bourdieu, Giddens, confronted with the major changes in human social life, established social theories with new ideological visions. It is these social theories leading the academic upsurge that make sociology irreplaceable in the academic field. The achievement made in sociology within less than 200 years is what cannot be achieved in other disciplines even within a millennium.

Compared with the humanistic social theory started by Kierkegaard and the critical social theory founded by Marx, the most prominent feature of the positivistic sociological theory is the relativity proposed by Comte. As mentioned earlier, Comte believed that sociology has achieved a radical change in the mode of thinking from absoluteness to relativity, which is a profound revolution in the human spirit. Kierkegaard, Feuerbach, and later humanists like Heidegger, while emphasizing the specific existence of caring people in a specific living environment, opposed the use of logic to interpret the suffering and confusion of life in the abstract rational generalization. However, humanism does not emphasize the use of empirical facts to support their theoretical interpretation, and many theoretical views are no more than experience and imagination expressed in a romantic literary way. Martin Spielberg's poetic philosophy also shows romantically humanists' opposition to scientific reason. Since it is romantic, it has to break the restraint of special conditions and draw conclusions that transcend reality by subjective imagination and subjective evaluation.

Comte believed that sociology is based on a down-to-earth style, which not only has its own facts, but also guarantees that the theoretical viewpoints of sociology go beyond absoluteness to relativity. It is precisely in specific conditions that the existence of human activities is comprehended. Moreover, since the actual activities of human beings must be carried out in society, the principle of relativity requires this new philosophy to be a sociological or social theory that handles social life rather than merely deals with individual existence. Due to the relativity of sociology, "the positivistic spirit obtained the greatest possible sociality without any difficulty. The positivistic spirit believed that there exists no single person but human beings, because our development is attributed to society no matter how you look at it. The reason why society seems to be abstract and abstruse for us is that we are always affected by the old philosophical system. It actually belongs to the category of individuals. At least, it is true of groups. The entire new philosophy tends to highlight the connections between the individual and the whole group, whether in real life or in speculative life, so that people are unconsciously get acquainted with the intimacy of social connections. Social connections extend to all corresponding ages and places."²² When sociology extends the thought on social connections to all ages and places, it means that the sociological vision is of historical significance and universal significance.

²²Comte. *On Positive Spirit*, pp. 52–53.

Sociological objectivity is best manifested by historicity and universality. Historicity is the temporal process of human life, while universality is the spatial development of human life. Observing and interpreting social phenomena restricted by specific conditions in a broad space–time vision means that the sociological vision is endowed with objectivity of close connections with human social life. Objectivity can be established not only in the antagonism between human society and nature, but also in human social life itself. That is to say, for individuals or a few groups, the social history developed in temporal course and the social phenomena existing in space are all objective not subject to the wishes of individuals or groups. The objectivity is what exists within the society rather than the exterior objectivity beyond the society. A careful examination of sociologists' emphasis on the objectivity of sociological research reveals that they tend to emphasize objectivity within the scope of social life rather than the objectivity of natural phenomena.

Durkheim was the best defender of the principle of objectivity in sociology. He considered the social fact which is the sociological research object as the object. Just because of this, people thought that he equated the social phenomenon with the natural thing to pursue the objective things beyond the society. Durkheim clearly refuted such misunderstanding, "The proposition that social facts should be regarded as things on the basis of my method, and it has caused the biggest controversy. The dissenters believed that it is ridiculous and weird to equate social reality with nonsocial reality. This is a big misunderstanding of the significance and scope of this equation. The purpose of doing so is not to degrade the high-level form of existence into a lower form. On the contrary, I want the former to get at least the same conditions for realization with the latter. In fact, I do not mean that social facts are physical things. What I am trying to get at is that social facts and the physical things should be equally treated although they are realized in different forms."²³

People tend to be blinded by some certain views of positivistic sociologists such as Comte and Durkheim and thus propose to observe social reality as they do with physics. They believed that he takes social life as a nonhuman object in the natural world. In fact, Comte and Durkheim did not equate social phenomena with natural phenomena, nor did he cease the enthusiastic pursuit of human ideals, moral care, and value evaluation. Comte once pointed out, "According to a more in-depth and more extensive evaluation which is both practical and theoretical, the positivistic spirit is described as: in its nature, it is the only spirit that directly enhances social feelings which form the primary foundation of all sound morality."²⁴ It can be seen that Comte did not limit positivistic sociology to science that pursues only exterior objectivity. He clearly affirmed the importance of subjective emotions, value evaluation, and moral values.

The three major shifts in the mid-nineteenth century from philosophy to social theory show that the three theories have different origins, modes of thinking, conceptual frameworks, and value orientations. The humanistic social theory is based on an

²³Durkheim. *The Rules of Sociological Method*, p. 7.

²⁴Comte. *On Positive Spirit*, p. 51.

individual's perceptual existence. In essence, taking social life as individual's subjectivity, it affirms an individual's perceptual consciousness and perceptual life, and at the same time denies the stubbornness of the traditional rationalism. Therefore, the academic vision focuses on daily life and re-seeks human liberation and social coordination. Positivistic social theory takes society as an object. From a theoretical perspective ignoring individual existence, and concentrating on human empirical life or social phenomena, it develops rational logic from conceptual deduction to social structure. Pursuit of rationalization goes from the philosophical speculation to the modernization process of developing from traditional society to modern society. The Marxist social theory, starting from the interaction between the individual and the society, i.e., from the practical opposition process between subjectivity and objectivity, based on dialectical rationality, critically examines the real life and historical process, and develops the social theory of promoting social contradictions with the help of social material forces.

Although the three social theories have different theoretical characteristics, they also have many commonalities in opposing tradition and creating new academic trends. The most prominent commonality is that all of the three major social theories show the Western academic trend of developing from abstraction to concreteness. The specific manifestation of this trend is that the three major social theories demonstrate the change of Western academics in the theoretical forms and ideological content from concept to reality, and from logic to life. The change signifies the maturity of wise Western philosophy, which is the result of human cognitive development and the most complex phenomenon that human beings have to live with and they have to face up. This phenomenon is the symbol of social life. When human society develops to a certain level where society becomes more complex with more contradictions, more in-depth theoretical answers are needed. The three major social theories are adapted to the historical demand which enables them to obtain an increasingly growing ideological driving force.

Although the three major social theories share the same trend of shifting from abstraction to concreteness, they often criticize each other's theoretical abstraction as they go deep into specific details of social life. Humanists criticize positivists for their abstraction of individual life into the natural existence that is as lifeless as an object, while positivists refute the humanistic social theory because they believe humanists are too romantic considered the social phenomenon to be isolated rather than interconnected as a whole, and use uncertain personal mentality to illustrate the social structure of objective inevitability; its essence is simply the abstraction of specific social life; Marxist social theory, in particular, pungently criticized humanist social theory and positivist social theory for their abstraction. According to Marxists, any social theory will be abstract unless the contradictory movement of social structure driven by physical forces is disclosed in specific economic, political, and cultural-historical conditions. The mutual accusations by the three major social theories further prove that the transition from abstraction to concreteness is their common pursuit and it is in this mutual accusation till today that the three major social theories offer infinite diversified ideas for contemporary scholarship.

Developing from abstraction to concreteness is also the common trend of human spiritual evolution, which is an important symbol of the maturity and development of various national thoughts and culture or academic trends. As mentioned above, the Chinese academic thoughts have begun the evolution from abstraction to concreteness since the late Ming Dynasty and early Qing Dynasty. From the Gu Yanwu and Qianjia Schools to the New Text Confucianism in the late Qing Dynasty represented by Gong Zizhen, Wei Yuan, and Kang Youwei, Chinese scholarship has started Pragmatism. The continuous development of the clue is, in essence, the continuous flow of Chinese academic thoughts into society. In other words, Chinese academics underwent a long-term evolution from classics to Tai Chi through classical studies in Han and Tang Dynasties, the Song and Ming Dynasties, and achieved a great shift in the social theory from the late seventeenth century to the mid-nineteenth century. More specifically, New Text Confucianism in the late Qing Dynasty was the social theory formed by Chinese academic tradition in the mid-nineteenth century.

Compared with the three major social theories in the mid-nineteenth century in the West, the New Text Confucianism in the late Qing Dynasty is far behind in terms of the scope of theoretical vision, the depth of revealed social contradictions, and the degree of systemization of theoretical viewpoints. The New Text Confucianism in the late Qing Dynasty shares the same evolution process of developing from abstraction to specificity, from concept to reality, from logic to the theoretical content and theoretical form of life. By further comparison, people will find that the New Text Confucianism is similar to the three Western social theories in many ways, such as the affirmation of social development and evolution, and the in-depth analysis of social institutions, social acts, and social structures, rational pursuit of social life, as well as the reflection on the integration of scientific spirit and humanistic spirit into social life, etc.

The statement that the three major social theories in the West are the direct source of Chinese sociology as the New Text Confucianism of the late Qing Dynasty is very important for revealing the occurrence and evolution of Chinese sociology. In some literature, Western positivistic sociology is regarded as the only source of thought in Chinese sociology. The influence on Chinese sociology brought by the New Text Confucianism in the late Qing Dynasty or even the whole Chinese classics is ignored. Consequently, Chinese sociology is simply seen as an exotic product of Western empirical sociology. And it is also impossible to grasp the commonality of the source of Chinese sociology and that of Western learning. In fact, not only positivistic sociology immediately affects the rise of Chinese sociology, but also humanistic social theory and Marxist social theory are also immediate sources of thought in Chinese sociology. Although it can be found in the literature by Yan Fu, Kang Youwei, and Liang Qichao that they repeatedly emphasized certain principles as to certain social phenomena. For example, they called for group consciousness and social concept as national danger occurred, and advocated scientific spirit against ignorance and backwardness. But none of these could prove that Chinese sociology pioneers were merely influenced by certain Western academic tradition and have nothing to do with other Western academic traditions.

For another example, Yan Fu, Kang Youwei, and Liang Qichao attached great importance to sociology which was characterized by collectivism tendencies. At the same time, they were also influenced by individualism inclined to humanism. In Yan Fu, Kang Youwei, and especially Liang Qichao's writings, profound humanism could be found in their views on personal living conditions, value beliefs, creative ability, and social morality as well as private morality. Marxist social theory brought more obvious and more profound influence to Chinese sociology. Chinese Marxists such as Li Dazhao, Qu Qiubai, and Li Da spread Marx's social theory. Marxist theory can also be found in Yan Fu, Kang Youwei, and Liang Qichao's sociological literature. Kang Youwei and Liang Qichao's exposition of class and class struggles are undoubtedly directly influenced by Marxist social theory.

Understanding that the New Text Confucianism in the late Qing Dynasty and the three Western major social theories are in common in the essential characteristics and basic pursuits, and affirming the influence of the three major social theories on the origin of Chinese sociology, are enlightening to understand why Chinese sociology took a central position in Chinese academics at first but later marginalized. Yan Fu's introduction to Spencer's sociology in *On the Origin of Strength* and other articles, Kang Youwei and Liang Qichao's discussion of sociology in a large number of documents produced strong repercussions in the Chinese academic circles in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. And also, a large number of scholars directly use sociological theories and methods to analyze and answer fundamental questions concerning Chinese survival on how to help Chinese society to get rid of dangers, how to save the country and protect the country and its citizens. Most of the scholars who play a central role in social thoughts and academic thoughts at the turn of the century have paid enthusiastic attention or made discussions on sociology. In addition to the three sociological pioneers Yan Fu, Kang Youwei and Liang Qichao, Tan Sitong, Zhang Binglin, Wang Guowei, Li Dazhao, Chen Duxiu, and Hu Shi, who were at the forefront of Chinese academics in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, also discussed sociology or social theory. More importantly, the sociological thoughts of Kang Youwei, Liang Qichao, and Yan Fu influenced the Hundred Days' Reform, and the Marxist social theory of Li Dazhao, Qu Qiubai, Li Da, and Mao Zedong guided the socialist revolution. The rural transformation movement led by Liang Shuming and Yan Yangchu (Y.C. James Ye) in the 1930s is the social practice of Chinese sociology. What is discussed above undoubtedly shows that Chinese sociology was China's dominant thought in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries and plays a central role in Chinese academics. However, by the late 1930s, the central position of Chinese sociology began to falter. Gradually, Chinese sociology became degraded and marginalized, which has been discussed in Fei Xiaotong's postscript for *Earthbound China* in 1937.²⁵ □

The marginalization of sociology that began in the late 1930s was caused by the fact that the sociological research objects analyzed by Fei Xiaotong were not clear enough, the sociologists at that time failed to concentrate on the key social issues. Many of the important research objects of sociology separated from sociology and

²⁵ Fei Xiaotong. *From the Soil, The Institutions for Reproduction*, p. 94.

gradually formed an independent discipline, making sociology a remnant discipline. Another important factor is the excessive empirical tendency of sociological research that has not received due attention so far. In the 1920s, sociologists started to pay excessive attention to empirical facts. At that time, a group of young scholars who returned from Europe and the United States were influenced by Western sociology, especially the empirical tendency of American sociology. They believed that the essence of sociology was the empirical facts. According to them, the core of sociology is observation and statistical analysis. Accordingly, sociologists at that time conducted a lot of field research in Beijing, Hebei covering extensive areas of life. It is unobjectionable to conduct a field survey of social life. However, if the role of the field survey is overestimated and thus dilute the theoretical construction of sociology, the study on sociology will be superficial and excessively empirical. It is for this reason that only a few sociologists such as Pan Guangdan, Liang Shuming, and Fei Xiaotong generalized profound sociological theories through empirical studies. Most of the field survey in the 1920s and 1930s is merely the description of the empirical facts, which did not contribute to Chinese sociological thoughts. Nor did they play an important role in solving the Chinese social crisis and ethnic conflicts at that time. Therefore, the one-sided empirical tendency is an important factor causing the marginalization of Chinese sociology.

In the late nineteenth century and early twentieth century, Chinese sociology became a hot topic in China. It played a leading role at the early stage of Chinese modern academics, attracted people of all walks of life, and thus became the focus of academic research and public concern. After excessive empirical facts were imposed on sociological research in the 1920s, sociology gradually withdrew from people's attention. This process shows that Chinese sociology should have continued Kang Youwei, Liang Qichao, and Yan Fu's integration of scientific spirit and humanistic spirit, and given a general answer to Chinese social issues through observation and value criticism. Sociological research should not have stayed at the empirical level. That was why Chinese sociological research was superficial and empirical, giving up deep thinking on major issues of Chinese society.

Chinese society in the middle of the nineteenth century was not only different from the calm and harmonious Victorian British society that Spencer faced, but also different from the stably developing American society where Parker lived in the early twentieth century. It is a society beset with troubles both internally and externally and social structures that have undergone deep shocks and complex restructuring. Regardless of the social turbulence, merely focusing on specific social aspects or individual social phenomena, it is not only easy to create an illusion of certain facts, but also difficult to get rid of local constraints and deeply think about the more complex problems. Moreover, China, a large country with a large population, underwent a long-term centralized system for a long time, which made people have a lot in common in terms of social life in many ways. Thus, Chinese sociologists were supposed to be able to generalize theories based on the principle of specificity to generality. Otherwise, they could not properly understand Chinese social issues. Although Chinese society is also relatively closed, causing inevitable gaps and specialties between

social groups, social classes, and regional communities, there should be commonalities in feudal cultural traditions and centralized social system of these closed groups and communities. It is difficult to reveal these generalities from specificities and thus impossible to achieve a specific understanding of specific phenomena.

In addition, the question that needs further discussion is: What position do Spencer's evolutionary sociology and Parker's empirical sociology take in positivistic sociology? How is the influence on Chinese sociology brought by Spencer and Parker compared with that caused by general sociology? As is discussed by Spencer, his evolutionary sociology is clearly different from Comte's empirical sociology. According to him, the main difference is that he was more loyal to the principle of objectivity than Comte. In fact, for Chinese sociology, what is important is not Spencer's loyalty to the principle of objectivity, but his emphasis on individual's free competition and individual initiative, and his opposition to government interference with individual competition. Since China was divided by big powers in the mid-nineteenth century, Yan Fu and others believed that the root cause of the national crisis was that Chinese people did not have a strong sense of unity, therefore causing inefficient social solidarity. In fact, Yan Fu's offered a shallow understanding of the Chinese social crisis because he merely discussed one of the factors causing the Chinese national crisis. From a more profound perspective, people's lack of individual consciousness and individual autonomy was the reason why China is weak and incapable of resisting foreign enemies. Of course, Yan Fu, and especially Liang Qichao, also realized that in addition to emphasizing the sense of unity, it is necessary to develop individuals' wisdom, people's power, and morality, and to reshape people's sense of nationality. However, they did not discuss the issue in terms of the relationship between individuals and society. That is to say, Yan Fu partially accepted Spencer's evolution sociology rather than fully accepting it without modification.

Spencer's evolutionary sociology cannot fully represent positivistic sociology, nor can Parker's empirical sociology. As mentioned above, Comte and Durkheim's positivistic sociology of French tradition did not completely return to the empirical level. They emphasized the research based on facts and an objective study of social phenomena. They expressed their ideal pursuit of rebuilding social order and seeking rationalization of social life, which means that under the banner of positivism or scientific principles, French empirical sociology did not completely eliminate the idealistic romantic style of French cultural tradition. Chinese sociology copied the empirical methodology of American sociology in the 1920s, which shows that Chinese sociology merely takes on a style, not all, formed by positivistic sociology in a certain period. As Comte said, the only characteristic of the positivistic spirit is relativity, and the relativity mentioned by Comte is the specificity of sociality and historicity. This is not the empiricalness that floats on the surface of social life.

The concreteness includes not only the perceptual concreteness perceived through sense organs but also the rational concreteness which deals with the adequacy and diversity of things through rational thinking. Comte saw positivistic sociology as the new philosophy through which the human spiritual revolution could be achieved. The concreteness achieved by sociology that is characterized merely by relativity is not the empirical concreteness existing as perceptual existence but the rational concreteness

in the specific historical conditions and living environment. Comte pointed out, “In all fundamental aspects, the true philosophical spirit is mainly to systematically extend the simple conscience to all truly accessible speculations. Their fields are identical, because the most important problems of sound philosophy are related to the most common phenomena. The artificial conditions are only an indispensable preparatory stage to a certain extent. These two have the same experimental starting point, the same connections and prediction goals, and the equally persistent attention to reality, and express the same wishes for utility. The main difference between them is that one insists on the necessary abstraction featured by systematic universality while the other holds the opposite views, paying consistent attention to specific things and characterized by specialty.”²⁶ It is clearly shown here that the concreteness that Comte pursues is not the perceptual concreteness that can be grasped at the level of experience, but the rationality acquired by “necessary abstraction and is characterized by systematic universality.”

When Chinese sociology pays excessive attention to empirical research and ignores the theoretical reflection on universal social problems in China, the investigation and study of Chinese society often stays at the level of perceptual concreteness. It is true that understanding the perceptual concreteness of social life is a prerequisite to knowing about the theoretical concreteness. But if the research merely stays at the level of perceptual concreteness, it will not do any good in understanding the theoretical concreteness. And the academic research of sociology will be superficially producing merely common sense. The New Text Confucianism in the late Qing Dynasty and the three major social theories in the Western countries offered theoretical reflection and generalization which contained abundant views on rational concreteness of human social life from different perspectives. Only by introducing these thoughts and inheriting the rational thinking discussed in other related disciplines can Chinese sociology offer a better rational concreteness of Chinese social life by integrating empirical observation and theoretical generalization.

2.3 Dual Origin of Chinese Sociology

In the late Ming and early Qing dynasties, China’s academic thoughts changed more clearly, opposing to subjective judgments, and focusing on objective and practical academic styles. The emergence of Gu Yanwu and Yu Jia School marked a new trend in Chinese academics. Liang Qichao believed that Gu Yanwu was the first person to launch the enlightenment movement in China. He praised Gu Yanwu’s initiative of “opposing subjective knowledge inward and advocating objective knowledge outward” [], which opened a new academic trend toward objective reality in the Qing Dynasty.²⁷ The so-called “inward subjective learning” mainly refers to the philosophy of the mind of Lu Jiuyuan and Wang Yangming. Gu Yanwu thought that Lu

²⁶Comte. *On Positive Spirit*, p. 32.

²⁷Qichao (1996).

Jiuyuan and Wang Yangming's philosophy of the mind is empty-minded and unrealistic, which is one of the reasons why the late Ming Dynasty was going to be decadent. "Tinglin enjoyed a special position in the Qing Dynasty. He developed a scholastic style, rejected the empty talk about principle, Qi and life and strictly observed the laws of affairs from an objective perspective. Second, he developed the methods of study, diligent search data, comprehensive research, test with reference to what is seen and heard, refute on echoing what have said, humble change of what is insufficiently discussed. Third, he developed the academic categories, such as reference to the classics, lessons and history, emphasis on rhyme, description of geography, and textual research."²⁸ It can be seen that Liang Qichao regarded Gu Yanwu as the initiator of the new academic trend in China in the late Ming and early Qing dynasties.

Gu Yanwu started this style of study, which focused on objective demonstration and was rigorous and realistic. Later, it was carried forward in the textual criticism school that emerged during the Qianlong and Jiaqing reigns. Gu Yanwu put forward "Confucian Classics is Neo-Confucianism" and argued that the study must start with textual research on words, exegesis, and ordinances, which are the basic principles upheld by the textual research school during the Qianlong and Jiaqing reigns. The Ganjia textual research school during the Qianlong and Jiaqing reigns mainly included Wu School and Wan School, where Wu School's representatives include Hui Dong, Wang Mingsheng, Qian Daxin, and so on. Representatives of Wan School include Dai Zhen, Duan Yucai, Wang Niansun, Wang Yinzhi, and so on. Wu School excelled in *The Book of Changes* and *The Book of History*, praised sinology, opposing modern classics' replacement of ancient classics by modern classics, advocating returning to Chinese Confucian classics and achieving the purpose of making clear the truth by means of "correcting characters, distinguishing pronunciations, interpreting exegesis, and communicating and annotating". There is not much difference between Wan School and Wu School. The difference is that Dai Zhen, et al did not praise Sinology as much as Wu School did and belittled Song Studies. Dai Zhen and other scholars from Anhui school attached important to objective reality and advocate that the sound should be used to explain the meaning of the ancient texts, and that the ancient texts should be used to seek justice and truth from facts, without laying particular stress on any school. This style of Wan school avoided the dispute over Sinology and Song studies, and more clearly highlighted the characteristics of objective demonstration, making textual research more scientific.

Textology during the Qianlong and Jiaqing reigns has made ideological and theoretical preparations and research methods for the development of Confucian classics in the late Qing Dynasty. The Ganjia textual research emphasizes the academic pursuit of returning to the classical and focusing on the objective reality, and has been inherited by Gong Zizhen, Liao Ping, and Kang Youwei, who combined the new style of study of the Ganjia school with the tradition of the modern text study represented by Zhuang Cunhe and Liu Fenglu, and further developed the academic spirit of basing on the reality, inheriting the tradition, caring about current affairs and politics,

²⁸Liang Qichao. *Academic History of China in Recent 300 Years*, p. 74.

and promoting social evolution, thus forming the modern text study in the late Qing Dynasty. The study of Confucian classics in the late Qing Dynasty can be regarded as the source of modern Chinese learning. Although it has not yet achieved the division of disciplines like modern Western learning, it has clearly demonstrated the modern academic spirit of respecting science, stressing reality, attaching importance to objectivity and pursuing practical results. In the late Qing Dynasty, the study of modern Chinese classics is one of the direct ideological sources of Chinese sociology. Many of the sociological ideas elaborated by Kang Youwei and Liang Qichao have already been discussed to a certain extent in the study of modern Chinese classics in the late Qing Dynasty.

Wang Guowei made a clear summary of the evolution of the academic history of the Qing Dynasty, pointing out: "In the three hundred years of our Dynasty, three changes occurred to academic history: The first occurred at the beginning of the country, the second during the Qianlong and Jiaqing reigns, and the third during the decline of Daoguang and Xianfeng. During the prosperous days, the world was in chaos, and most scholars were born in the previous Dynasty. After separation between loved ones in life or death, they were determined to survive in the world. Therefore, most of his studies were for practical use, seeking for the history of the classics, obtaining their original sources, sweeping away the habit of surviving and breaking up in the Ming Dynasty, while learning from reality was carried out for the sake of prosperity. After the reign by Yongzheng and Qianlong, the rules of conduct were established and the world was stable, the scholar-bureaucrats examined ancient deeds at will and no longer regarded it as a tool to know the world, but the classics and history become a special discipline of primary schools. After the decline of Daoguang and Xianfeng, there was a slight change in the way of development. Those who advocated classics and new text, those who study history and those studied geography in the Liao, Jin and Yuan dynasties were four generations devoted to doing what the predecessors never did. Although they have inherited the special learning during the Qianlong and Jiaqing reigns, they have also turned their back on the world and had aspirations as the old generations at the beginning of the country. Therefore, the learning was great at the beginning of the country, fine during the Qianlong and Jiaqing reigns, and new during the decline of Daoguang and Xianfeng."²⁹

Liu Mengxi fully affirmed Wang Guowei's summary of the academic evolution in the Qing Dynasty, believing that Wang Guowei's summary "was fair and appropriate. It is not easy to sum up the academic studies in the early Qing Dynasty with "大 (great in English)", the sinology during the Qianlong and Jiaqing reigns with "精 (fine in English)," and the studies in the late Qing Dynasty with "新 (new in English)."³⁰ However, as Liu Mengxi pointed out, Wang Guowei held a critical attitude toward the new learning in the late Qing Dynasty represented by Gong Zizhen and Wei Yuan, that is, the studies of the new text of Confucian classics. Wang Guowei believed that Gong and Wei were influenced by the situation in the late Qing Dynasty and "did not

²⁹Wang Guowei. *Preface to Mr. Shen Yi'an at the Age of Seventy Years*, Book 4 *Guantang Jilin of Posthumous Writings of Wang Guowei*, Vol. 23.

³⁰Mengxi (1996).

follow the method of learning in the early days of the country and the old scholars during the Qianlong and Jiaqing reigns,”³¹ while “the method of learning” was “to regard learning as an independent thing, but to explore its causes and understand its origins, which is beneficial to the mind of the people of the world. In other words, this is Wang Guowei’s way of doing scholarly research”.³² In short, Wang Guowei did not approve of Gong and Wei’s direct connection between academic research and political participation in current affairs, stressing the independence of academic research and advocating academic research for academic purposes.

Indeed, as Wang Guowei said, neither Gong Zizhen nor Wei Yuan’s studies of the new text of Confucian classics in the late Qing Dynasty until Kang Youwei, their master, was an academic school for academic purposes, but the political proposition of paying attention to current political changes and promoting China’s social reform was given the first priority. Confucian classics research is often a means to achieve political purposes. Liang Qichao’s evaluation of Gong and Wei is: “Those who are good at study of new text must be Gong Zizhen and Wei Yuan. During the times of Gong Zizhen and Wei Yuan, the Qing government was gradually declining, but the whole country was indulged in peace; if they were not able to cope with the worries and danger, how can they make plans for the prosperity of the country. They were not good at textual research, but most people studied that, they could also study and use it to protect the country; Therefore, although classics were studied, its spirit is different from that of orthodox schools, and those who studied classics held different views.”³³

Kang Youwei pushed the tradition of participating in politics and practical use of the studies of the new text of Confucian classics in the late Qing Dynasty opened by Gong and Wei to the top of the peak. Kang Youwei’s important position in the studies of the new text of Confucian classics in the late Qing Dynasty lies not only in his achievements in the studies of the new text of Confucian classics, but also in his politicization of the studies of the new text of Confucian classics, making it play an important role in challenging traditional scholarship and emancipating the mind in the modern history of China. The politicized studies of the new text of Confucian classics are not only the theoretical basis for the new upsurge of the enlightenment movement in the late Qing Dynasty and the social change in China, but also the direct source of modern academic thought in China.

Kang Youwei’s thought of the studies of the new text of Confucian classics is mainly expounded in his works such as *A Study of New Learning Pseudo-Classics*, *A Study of Confucius Reform* and *Dong Zhongshu’s Study on Spring and Autumn Annals*. However, these works contain rich discussions on the issue of sinology, not only on the interpersonal relationship between monarch and minister, father and son, relatives and neighbors, but also on social composition, social groups, social system, social crisis, and social changes. These sociological thoughts are directly related to

³¹Wang Guowei. *Preface to Mr. Shen Yi’an at the Age of Seventy Years*, Book 4 *Guantang Jilin of Posthumous Writings of Wang Guowei*, Vol. 23.

³²Liu Mengxi. *Chinese Modern Academic Classics· General Preface*, pp. 24–25.

³³Qichao (2004).

the contents of the *Pandect of Practical Reasoning and Public Law* written before the publication of these works, and also have much in common with the *Datong Shu* published after these works.

The *Pandect of Practical Reasoning and Public Law* is a book written according to the principle of rationality and the model of geometry, and in terms of content, is a typical rational sociology of inquiry into interpersonal relationships or social systems. Zhu Weizheng believed that *Pandect of Practical Reasoning and Public Law* was the prototype of *Datong Shu*. Judging from the basic contents of the two books, Zhu Weizheng's judgment was in line with reality. It is true that *Datong Shu* is not a simple utopian work. It not only contains a survey of life phenomena at the level of rich experience, but also deals with the core issue of sociological research—social system. Therefore, it can be called a work of institutional sociology in the history of Chinese sociology.

Since Kang Youwei's thoughts on the studies of the new text of Confucian classics were expounded between the writing of *Pandect of Practical Reasoning and Public Law* and *Datong Shu*, the sociological thoughts discussed in several books on the studies of the new text of Confucian classics can not only be regarded as simple annotations to classical texts, but also as sociological thoughts expounded on the premise of rational spirit, scientific principles, and social system concepts in *Pandect of Practical Reasoning and Public Law*, reflecting and criticizing China's academic tradition and showing genuine concern for real social problems, and these sociological thoughts have obtained multiple pursuits of fact investigation and value evaluation, realistic criticism, and ideal pursuit in *Datong Shu*.

According to the relationship between *Pandect of Practical Reasoning and Public Law*, *Datong Shu*, and *A Study of New Learning Pseudo-Classics*, *A Study of Confucius' Reform* and *Dong Zhongshu's Study on Spring and Autumn Annals*, Kang Youwei's academic progress shows that he first accepted the rational principles or scientific methods of Western mathematics and physics, then started the studies of the new text of Confucian classics, and finally carried out more abundant sociological research. But in fact, it was not such a straight-line process. Not only Kang Youwei, but also many accomplished scholars such as Guo Songtao, Pi Xirui, Wang Guowei, Liang Qichao, Zhang Binglin, etc., were following the changing trend of Chinese academic tradition since the end of the Ming Dynasty and the beginning of the Qing Dynasty, and accepted the influence of Western academic from different levels before forming their own new academic and new ideas. Therefore, it can be said that the new academic thought of the late Qing Dynasty was the product of the intersection, collision, and conflict between Chinese and Western cultures.

Liu Mengxi summed up the late Qing Dynasty's new learning as two branches of political new learning and enlightenment new learning, and believed that both branches were formed and developed in the intersection and collision of Chinese and Western cultures. He pointed out: "Therefore, the new learning in the late Qing Dynasty actually has two branches: First, the new school tending to be political, represented by Kang Youwei, came from the traditional modern literature; The first is the enlightenment new learning which took the direct translation and introduction of Western academic thoughts as its job and Yan Fu as its number one character. The

former focused on the imperial court and was keen on the reform of the real political order. Academic thinking was only a means to achieve political purposes. The latter focused on the intellectual class and hoped to promote people's spiritual awakening by spreading new academic ideas."³⁴

Coincidentally, Liu Mengxi's representative figures of the two branches of new learning in the late Qing Dynasty were exactly the two pioneers of Chinese sociology. If Kang Youwei and Yan Fu represented two branches in the new learning in the late Qing Dynasty, it would mean that they must have developed different paths when they launched Chinese society, or they have opened up two different sources of thought for the establishment and development of Chinese sociology: Late Qing Dynasty's studies of the new text of Confucian classics and Western positive sociology.

Although there are many things in common between the late Qing Dynasty's studies of the new text of Confucian classics and Western empirical sociology, such as opposing abstract thinking and advocating seeking truth from facts; Oppose empty talk and advocate practical use; Oppose rigidity and conservatism, advocate development and progress, and so on, which are both academic qualities and theoretical pursuits shared by the two. However, in the late Qing Dynasty, the studies of the new text of Confucian classics and empirical sociology were rooted in the two cultural traditions, and because of the differences in the historical process and social structure, there must be many important differences between the two academic traditions. If we recognize that the late Qing Dynasty's studies of the new text of Confucian classics and empirical sociology were two direct sources of thought at the beginning of Chinese sociology, we should not only ask people to study the history of the formation and development of Chinese sociology in the contradictory relationship between Chinese and Western cultures, but also pay attention to the deep role of this contradictory relationship in conducting sociological research in China in the face of the reality of life.

People are always willing to observe and reveal its essential rules in the place where things happen, because the things that have just happened will clearly show the essential relations it contains in its initial form. This is also true for grasping the essential characteristics of Chinese sociology. Although Chinese sociology has discarded some of its initial qualities in its subsequent evolution, this does not mean that some of its initial qualities are unimportant. The development of things is always complicated and tortuous. Some indispensable qualities may be lost or eliminated due to the influence of some historical factors. However, when these qualities that should not be lost are removed, they will certainly bring some harm to this thing. Even if these injuries can be covered up by some factors, they will deeply affect the healthy development of this thing.

As far as the studies of the new text of Confucian classics in the late Qing Dynasty and Western empirical sociology are the two most direct ideological sources at the beginning of Chinese sociology, it can be clearly recognized that Chinese sociology has two bases to support its formation and development: Politicized Chinese academic tradition and intellectual empirical sociological tradition.

³⁴Liu Mengxi. *Chinese Modern Academic Classics · General Preface*, p. 22.

The late Qing Dynasty and modern literary classics represented by Kang Youwei incorporated the thinking about social systems, social actions, and social structures into the political program of their reforms. The rich research on social life aims to support their social reformist politics and ideal implementation. Therefore, the late Qing Dynasty's studies of the new text of Confucian classics was introduced to Chinese sociology, which is a clear political purpose and a strong value requirement rooted in the major changes in Chinese society. This political purpose and value requirement is precisely the root of Chinese sociology, at the time of crisis, to become the root cause of the new academics that Chinese intellectuals are keenly concerned about. In the late Qing Dynasty and early Republic of China, a large number of outstanding intellectuals such as Tan Sitong, Liang Qichao, Zhang Binglin, Wang Guowei, Li Dazhao, Qu Qiubai, Li Da, Pan Guangdan, Zhou Gucheng, and Liang Shuming actively participated in sociological research, which is inseparable from their expectations for the value of sociological research. Suppose, if sociological research does not have political goals and values closely related to social life at that time, how can it attract a large number of enthusiastic intellectuals to actively participate in the national crisis?

Yan Fu's translation and introduction of empirical sociology represented by Spencer is different from that of the late Qing Dynasty's studies of the new text of Confucian classics in terms of knowledge, but Yan Fu's purpose of doing so is the same as Kang Youwei's research on the studies of the new text of Confucian classics, that is, they were both aimed at the value ideal of promoting political reform and strengthening the country. Spencer's sociology was established from the perspective and principle of biology. He insisted on a more strictly objective principle than Comte. If Yan Fu introduced his theory to Chinese academic circles according to Spencer's principle, then Chinese scholars will see objective knowledge without value requirements. This is not the case. Yan Fu's translation and introduction of Spencer's sociology, in Schwartz's words, was not faithful to the original text and made a "fantastic distortion" translation in many viewpoints. For example, Spencer's naturalistic social organic theory was translated into Yan Fu's works into a conscious social evolution theory that emphasizes the role of ideas. Spencer's extreme individualism of laissez-faire competition for survival was translated into a social group conclusion emphasizing the power of integration. All these "fantastic distortions" are merely Yan Fu's integration of the strong values arising from China's social crisis into Spencer's objectivist sociology.

Kang Youwei and Yan Fu are the two founders of Chinese sociology. Their work shows that Chinese sociology was not only truly based on Chinese social reality at the beginning, but also continued the long cultural tradition of the Chinese nation, making Chinese sociology have different contents and forms from Western empirical sociology. Not only did Kang Youwei's pursuit of modern Confucian classics and other academic traditions closely related to it integrate with his sociological research, but Yan Fu also continuously incorporated the rich ideas of Confucianism, Taoism, and Buddhism into his propaganda and interpretation of sociology while translating Western positive societies. All these show that only when Western sociology meets and merges with Chinese cultural traditions can it take root in this land of China.

Kang Youwei and Yan Fu both showed rational spirit and scientific consciousness when they expounded the thoughts of Qunxue or sociology, but because of their political consciousness and ideal value, the Chinese sociology they launched was not the kind of scientific sociology like physics or biology that some Western scholars hoped for. The scientific spirit and humanistic spirit they gave sociology were not only mutually exclusive, but also profoundly unified. Therefore, from the very beginning, Chinese sociology has devoted itself to the social movement of life enlightenment and spiritual reconstruction to save the nation from danger and death and relieve the sufferings of the people. It did not conceal its values, principles, ideals, and beliefs, nor did it stand outside social life as an objective observer.

Kang Youwei and Yan Fu started the beginning of Chinese sociology. By contrast, Kang Youwei mainly carried out sociological research according to Chinese academic tradition, while Yan Fu mainly promoted the dissemination of sociological theories through the introduction of Western sociology, the former representing the endogenous nature of Chinese sociology and the latter representing the exogenous nature of Chinese sociology. Kang Youwei and Yan Fu's efforts to lay stress on Chinese sociology are groundbreaking. However, the foundation of Chinese sociology was not laid by them. Liang Qichao was the one who laid the foundation for Chinese sociology.

Liang Qichao not only learned from Kang Youwei, but also accepted the profound influence of the studies of the new text of Confucian classics in the late Qing Dynasty and tried to make the Chinese academic tradition renew under the new historical conditions. He also extensively absorbed the Western academic ideas introduced by Yan Fu, et al. and actively promoted the blending of Western academic ideas with Chinese traditional culture, thus becoming a leading figure in the modern Chinese academic study that integrates Chinese and Western studies. In the history of Chinese sociology, Liang Qichao has made outstanding contributions to the construction of the theoretical framework and methodological principles of Chinese sociology, thus giving Chinese sociology a relatively complete disciplinary outline.

Liang Qichao was keen on Kang Youwei's research and writings on the studies of the new text of Confucian classics in his early years and had a wide and in-depth understanding of the thought of sinology in Confucian classics. Before the Reform Movement of 1898, Liang Qichao accepted Yan Fu's influence. After Yan Fu published *On the Origin of Strength* and other articles in Tianjin Zhibao in 1895, Yan Fu's Western academic introduction to Chinese academic circles gradually introduced Liang Qichao into a new realm of thought, especially Yan Fu's letter to Liang Qichao on "teaching is not guaranteed, nor is it necessary to guarantee," which enabled Liang Qichao to stand on the opposite side of Kang Youwei's position of respecting Confucius and protecting the emperor, absorb Yan Fu's Western sociological thoughts more actively, and strive to integrate Western sociological thoughts with the group thought in Chinese classics, thus constructing rich sociological theories and methods with obvious Chinese characteristics.

Liang Qichao developed the sociological theory of group management by group technique, new science of history studying group evolution, theory of nation-state in the transitional era, theory of social reconstruction of new people in education

and so on, and these new sociological theories, with new principles and new methods of dialectical criticism, historical evolution, and interpretation of meaning, also paid attention to the use of empirical principles and objective positions of empirical sociology, and made in-depth discussions on issues such as individual and society, social groups, social system, social change, social transformation, cultural tradition, and national character transformation. Although these statements were often made in the study of historical, political, and cultural issues, or there is no clear disciplinary boundary, it does not mean that Liang Qichao's disciplinary consciousness is unclear. He made an in-depth exposition of the disciplinary nature, theoretical framework, and methodological principles of sociology. Therefore, it is worthy to call Liang Qichao the founder of Chinese sociology.

However, it must be made clear that there is a clear difference between the Chinese sociology for which Liang Qichao laid the foundation and the empirical sociology of strict objectivity insisted on by Spencer, et al. If Spencer's sociology can be called the social structure theory with strict objectivity, then the Chinese sociology founded by Liang Qichao can be regarded as the social construction theory with strong subjectivity. As far as this is concerned, Liang Qichao's sociological thought has much in common with many contemporary sociological schools known as constructivism. At present, when people discuss Chinese society, they often cannot clearly summarize Liang Qichao's and others' sociological thoughts with constructivist characteristics, which is related to the fact that people only judge the unique early Chinese sociology with the objective structural criteria of the classical Western sociology.

Tan Sitong, Zhang Binglin, Wang Guowei, Li Dazhao, et al. of Liang Qichao's contemporaries also made many discussions about sociology. Although they discussed sociology from different angles and the contents and degree of discussion were far less than Liang Qichao's, they all had clear political goals and strong values and ideals. Therefore, it can be said that Liang Qichao's characteristics and style when he laid the foundation for Chinese sociology are the requirements of the times, not just the result of his personal thinking quality and academic style.

It is proved here that Comte's exposition of the relativity of sociology is precisely the essential characteristic of the relativity of sociology, stipulating that it should have different forms of expression and different contents of development in different nationalities, different cultural traditions, and different historical environments. If the time and place have changed but the form and content of sociology did not, then the relativity of sociology cannot be talked about, and it is an empty talk for sociology to carry out down-to-earth research based on empirical facts.

At the beginning of the twentieth century, while Liang Qichao was carrying out sociological research from the perspective of blending Chinese and Western cultures, more and more Chinese scholars joined the sociological research team. However, most of the latecomers did not step into the field of sociology along the sociological traditions created by Kang Youwei, Yan Fu and Liang Qichao, et al., but carried out sociological research completely according to the Westernization model. Yang Yabin called the early twentieth century and the late 1920s the "transplant" period

of Chinese sociology to Western sociology.³⁵ It should be said that the concept of “transplant” indicates that the main features of sociological research in this period were in line with reality, because the teaching activities conducted by some missionaries in Shanghai, Beijing, and other places at that time, as well as the social surveys conducted by Chinese scholars in some cities or rural areas, were simply the introduction and application of Western sociological theories and methods. The result was merely the propaganda of Western sociological theories or the use of Western sociological methods to collect and describe the actual life of some Chinese society, there was no academic thought at all and there were no new findings in the field investigation of Chinese social life.

In fact, the simple transplant of Chinese sociology to Western sociology was a common phenomenon throughout the period of the Republic of China. Although some sociologists with outstanding academic achievements, such as Pan Guangdan, Wu Jingchao, Liang Shuming, Sun Benwen, Chen Xujing, and Fei Xiaotong, also appeared during the period of the Republic of China, there were many sociological researchers who looked very active at that time, focusing on the investigation of empirical facts and neglecting the innovation and accumulation of academic viewpoints, thus leaving no sociological thought theory worth pondering for future generations. Later generations paid too much attention to the empirical research and fact investigation of Chinese sociological researchers when compiling the history of Chinese sociology, and did not compile the history of sociological thought or theory with profound ideas or rich academic schools as Western scholars did.

The history of discipline thought is the most profound content in the history of discipline development, and it is also the development framework and evolution logic of academic spirit. Therefore, studying the intellectual history of discipline is different from studying the activity history of the discipline. The activity history of discipline can be summarized through the development and changes of people's lives, social events, rise and fall of institutions, academic ranks, disciplinary status, etc., while the intellectual history of discipline can only be formed through the research of scholars who have made contributions to the ideological theory of this discipline. Moreover, such research does not focus on recording events and recollections as much as the history of activities, but rather reveals the formation and development of various new concepts and theories, and aims to clear up the origin and evolution logic of those ideological theories with distinct personalities, and to make a comparative analysis of different academic schools with direct or indirect links.

Hegel's rich exposition on how to understand the history of philosophy has profound inspiration for the study of the history of sociological thought. In Hegel's view, whether we can understand the history of philosophy in depth or summarize the history of philosophy clearly depends first on our understanding of the essence of philosophy. The history of philosophy was selected from history by the editor under the guidance of a specific philosophy. If history is only a kind of understanding of predecessors by later generations in the words of historian Colin Wood, so what kind of information can be selected from history for the understanding of what

³⁵Yabin (2001).

kind of philosophy or conception of history is, and then a history consistent with his own point of view can be compiled. However, Hegel believed that history was not compiled arbitrarily. The history of discipline was made up of a series of categories or views that have internal relations before and after. The most important thing for a good history of philosophy or thought is to reveal clearly the ideological logic of these closely related theoretical views before and after.

To study the history of Chinese sociological thought from Hegel's point of view, a clear definition of sociology should be made. Not to mention the prejudice of scholars in other disciplines towards sociology, even the professionals of sociology and even some influential sociological researchers, tend to have a superficial understanding of sociology. A common misconception in Chinese sociologists is: Sociology is an empirical discipline. Behind such a seemingly simple proposition lie many misinterpretations of sociology. For example, since it is an empirical discipline, the description and recording of empirical phenomena, the observation and statistics of real life, the tracking and explanation of individual cases, and so on, are the main activities of sociological research and even regarded as the normative behaviors of authentic sociology. However, those research activities or research methods that focus on the speculative analysis and theoretical generalization of social phenomena are often called metaphysical speculations that have not yet escaped from the embrace of philosophy.

It should not be forgotten that Comte's position for sociology as well as the study separated from empirical facts is definitely not sociology, but the research that only describes the empirical facts is not sociology. Violating this principle, some work in sociological research can be undertaken. But it is definitely impossible to make a definite contribution to the academic advancement and ideological progress of sociology, nor can it be written into the history of sociological thought or theory as a sociologist. The various versions of the history of sociology written by Western scholars will reveal that no scholar who has only done a lot of on-the-spot investigations but has not formed an original view has been written into the history of sociology. Those who have left their names in the history of Western sociology are all scholars who have made some gains in the chain of sociological thought.

Adhering to this sociological view, it will be made clear how to select materials to study the history of sociological thought. Therefore, we focus on those scholars that have made creative contributions in the development of Chinese sociology and their thoughts, while those scholars that have not made contributions in ideological theory despite a large number of empirical investigations and their activities are not in our view. If this is the case, our view seems to be much narrower. In fact, not only will our view not be narrowed, but it will be wider and deeper than the general study of activity history.

The study of activity history is often carried out in a relatively narrow field of vision, because the most important task of activity history is to describe the time experience and spatial scope of the activists, which must be confined to a specific place, environment, and specific process. The description of activity history cannot go beyond these spatial and temporal conditions at will, or else it will enter other research fields. Compared with the study of activity history, the study of thought

history can and should be carried out not only in a broader time course and space. Because thinkers' behaviors are bound to be limited by specific conditions, thinkers can expand rich associations beyond the conditions in limited conditions. As Comte said, "The real positive spirit mainly lies in observing for prediction and studying the present situation according to the general belief that the laws of nature remain unchanged in order to infer the future."³⁶ "Because scientific prediction obviously adapts to the present, even to the past, but also to the future; It is to constantly understand a thing according to its relationship with other existing things, without relying on direct investigation."³⁷ Obviously, Comte believed that sociological prediction is based on the relationship between things rather than relying on direct empirical investigation, so sociological theory can be expanded in the vast space of the present, past and future. This means that the scope of sociological thought theory is far broader than the experience observation. Similarly, the history of sociological thought must be broader and deeper than its empirical activity history.

In a word, Chinese sociology experienced four basic links during the late Qing Dynasty and the Republic of China: origination, foundation, transplantation, and deepening. As mentioned earlier, the beginning mainly refers to the work done by Kang Youwei and Yan Fu, who started from the studies of the new text of Confucian classics in the late Qing Dynasty and the empirical sociology in the West, opening up the ideological source for Chinese sociology. Kang Youwei and Yan Fu started a double beginning of endogenesis and endogeny for Chinese sociology. This double beginning with the strong pursuit of value to protect and revitalize China not only makes Chinese sociology have obvious national characteristics and era characteristics at the beginning, but also makes Chinese sociology closely related to Western sociology, and sets a basic direction for the further evolution of Chinese sociology.

Liang Qichao inherited Kang Youwei and Yan Fu's efforts in Chinese sociology and laid the foundation for the further development of Chinese sociology from both theoretical and methodological aspects. His sociological theoretical construction in the aspects of individual and society, social groups, social system, social change, social transformation, nation-state, and new people's education enabled Chinese sociology to have a rudiment, and he realized the basic task of Chinese sociology with a clear sense of discipline classification.

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³⁶Comte. *On Positive Spirit*, p. 12.

³⁷Comte. *On Positive Spirit*, p. 15.

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Chapter 3

Evolution Theory of Gregariousness

by Yan Fu



Yan Fu is the first thinker who observed Western modern civilization and accepted Western advanced thoughts and theories. Yan Fu reconstructively introduced evolutionary sociology represented by Spencer, which greatly shocked the conservative and dull Chinese culture and thoughts and raised questions concerning long-standing defects with Chinese society. He set up an example as a pioneer in the Chinese sociology. Yan Fu's perplexity, speculation, criticism, and reconstruction of Western sociology provide the primary basis for studying and evaluating the origin, core, and trend of Chinese sociology.

3.1 Starting from Positive Nationalism

In 1877, Yan Fu, at the age of 24, came to study in the UK with his ambition to protect and strengthen the country. Although he was studying in a foreign country, Yan Fu who was still young worried a lot about China's being divided up by big powers, Qing Dynasty's corruption and incompetence, and countrymen's disunity in defending against foreign enemies. Yan Fu went to Royal College of Greenwich in the UK with the mission to study maritime tactics and battery construction, but what appealed more to him was to explore how Britain became the world's biggest power in the nineteenth century. Yan Fu eagerly inspected the British science and culture, hoping to find out what contributed to the UK becoming so powerful. At that time, Chinese intellectuals were struggling to figure out why China was backward while Western countries were so powerful. In general, it is believed that Western countries are strong thanks to their science and technology as well as industrial production. Few people focus on cultural traditions and ideas. Yan Fu held a different view that not only British science and technology, but more importantly, but also thoughts and culture characterized by diligent and enterprising spirit contributed to the power of the Western world represented by the United Kingdom.

Before Yan Fu studied Western social science, he had had a deep understanding of Western natural science and technology. In 1867, Yan Fu was admitted with excellent performance to Fujian Arsenal Academy founded by Westernization Group and graduated with the best results five years later. At Fujian Arsenal Academy, Yan Fu studied English, arithmetic, geometry, algebra, astronomy and meteorology, navigation, and geography. Later in the Royal College of Greenwich, Yan Fu studied mechanics, electricity, chemistry, geomatics, and Marine meteorology. From these courses, Yan Fu not only learned abundant scientific skills and knowledge, but also had a deep understanding of scientific principles and scientific methods.

At the end of the nineteenth century, China's progressive intellectuals once again set off a wave of learning Western science and technology after the Westernization Movement. However, it was not a simple repetition of "Chinese learning as the base and Western learning for application" in the Westernization Movement. After the analysis of why the Westernization Movement failed, the intellectuals attached importance not only to the study and introduction of science and technology, but also to further discussion of scientific theories and methods. Yan Fu could not agree more on this point. While studying Western science and technology, he also attached great importance to Western scientific theories and scientific methods. He said: "Generally, scientific learning contributes to today's prosperity of Western countries in the fields of military, agriculture, and industry and business, and governance."¹ Also, "As a science established by Westerners, it is scientific and rigorous. The science is supported and proved by detailed argument. It shall be true and applicable on the whole without any exception. It can be theories kept in our mind or tactics when applied to practice. With a complete system combining theories and practice, it could be adapted to different situations and is effective. It is thus considered as a 'science'."² It can be seen that Yan Fu not only explicitly emphasized the universality and importance of the role of science, but also attached great importance to the rigor and practicality of scientific methods.

In 1902, Yan Fu translated part of the book *A System of Logic*. In 1908, Yan Fu translated *Primer of Logic*. These two translations give a relatively complete introduction to the deductive and inductive methods of formal logic, and also some basic principles of scientific methods, such as observation, experimental norms, rules to avoid errors, use of facts to demonstrate viewpoints and methods for argument and discussion. Yan Fu attached great importance to the inductive method and the deductive method. In his view, induction and deduction are "the law of all laws," and "the most important method to explore laws from things."³ "The methods used in Western science to study things include "neizhou" and "waizhou". "Neizhou" refers to the process of reasoning from detailed facts to general principles while deduction

¹Fu (1996).

²Yan Fu. *On Our Salvation*. Editor-in-Chief Liu Mengxi. *China Modern Academic Classics · Volume Yan Fu*, p. 565.

³Yan Fu. *On Our Salvation*. Editor-in-Chief Liu Mengxi. *China Modern Academic Classics · Volume Yan Fu*, p. 7.

refers to the process of reasoning from the general to the particular.”⁴ The technique of “neizhou” is actually induction while “waizhou” refers to deduction.

Through extensive and in-depth study of scientific theories and scientific methods, Yan Fu had a profound understanding of the scientific spirit of respecting objectivity, pursuing effectiveness, and valuing the laws of nature, which helped Yan Fu to get rid of traditional concepts and develop modernity, and which constituted the ideological premise of Yan Fu’s acceptance of social theories proposed by Spencer and Thomas Henry Huxley. Yan Fu later devoted himself to the enthusiastic study and translation of Western sociology, political science, law, and economics. By doing this, he developed a distinguished scientific spirit through the study of scientific theories and methods. It is obviously true that Western social science developed in modern times is essentially based on the scientific principles and scientific methods first established in the natural sciences. In short, modern social sciences are essentially the expansion and extension of the natural scientific spirit which is, therefore, the common essence of the natural sciences and the social sciences. Without the recognition or establishment of the scientific spirit, people cannot understand the essence of science oriented to various aspects of the world. It is also true of social sciences.

However, although the natural sciences and the social sciences have something in common in the scientific spirit, it should be noted that there are still many differences between the two. The striking difference is that the scientific spirit of the natural sciences cannot completely govern the social sciences, because the objects of the social sciences are much more complicated than those of the natural sciences; thus, the principles of natural science are not fully applicable to social sciences. Natural science can adhere to objective principles to find out the objective laws or objective prescription of natural phenomena, but social science cannot exclude value evaluation. It is inevitably related to the subjectivity of social life. It is difficult to avoid expressing the subjective pursuit of researchers. When Yan Fu accepted scientific principles on the basis of natural science and used scientific methods to observe and study social life, he encountered the contradiction between methods as well as principles used in natural science and social science research.

Yan Fu chose to integrate natural sciences with social sciences and insisted that the principles of natural science should be applied to the study of human social life. Zhou Ji made a clear statement on this point. In his view, Yan Fu combined natural science with social science mainly by using ‘law of things’ to interpret ‘law of politics’, and “using theory of evolution to interpret Chinese social evolution.”⁵ Yan Fu used extensive theories and methods of physics, biology, and other natural sciences to discuss economics, politics, culture, and psychology of social life. This can be seen throughout Yan Fu’s writings; Yan Fu used theories of evolution in *Evolution and Ethics* to explain the cause of China being bullied as a result of social backwardness and proposed that China should observe the development rules of objective things,

⁴Yan Fu, *On Our Salvation*. Editor-in-Chief Liu Mengxi. *China Modern Academic Classics · Volume Yan Fu*, p. 7.

⁵Ji (2001).

bringing earthshaking shock to the Chinese society, especially the academic and political circles, and promoted the modernization of Chinese society.

Although it is undeniable that Yan Fu used the principles of natural sciences such as physics and biology to explain social life, it should be noted that Yan Fu made modifications to the methods and principles of natural science and then applied them to the study of social phenomena. By combining the factual principles of natural science with the value principle of social life, he integrated the scientific spirit and humanistic spirit in his discussion of Chinese social issues. It is clearly shown in the connections between Yan Fu's theory and Spencer and Huxley's theories.

What strongly interested Yan Fu is Spencer's theory of evolutionary sociology. In *On the Origin of Strength*, he commented on Spencer's theory, "Spencer made a profound and subtle discussion in the book. Through inference, he managed to track gradually to the covert origin or nature of things. He repeatedly discussed the factors determining the strength of a country and unity of its citizens' morals. Around the world, the Westerners are very powerful with strong armies, conquering many parts of the world."⁶ It can be seen that Yan Fu gave a high evaluation of Spencer's sociology.

Spencer's sociology was translated into "Qunxue" by Yan Fu. As explained by Yan Fu, "What is 'Qunxue'?" Xuncius said, "What makes human beings different from animals is that they live in groups and socialize with each other." It can be seen from above that Yan Fu thought highly of Spencer's sociology. Spencer's sociology was termed as "Qunxue". As explained by Yan Fu, "What is 'Qunxue'?" According to Xuncius, human beings are different from animals because they socialize in groups. People could live together in harmony and provide mutual help to make up what the other lacks. People could abide by social rules and etiquette because they know how to make a group. Spencer believes it is a science."⁷ "Qun" proposed by Yan Fu basically means the same with "society" discussed in sociology. "Qunxue" takes social phenomena as its research object. And also, it is based on social life. More importantly, it explores the laws of social phenomena and offers people guidelines to deal with national decline and disorder and to prosper the nation. Yan Fu made it clearer in his preface to the translation of Spencer's *A Study of Sociology*. He said, "What is Qunxue? In Qunxue, laws of science are used to examine the changes among the people to look back on the past and predict the future." "The scientific studies are not merely used to make fame and fortune, and they should be used to improve social order with all kinds of means to improve people's living standard." Similarly, sociology is basically used to establish social order with various means to improve people's life."⁸

Yan Fu is a nationalist with a firm stand, but unlike those nationalists who emphasized "protection of Confucianism and the country" or "Chinese learning as the base

⁶ Yan Fu. *On the Origin of Strength*. Editor-in-Chief Liu Mingxi. *China Modern Academic Classics—Volume Yan Fu*, p. 541.

⁷ Yan Fu. *On the Origin of Strength*. Editor-in-Chief Liu Mingxi. *China Modern Academic Classics—Volume Yan Fu*, p. 541.

⁸ Fu (1981).

and Western learning for application,” he constantly denied the Confucian tradition and believed that Confucianism could not get the Chinese nation out of extreme misery. On the contrary, he believed that China would be bogged down deeper and deeper as a result of the bondage of Confucianism. Yan Fu once clearly pointed out, “Western people and Chinese people are different in doing things. The biggest difference is that Chinese people focus on the past while ignoring the present. People in the West strive to do better in the future. People in China believe that order and disorder, rise and fall of a nation are natural while the Westerners think that once a nation is prosperous, it cannot decline and once it is in order, they will not let it go out of order.”⁹ What Yan Fu was criticizing was the Confucian tradition. He believed if the Chinese refuse to give up this old tradition which is conservative and obsolete opposing advance and limiting humanity, people cannot save China from poverty and backwardness even they could master more science and technology.

Yan Fu posed a critical attitude toward the Confucian tradition and he did not simply accept the Western academics from Spencer, et al. His acceptance and evaluation of Chinese and Western academic standards were based on the Chinese reality he witnessed and experienced. Benjamin Schwartz, a well-known scholar studying modern Chinese literature in the United States, commented on Yan Fu’s understanding of Spencer’s sociological thoughts that Spencer’s sociology “linked scientific principles and Yan Fu’s close concern over the governance of the state and the society. Isn’t sociology fundamentally the science of governing the state and society (governance of state)? As he (Yan Fu) later said in the article *On the Origin of Strength*, ‘Spencer’s revolutionary sociology discussed the governance of society with ethics... He applied the study of natural phenomena to governance of a state.’ People will immediately notice that all these traditional Chinese terms have made freakish distortions to Spencer’s tedious works. In fact, the traditional schematic interpretation imposed by these terms may even shock this master.”¹⁰

Looking through Yan Fu’s writings, we can notice that “freakish distortions” mentioned by Schwartz are not uncommon. In the translations of *Evolution and Ethics*, *A Study of Sociology* (by Spencer), *On the Boundary between the Self and the Group*, *A History of Politics*, *The Spirit of Laws*, etc., Yan Fu either publicly stated views completely different from Spencer or comment on what Spencer did not discuss or even expressed completely different ideas, which may cause readers’ confusion in distinguishing the author’s original points of view from Yan Fu’s points of view. A principle going through these translations by Yan Fu is that what is important is not to give an exact description of the ideas of Western scholars, but to reveal the ideas of opening up Chinese wisdom and inspiring China’s fortitude by means of Western studies. Of course, this does not mean that Yan Fu’s translation completely deviated from the original text. Yan Fu had been advocating “faithfulness, expressiveness and elegance” as the principle of translation. Although he ignored or even rewrote the original author’s point of view in certain aspects, his translation was basically loyal to the author’s original ideas. Therefore, it still deserves careful research.

⁹Fu (1999).

¹⁰Schwartz (1990).

Yan Fu's translations mixing with comments, or alternation of translations and comments, on the one hand, reflect that Yan Fu's view that sleeping China is in desperate need of new shocking ideas, and on the other hand show Chinese exclusion from Western learning. If Yan Fu had adopted the method of literal translation in translating the works of Spencer, Huxley, and Montesquieu, the Chinese scholars without any Western background knowledge could not understand the theoretical works containing profound thoughts. And it would have been even more difficult to arouse Chinese awareness of sharing bitter hatred against the enemy and saving China and Chinese people.

In Yan Fu's translation, *Evolution and Ethics* is a book in which the views of translators and authors are clearly distinguished. However, it is in this book that Yan Fu fully expressed his style and courage to reinterpret the original works. As mentioned earlier, Yan Fu is a sincere admirer of Spencer. However, Huxley, the author of his first book, *Evolution and Ethics*, is a resolute opponent of Spencer. It seems to be confusing to us. According to Spencer, Darwin, et al., human society, like natural species, follows the irresistible laws of nature. Yan Fu opposes social Darwinism and adheres to the principle that the law of social evolution is different from that of natural evolution. Huxley stated his view of point as follows.

Natural evolution is different from social development. The difference is that human beings can take their initiative to change the world rather than passively following the world trend. The fittest survive in competitions in terms of natural evolution, while human beings are able to interfere with or stop the competitions. In natural evolution, it is governed by natural choice. That is to say, those who have established themselves are strong and will be more powerful and those who have failed to establish themselves are weak and will die. It is different when coming to human evolution where human beings exercise their initiative to make things in nature at their service. Human development could help people offer human beings a better environment where people are served and protected and finally becomes powerful.¹¹

Huxley clearly distinguished the laws of nature from those of social development and believed that the laws of nature cannot be used to reveal the evolution of social life. On the contrary, Yan Fu tried his best to justify Spencer's view of social organic evolution, and believed that social life, like biological organisms, followed the irresistible law of natural evolution—Only the fittest can survive. For Yan Fu, it is of vital importance to insist on Spencer's view of organic evolution, because Yan Fu wanted to subvert the “unity of man and heaven.” Only by breaking the spiritual shackles of the theory and admitting that social life is changing all the time can people free themselves from the stage where they stick to conventions and are reluctant to change and develop. But how to prove social life is changing all the time? Conservatives who advocate “protecting the Confucianism and the sovereignty of country” can demonstrate their views from the perspective of history of the Chinese

¹¹Huxley. *Evolution and Ethics*. Editor-in-Chief Liu Mengxi. *China Modern Academic Classics—Volume Yan Fu*, p. 25.

feudalism that remained unchanged for 2000 years. The most powerful argument for Yan Fu at that time was to use the theory of evolution to support himself.

A further problem is that since Yan Fu clearly affirmed that society and nature follow the same evolutionary law, why didn't he first choose to translate Spencer or Darwin's works that he strongly supported, instead of *Evolution and Ethics* contradicting his own point of view? Schwartz's answer to this question is that, on the one hand, Yan Fu was not interested in Darwin's *The Origin of Species* which was not directly related to social life because at that time, he was filled up with nationalist aspirations to save China. Although Spencer's sociological writings are of the greatest interest to Yan Fu, Spencer's complex discourse made it difficult to translate; on the other hand, although in the lecture notes of Schwartz's *Evolution and Ethics* completed in 1893, Huxley denied social Darwinism, he gave a vivid description of the basic ideas of Darwin's theory of evolution. In the meanwhile, Huxley was mainly interested in revealing the situation of human society rather than the evolution of the universe, which was also consistent with Yan Fu's interest; Huxley and Spencer held contradicting views, which Schwartz believed provided Yan Fu opportunities to defend Spencer's views and express his own ideas.¹²

Although Yan Fu supported Spencer while criticizing Huxley, as mentioned above, Yan Fu partially accepted Spencer's views, especially on the root cause or fundamental driving force of social evolution. Yan Fu elaborated his ideas contradicting with Spencer. Analogically, Spencer compared social life to biological organisms and believed that social life exists and operates as an organic system. Yan Fu agreed that social life is an organic system. The difference is that Spencer demonstrated the development and changes of social organisms from a purely naturalistic standpoint and the operation and change of social organisms are nothing special, while Yan Fu believed that both social organisms and natural organisms develop in accordance with the law of evolution. However, natural species undergo a completely unconscious objective process, while the development and changes of human society must be based on the consciousness of ideas. If human society developed completely objectively as natural species do, why is Western society so powerful while Chinese society remained conservative and stagnant in the past thousands of years? Yan Fu believed that it was the concept that works.

Yan Fu analyzed the reasons for the changes in social development from the perspective of concept, which sharply contradicted with his support for Spencer. Spencer had severely criticized Comte for studying social changes conceptually. He pointed out: "What is the tenet advocated by Comte? He aimed to give a comprehensive description of the progress of human concept. What am I going to do? I'm going to offer a complete description of the progress of the outside world; Comte believed inevitable and solid inheritance connections exist between various ideas, while I believe that such connections exist between different things; Comte hoped to find out the origin of natural knowledge, while I intend to find out... the composition of various phenomena in nature. He studied subjectivity, while I study objectivity."¹³

¹²Schwartz. *Yen Fu and the West*, pp. 76–90.

¹³Lewis A. Coser. *Masters of Sociological Thought*, p. 102.

Obviously, Spencer's basic principle is that the ideological concepts cannot be used to interpret the development and changes in social life. Only when sociology regards society as an objective existence or objective process like natural species can we have a correct understanding of the evolution of social development. Yan Fu did not adhere to the basic principle of Spencer. Rather, he explained conceptually why China did not evolve as well as the West, which was opposed by Spencer.

Although Yan Fu acknowledged the objective laws discussed by Spencer, he believed that people's understanding of the law can also determine the evolution of history. In the article *On the Speed of World Change*, Yan Fu affirmed the objective regularity of social development. "I do not know the cause of world changes. I name the trend of world changes Yunhui. No one including the saints can change the world developing trend, because saints are part of the Yunhui."¹⁴ It seems that Yan Fu denies the role of the saints in the world development, but Yan Fu then pointed out, "Saints can foretell the general trend of the world, and they have to follow the trend."¹⁵ We can learn that the saint is brilliant in understanding the rules of the development of things. Therefore, in addition to conforming to the law, he can teach people to follow the rules. Based on this principle, Yan Fu concluded that the reason why Chinese society did not realize the modernization as the UK did was mainly that the Chinese saints did not understand the law of social development. On the contrary, they used some stereotypes and outdated concepts to constrain the Chinese people, resulting in Chinese social evolution failing to follow the rules.

Yan Fu and Spencer's differences are also manifested in many aspects, but the most fundamental difference is that Spencer focuses on the individual, while Yan Fu is thinking about the nation or the country, or it is simply the opposition between individualism and nationalism. Such opposition is also the focus of our concern. It is true that the Chinese sociology started by Yan Fu had been focusing on the opposition between individualism and nationalism for a long time. In addition to Liang Qichao and Zhang Binglin, Pan Guangdan, Sun Benwen, Liang Shuming, and Fei Xiaotong presented the opposition in various ways. This opposition in the doctrines of, etc. is also manifested in various forms. In fact, the opposition between individualism and nationalism is the special extension of the relationship between individuals and society which is a fundamental issue in Chinese sociology in a specific historical period.

From the standpoint of nationalism, Yan Fu clearly conformed to the strong demands of that era. As the Chinese nation was being divided by the big powers while the 400 million Chinese people are unconscious of unity, the most urgent task of Chinese society is to unite and defend foreign enemies. Therefore, calling for national unity and social integration is a definite and compelling task for Chinese intellectuals. Therefore, Yan Fu, who has a strong sense of social mission, will not insist on individualism in a one-sided manner like Spencer or disregard the nation, the country, and the society.

¹⁴Yan Fu. *On the Speed of World Change*. *China Modern Chinese Enlightenment*, p. 161.

¹⁵Yan Fu. *On the Speed of World Change*. *China Modern Chinese Enlightenment*, p. 161.

Yan Fu also criticized Montesquieu's sociological thoughts on the nationalist stance. Like Durkheim, Yan Fu did not treat Montesquieu as a jurist, but as a sociologist. Durkheim once regarded both Montesquieu and Rousseau as pioneers of sociology. He clearly pointed out that Montesquieu proposed social laws and classified various social laws, namely social systems, thus establishing a theoretical premise or theoretical foundation. In the meantime, Durkheim also regarded Rousseau as a pioneer in sociology and thought that Rousseau's *Du Contrat Social* was closely related to sociological studies. What is even more striking is that Durkheim even thought that the socialist doctrines of Henri de Saint-Simon, Marx, etc. were also closely related to sociological studies. He pointed out: "There is no doubt that socialism contributes more than to receive from social sciences. It is because socialism has evoked reflection, inspired the vitality of science, ignited the enthusiasm of research, and raised questions, so the history of socialism is integrated in the history of sociology in many ways."¹⁶

It seems that Durkheim, the founder of sociology, has a much broader vision than some of the later positivists. As a pioneer of Chinese sociology, Yan Fu also has the same broad mind as Durkheim. Durkheim made a wrong judgment that Yan Fu admitted Comte as the only founder of sociology. Yan Fu did not limit sociology to a very narrow range like some scholars nowadays do. Yan Fu's extended his research on Western sociology to Montesquieu's views. Understanding this point is important for Chinese sociologists to have a good understanding of Western sociology. It means that Chinese sociology introduced Western sociological thoughts into China transcending empirical sociology from the very start. It is narrowed to consider sociology as empirical research based on merely empirical facts.

From the above, it can be clearly seen that Yan Fu is accepting, introducing, and reconstructing Western sociological thoughts from a positive nationalist standpoint. Yan Fu not only uses the methodological principles used in physics, biology, and even mathematics to explain Chinese social phenomena, but also combines the scientific spirit of Western scholarship with the humanistic spirit that Chinese society urgently demands from a strong nationalist standpoint. This is the origin of Chinese sociology with distinctive features, indicating that Chinese sociology are strongly demanded to root in Chinese social life from the start. This demand not only shows the subjective will of Chinese sociological pioneers, but also indicates a strong need for sociology in Chinese social reality. It is the combination of the two that offers China's sociology tenacious vitality to develop rapidly in a relatively short period of time.

3.2 Academic Stand Defining Chinese and Western Scholarship

How Yan Fu treated modern Western scholarship and traditional Chinese scholarship, especially how he viewed Confucian cultural traditions, is not only a controversial issue in studying Yan Fu, but also a key issue to further understanding Yan Fu's

¹⁶Durkheim. *Montesquieu and Rousseau—The Pioneer of Sociology*, p. 132.

starting of Chinese sociology. If most of the views and methods in the Chinese sociological community had been imported from the West, then people would probably think that Yan Fu is a pioneer in reproducing Western sociology. However, it did not go that way. Like other pioneers of Chinese sociology such as Kang Youwei and Liang Qichao, when Yan Fu introduced and disseminated Western sociology, he did not view sociological research and Chinese academic traditions as a contradictory pair as some scholars do nowadays. Instead, he made a dialectical analysis of Western culture and Chinese culture at the right time and did some dialectical thinking, introducing the good stuff while abandoning negative stuff.

The academic communities have made lots of discussion on Yan Fu's attitude toward Chinese and Western academic traditions. Two opposing views deserve to be analyzed here. One viewpoint is represented by Cai Yuanpei, Zhou Zhenfu, Wang Shi, Li Zehou, et al., believing that Yan Fu has changed his ideas of the relationship between Chinese and Western cultures from Westernization to vintage and from the advanced to the backwardness. Liu Guisheng summarized the views of this school as follows.

At present, a comparatively fixed "model" has formed in the research on Yan Fu's thoughts in Chinese academic circles. His route of development in his whole life, especially the evolution of his cultural concept, can be described as an "S", changing from "favoring complete westernization" to "preferring ancient styles". To put it in detail, at first (from the Sino-Japanese War of 1894–1895 to The 1898 Wuxu Coup), he completely affirmed western studies while denying Chinese traditional culture"; after that (from the Reform Movement of 1898 to the Revolution of 1911), he compromised between Chinese and Western cultures; finally (from the Revolution of 1911 to his death in 1921), he gradually "regressed" from one extreme to another, and "abandoned the 'new learning' or 'Western learning' that he had enthusiastically believed in and promoted in his early years, returning completely to the feudalism."¹⁷

Another viewpoint is represented by Zhang Hengshou, Lin Zaijue, Lin Qiyang, etc. They oppose the judgment that Yan Fu underwent the change from Westernization to vintage and from the advanced to the backwardness. According to Zhang Hengshou, Yan Fu had never been an opponent of Confucianism. Although Yan Fu criticized Confucianism in the early days, he did not criticize the essence of Confucianism, but criticized the "pseudo-Confucianism". Judging from Yan Fu's exposition in *Dao Xue Wai Zhuan Yu Yi*,¹⁸ Yan Fu's respect for Confucian scholars such as Zhou Dunyi and Zhu Xi shows that he not only affirmed the Confucianism, but also praised the Confucians' personalities and behaviors. Therefore, it is wrong to believe that Yan Fu opposed Confucianism. Moreover, Zhang Hengshou also believed that Yan Fu

¹⁷Guisheng et al. (1999).

¹⁸Yan Fu said in *Dao Xue Wai Zhuan Yu Yi*, "If Zhou Dunyi, Zhu Xi, Zhang Zai, Wang Yangming, and Liu Zongzhou lived in current society would they be helpful or not? I am sure that they would be helpful. They showed great loyalty to their country, care to people, perseverance in moral integrity, and moderation in desires. These virtues that should be indispensable are unfortunately missing in current society. If the literati and officialdom today possessed these virtues, China would become powerful in no time." *Collection of Yan Fu's Works*, Vol. 2, p. 486. Beijing, Zhonghua Book Company.

had been consistent with the promotion of Confucian traditions, education of the Chinese people with the ethics and morality advocated by Confucianism, change of the social atmosphere, and promotion of social evolution. Based on what is discussed above, Zhang Hengshou believed that Yan Fu did not change retrogressively from Westernization to vintage.¹⁹

Lin Zaijue also believed that there is no S-shaped change in Yan Fu's thoughts and Yan Fu did not experience changes from radicalness to conservativeness, from valuing critical tradition to stressing ancient styles. Before the Reform Movement of 1898, Yan Fu had been insisting that social development is a gradual process. Therefore, he had never held a radical position on Chinese social development and Chinese cultural traditions. Instead, he viewed and explained Chinese society and problems in Chinese culture from a reformist perspective. He also viewed Confucian culture in such a reformist position. Lin Zaijue concluded that Yan Fu viewed Chinese and Western culture from a conservative standpoint. He said, "Yan Fu is the first most rigorous, systematic and in-depth conservative in China's modern history. On the nature of social evolution, he held a conservative view at the beginning, and kept it for the whole life."²⁰

Lin Qiyang's evaluation of Yan Fu is based on blending theory. He believed that Yan Fu had been making calm thinking of Chinese and Western culture. In Lin Qiyang's view, Yan Fu is not simply judging whether Western culture and Chinese culture are superior or inferior. "What he cares about is merely whether the culture is conducive to the survival and development of the nation or whether it can cure poverty and weakness, regardless of whether the culture is new or not, Chinese or Western. He advocated that people should 'choose the good culture' and should 'broaden their mind to the far future, and integrate the Western and Chinese good culture regardless of whether it is old or new, Western or Chinese'."²¹ In his opinion, on the one hand, Yan Fu opposed Zhang Zhidong's proposition of "Chinese learning as the base and Western learning for application," criticizing him for separating Western culture from Chinese culture. Yan Fu believed that Chinese culture as the base and Western culture for application should be unified rather than separated. China should accept Western culture on the whole, grasping its rational spirit and natural science which is supposed to serve the economic construction. And China should learn to stimulate people's consciousness of the freedom and democracy as well as the humanistic spirit which could provide a motive force for political innovation. On the other hand, Yan Fu believed that Chinese culture cannot be simply denied. He recognized that Chinese traditional culture suppressed people's individuality and wisdom. In particular, the polarization of rationality and ambiguity and tedious knowledge of Neo-Confucianism seriously hindered the advance of Chinese society. Meanwhile,

¹⁹Liu Guisheng. *Yan Fu's Consistency in Views of Chinese and Western Culture*. Editors-in-chief Liu Guisheng, Lin Qiyang and Wang Xianming. *New Theory of Yan Fu's Thought*, p. 30.

²⁰Lin Zaijue. *Two Issues Concerning: Radicalness and Conservativeness, Criticism of Traditions and Resort to Ancient Thoughts*. Editors-in-chief Liu Guisheng, Lin Qiyang and Wang Xianming. *New Theory of Yan Fu's Thought*, p. 58.

²¹Lin Qiyang. *Yan Fu's Views of Chinese and Western Culture*. Editors-in-chief Liu Guisheng, Lin Qiyang and Wang Xianming. *New Theory of Yan Fu's Thought*, p. 30.

Yan Fu believed that the national quintessence and national scum in Chinese culture should be distinguished. The useful content of Confucianism should be inherited and carried forward, and Laozi's belief in inaction governance of a small country with a small population should also be affirmed. Yan Fu also thought highly of the idea of universal love and mutual benefit advocated by Mohist.

In all fairness, the "new theory" represented by Zhang Hengshou, Lin Zaijue, Lin Qiyang, et al., and the S-theory represented by Cai Yuanpei, Zhou Zhenfu, Wang Shi, Li Zehou, et al. are both justifiable. In comparison, the "new theory" pays attention to the analysis of Yan Fu's specific views on Chinese and Western cultures, while the S theory pays more attention to the investigation from the clues of changes in Yan Fu's ideas. In fact, besides Yan Fu, Kang Youwei, Liang Qichao, et al. are also involved in issues of the "new theory" and S-theory. As to the ideological content of that generation, many scholars were entangled with the contradiction between Western culture and Chinese culture, change and conservativeness. It is a phenomenon of that age rather than a personal problem. The root cause is not the radicalness and conservativeness of individual thoughts, or the accuracy and bias of the evaluation of Chinese and Western cultures, but the complexity of cultural conflicts and social changes in China from the end of the nineteenth century till the beginning of the twentieth century.

Indeed, as the "new theory" said, Yan Fu stuck to a relatively conservative position on Chinese traditional culture after the Revolution of 1911. Till the Reform Movement of 1898, Yan Fu did not completely deny the ancient Chinese ideology and culture in Confucianism, Taoism, and Mexico. However, according to the S-theory, it is believed that Yan Fu's attitude to Chinese and Western culture from radicalness to conservativeness is not groundless. In the letter to Liang Qichao in 1897, Yan Fu clearly expressed that "Confucianism cannot be and need not be conserved". Such a view that denied the roots of the feudal kingdom was like a bolt from the blue at that time. Liang Qichao was strongly shocked at Yan Fu's view. He said, "The letter says Confucianism cannot be and need not be conserved. Although the religion advances the society, Confucianism is not the right one. I am greatly shocked. 'It goes beyond my expectation he revealed the truth hidden for thousands of years. What I appreciate is not his wisdom but his courage to speak it out.'"²²

Yan Fu's attitude toward Confucianism in the letter to Liang Qichao is consistent with his basic attitude in the five articles published in *Zhibao* of Tianjin in 1895. In China where Confucianism has been followed for more than 2000 years, Yan Fu dared to put forward the idea that Confucianism need not be conserved. What revolutionary courage! Wasn't he radical at that time? However, despite Yan Fu radically and resolutely denied Confucianism, it did not mean that he completely negated all the contents of Confucianism. During the Reform Movement of 1898, Yan Fu's denial of Confucianism or even the denial of Chinese cultural traditions was a political proposition, neither a cultural critique, nor an academic viewpoint. As a political proposition, Yan Fu's denial of Confucianism is not a direct denial of its ideological content, but a response to the conservative forces of the Qing Dynasty

²²Qichao (1989).

who attempted to maintain the old system and oppose political reform, because the conservative forces in the Qing Dynasty resisted the reform because of their belief in Confucianism.

In fact, although Yan Fu denied the Confucianism politically and put forward the idea of “Confucianism need not be conserved,” he did not completely abandon Confucianism and Chinese traditional cultural concepts. As discussed above, Yan Fu used Xuncius’ “qun” to explain Spencer’s sociology, and reinterpreted the sociological theory of individualism as society-oriented collectivist sociology, which shows Confucianism pays much attention to the ethnic pursuit of social order and society. From what is discussed above, it can be seen that Yan Fu still adhered to some basic views of Confucians and tried to integrate Western cultural traditions with Chinese traditional culture.

Politically, Yan Fu aimed to carry out political reforms and promote social evolution under the premise of maintaining the feudal governing of the Qing Dynasty. This political position, although conservative, was of certain positive significance. After the Qing Dynasty was overthrown in the Revolution of 1911, Yan Fu’s reformist stance became meaningless. In his later years, he promoted Confucianism. His purpose was no longer to integrate Confucianism with Western studies, but to resist Sun Yat-sen’s Three People’s Principles (Nationalism, Democracy, and the People’s Livelihood) and Chen Duxiu as well as Li Dazhao’s socialism. In the face of the vigorous democratic revolution and the socialist revolution, Yan Fu began to suffer from fear of revolution and thus resist revolution in contrast with his intention to reform in the Reform Movement of 1898.

In a nutshell, when understanding the changes of Yan Fu’s attitudes toward Confucianism and Western culture, we have to distinguish between his political and academic positions. Yan Fu’s political stance was of positive significance for Hundred Days’ Reform and reforming efforts in the late Qing Dynasty. During the Revolution of 1911 and the May Fourth Movement in 1919, Yan Fu held the political standpoint of opposing the revolution, maintaining the feudal rule of the Qing Dynasty, and resisting the new cultural movement. In this sense, Yan Fu did become more conservative in his attitude toward Confucianism and Western culture.

However, changes in political positions do not necessarily lead to simultaneous changes in academic positions. When Yan Fu supported the Hundred Days’ Reform, and advocated abandoning the Confucianism and promoting ideological emancipation, social reform does not mean that he denied Confucianism academically and ideologically. In particular, Yan Fu tended to distinguish his political position from his academic stance when discussing the basic views of sociology. Judging from the fundamental value orientation of Confucianism and the development and changes of modern Chinese society, Confucianism does have a negative effect on the development and progress of Chinese society. Because the task facing the modern Chinese society is to break through the rigid and conservative old ideas, disintegrate the feudal hierarchy which had lasted about a thousand of years, stimulate the individual vitality of the members of the society, and advance the modernization of the Chinese nation. In the face of these tasks, the Confucianism and Taoism played a negative role, whose

moral ethics clearly restrained people's ideological concepts and practical behaviors. Chinese society would not develop unless the restrictions of Confucian ethics are eliminated.

On the other hand, after more than 2000 years of evolution, Confucianism has penetrated into all aspects of social life, which has made extensive discussions on various aspects of social life, and has constructed complicated ethics and moralizations which are undoubtedly conservative on the whole. However, there are lots of discussions on rewarding virtue and punishing vice, guiding people's daily behaviors, covering how to view life, experience human feelings, coordinate and socialize with people, private and national affairs, etc. It is of great significance to understand the social structure, regulating social behavior, integrating social groups, stabilizing the social situation, etc. Therefore, no matter how many limits the society-pushing scholars find with Confucianism, they will not abandon the Confucian doctrine, and always inherit some ideas therein.

As for Chinese sociology, it is closely related to Confucianism. On the one hand, the Confucian doctrine is the product by observing the order of social life and pursuing the sound operation of society. Although it was not so disciplinized as sociology in its 2000 year history, its study on the existing structure, running order, and changing mechanism of social life is as good as some modern sociological schools in some respects. On the other hand, Confucianism happens to be as conservative as sociology. Confucianism believes that social life should be maintained in the order in the past 2000 years, and should pursue harmony and avoid conflicts. Although Confucianism elaborated these ideas by moral preaching, sociological theories obtained by analysis from the perspective of social structure are conservative. Both of them do not advocate drastic changes but insist on the quantitative change that is opposed to all kinds of revolutionary theories.

More importantly, the history and reality of Chinese society are formed and developed under the profound influence of Confucianism. All aspects of social life are infiltrated with Confucian ideas. As Chinese scholars such as Yan Fu tried to interpret the social life of China with the sociological theories and methods rooted in Western social life, they will inevitably encounter much confusion, or discover the presence of Confucian ethics in reality, or interpret the development and changes of real life with the Confucian ideas in their minds. Just as Western scholars must use rationalist theoretical concepts to understand rationalized Western societies, Chinese scholars must use Confucian ideas to interpret Chinese society constructed under the influence of Confucianism. In this regard, although Yan Fu, as a pioneer of Chinese sociology, was the scholar knowing best about the West at that time, he could not analyze Chinese social life with the concept of Western sociology. Confucianism is a source of thought that he cannot reject.

Yan Fu was the first who introduced the Western sociology to China. He supported the Hundred Days' Reform and advocated denying Confucianism. However, the Confucian doctrine is still the main element in Yan Fu's research and interpretation of Chinese social life. Based on this, it can be concluded that no matter how enthusiastic Chinese scholars are in Western sociology, as an exotic product, Western sociology is divorced from Chinese society. In order to do real research and properly interpret

Chinese social life, we should not break away from Chinese cultural traditions and Chinese academics. In this regard, Confucianism and traditional Chinese culture played an indispensable role in the formation and development of Chinese sociology.

3.3 Vitality, Gregariousness, and Social Evolution

At the turn of the nineteenth and twentieth centuries when people did not live in peace and the country did not have a peaceful day, Yan Fu's purpose of academic research was not to create a complete knowledge system, but to promote people's practice of protecting the country and strengthening the country with advanced ideas. Therefore, the study of Yan Fu's academic thought should not seek a systematic theoretical system, but should pay attention to those important views closely related to real life.

Louis Hartz pointed out in his evaluation of Yan Fu's achievements in Western academic research: "Yan Fu's mystery in Western learning has at least two aspects: One is the embodiment of pure vitality; The other is the public spirit of restricting energy²³ to group, which Yan Fu believed will help China get rid of backwardness." It should be affirmed that Hatz really grasped the most core and creative aspect of Yan Fu's sociological thought.²⁴ How to promote the vitality of individuals to the development and evolution of groups or societies is not only the theme of Yan Fu's exploration of Western academic thoughts, but also Yan Fu's fundamental theoretical pursuit of reconstructing Western academic thoughts in order to guide Chinese society out of conservative backwardness.

Yan Fu first accepted the view of personal energy from Spencer. In Spencer's view, social history, like the development and evolution of nature, is an objective process of self-growth and gradual improvement. The impetus for the continuous development of this process comes from within the social organism, and the most basic one is the ability contained in the individual. As far as this is concerned, Yan Fu and Spencer's views are consistent. However, when the individual ability is linked with social evolution, there is a serious disagreement between Yan Fu and Spencer.

The basic starting point of Spencer's sociology is extreme individualism. Although he thought that the individual's ability can become the driving force of social evolution, he expressed a cruel and merciless view on the transformation from an individual's ability to the driving force of social evolution. Spencer believed that the transformation of individual ability into the evolutionary motive force of social organism must be realized through survival competition. Because the individuals' abilities are different, only the endless competition between individuals like the biological world can produce a state of "natural selection and survival of the fittest." Although this kind of survival competition may lead to heartless social differentiation, even inequality

²³The author thinks that it is better to translate energy into "ability", so "ability" is used instead of "vitality" below.

²⁴Schwartz. *Yen Fu and the West* · Preface, p. 1.

that the rich get richer and the poor get poorer, this kind of continuation of the struggle for existence can lead to the effect of “survival of the fittest” and play the role in optimizing race and promoting social evolution. On the contrary, if the government or the ruler restrains the survival competition through the compulsory adjustment to the society, the result may reach an average effect and the social life may also show a relatively stable trend, but the vitality of the individual will be suppressed and the impetus of social evolution will not be generated. Therefore, Spencer was firmly opposed to government or state agencies interfering in the survival competition, and he advocated non-interventionism that allows the survival competition to drift freely.

Although Spencer’s point of view seems extreme, it is not without merit. Spencer revealed an undeniable fact: The change of social development depends on the motive force of survival competition, and the premise of survival competition is to affirm the legitimacy of differences. In Spencer’s view, the individuals’ difference in intelligence and physical strength is an undeniable natural phenomenon. It is this difference that leads to the difference in the living conditions and living conditions of members of society, and it is also the difference in living standards caused by the difference in individual abilities that drives or forces individuals to try their best to participate in the competition. As a result, every individual is urged to strive for the best in social life, otherwise, they can only sink into the bottom of society continuously in the relentless competition, while those individuals who actively compete can constantly flow to the bottom by virtue of their intelligence and physical strength, and the whole society will continue to evolve in the individual competition.

Spencer’s interpretation of the above viewpoint coincided with the Victorian era in England, which was described by many people as a warm and sunny historical period of long-term steady development. Spencer neither praised the beautiful process of real development nor was satisfied with the stability and harmony of social order, but stood on the opposite side of social life, advocating survival competition and hoping for new changes in the society in the process of differentiation. Spencer’s theoretical pursuit seemed to be very incongruous with the Victorian reality, and therefore, his theory did not have the same influence as that later. In fact, Spencer’s seemingly negative theory has a very positive value orientation, because in an era that tends to be stable, what may follow is the weakening of the momentum and speed of development. Spencer was not satisfied with the real existence he faced, affirmed the difference in ability, encouraged the struggle for existence and tried to reveal the deep and lasting motive force for social evolution, which would not bring negative influence to social order, but would inject new vitality into the gradual social life. This may be Gramsci’s so-called critical character of real intellectuals, that is, to stand on the opposite side of social life and examine and criticize reality.

The value of a theory is always relative. To evaluate the value of a theoretical view, its positivity or passivity can only be clearly stated in relation to specific times and historical conditions. The positive significance of Spencer’s promotion of survival and competition can be confirmed by linking with the social reality of Victorian era, but Spencer’s proposal cannot be simply transplanted to China at the same time, because the situations in China and Britain were just the opposite, with domestic

strife and foreign aggression. Yan Fu also critically absorbed Spencer's theory of individual ability and survival competition according to the social reality difference between China and Britain.

Yan Fu agreed with Spencer's view on individual ability, but did not advocate a laissez-faire attitude toward individual survival competition with his own ability. Yan Fu believed that the evolution of social history can be explained according to Darwin's biological evolution theory, because the fundamental motive force for the development and change of human society comes from the intelligence, physical strength, and moral strength of people as individuals, and these forces are just like the vitality of living organisms, from which the powerfulness of a country and the prosperity of a nation cannot be separated. Yan Fu pointed out: "From this perspective, it is not feasible to fundamentally make a country powerful. If the current problems cannot be eliminated, it is impossible to save the situation of decline; if the root causes cannot be eliminated, it will be ruined even the current problems are resolved. What is the current problem? Retake the power and perform military drills, as Russia did. As for its root causes, it means wisdom, financial resources and virtue of people. If the people's wisdom, financial resources and virtues are improved, the target could be achieve even the current problems are not resolved."²⁵

On the basis of affirming that individual ability is the fundamental driving force of social evolution, Yan Fu's further exploration is how to make these individual or folk abilities become the power of groups, nations, and societies. Spencer advocated forming the motive force of social evolution through competition among individuals, which in essence is to seek the resultant force of society in the confrontation of individuals, while Yan Fu did the opposite. He did not advocate forming the motive force of promoting social evolution through survival competition, but advocated opening up people's wisdom through enlightenment and breaking through the closed, conservative and selfish stereotypes formed over thousands of years.

If we use Durkheim's point of view to analyze the difference between Yan Fu and Spencer, Spencer paid attention to objective power, which is a functional point of view. Although it looks cold from the point of view of value, it is a modern consciousness because emphasizing differences, competition, and differentiation not only promotes social division of labor, but also can form organic solidarity. Yan Fu tried to open people's minds with advanced cultural concepts in a moralizing way, whose essence focused on subjective strength and emphasized some value principles, that is, the collective conscience of Durkheim's appellation. As a result, social differences were dispelled with ideas and society was condensed with morality, resulting in a mechanical unity of lack of vitality.

Integrating society with values and moral conscience is a way of social integration or social solidarity that suppresses individuality and vitality, and it is unstable and often stays on the formal level. Yan Fu's point of view is obviously contrary to the positive social function theory or social integration theory. In Yan Fu's view, China must replace the concept of self-interest with the concept of social integrity.

²⁵Yan Fu. *On the Origin of Strength*. Editor-in-Chief Liu Mengxi. *Chinese Modern Academic Classics · Volume Yan Fu*, p. 550.

Otherwise, not only will the society be scattered, there will be no strength to unite, resist foreign enemies, and save China, and members of the society who do not have a sense of community will be unable to stand on their own feet, improve themselves and save themselves. Yan Fu still put forward his own opinions according to the reality of China. In *On the Origin of Strength*, he painfully called for.

Alas! As for today, China is weaker and weaker, which cannot wait for the wise man to make it clear. What a deep shame. With only tens of thousands of soldiers, Japan took our closest vassal state—North Korea in the North Korean Battle, took Fenghuang and Jiuliancheng, threatening Shengjing in the Yalu River Battle, defeated Beijing Fleet and took the port and ship repair facilities during the Lvshunkou Battle, and took Weihai and killed all the Beiyang Fleet during the Weihaiwei Battle.²⁶

It was in the face of China's own weakness and foreign enemy's forcible seizure at that time that the Chinese people should no longer be like loose sand, but should "love each other and protect each other," otherwise, even if they had guns, they could only be involved in internal quarrels and could not resist foreign enemies. He pointed out: "Therefore, a country is like a man; if his head is hit, the limbs will make response; if his abdomen is stabbed, he will die. Although the north and the south are united as one, they actually have their own boundaries. If the capital city is shaken, the other parts of a country will make response; the country is threatened as deemed, just like the vast and fertile land in the Qin and Yue Dynasties. Then the relationship between monarch and his people will be awakened and their devotion to each other will be shaken. If a general does not give lectures on how to fight, the soldiers do not perform military drills and weapons are not stored at any time, it will be chaos just like the gathering of mutillids; given the imported rifles and guns, the soldiers will not know how to use them well."²⁷

It can be seen that if this scattered and passive state does not change, the result will only be the destruction of the nation. Therefore, Yan Fu first realized with what force the scattered Chinese people were united. It goes without saying that the search for social integration in accordance with Spencer's principle, that is, to allow social competition and integrate social organisms in the cruel law of the jungle, was obviously worse for China at that time, not only failing to integrate the society, but leading to more and more scattered Chinese society. Therefore, Yan Fu must go the other way. Faced with the fragmented reality of China, he actively called for educating the people, promoting the ethics of the people and calling for the "public spirit" of the Chinese nation.

Yan Fu's so-called "public spirit" is a social morality based on affirming the individual's physical strength, intelligence, and ability. It is a value that unites the Western values of freedom, equality, and democracy. The fundamental purpose of advocating this public spirit is to integrate the fragmented Chinese society, form the overall strength of the society, resist foreign enemies, and revitalize China. From this

²⁶Yan Fu. *On the Origin of Strength*. Editor-in-Chief Liu Mengxi. *Chinese Modern Academic Classics · Volume Yan Fu*, p. 542.

²⁷Yan Fu. *On the Origin of Strength*. Editor-in-Chief Liu Mengxi. *Chinese Modern Academic Classics · Volume Yan Fu*, p. 543.

viewpoint, Yan Fu's advocacy of "public spirit" is based on Spencer's individualism, that is, the thinking of affirming and emphasizing the individual's ability and status first, and then rising to the social level. However, in the sublimation from individual to society, Yan Fu entered the realm of Spencer's opposition—the "public spirit" of safeguarding national unity.

On the relationship between Yan Fu's pursuit of "public spirit" and Spencer's theory, Schwartz's view is insightful: "One theme that runs through all Yan Fu's works is the praise of the Western 'public spirit' (public mind). It is difficult to trace this theme back clearly to any element of Spencer's doctrine. It may just be based on his own observation of British life. What impressed him at one time was not only freedom and growing equality of opportunity, but also autonomy and a value that contains all other values and integrates them, that is, the value of public spirit. When he talked about 'people's morality', he first pointed out this value. The amazing miracle of the West (especially the British Empire) is that it can promote the constructive self-interest of individuals, liberate the vitality of individuals, and also drive this vitality to direct them towards collective goals."²⁸

It is clear here that Yan Fu's viewpoint on the integration of personal ability and society is not only related to Spencer's theory, but also related to the simultaneous inspection of the two realities of Chinese society and Western society. According to the investigation of the current situation of the Chinese society like scattered sand, Yan Fu realized that Chinese society could not form social forces by promoting differentiation and encouraging struggle as Spencer did, but should emphasize the ideological education of the people, promote social unity, and then integrate individual abilities into social force. Yan Fu found the concept of educating the Chinese people—the public spirit—in his observation and reflection of the British social reality in Victorian times. It is a universal value concept that overcomes narrow desires, breaks through feudal family concepts, safeguards national interests, promotes social unity, and pursues social progress on the premise of affirming individual status, ability, and freedom and equality.

Although Yan Fu's concept of "public spirit" is obviously opposed to Spencer's theoretical pursuit, he still took Spencer's sociology as the theoretical basis for constructing "public spirit". Yan Fu's idea of "governing a group with sociology" clearly illustrated this point. In Yan Fu's view, Spencer's sociology, which affirms individual ability and emphasizes social organism, is not only a theory that can clearly analyze social composition and social change, but also, more importantly, can guide rulers to effectively govern and rule the society. Yan Fu believed that: "For a country, the policy and laws are aimed to protect its people and correct human errors; if this is indeed the aim, it will be completed; if not, it will be ignored. As it will go through a long time and there will be many twists and turns, negative and positive effects will change at any time, and therefore, it is impossible to find out the root causes. If how the logistics work is not understood, it is not feasible to observe the old rules; if change to new rules, errors could be corrected; if one is careless, one of the two

²⁸Schwartz. *Yen Fu and the West*, p. 57.

must be feasible. If a country is governed by use of sociology to improve self-cultivation, manage the family, manage the country, and appease the ambitions of the people in the country, in order to keep the country in order and protect the people, it will achieve the greatest prosperity.”²⁹

Yan Fu used Spencer’s point of view to demonstrate the necessary connection between uniting societies and protecting race; “There is another examples for preservation of race in Spencer’s sociology, saying: If a thing wants to reproduce, the benefits that it obtain will be inversely proportional to what it contributes before grown up; After grown up, the benefits it obtain will be proportional to what it contributes. Otherwise, it will gradually lose its function until it is dead. There are three examples in his *On Sociology*: One is that after a person is grown up, what he contributes will be equal to what he requires; Second, people have their own psychological boundaries, they do not attack and cheat each other; Third, if there is any contradiction between the self and the group, the group should prevail. This is a collection of achievements from Greek and Roman and the scholars in the past two decades, which is used to govern the states.”³⁰ It can be seen that Yan Fu believed Spencer discussed the law of gregariousness and keeping race from the natural nature of human evolution, and called it the great achievement of Western civilization, which can be described as supreme.

In fact, although the recognition of the role and status of society can be explained from Spencer’s theory, it is not necessarily true, like Yan Fu, that Spencer directly talked about “society over individual and uniting societies and protecting race.” Spencer examined the development and evolution of human society from a biological point of view and believed that society is an organism composed of cells, organizations, and various systems. In this sense, Spencer’s theory necessarily includes concern for organizations and societies. However, the problem lies in how to evaluate the role of organizations or groups, even the nation, and the state. Spencer did not regard it as important as Yan Fu. From a naturalistic standpoint, Spencer opposed exaggerating the role of state rule or government control. In his view, if the government intervenes too much in individual behavior, the result will not only directly restrain survival competition and dissolve social vitality, but also often resort to power to promote wrong ideas, harm individual ability, affect the operation of social organisms and hinder the healthy evolution of society.

Yan Fu and Spencer have differences in idealism and naturalism as far as how to view social evolution is concerned. Spencer believed that allowance for individual competition would naturally form the vitality of social evolution, while Yan Fu believed that only by educating the public with moral concepts and enhancing their morality can development and evolution be achieved. In fact, the reason for this difference is not complicated, but the difference between Yan Fu and Spencer’s social reality. Spencer’s British society is a society that has left tradition and entered modern

²⁹Yan Fu. *On the Origin of Strength*. Editor-in-Chief Liu Mengxi. *Chinese Modern Academic Classics · Volume Yan Fu*, pp. 541–542.

³⁰Yan Fu. *Evolution and Ethics*. Editor-in-chief Liu Mengxi. *Chinese Modern Academic Classics · Volume Yan Fu*, p. 50.

times, and the process of social evolution has smoothly commenced. Moreover, it is particularly important that although the Western capitalist society represented by Britain has gone through a 300-year renaissance movement, the revolution of ideas has played an important role in the establishment of the capitalist system and the process of capitalist modernization, however, the capitalist mode of production and the process of industrialization do have undeniable spontaneity. Therefore, Spencer could form a naturalistic view of evolution based on reality.

On the contrary, Yan Fu's Chinese society is a super-rigid society controlled by feudal system and Confucian ethics for 2000 years without essential changes. It is difficult to find out the basis and motive force of social evolution and development from the social reality itself. In a word, there are only two areas when thinkers look for the basis for their theoretical pursuit, either the reality of life or the ideal concept. When the reality of life deviates from its theoretical pursuit, thinkers can only find their own basis and motivation in the ideal concept. Yan Fu could not find the basis and motive force of social evolution in China from reality, but only with the help of ideas which he believed had the function of promoting social development and evolution.

Yan Fu proposed to educate the public and awaken the power of the Chinese nation's evolution and development with ideas representing the development direction of modern society, which since Yan Fu had been not only a universal pursuit of Chinese scholars, but also a fundamental motive force for China to get rid of the shackles for a millennium and embark on the road of modernization. In fact, it was Sun Yat-sen, Li Dazhao, Chen Duxiu, Mao Zedong, et al. who accepted bourgeois democracy and Marxist ideas and used these advanced ideas to educate the Chinese people that China's democratic revolution and socialist revolution would take place and China ended its feudal rule for more than 2000 years and embarked on the road of modernization.

Since the middle of the twentieth century, people have often interpreted the evolution or development of modern Chinese society simply from the viewpoint of historical materialism, believing that a series of major historical changes in China since the 1911 Revolution is the result of the development and changes in the mode of production. In fact, until the founding of the People's Republic of China, China's mode of production has not changed as a whole, and it was still a mode of production in the closed natural economy system. Although China has had some development in its own industry or national industry since the Westernization Movement, it is not enough to show that China's social mode of production as the main body has changed. Therefore, it is far-fetched to explain the occurrence of China's social revolution and the development of social modernization from the change of production mode without a realistic basis.

If we recognize the role of ideas in the evolution and development of Chinese society, it means that the process of social development and change in China is not a simple objective process, but a process of subjective construction and choice. Subjective construction itself is also a choice, because it is obviously not an inexorable natural process to construct a social reality on the basis of what kind of ideas, not only are ideas diverse, but social models are also diverse, or for the same social facts,

different understandings can be given according to different thought principles or modes, and different models of social construction can be given on this basis.

Yan Fu chose Spencer's theory of social organic evolution as the theoretical basis for the construction of Chinese society. Based on this constructive principle and according to China's actual situation, he reconstructed Spencer's theory with many important theories, such as strength of society, morality of society, public spirit and unity of societies, and protection of race, which opened the way for China's reconstruction to introduce Western sociology.

3.4 Freedom View of "Boundary Between the Self and the Group"

Western scholars usually discuss freedom from two perspectives, one is political democracy and political guarantee, and the other is cognitive level and practical ability. The former is mostly from the perspective of political science, involving issues such as government and the masses, rights, and democracy; The latter is mostly from the epistemological perspective, involving people's understanding of the inevitable laws of the outside world and their control and conquest of natural objects. Therefore, the issue of freedom is mainly the subject of political science and philosophy. Yan Fu had a wealth of discussions on freedom. He has established a unique view of freedom from the differences between Chinese and Western cultures and social conditions in the relationship between individuals, societies, and countries, and in the close relationship between national capabilities and social conditions and has fully discussed personal freedom, freedom of society, national freedom, and ideological freedom, economic freedom, and political freedom. This view of freedom should be regarded as a social view of freedom from a sociological perspective, rather than a general view of political freedom and philosophical freedom.

In 1899, Yan Fu translated the book *On the Boundary between the Self and the Group* written by a British liberal thinker Muller, initially named *Interpretation of Self-freedom*, and in 1903 changed to *On Demarcation between individual and social public life*. Yan Fu's change of title of the book shows his original view of freedom. In his view, freedom cannot be clearly stated not only from personal political rights or political freedom, but also from personal understanding and utilization of objective laws. He regarded: "There are different opinions on freedom, which is impossible for Muller to state completely." Although the scholars have to define the self and the group, only the term "freedom" is available for defining them."³¹ It can be seen that freedom should be premised on a clear definition of the rights of individuals and societies.

It should be affirmed that Yan Fu raised this issue at the end of the Qing Dynasty, not only with clear realistic pertinence, but also with profound insight into theory.

³¹ Yan Fu. *On the Boundary between the Self and the Group*. The translator's preface. Editor-in-chief Liu Mengxi. *Chinese Modern Academic Classics · Volume Yan Fu*, p. 421.

Up to now, China is a society with insufficient differentiation. Not only is the degree of specialization of social members not high, the division of labor in society is not developed, but more importantly, the individual consciousness is not clear, and the individual's independent status, ability, and choice are bound by heavy feudal ethics. However, if the individual's autonomy is not formed, it will inevitably affect the formation of the consciousness of society. Because the individual is the basis of the society, the individual who is not clearly aware of his own rights and status will not be able to talk about the real society. Even if there are some organizations or institutions established in the name of a society, they are merely deceiving the world, raping public opinion, and seeking personal gain under the guise of a society.

At the same time, because the individual's autonomy or autonomous status has not been formed, societies, including the government and the state, cannot give play to its due role and value. A society can only represent the interests and will of its members when its individual members have the ability and consciousness of autonomy, and can be a society in the true sense. However, when individual members do not have the ability and consciousness of autonomy, the society will be easily controlled by some individuals with inflated desires, and the society will lose its function of safeguarding the interests and will of its members and become a tool for powerful people to seek personal gain. In addition, because the interests and wills of the society and its members form a separate and antagonistic relationship, the functions and roles of the society cannot be maintained at a positive and active level.

From this viewpoint, Yan Fu raised the issue of freedom from the relationship of demarcation between individual and social public life, which not only concerns the rationalization of China's social structure, but also concerns the vitality of China's society that he has always attached great importance to. This reflects Spencer's influence on Yan Fu. As mentioned above, Yan Fu discussed the individual vitality and function of society in translating and interpreting Spencer's *The Study of Sociology* with the aim of promoting Chinese people's ability to build up a sense of belonging to a society and form a national self-reliance and protection of the race. The discussion of the freedom concept in the society's own right circle can be seen as a deepening of this ideological road, or, in other words, a further expansion of the issue of freedom from the perspective of sociology.

Zhou Changlong, a Taiwanese scholar, has made a more in-depth discussion on the theoretical contribution of Yan Fuqun's view of freedom in his own sphere of power. He pointed out: “Yan Fu's *On the Boundary between the Self and the Group* is on the one hand introducing the Western liberal political doctrine and the concept of individual freedom to the people, but on the other hand, it is also a coherent Chinese and Western doctrine, affirming the value of the individual freedom described by John Muller, emphasizing the extensive freedom of inviolability and adding this value to the ‘what you say and do should be exemplary’ and eliminating the boundaries between the self and the group with ‘Good and bright virtue and self-improvement’ and ‘make contributions while improving oneself’. Outside the realm of confrontation between Western individuals and social conflicts, it points to a vast world where

individuals and groups are mutually embracing.”³² It can be seen that Yan Fu’s exposition of freedom is a pursuit aimed at constructing an ideal realm from the perspective of the blending of Chinese and Western cultures and the relationship between individuals and society.

Zhou Changlong also believed that Yan Fu’s view of freedom is mainly developed from three aspects, namely, the demarcation between individual and social public life, what you say and do should be exemplary, individual freedom and freedom of society. The view of demarcation between individual and social public life first points out the respective power limits of individuals and societies, while its focus is on emphasizing the power limits of a society, especially the national government, with the aim of limiting government power and leaving room for individual freedom. The most effective measure to restrict government or state power and protect individual freedom is to implement democratic system, thus Yan Fu put forward the viewpoint of “freedom lays the foundation and democracy is implemented”, that is, freedom is the foundation of the existence and pursuit of democracy, and democracy is the guarantee and means to realize freedom.

What you say and do should be exemplary is the Confucian way to cultivate one’s morality and cultivate one’s character, emphasizing the state of mind to achieve sincerity and integrity through learning from things. “The Confucian “what you say and do should be exemplary” emphasizes the similarity of mind and apply it to make judgments. The so-called “Although you hate the attitude of superiors to subordinates, you shouldn’t treat my subordinates with the same attitude; although you hate subordinates’ behaviors of superiors, you shouldn’t use the same behavior to subordinates”, i.e., “Do unto others as you would have them do unto you”; In terms of positive aspects, it is “A benevolent man helps others to take their stand in that he himself wishes to take his stand, and gets others there in that he himself wishes to get there.”³³ Yan Fu explained freedom in this way of emphasizing benevolence and self-cultivation. Its essence is to put forward a view of freedom that is different from the Western view of understanding the outside, controlling the outside, and seeking from the inside, or an inner view of freedom. Of course, if the inner world can reach a state of sincerity, it will inevitably perform a practice of pursuing harmony when treating people and things, the relationships between people and between people and society will not be a state of mutual destruction, and individuals and societies will be fundamentally free.

On the issue of individual freedom and freedom between societies or countries, Yan Fu’s view is that it is important to emphasize the freedom of societies and countries and advocate the obedience of individuals to the state and society in terms of the situation facing China and the lack of group consciousness and the lack of attention to the national crisis, but the fundamental nature of individual freedom cannot be

³²Zhou Changlong. *Yan Fu’s Three Levels of Meaning of Freedom*. Editors-in-chief Liu Guisheng, Lin Qiyan and Wang Xianming. *New Theory of Yan Fu’s Thought*, p. 84.

³³Zhou Changlong. *Yan Fu’s Three Levels of Meaning of Freedom*. Editors-in-chief Liu Guisheng, Lin Qiyan and Wang Xianming. *New Theory of Yan Fu’s Thought*, p. 69.

ignored. In line with Yan Fu’s view that people’s wisdom, strength, and virtue are fundamental to China’s efforts to get rid of backwardness and seek prosperity, Yan Fu knew deeply the importance of individual freedom, but he did not emphasize individual freedom as Western liberalism does. He believed that: “Based on current conditions of our country, the freedom of the self is not urgent, and the top priority is to avoid foreign attack and find out a way beneficial to our country. Therefore, the country should be given first priority rather than the freedom of the self.”³⁴

The “individual” as mentioned by Yan Fu refers to an isolated individual. He believed that an isolated individual cannot achieve the state of freedom because in real life all individuals are subject to social conditions and social relations, and freedom separated from these restrictions does not exist. Therefore, when a nation or country is divided up and humiliated, it is impossible to pay attention to the personal freedom of an individual. Therefore, the freedom of society must be given the first priority, and the individuals must cooperate fully to strive for and support the freedom of society, he said, “To seek freedom for a state, it’s the only way to pool the wisdom and efforts of everyone. To pool the wisdom and efforts of everyone, not everyone is patriotic, and everyone has his own responsibility for his state.”³⁵

Between the individual and the country, Yan Fu put forward the intermediate organization form of individual support for the freedom of country—local autonomy. He said that “Everyone has his own obligations, because he has a patriotic heart and is not lured to care about the state affairs; it is impossible to teach him to care about what has happened outside. However, local autonomy is a matter of urgency.”³⁶ The purpose of implementing local autonomy is to organize members of society to participate in local affairs and then to care about national and ethnic affairs, to carry out social education through local grass-roots organizations, to inspire patriotic consciousness, to arouse the people’s will to save the nation and protect the race, and to form a situation of concerted efforts to fight for the freedom of the nation. Moreover, the freedom of the nation is realized, which also provides conditions and guarantees for the realization of the individual freedom.

Yan Fu’s exposition of the individual freedom and the freedom of nation clearly shows that he viewed freedom in the relationship between society and individual or that the relationship between society and individual provides a basis for his exposition of freedom. As Schwartz pointed out, Yan Fu in many cases considered other people’s views in Spencer’s sociological system, and put the issue of freedom on the basis of society-to-individual relations, which is also the unfolding of Spencer’s sociological perspective. Yan Fu said, “For freedom, there must be reason for what to do; however, for a person living alone outside, what is his boundary? He can do everything for any purposes, good or evil. No one could ban on what he wants to do. However, if he does not follow the rules after joining a group, it will result in a world of hegemonism and

³⁴Schwartz. *Yen Fu and the West*, pp. 148–149.

³⁵Schwartz. *Yen Fu and the West*, p. 149.

³⁶Schwartz. *Yen Fu and the West*, p. 149.

contradictions may be caused.”³⁷ Therefore, we must examine freedom in a group so that we can have a concrete and true understanding.

Here again shows the contradictory relationship between Yan Fu’s ideological theory and Spencer’s. On the one hand, Yan Fu incorporated freedom into Spencer’s sociological system and explained the essence and contradiction of freedom in the relationship between individual and society or between individual and country, reflecting the theoretical vision and methodological principles of sociological observation. On the other hand, Yan Fu opposed Spencer from the basic point of view. Spencer, starting from the naturalistic and laissez-faire standpoint, urged individual free competition and opposed the restriction of individual competition by the state and the government, believing that the government’s role is not positive and that the government’s excessive exercise of its own power may lead to immoral and anti-human actions. Yan Fu affirmed that the freedom of the nation should precede individual freedom and should enhance the authority of the government to promote the prosperity of the country so that the freedom of the nation can be truly realized. Yan Fu’s views on strengthening the role of the state and government are exactly the opposite of Spencer’s.

Yan Fu also introduced Adam Smith’s economic freedom and Montesquieu’s political freedom through the translation of *On Wealth* and *Fa Yi*. Adam Smith believed that everyone has the instinct of seeking profits and avoiding harm. In the market behavior, individuals pursuing economic interests are trying to obtain greater profits at a lower cost. This behavior of pursuing personal interests is controlled by the invisible hand of the market. Looking directly, individuals pursuing their own interests will be harmful to the interests of societies or countries. In fact, this is not the case. Because the pursuit of the maximization of personal interests can enable individuals to mobilize their maximum energy, although there will be conflicts between individuals because of the interests, as long as individuals are given equal competition status and rights, they will accumulate wealth for the society while freely pursuing their interests, and the market can make the interests competition among individuals reach a balanced state according to its own laws. Therefore, it is not the responsibility of the state or the government to restrict individual competition, but to create an equal condition so that individuals pursuing economic interests, that is, economic persons, can compete freely.

Yan Fu accepted the economic freedom view from Adam Smith, who believed that the government should protect people’s pursuit and competition for economic interests in an equal institutional environment and social conditions, as Adam Smith advocated. “In economic activities, the government must give freedom to the people. Only then can the nationals produce more wealth, the people can be rich, and the country can be strong. Otherwise, opposite results will be achieved.”³⁸ Yan Fu, according to this view, advocated that the government should relax the restrictions on people’s economic behavior and encourage free economic competition among

³⁷ Yan Fu. *On the Boundary between the Self and the Group*. The translator’s preface. Editor-in-chief Liu Mengxi. *Chinese Modern Academic Classics · Volume Yan Fu*, p. 422.

³⁸ Adam Smith. *Yuan Fu* (Part D, Article Four Comments), p. 494.

members of society as much as possible, so as to promote economic vitality and accumulate national economic wealth.

Montesquieu’s main views on political freedom are: Freedom is not doing what you want, but doing what you want under the restriction and protection of the law. He said, “Political freedom is not doing what you want. In a country or society where laws exist, freedom exists in being able to do what you should do and not being forced to do what you should not do.”³⁹ Moreover, Montesquieu believed that the government should also exercise its rights under the restrictions of the law so as to ensure that citizens’ freedoms are not violated. Yan Fu’s view of political freedom was influenced by Montesquieu. He realized that there is a contradiction between personal freedom and the government’s jurisdiction, and the best way to solve this contradiction is to act according to the law and restrict the government’s rights with the law so as to protect the people’s political freedom.

Yan Fu also discussed the conditions for the realization of freedom. He believed that although freedom has its undeniable significance, whether freedom can be truly realized at all levels must be premised on the improvement of national quality. Otherwise, freedom can only remain in the concept. Therefore, Yan Fu advocated raising people’s power, opening people’s minds, and promoting people’s morality as the basic conditions for freedom in China. Without this condition, personal freedom, economic freedom, and political freedom would not be possible. To realize this condition, we must turn to education and improve the quality of the nation through national education, so as to lay a solid foundation for realizing freedom.

3.5 Historical Significance of Reconstructive Beginning

Yan Fu’s reconstructive introduction of Western sociology not only enabled Chinese scholars to actively accept Western sociology at a time of national crisis, but also established a very important basis for the subsequent development of Chinese sociology. Throughout the academic history at home and abroad, any theory that has vitality and can have an important impact on society will surely find its deep foundation in real life. Spencer’s organic evolution theory has its deep roots in Victorian England, that is, British society can enter a period of steady development in Victorian times through struggle for existence like sheep eating people during the enclosure movement, so Spencer called on people not to fear struggle for existence, and the cruel and merciless process will lead to a happy and peaceful ending.

However, the society that Yan Fu was confronted with and cared for is in stark contrast to Victorian Britain. When the Western colonists invaded China with unbridled imperialism, the Chinese nation could not only work together to resist the colonists’ burning and looting, but instead in the groggy state of mind like a piece of loose sand to wait for the invaders to eat. If Spencer’s doctrine is introduced by Yan Fu in China without any restrictions, it will not attract the attention or excitement of

³⁹Charles de Montesquieu. *The Spirit of Laws*, p. 183.

Chinese scholars, regardless of its flattery words. Because whether it is a naturalistic attitude that encourages survival competition or proposition of political sociology opposing national state and social integration, it is contrary to the enthusiasm of the Chinese intellectuals who saved the Chinese nation in the dire straits.

Yan Fu can only reconstruct the Spencer sociology rooted in the British Victorian era in accordance with the needs of Chinese social reality, so that it can be rooted in the realities of Chinese society in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. When Yan Fu reconstructed Spencer's doctrine, the Chinese sociological thought formed its own source, or Chinese sociology had its own beginning. This is a very special and very important beginning, and it is a beginning that breeds the strong vitality of Chinese sociology and is constantly being obscured and relentlessly reappeared in the later evolutionary history.

The reconstructive introduction of Western sociology is the beginning of Chinese sociology. First of all, it is the nature of sociology. From the empirical facts, sociology reveals the essential connection of social life in the observation of the facts of social experience, and then uses the general theory rooted in reality to reach into the thinking of the wider social life and the prediction of future life. People are no stranger to this essence of sociology, but people seldom mention an essential link defined by this essence—the regional and universal nature of sociological theory.

Starting from the empirical facts, the sociological theories are constructed in the observation and thinking of the empirical facts, which determines that sociology must have regional characteristics. Because only in the specific space–time conditions can we observe the empirical facts existing as reality, and the specific space–time conditions are also the specific areas. It is in this sense that Comte repeatedly stated: Sociological theories are all relative, that is, they are rational with respect to specific regions. “Our empirical research should basically come down to a systematic evaluation of the existence in all aspects and give up the search for its earliest source and ultimate purpose. Moreover, we should also understand that this research of phenomena cannot be anything absolute, but should always be closely related to our physical structure and our condition.”⁴⁰

Acknowledging the relativity of sociological theory does not mean completely denying its universality. Although sociology starts from the observation and thinking of empirical facts, sociology is not only an intuitive description of empirical facts, “the real positive spirit is mainly to observe for prediction, and to study the present situation in order to infer the future according to the general belief that the laws of nature remain unchanged.”⁴¹ It is this theoretical pursuit of predicting the future and inferring the future that determines that sociology must rise to a certain level of theoretical generalization, because only theoretical generalization can be pushed from the present to the future, while simple empirical observation can only stay on the surface of things. When the society forms a general theory, it also marks the rise from concrete to universal, from regional to universal.

⁴⁰Comte. *On Positive Spirit*, p. 10.

⁴¹Comte. *On Positive Spirit*, p. 12.

Generalization is abstraction, while abstraction is the abandonment of certain particularities. Therefore, when sociology carries out theoretical generalization based on regional empirical studies, it is necessary to discard some of the particularities that really exist in the region. However, no matter how much theoretical generalization sociology makes, it will not be as abstract as metaphysics to absoluteness away from reality, otherwise its disciplinary characteristics will be completely annihilated and returned to the embrace of philosophy. The abstraction of sociology is always limited, and regional characteristics must be preserved in different forms in different degrees. Therefore, when sociologists try to move a sociological theory formed in one region to another, they inevitably encounter some outdated theoretical viewpoints that need to be reconstructed, otherwise, the conflict between theory and reality will happen unexpectedly.

Yan Fu interpreted extreme individualism as a collective principle and public spirit, and struggle for existence as unity of societies and protection of the race, just in view of the regional limitations of Spencer's sociological theory and ignoring the suspicion of "misinterpreting" the original intention. Yan Fu's practice violated Spencer's principle of positivism which he revered. Spencer insisted on objective description more strictly than Comte, but Yan Fu creatively interpreted Spencer's original text according to the needs of the Chinese nation to unite societies and protect race. Interpretation is not reading, but creating new ideas after deconstructing the original structure. The meaning read out by the interpreter is often richer than that expressed directly by the author.

Yan Fu seems to follow the hermeneutic principles of Dilthey, Gadamer, Liko, etc. Without textual research, Yan Fu could not understand the hermeneutics that was not popular until the middle of the twentieth century. However, why does Yan Fu's translation so clearly show the style of hermeneutics? Perhaps this is Gadamer's claim that hermeneutics is universal, that is, the principle of hermeneutics is universal. Furthermore, it is not necessary for people to study the literature of hermeneutics and understand the principles of hermeneutics before they can interpret the text. The essence of hermeneutics lies in the recognition of the principle of value. As long as the principle of value is recognized and cognitive activities are carried out according to the principle of value, the principle of hermeneutics will play a role, which is the vitality of hermeneutics.

Traditional epistemology rejects the principle of value, which is based on scientific cognition. It believed that only by maintaining strict objectivity can the process of cognition form an accurate result of cognition, and to maintain the objectivity of cognition, the most basic premise is to exclude the value principle of cognition, which is what Comte advocated: Ask only what it is and not what it should be. The former means "to be" and the latter means "should be". "To be" is an objective existence, while "should be" is a subjective requirement or subjective imagination. Objectivity is external, it is the same kind of existence for anyone who knows it, while subjective requirements are internal and varies from person to person. Therefore, the traditional epistemology or scientific epistemology advocates adhering to the objective principle to ensure the formation of true rational knowledge and rejecting the value principle

as a subjective requirement, believing that only by removing the value evaluation can the objective object be understood without prejudice.

Yan Fu just violated the objective principle of scientific epistemology. He did not reject the value principle, but absorbed and explained Spencer's sociological theory without disguise according to the positive nationalism value principles of uniting societies and protecting race and saving China. Yan Fu unconsciously stood in the ranks of hermeneutics just because he adhered to the principle of value. Perhaps this is universality. Recognition of the value principle and understanding based on the value principle will surely be incorporated into hermeneutics. Heinrich Rickert explained this necessity very clearly. In his view, human beings have established two kinds of science: Cultural science and natural science. Heinrich Rickert believed that the decisive criterion for distinguishing the two kinds of sciences is value, nature has no value, and natural science with nature as its object must also exclude the principle of value, while culture is valuable, and cultural science with culture as its object must affirm value and pursue value in its own vision. He said, "Through this connection with value (this connection either exists or does not exist), we can safely distinguish the two kinds of objects, and this can only be done through this method, because apart from the inherent value of cultural phenomena, every cultural phenomenon can be regarded as connected with nature and even necessarily as nature."⁴²

According to Heinrich Rickert's point of view, Yan Fu is undoubtedly correct, because not only Spencer's sociology is a cultural phenomenon, this cultural phenomenon must contain certain values, and the cultural phenomenon with values cannot be correctly understood by worthless research, but Yan Fu's introduction of Spencer's sociology to study the social phenomenon of Chinese society, which is vital to life and death, is also a cultural activity in itself, and the value principle must also be contained in it. However, the value principle contained in Spencer's sociology is opposite to Yan Fu's. Spencer advocated the value principle of "the law of the jungle" and this value principle can be converted into the theoretical basis for colonists' outward aggression and expansion. Although this principle is included in the objective description of biological evolution and survival competition, its extreme egoism value principle of bullying cannot be concealed. Yan Fu insisted on the opposite value principle, that is, active nationalism, which is a principle of collectivism that tries to overcome narrow egoism and is a value principle that openly provides a theoretical basis for resisting colonial aggression.

Why did Yan Fu find an acceptable theoretical point of view in the contradiction between the two value principles? The reason also lies in the subjective constructiveness of the value principle. Since the value principle is a kind of evaluation given to the objectivity from the subjective point of view and according to the subjective needs, this evaluation expresses the subjective desire to accept or reject the objective trade-off desire and the ideal of reconstruction, so even things that are completely opposed to themselves can be reconstructed according to the value principle and then used by themselves after being reconstructed according to their own value principles. What's more, there are some common values between Yan Fu and Spencer.

⁴²Rickert (1991).

For example, individuals should be free, the effective exertion of individual abilities is the foundation of social evolution, and equality and democracy in social life are indispensable conditions for social development and evolution.

Yan Fu was able to interpret Spencer's theory according to his own value principle, which was not expected by the author, and was also directly related to the space-time distance between the reader and the author. Hans-Georg Gadamer, Liko, etc., both discussed the time distance between text and interpretation. Hans-Georg Gadamer believed that there must be a certain length of time between the reader and the text. According to scientific epistemology, the longer the time distance between the text and the reader, the more difficult it is to accurately understand the meaning of the original text. However, this is not the case from the hermeneutic point of view. Because the meaning of the text was created jointly by readers and authors, the longer the time between readers and texts, the more room for readers to explain the text, and readers may create richer meanings than the authors expected. Liko expressed his understanding of time distance by using the concepts of "distance" and "distantiation". In his view, after the text was created by the author, it will have a distance from the author's original creation environment (including mood) over time. The meaning given to the text by the author will continue to be far away in the process of gradually widening the distance. As a result of the distance, the author's meaning will gradually become blurred, but the reader can give the text new ideas according to his new environment.

Yan Fu gave Spencer's sociology a new idea, not only the effect of time distance, but first of all the effect of space distance. Although Yan Fu faces eastern China and western Britain in the same era, the cultural traditions, social systems, public attitudes, behavior patterns, and living conditions existing in these two countries are far-reaching and even completely contradictory. If Yan Fu can't look at Spencer's sociology and British social reality from the hermeneutic point of view, and observe and think completely and objectively as advocated by scientific epistemology, Yan Fu, anxious day and night for the national crisis, will not feel any value or significance. It is in the spatial distance that Yan Fu discovered the time interval, discovered the gap between Western advancement and Chinese backwardness, discovered the rich value that China can draw lessons from, and reconstructed the brave meaning according to the value ideal of revitalizing China.

Yan Fu, in his interpretation of Spencer's strict positivism, expounded the sociological thought with hermeneutic characteristics that break through the positivism principle. This is really a pioneering work, which is not only due to Yan Fu's personal ability, quality, and mentality, but also the inevitable manifestation of the Chinese cultural tradition encountering foreign culture. After 5000 years of development, Chinese culture not only has its own profound cultural background, but also has its own value orientation different from other national cultures. The profound cultural background and unique value orientation make it impossible for Chinese culture to be assimilated by other national cultures. Chinese culture will not only stand in the forest of national cultures based on its rich accumulation, but will also integrate and even assimilate other cultural traditions with its strong traditional inertia. Although China was backward western civilization due to feudal monarchy, Chinese culture

still has its eternal splendor and brilliant thought in the face of Western civilization that has only risen for two centuries, which is the base for Chinese scholars to dare to stand on their own feet and strengthen themselves in the face of surging Western civilization and the source of strength for Chinese scholars to dare to give their own new interpretation of Western literature.

The biggest characteristic of Chinese culture is to reflect on all phenomena in human relations. In other words, human order and ethical relations are the network nerves that Chinese culture cannot remove. Only in human order and ethical relations can Chinese literature and classics, ideological theories, national spirit, social customs, and even customs and habits be thoroughly understood. This feature makes it difficult for scholars deeply influenced by Chinese cultural traditions to see all kinds of social phenomena completely and objectively according to the principles of scientific epistemology. They always put all kinds of social phenomena, including cultural phenomena, into interpersonal order or ethical relations, and therefore make explanations and evaluations with strong value pursuit. Therefore, the essence of Chinese cultural tradition determines that Chinese intellectuals who are involved in it usually interpret the ideological culture of other nations in the way of hermeneutics.

Yan Fu's reconstructive interpretation of Spencer's thoughts not only shows the continuation of Chinese cultural tradition, but also shows the new vitality of Chinese culture. Because the reconstructive interpretation includes the continuation of the tradition, the reconstruction is, after all, the reconstruction of Western ideas. No matter how deep the reconstruction is, Chinese intellectuals and Chinese culture will always exchange with Western culture, and such exchange will certainly produce a two-way effect. Yan Fu absorbed the positive ideas in Western sociology through his reconstructive interpretation of Spencer's thoughts, which opened a new horizon and a new realm for Chinese scholars to observe and think about Chinese social problems, and thus gave a new vitality.

Yan Fu's start for Chinese sociology has far-reaching historical significance. It first shows that although Chinese sociology raised the curtain in introducing Western sociology and started its own theoretical thinking directly in the face of strict empirical sociology, Chinese sociology started with its own viewpoints as its basis, its Chinese social life as its basis, its pursuit of value full of the Chinese nation, and its reconstructive treatment of Western sociology with creative theoretical mind, raising the curtain of Chinese sociology in the dual contemplation of man and society. In the course of China's sociology in the future, it often forgets such a reconstructed beginning rooted in China's mainland, and often regards simply accepting certain Western sociological theories and methods as authentic, while treating those sociology with local characteristics and creative thinking as heretical, which has set an undue obstacle to the healthy development of China's sociology.

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Chapter 4

Kang Youwei's Theory on Great Harmony



Kang Youwei is another important pioneer of Chinese sociology. By exploring the positive factors in the Chinese academic tradition, he integrated some of the principles of western sociology into the Chinese traditional academy and expounded the sociological thoughts on great harmony with strong idealism. The study of Kang Youwei's sociological thought is undoubtedly of great significance in grasping the evolutionary clues and theoretical characteristics of Chinese sociological thought.

4.1 Inheritance and Development of the New Text Confucianism

Kang Youwei's achievements in the development of modern Chinese society or the modernization of Chinese society cannot be buried. Although his political ideas and academic thoughts have obvious conservative elements of reformism, even after the 1911 Revolution, he allied himself with Zhang Xun and advocated the restoration of unification and was accused of being a reactionary who saved the fall of the Qing Dynasty, he launched the Constitutional Reform and Modernization movement to promote institutional and ideological changes in the Chinese empire, and as the head of reforming the old system and constitutional reform and modernization, he wrote an indelible brilliant chapter in modern Chinese history.

Kang Youwei studied hard in his youth, studied Confucian cultural classics extensively and profoundly, and witnesses a change from the old text Confucianism to the new text Confucianism. According to Kang Youwei's autobiography *My History*, he began to study the classic *The Rites of Zhou* at the age of 21 from Guangdong famous Confucian scholar Zhu Ciqi, "At kanoetatsu in the 6th year of Guangxu (Emperor of Qing Dynasty), he was 23 years old. This year, he studied classics and Gongyang School, and specialized in He Shaogong's works and wrote *Correction of He Shaogong's Works*. Soon, he discovered the errors therein and burnt it."¹ He Shaogong,

¹Kang (1996).

that is, He Xiu, is a master of the new text Confucianism in the Eastern Han Dynasty. That is to say, Kang Youwei shifted from the old text Confucianism to the new text Confucianism in the sixth year of Guangxu in 1880.

For Kang Youwei, the difference between the new text Confucianism and the old text Confucianism lies first: The old text Confucianism respect The Rites of Zhou, pay attention to identifying the authenticity of the classics with subtle exegesis methods, and think that Confucius' remarks are mostly derived from the narration and interpretation of The Rites of Zhou, so the study of The Rites of Zhou has become the academic foundation. However, Dong Zhongshu of the Western Han Dynasty initiated the new text Confucianism, which was epitomized by He Xiu of the Eastern Han Dynasty, focusing on giving full play to the "general sense of the word" of the classics, with the aim of maintaining feudal unification", paying special attention to the interpretation of *Spring and Autumn Annals-Gongyang Biography*, recognizing the historical development and changes, paying attention to practical application, and despising the smart skills of identifying the exegesis in the old text Confucianism. In contrast, the Han Dynasty has already witnessed the difference between the conservative and dull and empty old text Confucianism and the active, practical new text Confucianism.

At the end of the Eastern Han Dynasty, Ma Rong (79–166) annotated the classics all over the world, raising the academic standard of the old text Confucianism to an unprecedented level, and it was considered to have reached a mature stage. Also, Ma Rong embraced the new text Confucianism and absorbed the advantages of the new text Confucianism to promote the integration of the old text Confucianism with the new text Confucianism. Zheng Xuan (127–200) followed Ma Rong's lead and continued to promote the integration of the old text Confucianism with the new text Confucianism. He broke away the legalist tradition and collected the achievements of Han Dynasty classics, basically ending the long-standing opposition between the old text Confucianism and the new text Confucianism and thus settling the dispute between them.

However, in the Daoguang's and Jiaqing's reigns in the Qing Dynasty, there was a resurgence of opposition between the old text Confucianism and the new text Confucianism. Zhuang Cunhe and Liu Fenglu used the Confucian classics argumentation in the *Spring and Autumn Annals-Gongyang Biography* to discuss current affairs, attack current problems and open up a new atmosphere for the Gongyang School. The Gongyang School affirmed the social development and change of the Han Dynasty's new text Confucianism and further strengthened its emphasis on practical application, especially in its criticism and intervention on real social or political issues. The revival of Confucian classics during the Jiaqing and Daoguang's reigns is an academic reflection of the growing corruption of the Qing government and the increasingly fierce social conflicts since the late period of Qianlong's reign.

After more than 70 years of governance and development in the reign of Kangxi and Yongzheng, the Qing Dynasty enjoyed a strong national strength and a sound economic and social development, which reached its peak in the reign of Kangxi and Yongzheng. In the 60 years of his reign, Qianlong was able to inherit the tradition of Emperors Kangxi and Yongzheng's diligent and meticulous administration in the

early stage, but in the later stage, the Qianlong Dynasty gradually became luxurious and corrupt. According to historical records, the Queen Mother spent millions of taels of silver on three celebrations of her 60th, 70th and 80th birthday, when a farmer needed only two taels of silver a year. What's more, Qianlong's celebration of his birthday was lavish. The 55th year of Qianlong (1790) was his 80th birthday. The preparations for the celebration lasted three years, with more than a month of climax and millions of taels of silver. Its scale and complexity were unprecedented. During Qianlong's reign, he traveled all over the world as many as 150 times, spending too much money, building palace gardens everywhere, and making the people miserable. Qianlong was corrupt and degenerate, and ministers and local officials of the imperial court followed suit with impunity, weakening the Qing Dynasty. During the reigns by Jiaqing and Daoguang, the corruption of the Qing court continued declining. In addition, opium import surged and corruption became rampant. Political corruption in the Qing Dynasty became an incurable disease, and the decline and incompetence was also an irreversible foregone conclusion. Under this historical background, the rise of the Gongyang School, which takes attacking current malpractices and intervening in government affairs as its own duty, is undoubtedly a positive academic phenomenon.

During the reign of Daoguang and Xianfeng, with the promotion of Gong Zizhen and Wei Yuan, the influence of the new text Confucianism has gradually expanded and more attention has been paid to the study of real political issues. As Liang Qichao said, in the modern times, "the new ideas come out one by one, whose causes are traced back to Gong Zizhen and Wei Yuan." ² Moreover, they both studied new text Confucianism. However, Gong Zizhen and Wei Yuan are not just scholars engaged in the new text Confucianism. They both combined academic research with the analysis and evaluation of current affairs and politics to put forward new policies for the rejuvenation of China. It can be seen that, promoted by Gong Zizhen and Wei Yuan, the new text Confucianism has broken away from the pedantic style of study of adhering to dogma and not caring about politics, and has opened its own academic mind with the attitude of actively participating in real politics.

Gong Zizhen's position in the history of Confucian classics is very important. He not only agreed with some of the ideas of advocating Spring and Autumn Annals-Gongyang Biography by the new text Confucianism, but also advanced the historical development concept and practical thoughts of the new text Confucianism according to the social crisis in the late Qing Dynasty. Liu Fenglu, a master of new text Confucianism in the Qing Dynasty, had a great influence on Gong Zizhen. Liu Fenglu advocated that the study of Confucian classics should go through from top to bottom, and the Gongyang study should be used to understand and explain historical issues. Gong Zizhen's thought of the new text Confucianism is very rich, and the most direct connection with the topic of this book is his "Theory of the third world", especially the discussion about "Decadence of the world". In his representative work *Yi Bing Zhi Ji Zhu Yi* 9, he said: People who have deep research on The Spring and Autumn Annals also studies the history, saying: Since there is written record, the society has

²Liang Qichao. *On the Changing Trend of Chinese Academic Thoughts. Collected Works from the Ice-Drinker's Studio · Collection 7*, p. 97.

been divided into three societies and the distinction between three classes of societies must be based on talents. If the talents have extremely poor qualities, the society where class contradictions are mild is first class, the society in chaos and the society declining is first class. In the society declining, it is governed by use of literary grace, nominally, and literally, the society declining is still like the one where class contradictions are mild. In the society declining, black and white is indivisible, and the five colors can actually be abolished; literally, it is like the society where class contradictions are mild, advocating the plainness. The first and last pitches are chaotic, and the five pitches can be eliminated. Literally, it is like the loudest pitch sounds silent for the society where class contradictions are mild; In the society declining, all legal systems and moral norms have been destroyed, and the ruling class is free to indulge and do whatever it wants. Literally, it seems the political balance in the society where class contradictions are mild; The ordinary people do not have clear thoughts but keep their words, and talk nothing about politics in the society where class contradictions are mild.”³ That is to say, Gong Zizhen believed that history can present its development process in three stages, namely, society where class contradictions are mild, society in chaos and society declining. The society declining is at a state of crisis, but it shows illusion. The Qing Dynasty is already a society declining, but it shows false prosperity.

The reason for this society declining is the shortage of talents, which is rooted in the imperial examination system and the official system of the Qing Dynasty. Therefore, to get rid of the bad luck of the society declining, we must reform the imperial examination system and the official appointment system. Otherwise, the Qing Dynasty will be in a terrible state. In Gong Zizhen's view, the Qing Dynasty followed the imperial examination system of the Ming Dynasty, testing candidates with stereotyped writing, which not only failed to select outstanding talents, but also restrained the growth of talents, thus leading to a shortage of talents and a decline in national strength. Gong Zizhen called for: “I advised the emperor to renew its energy and select talents without restriction,” and put forward some positive suggestions on selecting talents and abilities.

Gong Zizhen did a more in-depth study of the new text Confucianism in his later years, with the book *The Spring and Autumn Annals Exemplary Cases of Judgment* explaining the spiritual essence of *The Spring and Autumn Annals* as participating in political affairs and promoting changes, and drawing the conclusion that “The Spring and Autumn Annals Make New Kings” and there are “Regular” and “Change” in *The Spring and Autumn Annals*. Li Kai, Liu Guancai, et al. compiled *A Brief History of Academic Studies in the Late Qing Dynasty* which summarized Gong Zizhen's explanation of the general idea of *The Spring and Autumn Annals* in *The Spring and Autumn Annals Exemplary Cases of Judgment* into three laws: “No Law”, that is, some of the facts recorded in *The Spring and Autumn Annals* are often different from the evaluation thereafter. In fact, it is only said that *The Spring and Autumn Annals* has certain flexibility in its evaluation of facts; “Disdaining of law” is intended to “extend the meaning of *The Spring and Autumn Annals* by telling the monarch to

³Gong (2003).

respect himself and not to fall into the ranks of “Disdaining of law” because of the appointment of any person “Disdaining of law”; “Constant and variable law” means that there are always changes, and there should be flexibility in principle. The seriousness of interpreting the Confucius classics should be combined with the flexibility of governance.⁴

Wei Yuan’s thought of new text Confucianism is more radical than Gong Zizhen’s. He held a stern negative attitude towards both Han studies and Song studies of old text Confucianism. He believed that Han studies stack up words and are impractical, and that Song studies are superficial and empty. Only the general principles of new text Confucianism can participate in current politics and can be used in practice. The standard of Wei Yuan’s criticism of old text Confucianism is “to use the classics for governance”, that is, “to use the classics to judge crimes”, “to use the classics to make decisions on the matter”, or “to use the classics to achieve the purpose”. However, the old text Confucianism are just opposite to Wei Yuan’s standard, that is, to concentrate on the exegesis, which results in obscuring the important sense of classics and no achievements in trivial discussions. He said, those who have mastered Confucianism use the study of Confucian classics to “cultivate one’s morality, manage the family and govern the country” to maintain the feudal ruling order, which is the real “governance”. They could eliminate the doubts with The Book of Changes, keep in order with the Rule of Law, make decisions with The Spring and Autumn Annals, educate people with rites, music and dressing, keep in peace with the Official System of Zhou, travel with Tribute of Yu, give remonstrance with The Book of Songs and answer the questions, which is a strategy of governance with classics. Was there anyone criticizing the study of Confucian classics to address actual problems?”⁵ It can be seen that Wei Yuan highly values the role of new text Confucianism in politics and practical application.

The new text Confucianism in the late Qing Dynasty represented by Gong Zizhen and Wei Yuan not only sharply criticized the old text Confucianism, but also impacted on the Neo-Confucianism of Er Cheng and Zhu Xi, which Zeng Guofan, Zuo Zongtang, et al. admired, and moral obligations and preachings held on to thereby. Compared with the Neo-Confucianism of Er Cheng and Zhu and moral obligations and preachings held onto thereby, the positive significance of the new text Confucianism is even more obvious. Created by Zhou Dunyi, Shao Yong, Zhang Zai, Cheng Hao and Cheng Yi, the Neo-Confucianism of Er Cheng and Zhu Xi, which was later epitomized by Zhu Xi, emphasizes that the principle is the ultimate origin and common essence of all things in the world, is an immutable and irresistible eternal law, and can only recognize and obey the principle governing all things and life, as Cheng Hao and Cheng Yi said: “The principle, natural endowment and heaven have no difference. Natural endowment can be known by studying the principle, and heaven can be

⁴Editors-in-chief Li Kai and Liu Guancai. *A Brief History of Academic Studies in the Late Qing Dynasty*, pp. 11–14.

⁵Wei Yuan. *Mogu Learning* 9. Annotation of Teaching and Research Office of Chinese Philosophy, Department of Philosophy, Peking University. *Selection of Teaching Materials of Chinese Philosophy History* Vol. 2, p. 391.

learnt by studying the natural endowment.”⁶ Zhu Xi is more extreme, thinking that: “Metaphysicians are all heavenly principles, while physical ones are just the scum.”⁷ The way to learn is to keep the natural principles and eliminate the human desires. Dai Zhen, a thinker in the Qing Dynasty during the reign of Qianlong, denounced it as the principle of homicide, and he pointed out that: Some new intellectuals later, without following the law of truth, insisted on their own theories and principles, misusing the legislation and the virtues, just like an official that commit bankruptcy and misuse criminal laws to make a false charge against someone; they end up the wisdom of people without justification.”⁸

Unlike Neo-Confucianism, which restrains feelings and destroys desires, the new text Confucianism with sublime words with deep meaning, has left a wide room for people's thoughts. It not only allows people to think about academic and political issues, but also allows people to make imaginative interpretations of classic texts, rather than strictly adhering to the original meaning of the moral obligations and preachings as in Neo-Confucianism. The essence of this way of doing scholarly research is to be tolerant of creative thinking to a certain extent. Although the new text Confucianism often give people the feeling of giving strained interpretations and drawing far-fetched analogies, but left scholars room for freedom of thought and enabled academic thinking in the late Qing Dynasty to enter a relatively active state, unconsciously paving the way for the later ideological liberation movement.

The new text Confucianism in the late Qing Dynasty played a very important role in the history of Chinese thought and played an important role in pushing forward the development of Chinese ideology and culture from closure to liberation and from conservatism to progress. As far as this is concerned, historians generally regard the new text Confucianism in the late Qing Dynasty as an important part of China's modern enlightenment movement. If the concept of enlightenment from the European Enlightenment is used to evaluate the new text Confucianism in the late Qing Dynasty, its historical role has not reached the level of enlightenment to the Chinese ideology. The nature of the Enlightenment represented by Voltaire, Rousseau and Diderot is to re-examine everything with reason, requiring that anything that does not conform to the principle of rationality should be re-evaluated or reformed. Although the concept of rationality during the European Enlightenment has a certain abstraction, its connotation is clear. Rationality is not only a cognitive model or cognitive ability modeled on scientific cognitive activities, but also a criterion for building social order and carrying out social activities, namely democracy, freedom, equality and fraternity. Compared with these contents of the European Enlightenment, it is obviously unrealistic and overrated to consider the new text Confucianism in the Late Qing Dynasty an important part of the Enlightenment of Modern Chinese History.

There were many similarities between the new text Confucianism In the late Qing Dynasty and the European Renaissance. Although the new text Confucianism in the

⁶Yi and Xi (1981).

⁷Zhu (1986).

⁸Dai (1980).

late Qing Dynasty did not completely impact religious theology and feudal ideology as the Renaissance movement did, and in some respects maintained the feudal social system and ethics, the Confucian classics firmly demonstrated that social history must move forward and change, calling for academic research to abandon emptiness, face reality, attack current malpractices and promote social progress, etc., which seemed to reproduce some of the practices of the Renaissance movement. The most important contribution of the Renaissance movement is to revive ancient Greek and Roman literature and art in the form of publicizing the national consciousness awakened by changes in reality. In criticizing the empty dogma of scholasticism and the dark reality of feudal society, it resolutely negates the empty dogma of religious theology, fully affirms the practical significance of life, and draws Europeans' eyes back from heaven to earth.

If the difference between the enlightenment movement and the renaissance movement lies in whether the rational principle is adhered to or implemented, or whether the thinking and evaluation of the real problems in life is raised to the rational level, Kang Youwei's interpretation and exertion of the new text Confucianism is not yet raised to the level of the renaissance at the rational level, but, like the French enlighteners, clearly raised the banner of rationality. The works that expressed Kang Youwei's rational spirit the most clearly is *Pandect of Practical Reasoning and Public Law*, which was Zhu Weizheng spoke highly of: the *Pandect of Practical Reasoning and Public Law* is short in length. After proofreading and collation, the whole draft is only fifteen thousand Chinese characters. However, it was an example of innovation in the academic history of the late Qing Dynasty from leading thought to writing form."⁹ From the point of view of the leading thought, the innovation of *Pandect of Practical Reasoning and Public Law* is to give a new explanation to the real problems of life with the rational principle as the core.

Zhu Weizheng pointed out in *Kang Youwei's Biography*: "Kang Youwei first became fascinated by western scientific classics, such as Wilhelm Herschel's *On Heaven* and Charles Lyell's *A Brief Interpretation of Geoscience*, especially the popular Chinese reading *Mathematics Enlightenment* by British missionary Alexander Wylie. As a result, he became fonder and fonder of Geometry. Before 1885, "he suffered intermittent headache at 28, lasting for more than half a year", which was attributed to his work in mathematics that he lost interest in. However, he regarded Euclid's geometric axiom system as 'human axiom', which has been confirmed by the existing manuscript of *Pandect of Practical Reasoning and Public Law*."¹⁰ It can be seen that the rational principle or spirit in the *Pandect of Practical Reasoning and Public Law* is based on the study of modern science such as astronomy, geography and mathematics.

⁹Zhu (1998).

¹⁰Zhu Weizheng. *Kang Youwei's Biography*. Editor-in-chief Liu Mengxi. *Chinese Modern Academic Classics · Volume Kang Youwei*, pp. 6–7.

The formation of rational principles on the basis of modern science is the basic yardstick for judging whether Kang Youwei's theory has modern enlightenment significance in China. The concept of rationality did not originate from the Enlightenment. Not only did Plato and Aristotle, the ancient Greek philosophers, have profound concepts of rationality and rich discussions thereon, but even medieval scholasticism also talked about rationality, for example, Thomas Aquinas, the representative of scholasticism, fully affirmed the position and role of rationality while discussing belief, and ancient Chinese philosophers also talked about rationality, such as Neo-Confucianism. However, the connotation of rational concept is different. Only rational concept based on modern science is the rationality publicized by enlighteners. Kang Youwei's real principles and axioms all have the meanings of rationality based on modern science. Therefore, the modern enlightenment movement in China started with Kang Youwei in a strict sense, and should not refer to Kang Youwei's representative figures of the new text Confucianism in the late Qing Dynasty as enlighteners in modern China in general.

The ultimate purpose of the above discussions is not to explain the history of the new text Confucianism in the present text, nor to discuss the emergence of Kang Youwei's rational principle, but to explain that the formation of Chinese sociology has both the source of Chinese learning and the rational basis. Furthermore, the pragmatic pursuit of practical change and opposition to rigid pursuit of the studies of the new text of Confucian have opened up ideological imprisonment for the formation of Chinese sociology and laid the groundwork and preparation for thinking, especially the academic spirit of the new text Confucianism to deal with reality and answer real social problems, as well as the theoretical viewpoint of affirming the development and change of social life and so on, which are consistent with the pursuit of sociology. Therefore, it can be said that the new text Confucianism is one of the sources of Chinese sociology.

4.2 Social Ideal of Reforming the Institution Relying on the Ancient

Kang Youwei's main works include *A Study of the 'New Text' Forgeries*, *Confucius as Reformer*, *Dong Zhongshu's Study on Spring and Autumn Annals* and *Datong Shu*, among which are the ideological principles and spiritual pursuit of Gongyang's *Commentary on Spring and Autumn Annals*. The main content of these works is that Confucius wrote the "Six Classics" for the sake of "reforming the institution relying on the ancients". Confucius was not the defender of feudal autocracy, but the master of reform, and Confucius spirit of reforming the institution should be inherited. These works use the doctrine of "Understand the Heaven, Earth and Man" and "What is heard, seen and known" of Gongyang, and discuss that history is a process of orderly evolution in accordance with the three development stages of "Beginning of Datong", "Development of Datong" and "Completion of Datong".

Liang Qichao commented on these thoughts of Kang Youwei: Institutional reform relying on the ancients, “not only Confucius, but also the scholars in the Zhou and Qin Dynasties did reform the institution relying on the ancients. For example, Laozi who relied on the Yellow Emperor, Mozi relied on the Emperor Yu, Xu Xing relied on Shennong. The ancestors of modern people said He Xiu studied Gong Yang. Liu Fenglu, Gong Zizhen, and Chen Lisheng all vowed to perform institutional reform, but what Kang Youwei said was different from them. According to Kang Youwei, a so-called reformer is a person committed to political revolution and social transformation; therefore, a reformer should “understand the calendars in the Xia, Shang and Zhou Dynasties”. The ‘three calendars’ were different in Xia, Shang, and Zhou Dynasties, because they were changed as time went by. It is also called “What is heard, seen and known”. For ‘what is heard, seen and known’, it includes Beginning of Datong, Development of Datong and Completion of Datong, which is a process of improvement. Kang Youwei’s claim for political reform” was originated from this.”¹¹ This clearly shows that Kang Youwei’s ideological theory is aimed at the political purpose of the reform, whose thought originates from the Chinese cultural tradition, not from the transplantation of western scholarship. Zhang Rulun made a more appropriate evaluation of this: “In fact, Kang Youwei is the first person in the history of modern Chinese thought who tried to interpret and elucidate Chinese traditional ideological resources creatively so as to adapt them to the needs of the new era.”¹²

Kang Youwei’s first important work after his shift from the studies of old text of Confucian classics to the studies of new text of Confucian classics was published in 1891, the seventeenth year of Emperor Guangxu. The reason for writing this book is that Kang Youwei discovered that the records of The Story of King Xian of Hejian and The Story of the King of Lugong in the History of the Han Dynasty are not the same as those in the Historical Records. The former talked about the old text Confucianism, but the latter did not mention. Kang Youwei believed that Sima Qian, born after King Xian of Hejian and King Lugong, would not have known about the two kings’ “opening walls” and “offering books”, nor could he not have recorded the matter in *Historical Records*. Therefore, Kang Youwei, on the basis of Historical Records, made a thorough study on the books written in Zhou, Qin and Han Dynasties, and concluded that the ancient classics were forged by Liu Xin in the late Western Han Dynasty. To expose Liu Xin’s false theory and interpret what Confucius actually is, Kang Youwei wrote this book.

Liang Qichao summed up the main points of A Study of the ‘New Text’ Forgeries: First, in the Western Han Confucian classics, there were no old texts, and all ancient texts were falsely made by Liu Xin; Second, the burning of books and burying of scholars during the Qin Dynasty posed no threats to the Confucian six classics; the books passed down by the doctors of new text Confucianism without any missing were written by Confucius; 3. The Chinese characters used at the age of Confucius are seal characters popular between the Qin and Han Dynasties, that is, the ‘text’

¹¹Liang (1996).

¹²Zhang (2001).

theory, and there is no such catalog as the present; Fourth, Liu Yuyue concealed its falsification. Therefore, during the proofreading in secrecy, all the ancient books were mixed and disorderly; 5. Liu Wei's reason for doing so was to give support to Wang Mang in overthrowing the Han Dynasty, and he first tried to confuse Confucius' words."¹³

A Study of the 'New Text' Forgeries marks a new stage in the development of the new text Confucianism in the late Qing Dynasty and plays a very important role in the emancipation of China's mind, as Liang Qichao said. A hurricane has sprung up in China's ideological circles. Generally speaking, the theoretical significance and practical significance of A Study of the 'New Text' Forgeries are as follows:

First of all, A Study of the 'New Text' Forgeries successfully lifted the banner of skepticism in Chinese ideological circles. It should be said that not only revolution, but also improvement comes from doubt. Without doubt, there would be no criticism and negation, and it would be impossible to put forward the problems and objectives of development and innovation in practice. Kang Youwei negated the authenticity and authority of the studies of old text of Confucian classics with sufficient evidence. If the literature which has been regarded as the classics of Confucianism for thousands of years can be counterfeited, suspected and negated, what other existing concepts and existing order cannot be questioned and negated?

Secondly, A Study of the 'New Text' Forgeries severely attacked the orthodox school of Confucianism in the late Qing Dynasty, which not only subverted the study style of the studies of old text of Confucian classics and Confucianism which adhered to ancestor's precepts and talked about emptily, but also further promoted the academic pursuit of applying practically the studies of new text of Confucian classics and promoting social development and change. A large number of scholars studying the books written by ancient writers have changed the pedantic atmosphere of reading only saints' books and not asking about things outside. They were enthusiastic about the reality and actively criticize the current issues. Academia has entered a relatively active period, which has provided the ideological basis for the reform.

Thirdly, on the basis of doubting tradition and negating orthodoxy, A Study of the 'New Text' Forgeries presupposes the task of changing reality. Because the orthodox Confucianism regulating the family, governing the country and making the world peaceful is based on untruthfulness, with which the political order and social system formed with it on the ideological or theoretical basis should also be questioned, and the disadvantages of its conformity and restriction on evolution should also be changed. And this further task was put forward by Kang Youwei in Study of the Reforms of Confucius.

There is a close relationship between Study of the Reforms of Confucius and A Study of the 'New Text' Forgeries. If we say that A Study of the 'New Text' Forgeries mainly breaks through dogma and pursues ideological emancipation, Study of the Reforms of Confucius mainly advocates institutional reform and social evolution. Although both works are mainly about literature research, Study of the Reforms of Confucius is much more idealistic, realistic and participatory in practice than A Study

¹³Liang (2004).

of the 'New Text' Forgeries. From the perspective of sociology, A Study of the 'New Text' Forgeries can be regarded as Kang Youwei's work on historical sociology, which is of great academic value to the study of the origin of Chinese sociology.

Study of the Reforms of Confucius was compiled and published with the assistance of Kang Youwei's disciples Chen Qianqiu and Liang Qichao. It lasted eight years from 1891 to 1898. Its main contents include 21 volumes and 340,000 Chinese characters. To sum up, Study of the Reforms of Confucius can be summed up as how the pre-Qin philosophers to reform the institution relying on the ancients and create schools. To sum up, Study of the Reforms of Confucius can be summed up as how the pre-Qin philosophers to reform the institution relying on the ancients and create schools; How to criticize each other between the pre-Qin philosophers in institutional reform relying on the ancients. Kang Youwei first declared Confucius as the world's founder of the creation of schools and institutional reform, saying: "The Heaven was worried about how hard it is for people to live, and assigned the Emperor of the North to save them from hell as the sage king, the leader of the people, the protector of the people and the master of the earth. Born in troubled times, the law of the world was formulated at the beginning of Datong to keep the world in order; it means three periods were divided due to the country of generation, and important is attached to the great unity of the world regardless of the size and distance. Therefore, Yuan is founded to unify the world with Heaven as benevolence, Qi to teach all things and non-benevolence for governance. Ghosts, gods, mountains and rivers, noblemen with a knighthood and people with a high official and ordinary people, pests, grass and trees are unified for education, while people are loved first and the rules for the brave to fight are eliminated to write the *Spring and Autumn Annals* to implement the system of benevolence for the new king."¹⁴ It can be seen that Kang Youwei used mysterious techniques to treat Confucius as the hierarch commanded by heaven, unified all things, defining education legislation, reforming the institution and eliminating the chaos.

Kang Youwei thought: "China is known as an ancient country, civilization is the first to carry on, but there are no books before the six classics. Before Xia, Shang and Zhou Dynasties and the Republic of China, there were no books about the civilization that was recorded in detail until Qin and Han Dynasties."¹⁵ Therefore, before the Qin and Han Dynasties, there was no detailed record of Chinese history. In the Spring and Autumn Period, hundreds of schools of thought began to innovate education and reform the institution relying on the ancients, Mozi relied on Emperor Yu of Xia Dynasty, Laozi on Yellow Emperor, Xu Xing on Shennong, and Confucius on Emperors Yao, Shun and Wen. Confucius made the greatest achievements in reforming the institution relying on the ancients. He founded Confucianism and compiled The Book of Songs, The Book of History, The Book of Right, The Book of Music, The Book of Changes and The Spring and Autumn Annals, which established

¹⁴Kang Youwei. *Study of the Reforms of Confucius*. Editor-in-chief Liu Mengxi. *Chinese Modern Academic Classics · Volume Kang Youwei*, p. 341.

¹⁵Kang Youwei. *Study of the Reforms of Confucius*. Editor-in-chief Liu Mengxi. *Chinese Modern Academic Classics · Volume Kang Youwei*, p. 343.

Confucian classics for reforming the institution relying on the ancients. Confucius therefore considered himself the king of institutional reform.

Kang Youwei analyzed the reasons why the scholars founded schools and reformed the institution relying on the ancients. In his view, it is the inevitable result of social evolution for the scholars to create schools, and he said: "Everything become delicate from rough, superior from inferiority, and smart from dumbness. After stone and soil are accumulated, grass and green trees could grow up; as pests grow, the poultry and animals could live on them; man is the soul of everything, and he could have his offsprings if he survives. Flood is formed naturally, but man is born thereafter. Therefore, people on the earth were initially inspired by King Yu in Xia Dynasty. As the population increased and the knowledge was accumulated, the principles of things were formulated after two thousand years. Thus, talents with profound knowledge could stand out one by one. Owing to different natural qualities and experiences, they put forward their views and gathered the people to reform the social institution and think how to change the world. As their natural quality is like Yin and Yang, their views could not cover every details, which only express their own meanings, just like ear, eye, nose and mouth that cannot communicate with each other. Therefore, they worked hard independently, studied the profound ideas, did not hesitate to do what they want to do, and thought how to govern the world by setting up their schools. The schools outside China are also the same."¹⁶ It is obvious that Kang Youwei used the viewpoint of social evolutionism to explain the reasons of the pre-Qin scholars' creation of schools.

The content of creation of schools and institutional reform of scholars is rich and Kang Youwei inspected the creation of schools and institutional reform of Mozi, Guanzi, Yanzi, Jizi, Yangzi, Huizi and Hanfeizi. As far as the content of institutional reform is concerned, it involves the social communication behavior and social life system, such as travel dress, communication etiquette, marriage and funeral, law and criminal law, rural system, people-friendly government and so on. It is really a vigorous and multi-oriented reconstruction of social life. As mentioned above, these pluralistic institutional reforms are premised on the establishment of pluralistic sects, which is caused by the differences in social development. With the population reproduction, endlessly emerging outstanding talents, different conditions and opportunities, and different thinking modes, just as people's five senses having their positions, even different sects were founded by the scholars, proposing mutually exclusive reform ideas.

Although the scholars' creation of sects and institutional reform has their realistic basis, they still have to search for evidence from the ancients. Kang Youwei attributed the reason why the scholars founded sects and reformed the institution relying on the ancients to a traditional habit or a social and psychological tendency, and he said, "It is human nature to praise what happened in the ancient times and criticize that the present times, despise what is advanced and keep away from those noble. What is heard and seen will often be ignored, while what is not heard and seen will be

¹⁶Kang Youwei. *Study of the Reforms of Confucius*. Editor-in-chief Liu Mengxi. *Chinese Modern Academic Classics · Volume Kang Youwei*, p. 350.

given high respect; it is human nature, too... It is said that nothing is comparable to what happened in the ancient times, and therefore, most of the scholars discussed about what was done by the Yellow Emperor and showed great respect for him. This is a custom at that time. At the late Zhou Dynasty, the scholars revived the education, especially showing great respect for allegory.”¹⁷ This means that Kang Youwei believed that the reason for the creation of sects and institutional reform was not the preaching of the ancients, but because of the prevalent mentality of the ancients, scholars had to use this mentality to achieve the goal of the reform.

Kang Youwei's psychological analysis of Chinese advocating the ancients' thoughts is similar to Weber's analysis of traditional action patterns and traditional authority types. The essence of traditional action and traditional authority is to put its basis in the past, rather than to give inferences and evaluations from rational logic and value principles. This conservative tradition, as a psychological tendency, generally exists in the traditional society with a low degree of rationalization. Since tradition cannot be changed in a short time, it can only be used when eager to carry out reform. Kang Youwei not only revealed that the pre-Qin scholars used the Chinese ancient mentality of advocating the ancients' thoughts to adhere to the progressive ideals of creation of sects and institutional reform, but also followed the example of the pre-Qin scholars, especially Confucius, to actively carry out the institutional reform. This shows that Kang Youwei had a profound understanding of the strong inertia of traditional habits and has made very wise use of this irresistible inertia.

Kang Youwei explored the creation of sects and institutional system, aiming at demonstrating the inevitability of Confucius' creation of sects and institutional system. According to Kang Youwei, Confucius was the greatest sage in the pre-Qin Dynasty and the highest religious master. All the scholars reformed the institution relying on the ancients, and therefore, Confucius could do his best. Kang Youwei pointed out: “None of the leaders of sects will not perform institutional reform and formulate rules and regulations, so will the scholars. The righteousness and institution in China all come into being based on Confucius. His disciples passed down that they were taught by him and put it into practice and changed the old customs, such as dressing, three years of mourning, fetching the bride, “nine squares” system, school and election, whichever is the most important.”¹⁸ Kang Youwei discussed the institutional reforms of Confucius in more than ten aspects such as costumes, fetching the bride, heir inheritance, funeral, unification, timing, “nine squares” system, election, punishment, determination of surname and rituals and music. The discussions on these reforms on social life and social interaction behaviors not only further reflect the sociological connotation of Kang Youwei's theory, but also show that the academic activities of ancient Chinese thinkers such as Confucius are closely related to sociological research.

¹⁷Kang Youwei. *Study of the Reforms of Confucius*. Editor-in-chief Liu Mengxi. *Chinese Modern Academic Classics · Volume Kang Youwei*, p. 389.

¹⁸Kang Youwei. *Study of the Reforms of Confucius*. Editor-in-chief Liu Mengxi. *Chinese Modern Academic Classics · Volume Kang Youwei*, pp. 537–538.

In order to further highlight the great achievements of Confucius' creation of reform and institutional reform, Kang Youwei also discussed that the six classics were produced by the institutional reform of the Confucius. Kang Youwei believed that before the Han Dynasty, no one in the pre-Qin Dynasty did not recognize the Six Classics written by Confucius. However, at the end of the Western Han Dynasty, Liu Wei supported Wang Mang's usurping the throne and changed the five classics of The Book of Songs, The Book of History, The Book of Rites, The Book of Music and The Book of Changes to Zhou Gong's works, and thus lowered the status of Confucius. He said: It was said after Liu Xin created pseudo ancient classics that The Book of Songs, The Book of History, The Book of Rites, The Book of Music and The Book of Changes are old classics of the former emperor Zhou Gong, and the Spring and Autumn Annals is a book of announcements and orders. He wants to take the position of Confucius as a saint and change his holy thoughts. Therefore, it is also easy to shift from Confucius to Zhou Gong. There is no such a thing before the Han Dynasty. Before the Han Dynasty, it was known to all that Confucius was the master to reform the institution, and it is known that Confucius is the holy king of the gods.... It is known that Confucius is the leader of a sect, the 'Six Classics' were written by him, and he made contributions to the peace. All those who are brave keep his great merits in mind."¹⁹

With regard to the reasons for Confucius to reform the institution relying on the ancients, Kang Youwei made full discussion. Just like the institutional reform by the scholars relying on the ancients, Confucius can only get people's convinced relying the ancients, and the purpose of Confucius' institutional reform relying on the ancients is to "keep the world in good order and find out the universal law suitable for the world."²⁰ Kang Youwei said, "Confucius was under the command of heaven to reform the system in chaos and unified the world, and thought that the emperor should made decisions on governing the state based on the actual situation. The meaning of the institutional reform relying on the ancients is clearly reflected here, with no doubt."²¹ That is to say, the purpose of Confucius' institutional reform relying on the ancients is higher than that of other scholars. That is, Confucius did not propose reforms only on certain dogmas of social behaviors, customs, and ethics, but promoted social evolution by teaching people with sublime words with deep meaning achieve the purpose of "What is heard, seen and known" and "Understand the world".

In the Spring and Autumn Period, the institutional reform relying on the ancients was ended with the insistence on their own views, and they argued with each other, leading to a situation in which hundreds of schools contended. In the end, Confucianism, Taoism, and Mohism were the top three. However, the three continued to argue

¹⁹Kang Youwei. *Study of the Reforms of Confucius*. Editor-in-chief Liu Mengxi. *Chinese Modern Academic Classics · Volume Kang Youwei*, pp. 567–568.

²⁰Dong Zhongshu. *Fan Lu Fu Rui*. Editor-in-chief Liu Mengxi. *Chinese Modern Academic Classics · Volume Kang Youwei*, p. 593.

²¹Kang Youwei. *Study of the Reforms of Confucius*. Editor-in-chief Liu Mengxi. *Chinese Modern Academic Classics · Volume Kang Youwei*, p. 593.

with each other. In the end, Confucianism won the respect due to its rich in teachings, complete and feasible institution, consistence with reality, compliance with human affairs and ethics, pragmatism, etc. In this way, Kang Youwei attributed the history of China since the pre-Qin to a history of creation of sects and institutional reform, dressed Confucius as the greatest reformer, and concluded that only reform can flourish, and only to establish an institution that suits the reality and national conditions and promotes the development can win. These contents are discussed in more depth in *Dong Zhongshu's Study on Spring and Autumn Annals*.

Dong Zhongshu's Study on Spring and Autumn Annals is also a work compiled by Kang Youwei under the cooperation of students, whose content is through the interpretation of the *Luxuriant Dew of the Spring and Autumn Annals* by Dong Zhongshu, a great scholar in the Han Dynasty, further expounding Confucius' institutional reform relying on the ancients and his proposal of social progress and development. Kang Youwei first highly praised Dong Zhongshu's inheritance and interpretation of Confucius' theory. In his view, Confucius' *The Spring and Autumn Annals* is rich in content and later people's comments and comments thereon were innumerable. Therefore, the deep meaning in the *Spring and Autumn Annals* is difficult to understand. Fortunately, Dong Zhongshu could give an exact interpretation to it so that Confucianism could flourish. Kang Youwei said, "I derive the views in the new text Confucianism from Dong Zhongshu's studies and discover that there are no difference and derive the views in the books written during the Zhou and Qin Dynasties from Dong Zhongshu's views and discover that there are no difference. If he explores the originality of Heaven, distinguishes Yin and Yang, identifies the beginning and end of human and creatures, derives the sources of the sages' works, popularizes the disciplines, understand humanity and destiny, adheres to benevolence and friendship, keeps the world in order, and implements the fundamental law and specific measures."²²

Why is Dong Zhongshu so versed in Confucianism and known as Confucian? Kang Youwei believed that the reason lies in: "Because Dong Zhongshu studied Gongyang, then understood *The Spring and Autumn Annals* by studying Gongyang, and understood the six classics by studying *The Spring and Autumn Annals*, to understand the essence of Confucianism."²³ The fundamentals of Confucian classics are attributed to *Gongyang*, which is the root cause of Kang Youwei's advocacy of Dong Zhongshu. Dong Zhongshu pioneered the new text Confucianism by attributing the Six Classics to *The Commentary of Gongyang*, promoting the active tradition of pragmatism of Confucianism, while this tradition is an ideological weapon for Kang Youwei to awaken the people and promote the reform.

More importantly, *The Commentary of Gongyang* contains the theory of the Three Worlds and the Three Unifications, expressing the ideas of historical evolution and social development. "Xia, Shang and Zhou Dynasties are what Confucius studied, and

²²Kang Youwei. *Dong Zhongshu's Study on Spring and Autumn Annals*. Editor-in-chief Liu Mengxi. *Chinese Modern Academic Classics · Volume Kang Youwei*, p. 109.

²³Kang Youwei. *Dong Zhongshu's Study on Spring and Autumn Annals*. Editor-in-chief Liu Mengxi. *Chinese Modern Academic Classics · Volume Kang Youwei*, p. 109.

could be made clear relying on *The Spring and Autumn Annals*. “What is told is the beginning of Datong, what is heard the development of Datong and what is seen the completion of Datong. At the beginning of Datong, the education is unknown. During the development of Datong, education comes into being, which is called “well-off”. At the completion of Datong, great unity is achieved with complete education provided. General meaning represents well-off while sublime words mean peace. To study Confucianism, it should be divided into two parts, which is the first general meaning of the *Spring and Autumn Annals*. Since the disappearance of falsified *Zuo Zhuan*, *Gongyang* and *Spring and Autumn Annals*, the law of Confucianism was gone.²⁴ As discussed by Liang Qichao, three periods are used to stress the social development and changes as time goes by; only the society develops with time is accepted could Kang Youwei's reform have ideological premise or theoretical basis.

Because the *Luxuriant Dew of the Spring and Autumn Annals* is an interpretation of *The Commentary of Gongyang*, and *The Commentary of Gongyang* is characterized by focusing on reality and pragmatism, the *Luxuriant Dew of the Spring and Autumn Annals* inevitably discusses a large number of social realities. As far as the paragraphs quoted by Kang Youwei are concerned, the content is like the Study of the Reforms of Confucius, which covers all aspects of social life, such as husband and wife, interpersonal communication, moral education, school education, emperors and subjects and fathers and sons, benevolence and justice, customs, etc. Among them, the discussion about monarch gathering is very close to the view of modern sociology.

Dong Zhongshu said, “The biggest meaning of the title of the monarch was investigated in depth, among which there were also five: Beginning, source, power, gentle, and unity. All these five subjects are called monarch. The monarch means beginning, source, power, gentle and unity. Therefore, the monarch's thoughts are not compared to the beginning, and if the position of monarch changes, the foundation will be lost; If an action loses its foundation, it will be groundless; If an action is groundless, it cannot prove the beginning; If it can't be true to the source, it means give up; Giving up, education cannot be performed. The use of power in change will lose its propriety; if such propriety is lost, the way to govern the state will not be proper and the virtue will not be good; if the way to govern the country is not proper and the virtues are not good, the people will not be emotionally close, unified and stable. If the people are not emotionally close and stable, they will keep away from each other; if the people keep away from each other, it will be difficult to keep the monarch safe.”²⁵

Dong Zhongshu's discussion of these ways to be a monarch called gregariousness by Kang Youwei. Kang Youwei said, “A king should do what his people want to do. A monarch should not leave his people. A person who can unite the people is qualified for a king or monarch! That is what Confucius generally meant. If a person wants to

²⁴Kang Youwei. *Dong Zhongshu's Study on Spring and Autumn Annals*. Editor-in-chief Liu Mengxi. *Chinese Modern Academic Classics · Volume Kang Youwei*, p. 137.

²⁵Dong Zhongshu. *Luxuriant Dew of the Spring and Autumn Annals*. Editor-in-chief Liu Mengxi. *Chinese Modern Academic Classics · Volume Kang Youwei*, pp. 277–278.

live alone, he is only ‘an individual’. It is the law of nature, which is not imposed, can be used as a metaphor.”²⁶ Dong Zhongshu regarded gregariousness as the ability of a monarch to keep the source and then give full play to it. It is an essential means and a necessary effect that must be achieved as a monarch. Otherwise, there is neither society nor monarch. Kang Youwei regarded the unification as the essence as a monarch. If the monarch has no ability to unite, he is just a sole ruler. “A monarch should not leave his people” and is a name given by the heaven.

Here, we are faced with the question of how to view the relationship between Chinese sociology and Western sociology. From Kang Youwei’s acceptance and interpretation of Dong Zhongshu’s “A monarch should unify his people” view, Kang Youwei’s view of unification is the continuation and development of the sociological theory in Chinese academic tradition. Or, instead of accepting the influence of Western sociology, China also has its own sociology with interpersonal relationships and social activities as the subject, whose sociology is essentially consistent with Western sociological research objects. However, from the relationship between Kang Youwei and Yan Fu, *Dong Zhongshu’s Study on Spring and Autumn Annals* was published in 1898, while Yan Fu translated it into *Evolution and Ethics* in 1895. The translation was sent to Liang Qichao in the same year. Kang Youwei saw Yan Fu’s translation at the Liang Qichao’s. Kang Youwei’s above-mentioned sociological views are consistent with Yan Fu’s thoughts on unification in the *Evolution and Ethics*.

In *Evolution and Ethics*, Yan Fu made a clear exposition on the idea of unification. He said, “A person living alone joins a group for safety and benefit, which is the same as an animal. It wasn’t originally a conscious social relationship. After gaining the safety and mutual benefit from the group, the laws of natural evolution will ensure that those who live in groups survive and those who do not die out; Those good at living in groups will survive, while those who are not good at the same will be eliminated. Who is good at living in groups? The one who is good at communication.”²⁷ It can be seen that Yan Fu discussed the inevitability of gregariousness from the perspective of evolution, and regarded gregariousness as the fundamental factor for human survival. Kang Youwei explained the gregarious problem from the origin of the monarch. Although the relationship between the king and the subjects is discussed, it seems to be more specific than Yan Fu. However, in essence, it is necessary to discuss the need for individuals to form social relations and maintain social integration. Therefore, the two are essentially the same.

4.3 Value Pursuit and Ideal Sociology

Many scholars have noticed in *Study of the Reforms of Confucius* and *Dong Zhongshu’s Study of Spring and Autumn Annals* that Kang Youwei not only attempted to

²⁶Kang Youwei. *Dong Zhongshu’s Study on Spring and Autumn Annals*. Editor-in-chief Liu Mengxi. *Chinese Modern Academic Classics · Volume Kang Youwei*, p. 278.

²⁷Yan (1981).

prove the necessity of reforms with the help of ancient saints, but also attributed some advanced systems in modern Western countries to Confucius. For example, Kang Youwei described that the Western House system was created by Confucius, argued that the election system was also invented by Confucius, and said that Confucius was also described as an advocate of democracy and civil rights. These arguments are undoubtedly too far-fetched, but it shows that Kang Youwei's fundamental purpose in discussing Confucius' reform is not to talk about the ancients in a general manner, but to discuss about the present affairs. It is also found that Kang Youwei regarded such an ancient-supported reform as a universal historical phenomenon, which is also of profound significance. If the content of pre-Qin culture that has been regarded as the source of Chinese national culture mainly centers on ancient-supported reform, it means that reform and innovation are the evolutionary source of Chinese civilization. Moreover, the ancient philosophers actively participated in the sector formation and institutional reform, indicating that reform and innovation is a common phenomenon in the history of the Chinese nation. The claim for institutional reform and innovation should not be abandoned because of the opposition by a certain person at a certain time. Undoubtedly, Kang Youwei used these arguments to support his reforms, showing strong ideality and value orientation.

Generally speaking, ideality and value orientation cannot fall into the category of sociology, but the author still believes that Kang Youwei's *Study of the Reforms of Confucius* and *Dong Zhongshu's Study of Spring and Autumn Annals* have a lot of discussions on historical sociology. *Study of the Reforms of Confucius* and *Dong Zhongshu's Study of Spring and Autumn Annals* by Kang Youwei, *Madness and Civilization* (French: *Folie et Dérailson*) and *The Archaeology of Knowledge* (French: *L'Archéologie du savoir*) by Michel Foucault, and *The Structural Transformation of the Public Sphere* (German: *Strukturwandel der Öffentlichkeit*) by Habermas are much alike in terms of content, way of discussion and theoretical pursuit. Foucault examines the history of European insanity and the historical changes in the type of human knowledge, aiming to reveal the drawbacks of the real society as well as the ways and means of solving the problems through the investigation of history rather than to trace and examine the past. Habermas discussed the historical evolution of public sphere from ancient Greece to modern times with the aim to examine the rationality of the structure of the contemporary public sphere, requiring unreasonable changes to the structure of the public sphere and even to the entire social structure. Obviously, if the writings by Foucault and Habermas falls into the category of historical sociology, then the *Study of the Reforms of Confucius* and *Dong Zhongshu's Study of Spring and Autumn Annals* similar in terms of content and style can also be regarded as works of historical sociology.

In a certain sense, *Study of the Reforms of Confucius* and *Dong Zhongshu's Study of Spring and Autumn Annals* are more sociological than the works by Foucault and Habermas. Obviously, the pre-Qin scholars mainly discussed the reality of life, which not only reflects the living conditions, customs, modes of communication, class relations, economic system, cultural system and moral ethics, etc., and also reflects the profound influence of pre-Qin lifestyle, cultural traditions and religious beliefs on contemporary Chinese social life, so that people can understand the profound cultural

heritage of the Chinese nation in the long history. Moreover, not only abstract dogmas, but also a large number of empirical phenomena can be found in Kang Youwei's discussion of the pre-Qin documents, offering readers a feeling of experiencing social reality in the long history.

Regrettably, no one has yet regarded Kang Youwei's *Study of the Reforms of Confucius* and *Dong Zhongshu's Study of Spring and Autumn Annals* as sociological works. It is generally believed that Kang Youwei talked about what happened in modern times with that in ancient times, attempting to help China out of danger by means of social reform mainly including social ideal of institutional reform to save China. For this reason, although several works on Chinese sociology covered Kang Youwei's social ideal of ancient-supported reform, they treated it as the ideological background related to sociological research instead of the important part sociological thoughts. Again we have encountered a universal sociological prejudice derived from Western sociology that sociology gives a description and interpretation of social facts rather than the value judgment of social phenomena; therefore, sociology should reflect and depict the reality rather than evaluate the ideals and beliefs. This is a deep-rooted sociological prejudice. However, when expressing this principle, sociologists often fall into the predicament of self-denial.

Weber's Value-Free Principle proposed such a principle of sociology that excludes value evaluation after judgments based on facts and ideals and beliefs based on objective description. In fact, sociology has never completely ruled out the Value Principle. Weber expressed clear Value Principle in his sociological writings, and positivists such as Comte and Durkheim have never really given up their own Value Principles. If the Value Principle is one of the principles of sociology, the social ideal of criticizing reality and constructing the future should be an indispensable part of sociology.

It is well known to the sociological community that Weber has made an abundant account of the Value-Free Principle. However, few people have mentioned that Weber's Value-Free Principle not only contains contradictions that are difficult to rule out, but also is an ideal Value Principle. Weber once pointed out, "As we all know, like any other science on human's cultural customs and important cultural events (political history may be an exception), this science is developed with the consideration of human reality. Its most immediate and often the only purpose is to make value judgments on the national economic policies and measures."²⁸ It can be seen that Weber acknowledges that in humanities and social science research, the Value Principle or value evaluation cannot be ruled out because the Value Principle is inseparable from people's investigation of reality and the requirements for researchers and research process.

Weber did not conclude that sociology should affirm value judgments because of the inseparability of value judgments from humanities and social sciences. The fundamental reason is that he believed sociology is a positivistic discipline. He said, "A positivistic discipline cannot tell anyone what to do, but what he can do— and in specific conditions—what he wants to do."²⁹ As a positivistic discipline cannot

²⁸Max Weber. *Social Science Methodology*, p. 148.

²⁹Max Weber. *Social Science Methodology*, p. 151.

make observations and reflections without empirical facts, sociology must perform analysis and judgments based on specific empirical facts. "However, the scientific discussion of value judgments can not only help us understand and empathetically analyze the desired goals and the ideals, but also help us make critical "judgment". Of course, such critical judgment can only be dialectical, that is, it is a value judgment on the given history and a logical judgment of the conceptual forms, which verifies the ideals based on the assumption of inherent consistency of the desired goals."³⁰ It is shown that Weber's point of view is not complicated. Value judgment is an inference at the conceptual and logical level. It is merely an expectation which cannot be used for empirical scientific research.

Actually, these views have been denied by Weber in his discussion of sociological research objects and research methodology. Weber believed that social action is the object of sociological research, and social action is marked by the connection of actors in subjective will. As to the subjective will, as purposeful orientation, some are utilitarian and idealistic, and some traditional and emotional, whose essence is a kind of value orientation. Although value is expressed in diverse ways, it is essentially a kind of subjective desire and a kind of orientation that actors impose on the objective things, absolutely not a value-free objective phenomenon. Therefore, Weber believed that for the sociology with social action with subjective desire as the research object, its research method should not be the scientific cognitive methods, but should be the comprehension method. Weber convincingly stated that:

Every piece of artifact, such as a machine, can only be interpreted and understood by the meaning given (to be given) by the actor who makes and uses it; if it is not traced back to this meaning, it is still incomprehensible. Therefore, what is intelligible is the relevance of human behavior and meaning, either as a "means" or as a "purpose" of an actor's act or intended act. This kind of thing can ONLY be understood in these categories.³¹

As Weber argues, meaningless things are incomprehensible. Understanding meaningful things inevitably involves aim orientation or value pursuit. Moreover, understanding is interactive communication, exchange, and consensus. It is basically realized in the forms of sympathy, experience, and place oneself in others' position. This means that the process of understanding cannot be separated from the exchange and communication of values between the person to understand and the person to be understood. Thus it is inextricably linked to the Value Principle by understanding the sociology that performs research activities. For this reason, Weber expressed plenty of value pursuits when discussing about four social action modes,³² three types of authority³³ and Protestant ethics and modernization of capitalism. Although some are implicit, they can be easily made clear after a little bit of analysis. Generally speaking, in Weber's sociological theory, although he had repeatedly stated that sociology should adhere to the Value-Free Principle, he has never given up the

³⁰Max Weber. *Social Science Methodology*, p. 151.

³¹Max Weber. *Economy and Society*, p. 42.

³²Max Weber. *Economy and Society*, pp. 56–57.

³³Max Weber. *Economy and Society*, p. 241.

pursuit of rationalization of social life, which is one of the most important value ideals or value principles in modern sociology.

As for how to treat value principle or value ideal, Comte, who is called a strict positivist, seems to be more open-minded. Unlike Weber, Comte did not degrade sociology to the empirical research that opposes logical thinking. Instead, he repeatedly emphasized that simple empiricism should be avoided in sociological research. Comte pointed out, "Since it is consistently admitted that imagination that has always been considered to be subordinate to observation is the primary basic condition for the sound scientific speculation, a dumb interpretation often leads to abuse of the great logical principle, which turns the realistic science into disorderly accumulation of fragmented facts, providing only a local precision. Therefore, it is important to understand this: finally, the true empirical spirit and mysticism are far different from empiricism."³⁴

In Comte's view, it is impossible for sociology to study the inevitable connection between empirical phenomena merely based on empirical observation. "Real science is much more than observation, and always tends to avoid immediate exploration instead of reasonable prediction, where the latter becomes the main feature of positivistic spirit from all aspects".³⁵ Undoubtedly, prediction as the main feature of positivistic spirit determines that positivistic sociology is impossible to be confined to immediate observation, which must resort to logical thinking to discuss the future based on reality and predict the unknown from known. Therefore, Comte never opposed the empirical sociology established by him to the philosophical speculation. On the contrary, he repeatedly emphasized that in positivistic sociology as a new philosophy is make deep thinking on the basis of logical speculation of empirical phenomenon, reveal the inevitable law and predict the development and change in the future.

Value pursuit is surely involved as we reflect on the reality and predict the future. Otherwise, either the complexity of empirical reality or the abstractness of logical inference will make the prediction blind and meaningless. In his sociological writings, Comte insisted on regarding social order and progress as two basic value pursuits which are considered as the core objectives in his analysis of reality and the inference of the future. The pursuit of order and progress imposes the mission of human spiritual revolution on sociology. Comte proudly announced:

The positivistic spirit can spontaneously and systematically sum up the two sound concepts order and progress; it is pointed out here that this basic feature is sufficient to clearly show the superb social effectiveness of all new philosophies. In this respect, the value of a new philosophy depends in particular on sufficient scientific facts. In other words, it keeps an accurate balance between principle and fact as much as possible, regardless of whether they are social phenomenon or not. Only a comprehensive reconstruction can end the major crisis of modern times. In the spiritual aspect

³⁴Comte. *On Positive Spirit*, pp. 11–12.

³⁵Comte. *On Positive Spirit*, p. 12.

(which should be given priority), such reconstruction is mainly aimed to develop a sociological theory that can properly interpret the entire human history.³⁶

Comte believed that, in terms of the human spiritual history, the research method of social sciences, and the organization of social life, the pursuit of order and progress of human society is a far-reaching social reconstruction by use of the research method taking into consideration logical principles and scientific facts. Social reconstruction is first and foremost the transcendence of ideals over reality is a process to change reality based on certain social ideals. In this regard, at the beginning of the development of sociology, Comte regarded the future-oriented social ideals transcending reality as the fundamental and indispensable part of sociological research. It is safe to say that it is the lofty ideal of rebuilding the society that encourages Comte's positive and calm dedication to the development of sociology as a new discipline.

One issue we also need to discuss here is the relationship between moral education and sociological research. Generally speaking, to deny the evaluation principle and ideality of sociological research is to negate the moral function of sociology. Because the role of morality lies in social evaluation, its essence is to regulate social life with certain behavioral rules. It is oriented to an ideal situation which is much different from real life. Therefore, morality is closely related with social ideals. Weber denied the sociology's role of moral evaluation based on this principle. He said, "Before any discussion, we should emphasize that we must distinguish moral order, that is, the concept about what kind of 'style' and 'should' should exist, from analytical structure. This analytical structure is an 'ideal' structure in a strictly logical sense. Here, it is about structural relationship, which is considered to be well motivated and is therefore 'objective and possible'. Moreover, it seems to be appropriate."³⁷

In Weber's view, the ideal structure he used to analyze the social action and type of authority, although ideal, is the generalization of the complicated social life, not social life itself, it is still objective. It should be differentiated from evaluative moral rules. Because "an ideal type is formed by one-sidedly highlighting one or more viewpoints, by synthesizing many pervasive, unconnected, more or less existing and occasionally non-existent individual phenomena. These phenomena are organized into the analytical structure based on the one-sidedly highlighted viewpoints. As far as the purity of the concept is concerned, it is impossible to find such a spiritual structure anywhere in the real world based on experience."³⁸

It should be said that Weber's maintaining the purity of ideality research is in itself an ideal which cannot be realized. Richard Rorty, an American philosopher once ridiculed the epistemology rejecting moral evaluation as trying to get itself out of the earth. That is to say, since human cognitive activities occur in a specific environment, these activities are unavoidably followed by the moral evaluation on the surroundings, because not only the human beings are the moral existence, but also the environment will develop moral relationships with the human beings unless the human beings live in space without traces of human presence.

³⁶Comte. *On Positive Spirit*, p. 43.

³⁷Max Weber. *Social Science Methodology*, p. 187.

³⁸Max Weber. *Social Science Methodology*, p. 186.

It seems not difficult to understand that cognitive activities cannot exclude moral evaluation, but why did Weber, who is good at logical thinking, make such a decisive judgment? This may be related to Weber's transfer of economic research method into sociology. Mises, an Austrian economist, once pointed out that economics is not empirical science but logic. According to Mises, many behavioral models designed in economics based on rational choice theory cannot be traced in life. However, it is logical indeed. It does not describe society but guide the society as an ideal model. Weber's classification of the act into four types, namely Instrumental Rationality, Value Rationality, Traditional Act, and Emotional Act, as well as his classification of authority into Traditional Authority, Charismatic Authority, and Legal Authority, are essentially the same as the economic model as Mises argued. None of them are purely objective existence, but a rational generalization that merely guides people's behavior or exists as a model of analytical hypothesis.

Weber refused to admit this and shifted to the one-sided principle of objectivity. He even said in a ridiculous way, "we need to distinguish the comparative analysis of the reality according to the type of ideas from the value judgment based on ideals, which is the basic responsibility of scientific self-control and the only way to avoid serious stupid mistakes. We re-emphasize that what we call the 'ideal type' has nothing to do with value judgment. Except for pure logic connections, it has nothing to do with the perfection of any kind." He even said, "There are ideals of brothels and religions; there exist both technically 'convenient' brothels in accordance with the professional rules of police and the ideal ones that happen to be the opposite to this situation."³⁹

Weber has clearly defined his type of ideal as a purely logical form. For example, a geometric square is no means a real square object like a building. In Weber's view, we can study a geometric square without moral sense in our mind. However, it will be different when we judge a square building full of the poor according to the principle that life should be happy. Weber's distinction is theoretically true, but because we are asking questions in the perspective of sociology, as Weber understood, sociological research cannot be separated from empirical facts, sociology cannot simply study the void—the ideal type which is not related to specific social facts; thus, Weber's distinction cannot hold water in the actual sociological research.

Therefore, it is impossible for sociological research based on empirical facts, no matter how abstract it is, to deal with the logic form that is pure and will not enable the researchers to make any value judgments or produce any moral senses. It often more or less involves or expresses researchers' judgment of value or morality. Here, we mentioned Comte's open-mindedness in sociological research. What Comte thought was not how to exclude value judgment and moral evaluation. What he made active efforts on is to effectively combine the moral evaluation of value with the scientific analysis of fact, because the basic task of sociological design itself contained moral sense and the ideal pursuit—order and progress as thought by Comte. Comte pointed out, "In the future, all the timely and systematic thinking will continuously promote the universal advantage of morality as much as possible,

³⁹Max Weber. *Social Science Methodology*, p. 194.

because moral views will inevitably become the scientific ties and logic regulators of all other empirical aspects. Such coordination, when developing the concepts of order and harmony closely related to human beings will offer elites deep moral education, and educate a large group of wise men. The latter will all participate more or less in the great enlightenment according to the corresponding system of universal education.”⁴⁰

Durkheim, the successor of Comte and the master of empirical sociology, also attached great importance to sociological research from the perspective of moral education. The founder of empirical sociology, which once described sociology as physics studying objective things never denied the role of moral education in the evolution from traditional society to modern society. Although Durkheim believed that with the improvement of social modernization, the role of moral education will be on the decline. The role of social integration will be mainly realized through the functional dependence formed on the basis of social differentiation. However, he still continually emphasized the reconstruction of individuals and society through moral education.

4.4 Rational Spirit and Positivism Principles

Value pursuit and moral evaluation are the basic contents that sociology cannot exclude. If this judgment is established, then not only many of the arguments of Kang Youwei in the *Study of the Reforms of Confucius* and Dong Zhongshu's *Study on Spring and Autumn Annals* can be regarded as the precious heritage of sociology, but also his *Datong Shu* should be regarded as an important document of sociology. In *Datong Shu*, Kang Youwei aimed at the ideal pursuit of seeking common ground and promoting social evolution, and adopted rational principles such as democracy, equality, freedom, and fraternity as social norms and moral standards, and through extensive investigation and analysis of empirical facts, expounded the rich sociological thoughts with the characteristics of constructivism, and these rich sociological literature only viewed as utopian social fantasy were long been sealed up because of the narrow sociological concept.

Zhu Weizhen believed that Kang Youwei's *Datong Shu* should be studied together with his *Pandect of Practical Reasoning and Public Law*, because the latter is the prototype of the former. Zhu Weizhen pointed out: “Kang Youwei's *Datong Shu* and its rudimentary *Pandect of Practical Reasoning and Public Law*, as the representative works of Kang Youwei's early social doctrine, were almost unknown in the academic circles of the late Qing Dynasty, because these two books were never published at that time. Owing to the propaganda by his students such as Liang Qichao, many people have known Kang Youwei's ambition in *Datong*.”⁴¹ There are two points worth

⁴⁰Max Weber. *Social Science Methodology*, p. 50.

⁴¹Zhu Weizheng. *Introduction—From <Pandect of Practical Reasoning and Public Law> to <Datong Shu>*. Kang Youwei. *Kang Youwei's Two Kinds of Datong Theories*, p. 1.

noting in this passage by Zhu Weiwei: First, the *Pandect of Practical Reasoning and Public Law* is the embryonic form of *Datong Shu*, which means that there is not only a close connection between the two works, but also the former contains the most basic principles and viewpoints of the latter; Second, these two works are representative works of Kang Youwei's social theory.

So far, no one in the domestic sociology circles has explicitly regarded the *Pandect of Practical Reasoning and Public Law* and *Datong Shu* as the representative works of Kang Youwei's social doctrine, and the historian Zhu Weizhen made this judgment, which is worthy of consideration by the sociological circles. These two works are called representative works of social doctrine and can be understood from two levels. On the one hand, the content of these two works is the study of social issues; on the other hand, these two works are written in sociology. The former is the judgment made on the research object, while the latter has the meaning of the subject attribution judgment. Zhu Weizhen may not make judgments in the sense of subject attribution, but it does not rule out this possibility. Because these two works have common or at least coincidence with the sociology in the general sense in terms of research field, premise, basic content, theoretical pursuit and methodological principles.

According to Kang Youwei in his *Biography*, he began collecting a large amount of Western academic literature at the age of 26 (1883) and became interested in geometry. At the age of 28, he used geometry to write *Human Justice* and the following year, wrote *Justice* based on geometry. According to Zhu Weizhen's research, the *Pandect of Practical Reasoning and Public Law* was completed on the basis of these two books, and the manuscript was not earlier than the early 1890s.

The basic content of the *Pandect of Practical Reasoning and Public Law* is divided into eleven chapters. The first is General overview, which discusses the universal laws that human beings abide by, including a total of four principles, and six public laws; The remaining ten cover: Couples, Parents and children, Teachers and students, Monarchs and Subjects, The elder and the young, Friends, Etiquette, Penalty, Teaching, and Governance. From the topics of these ten chapters, it is clear that the research content of the *Pandect of Practical Reasoning and Public Law* is the most basic social relationship or social life, and is the most common topic in the field of sociology.

It is difficult to determine when *Datong Shu* was written. Liang Qichao believed that *Datong Shu* was written between 1901 and 1902, when Kang Youwei was in exile in India. Zhu Weizhen believed that Liang Qichao's statement is not precise, because some of the examples cited in this book occurred in 1909; therefore, he believed that *Datong Shu* should be written in the first 10 years of the 1911 Revolution. The basic content of *Datong Shu* is divided into ten parts. The first part is "Suffering of people" to discuss six categories and 38 kinds of sufferings such as the suffering of life, the suffering of natural disasters, the suffering of humanity, the suffering of human governance, the suffering of human feelings, and the suffering of human pursuit; The remaining nine topics are: Eliminate the national boundaries to unify the world, eliminate the class boundaries to unify the Chinese nation, eliminate the race boundaries to unify human beings, eliminate the shape boundaries to main independence, elimination the family boundaries for citizens of Heaven, eliminate

the property boundaries to create public property, eliminate the chaos boundaries to make peace, eliminate the race boundaries to love the people, and eliminate the boundaries of suffering to make happiness. From the content point of view, the content of *Datong Shu* is much broader than the *Pandect of Practical Reasoning and Public Law*, where the latter mainly focuses on interpersonal relations, communication relations and behavioral norms, while the former covers country, class, race, gender, family, industry, administration, reward and punishment, ecology, happiness, etc., incorporating almost all aspects of social aspects, whose vision is as wide as a complete system of sociology.

In summary, the *Pandect of Practical Reasoning and Public Law* focuses on the micro level of individual behaviors, while the *Datong Shu* is developed on the macro level of the social structure; therefore, the contents of the two works are still different. If so, is it established for Zhu Weizhen to treat the *Pandect of Practical Reasoning and Public Law* as the prototype of *Datong Shu*? In my opinion, this will not only deny Zhu Weijun's judgment, but also will more clearly interpret that the former is prototype of the latter. Because it is certain that the former is the prototype of the latter, which is judged not only from the simple correspondence between the contents of the two works, but on its basic principles and basic points.

From the basic principle, the two works are common in the following four aspects:

First, the principle of rationalism is highlighted. The following five points can be summarized for rationalism: (1) emphasizing the universal applicability of scientific principles and laws and regulations; (2) affirming the objective validity of conceptual judgments and logical inferences; (3) recognizing the principle of utilitarianism and the rationality of social control; (4) believing in the initiative of the subject and the evolution of social development; (5) promoting the values of freedom, democracy, equality and fraternity. Using the principles of rationalism to measure the two works by Kang Youwei, it is discovered that the rationalist spirit or principles are very prominent.

As mentioned above, Kang Youwei began to write the book *Pandect of Practical Reasoning and Public Law* after obsessing with Euclidean geometry on the basis of extensive reading of Western literature, whose definition of propositions and inferences of viewpoints are very obvious geometrically, while geometry is a typical form of conceptual judgment, logical inference, and an accurate representation of scientific principles and theorems. Therefore, constructing theoretical viewpoints based on geometric principles and exposing viewpoints according to geometric forms is an extreme rationalist behavior, and Spinoza is such a strict rationalist. As commended by Zhu Weijun: "In his view, the mathematical axioms outlined by Euclid's *Elements of Geometry* embodies the highest law of nature, including human society, the so-called 'necessary reality' or 'eternal reality', while the customary law in the human society the so-called 'rules by people' is measured by geometric axioms; therefore, they have something in common and different, which are called 'two acceptable realities'."⁴²

⁴²Zhu Weizheng. *Introduction—From <Pandect of Practical Reasoning and Public Law> to <Datong Shu>*. Kang Youwei. *Kang Youwei's Two Kinds of Datong Theories*, pp. 2–3.

Although *Datong Shu* does not have the mechanical geometry of the *Pandect of Practical Reasoning and Public Law*, its rationalist spirit is also very obvious. Kang Youwei put forward the idea of “going to the nine realms to seek the common world” in *Datong Shu*. Although these have rich factual basis, no matter the statement of facts or the idea of “eliminating the boundaries to seek common ground” is provided on the basis of this rationality. Specifically, Kang Youwei’s arguments are based on the values established during the French Enlightenment, such as freedom, democracy, equality and fraternity. Moreover, in Kang Youwei’s exposition of reward the good and punish the evil, the principles of nature and the principles of human public law are constantly being reproduced.

Second, the principles of criticism are highlighted. In fact, adhering to the principle of reason must inevitably adhere to the principles of criticism, and the two are essentially identical. The scientific laws, logical principles, and value principles that rationalists admire are universal; although universality lies in individuality, it always transcends individual limitations, especially when rationalists overestimate the effectiveness of universality, the limitations of individual things become intolerable, rationalists must take advantage of the principle of universality to deny the particularity of individuality, which is theoretically reflected in the publicity of critical principles.

Criticism is the first and foremost to review and deny. Although the main task of the *Pandect of Practical Reasoning and Public Law* is to clarify the practical reasoning and public law, not the ugly criticism of the practical reasoning and public law, Kang Youwei immediately shifted to the discussion of public-private relations while affirming the practical reasoning and public law, believing that no one in the ancient and modern times is separated from the mutual interaction system.”⁴³ Therefore, while clarifying the practical reasoning and public law, he always criticized those behaviors that infringe on public interest from self-interest. Moreover, Kang Youwei’s fundamental intention of discussing practical reasoning and public law is to prepare for the theoretical principle of criticizing the injustice in reality.

The criticality in *Datong Shu* is hard-edged. Although Kang Youwei depicted the beautiful realm of human society over heaven in *Datong Shu*, each of his arguments is based on the ruthless disclosure of facts of human suffering and undesirable social system. Acts of god and man-made disasters, turmoil of war, intrigue, deceit, extortion, rap and rend, bullying, power struggle, class opposition, racial discrimination, preference for sons over daughters, family oppression, and other human suffering are all criticized by Kang Youwei.

Third, strong principle of construction. Not only does *Datong Shu* lead the human society to an ideal society of equality and harmony, it proposes improvement measures against many social malpractices, and shows strong principles of constructiveness, and the *Pandect of Practical Reasoning and Public Law* also presents the strong desire to guide and rebuild a society. Kang Youwei pointed out in Appendix II *International Law* of the *Pandect of Practical Reasoning and Public Law* that: “Public law is the most beneficial to humanity, which is true, and there must be order

⁴³Kang Youwei. *Kang Youwei’s Two Kinds of Datong Theories*, p. 7.

in doing things. If a person in power in a country knows the beauty of public law and intends to change the public law, the law currently used in his country is only at the end of the ratio, and at the beginning of the transition, it becomes the first of its kind; the public law is directly used when there is any change. Then there will be no sudden change or hazards.”⁴⁴ It can be seen that the practical reasoning and public law derived from geometric axioms have a formula-like derivation. Here, Kang Youwei's ambition for later reformation has been revealed.

Fourth, positive empirical principles. From the *Pandect of Practical Reasoning and Public Law* to *Datong Shu*, although both works have shown the ideal pursuit of the future, they have not concealed the empirical principle of consistent implementation, and Kang Youwei insisted on the positive empirical principle different from vulgar positivism. Although the *Pandect of Practical Reasoning and Public Law* is an outline work, which has only 15,000 Chinese characters,⁴⁵ Kang Youwei still cites some examples to demonstrate his own views. For example, when discussing marriage between men and women, Kang Youwei not only discussed the axiom and public law regarding the relationship between husband and wife, but also discussed the rise of divorce rate of French couples from 1890 to 1891, as well as the birth and death of the French population during the same period. Moreover, Kang Youwei also explicitly discussed the positivism principles, saying: “When there are few principles and no tests, they will not be recorded.”⁴⁶ “If there are proved facts, it is real reason after investigation. It is actually discussed. For example, a teacher taught how to teach students in the ancient times, and the students would become the one how they were hoped to be; what kind of laws formulated by a state will make its people become what are hoped to be. The results could be evaluated, listed and proved. This is the result of demonstration. However, this is what is afraid of today.”⁴⁷ Kang Youwei compared the positivism principles to the studying the phenomena of nature to acquire knowledge, not only emphasizing the observation and measurement of actual things, but also emphasizing the factual argument when discussing the viewpoint.

Kang Youwei also discussed the “single characteristic” of the positivism principles—relativity. He said, “To discuss the contribution made by the ancient and modern people, their era should be identified, followed by their places. If the public law and proportions are used the measure to discuss, then they should be discussed from two aspects including the righteousness and reason and the institution.”⁴⁸ That is to say, Kang Youwei clearly stated that it is necessary to clarify the facts and judge the right and wrong at a specific time and place, and to recognize the limitations of certain conditions, and the axioms and public laws cannot be used indiscriminately

⁴⁴Kang Youwei. *Kang Youwei's Two Kinds of Datong Theories*, p. 42.

⁴⁵Zhu Weizheng. Introduction—From <*Pandect of Practical Reasoning and Public Law*> to <*Datong Shu*>. Kang Youwei. *Kang Youwei's Two Kinds of Datong Theories*, p. 3.

⁴⁶Kang Youwei. *Kang Youwei's Two Kinds of Datong Theories*, p. 3.

⁴⁷Kang Youwei. *Kang Youwei's Two Kinds of Datong Theories*, p. 5.

⁴⁸Kang Youwei. *Kang Youwei's Two Kinds of Datong Theories*, p. 33.

from time and space. This is the relativity that Comte calls the only characteristic of positive philosophy or sociology.

Persistence in observing and thinking about the reality of life in specific time and space conditions means that it is a must to develop a theoretical perspective on the social level, because the reality of life in specific time and space conditions must exist in social relations; Comte believed that: “The positivist spirit has the greatest possible sociality without any difficulty. The positivist spirit believes that a pure person does not exist, but only human beings exist, because our entire development is attributed to society regardless of what kind of relationship.”⁴⁹ In *Datong Shu*, which has always been treated as a Utopian fantasy, it can be found that Kang Youwei’s rich investigations and expositions were all carried out in social relations. According to Durkheim’s principle, Kang Youwei discussed social facts instead of personal behaviors or inner psychology. Moreover, it is especially striking that many social facts are what Kang Youwei personally experienced. It is well-known that after the failure of the Reform Movement of 1898, Kang Youwei was forced to go abroad and traveled to Southeast Asia, Japan, India, North America, Central and Western Europe and North Africa, including more than 20 countries and regions for nearly 10 years, witnessing the development of economy, politics and culture as well as various customs in the East and West, and had rich perceptual knowledge and profound experience of the social living conditions and social behaviors in the countries around the world.

Although Kang Youwei’s investigation and analysis of social facts in *Datong Shu* are not as refined as the quantitative research of traditional empirical sociology, nor those rules and patterns are qualitatively studied, the positivism principles he demonstrated from social facts and based on actual existence are still very clear. As mentioned above, *Datong Shu* started from 38 kinds of sufferings in six categories in the human society, involving various aspects of social life and giving people a strong feeling of broad vision and current shortcomings. Kang Youwei has a strong generalization of these social facts. Compared with empirical sociology that advocates the local description of the event, he paid attention to revealing and criticizing the system contained in the social facts and depicting how the institutions in the fields bring disasters to the society and how to limit the evolution of society.

In short, Kang Youwei expressed a strong rational spirit and positivism principles in his observation and reflection on social life, and expressed a profound positive positivist pursuit in his exposition with a strong Chinese academic tradition. Comte has made a clear definition of the word “positive”, which means that its basic meaning is true, useful, affirmative, precise and organized, and the commonality of these basic meanings defined by Comte is positivity that is indeed the basic meaning of the word ‘positive’. Regrettably, more than a century and a half after Comte’s proposal to construct sociology with positivism principles, the enthusiasm of the positivism principles has gradually been annihilated, and some scholars holding empirical evidence have increasingly experienced it. The characteristics have been changed from hard

⁴⁹Comte. *On Positive Spirit*, pp. 52–53.

work and progress to a passive description of empirical phenomena, and the spirit of actively promoting the evolution of society has been inundated with suffocation.

4.5 Institutional Sociology of Demarcation and Seeking Common Ground

Institutional issue is at the heart of sociological research. This task was not proposed by sociologists until the rise of institutional economics. On the contrary, when economics has not put the system in a more important position to think about, the pioneers of sociology have clearly regarded institutional issues as the core issue of sociology to be raised. Comte constantly stated that the core issue of sociology is progress and order, and order is more important than progress, because only progress will make a certain order, and the meaning of progress will exist. Otherwise, progress is just a constant change, making human being only turbulent. The order pursued by Comte is considered to be an objective necessity. However, as the operating law and existential mode presented to society, order is defined by a series of rules and regulations. If there is no system, it is impossible to have order. Therefore, when Comte called on his followers to strive for the stability and harmony of social order, he must constantly talk about the reconstruction of social systems.

Durkheim more clearly regarded the study of social institution as the core task of sociology, and he traced the birth of sociology to the era of Montesquieu based on whether he studies social systems. In Durkheim's view, the origin of defining sociology is not who first proposed the concept of sociology, but who laid the foundation for research in sociology. Although Montesquieu did not propose the concept of sociology, he laid the foundation for sociological research at the beginning of Comte. Therefore, the occurrence of sociology should be tracked to Montesquieu.

Durkheim believed that Montesquieu's contribution to sociology is mainly manifested in his two basic concepts of social type and social law. He said, "Montesquieu not only understands the importance of social phenomena for scientific research, but also participates in shaping two basic concepts, namely, the concept of type and the concept of law. It is essential to the establishment of social science."⁵⁰ Montesquieu distinguished social types from national sovereignty and social nature, and essentially discussed the role of social institutions in forming different social types; and for the concept from Montesquieu, the explanation given by Durkheim is: Montesquieu "did not introduce the law from the "nature" of human beings but from the "nature" of social organisms. He knew very clearly that the nature of society is no more stable and continuous than human nature. Changing the type of society is no easier than changing the species of animals."⁵¹ In a nutshell, the socially relevant laws that Montesquieu said are just a series of social institutions.

⁵⁰Durkheim. *Montesquieu and Rousseau—The Pioneer of Sociology*, p. 55.

⁵¹Durkheim. *Montesquieu and Rousseau—The Pioneer of Sociology*, p. 19.

That is to say, the social institution is the core issue or main research object of sociology. It has not only been clearly identified by the founders of sociology, but also has become the evaluation scale for identifying whether a doctrine can be attributed to sociology. If Kang Youwei's doctrine is evaluated according to this scale, then it is more convincing to call Kang Youwei a sociologist. Because Kang Youwei also clearly defined the social institution as the core issue of his academic research, this point is fully reflected in *Pandect of Practical Reasoning and Public Law* and *Datong Shu*.

In *Pandect of Practical Reasoning and Public Law*, Kang Youwei pointed out that: "Where the world is big, there is no difference between the righteousness and the institution." What is the righteousness? Real reason, axiom and private reason. What is institution? Public law, public law of proportion and private law."⁵² Zhu Weijun said, "Kang Youwei's emphasis is on the relationship between natural laws and social laws."⁵³ Although Kang Youwei believed that the law of nature is more real than the law of society, "whether the truth is true or not, it is the public-private relationship that human society must abide by. "He called it 'real reason'."⁵⁴ It can be seen that whether it is real reason, axiom or public law, it is just an institution that people must abide by in social life.

In this regard, Kang Youwei regarded the social institution issue as the core one of his academic research, especially as the main research object of the two sociological works of *Pandect of Practical Reasoning and Public Law* and *Datong Shu*. The *Pandect of Practical Reasoning and Public Law* discusses the role of the institution in public-private relations from beginning to end. The book consists of one general and ten chapters. The General—Humanity discusses the universal institution that all human beings should abide by and the chapters discuss the institution that people should abide by in dealing with public-private relations from different aspects, whose topics have been covered earlier. It can be seen from these titles that the social institution discussed by Kang Youwei in *Pandect of Practical Reasoning and Public Law* is very extensive.

The discussion of social institution in *Datong Shu* is more profound and broader. As mentioned above, the *Pandect of Practical Reasoning and Public Law* mainly discusses the social institution in public-private relations from the human behavior, and the theoretical perspective of *Datong Shu* has risen from human behavior to social structure. Therefore, *Datong Shu* investigates the social institution at a broader and more complex level. In *Datong Shu*, not only does Kang Youwei's exposition on "eliminating the boundaries to seek common ground" is a direct exposition of the idea of reforming the old institution and constructing a new one, and his discussion of the six types of 38 sufferings is undoubtedly to expose the dark and sin side of the old institution. According to Kang Youwei, the boundaries of state, class, race,

⁵²Kang Youwei. *Kang Youwei's Two Kinds of Datong Theories*, p. 3.

⁵³Zhu Weizheng. *Introduction—From <Pandect of Practical Reasoning and Public Law> to <Datong Shu>*. Kang Youwei. *Kang Youwei's Two Kinds of Datong Theories*, p. 3.

⁵⁴Zhu Weizheng. *Introduction—From <Pandect of Practical Reasoning and Public Law> to <Datong Shu>*. Kang Youwei. *Kang Youwei's Two Kinds of Datong Theories*, p. 3.

shape, family, property, chaos, type and sufferings are actually only the separation and restriction of the institution to the reality of life. It is these institutions that have caused oppression and injustice between human beings, which must be reformed in order to save lives from suffering.

If Durkheim called him a pioneer of sociology based on Montesquieu's conception of social type and social law, then we have every reason to rely on Kang Youwei's deep criticism and construction of social institution issues, not only calling him the pioneer of Chinese sociology, but also should regard his *Datong Shu* together with its prototype *Pandect of Practical Reasoning and Public Law* as a representative of Chinese institutional sociology. If this view is true, then this means that Chinese sociology has seized the most important core of sociology, the institutional issue, from the beginning. Moreover, the institutional issue is still the core of all humanities and social sciences. The breadth and depth of research on institutional issues in different disciplines is one of the important indicators to measure the academic status and development degree of a discipline. Also, because the institution is also the core of social life at all levels, the extent to which a discipline studies institutional issues is also an important factor in the social status of the discipline. At the beginning of its development, Chinese sociology can grasp the core of sociology, not only established its prominent position in Chinese society in the early 20th century, but also avoided it from the marginalization of disciplines. As for the later Chinese sociology, which was influenced by narrow empiricism and flowed through the general description of social phenomena, it kept itself into the marginalized predicament, which was not related to the Chinese sociological pioneers such as Yan Fu, Kang Youwei and Liang Qichao and was seriously departed from the academic thought and academic pursuit advocated by them.

Kang Youwei's research on social institutions is critical and constructive. The basis or premise of his criticism and construction is the rationalist principle that we have already discussed. It is based on the scientific rationality of value rationality, geometric axioms and natural laws such as freedom, democracy, equality and fraternity that Kang Youwei resolutely and thoroughly criticized the shortcomings of various social institutions. Also, he actively proposed plans to reform the old institution and create a new one. This not only continued the academic tradition or academic pursuit of China's pragmatism after the turn from the old text Confucianism to the new text Confucianism but also made the positivism principles disseminated from Western sociology more motivating and enterprising.

In *Datong Shu*, the book that has the most abundant and in-depth discussion on institutional issues is the *Elimination of family boundaries for citizens of Heaven*. The theme of this section is: With regard to the formation and function of the Chinese family system, the limitations and harms of the Chinese family system to social development, the reform of the family system to achieve the social construction of family life and so on.

Kang Youwei first discussed the origins of the family and family system. He believed that the love of parents and children is the root cause of family generation and development, saying, "There is no one who can disobey the law of father and son in the world from ancient times to modern times." The love of parents and son

is nature and humanity, which is not imposed by human beings.”⁵⁵ It can be seen that Kang Youwei, like the viewpoint in *Pandect of Practical Reasoning and Public Law*, first discussed the origin of family life from the natural theory, and attributed the root cause of family generation and the relationship between father and son to the nature of man.

However, the family is a social relationship after all. Especially the family system cannot be interpreted clearly only from the natural relationship. Therefore, Kang Youwei's further discussion shifted from natural relation to social relation. Kang Youwei believed that the original families are dominated by mothers, but due to the harsh living environment, human beings are faced with various natural forces, and mothers have to be responsible for the responsibilities such as laying, raising, and defending enemies, which is difficult to afford. “A mother has to raise herself and her kids, and therefore, has no spare efforts to take care of both of them; moreover, faced with threats from wild beasts and strong people and dangers, she has to report to men. Therefore, a man gives support to her financially and physically in the form of family, where the woman is responsible for raising their babies and the man is responsible for working. With sufficient food and protection, their babies will grow up with good physical and mental health.”⁵⁶ Kang Youwei not only viewed the improvement of a father's status in the family from the division of labor, but also emphasized the improvement of a father's status from the perspective of cooperation. Moreover, he paid more attention to cooperation, which is consistent with his thought of gregariousness.

Based on the principle of gregariousness, the couple system, family system and familial system have gradually formed, and Kang Youwei called it: “A couple is formed, followed by family and production”.⁵⁷ “A couple is formed” means that the relationship between husband and wife changes from instability to stability. “The longer a couple get along with each, the stronger affection they have; the longer they are alone, the weaker affection they have; that is the law of husband and wife.”⁵⁸ After the relationship between husband and wife is stabilized, the relationship between the father and the daughter also becomes stable and clear; therefore, the family relationship is also clear, that is, the family system is established. However, the family is a small group after all. In order to form a larger group, the family relationship needs to be further expanded. As a result, the children and grandchildren gather together to create a family relationship, and the family system formed to stabilize the family relationship will follow. “If the relationships between the father and son and between the brothers are formed, the family system is established.” The brothers get married and give birth to their children that are called grandchildren, the grandchildren get

⁵⁵Kang Youwei. *Kang Youwei's Two Kinds of Datong Theories*, p. 225.

⁵⁶Kang Youwei. *Kang Youwei's Two Kinds of Datong Theories*, p. 226.

⁵⁷Kang Youwei. *Kang Youwei's Two Kinds of Datong Theories*, p. 227.

⁵⁸Kang Youwei. *Kang Youwei's Two Kinds of Datong Theories*, p. 227.

married and give birth to their children that are called grand-grandchildren, the grand-grandchildren get married and give birth to their children that form an ethnic group, and thus the ethnic system is established.”⁵⁹

Kang Youwei's interpretation of the formation of the national institution and family system is somewhat simplistic. The family system is a basic part of China's feudal social system, whose formation and existence are closely and essentially related to the political, economic, and even cultural systems of the Centralized System, and there is a long-lasting interaction and mutual support. It is obvious that the Chinese family system is abstract and one-sided from the relationship between the two sexes and the kinship. There are many problems that are unclear. For example, gender relation and kinship are also one of the basic factors of Western families, but why is there no large and stable family like China in Western society? And why is there no family system that is strictly hierarchical and functional?

Kang Youwei further attributed the consolidation and expansion of the family system to the same love of human beings and animals. The difference is that human love is greater than the love of animals without knowledge under the influence of knowledge, and therefore, people can form a family, while the animals cannot. He said, “The couple, the father, the son, and the brothers are both out of the nature of the Heaven, not from the good deeds of mankind, even though the beasts are the same. However, people with more knowledge can promote their love and consolidate it; The animals with less knowledge cannot do the same, and as time goes by, their inherent love will be forgotten; This is the difference between human and animals. Therefore, human beings can get married to form relationships between the father and the so and between the brothers, thereby forming an ethnic group, while the animals will forget the relationship between mother and child after an enough long time.”⁶⁰

This is essentially the natural love, which is treated by Kang Youwei as the driving force for human beings to reproduce and the foundation of a country to develop and a race to expand. He said, “People love their country because they love their families, and therefore, the country will become stronger and stronger; however, the animals will gradually forget their parents and brothers as time goes by, and therefore, they will not do the same as human beings. The wider their love is, the closer their ties are. Therefore, a person with strong gregariousness and high reproduction will be the most knowledgeable; A person with narrow love, weak consolidation, weak gregariousness, and low reproduction will be less knowledgeable.”⁶¹ Here, Kang Youwei expounded the relationship between love, family system and national prosperity, that is, the family system is originated from love. After the formation of the family system, it will broaden the love to the expansion and reproduction of the country and race.

In Kang Youwei's view, the Chinese nation, with the support of the family system based on love, has reproduced to become the most populous nation in the world.

⁵⁹Kang Youwei. *Kang Youwei's Two Kinds of Datong Theories*, pp. 227–228.

⁶⁰Kang Youwei. *Kang Youwei's Two Kinds of Datong Theories*, p. 228.

⁶¹Kang Youwei. *Kang Youwei's Two Kinds of Datong Theories*, p. 229.

“Therefore, China has a population of four hundred to five hundred million, which is times that of Europe and the largest in the world, accounting for one third of the total population on the earth. They were all born from the husband-wife and father-son family system.”⁶² Kang Youwei finally attributed the credit of the family system to Confucius. “This is developed by Confucius based on the beginning of Datong.” They are good at reproducing their races and consolidating their species in an appropriate manner, which is the great work of Confucius.”⁶³

Kang Youwei insisted on his point of view, believing that things always develop in a reciprocal relationship, which also insisted that this view is applied in the evaluation of the family system. After affirming the positive role of the family system, Kang Youwei also discussed its hazards. He mainly discussed the three major hazards of family system:

First of all, Kang Youwei discussed the “disintegration due to family system.” He made discussions based on the principle of fraternity, believing that everyone in the world should love each other, while the family system adheres to the closeness and fraternity within a limited range, which is a “preference” based on blood relations, not a fraternity between all people. “If you have a partial preference, you will not like all. If you have a partial love, you will not love all. Chinese people are consolidating based on ethnicity, and therefore, they will like those with the same surnames, but keep a certain distance mentally and physically from those with different surnames; those with the same surnames attract each other, while those with different surnames will not care about each other. Therefore, those with two surnames will fight each other like enemies; accustomed to the old view of unity, they do not know that if there is no country, there will be no surname, even if they as a group migrate thousands of miles away like to the United States, etc. There are many examples that those with different surnames do not care about each other, but attach or kill each other. If there are different surnames in a country, it means there are different states.”⁶⁴

This shows that the integration of the family system is only effective within the blood relationship, and in the social relationships other than the blood relationship, the family system plays a role in decomposing society. It should be said that Kang Youwei’s opinion was still very instructive at that time. Amid the context that the imperialist powers divide China and the national crisis is very grim, it is difficult for the Chinese in a stage of disunity to unite and defend against the enemy. A large number of intellectuals are very worried and are anxiously exploring the reasons. Yan Fu attributed the reason to the fact that Chinese people are not gregarious, which, compared with Kang Youwei’s analysis of integration of family system in the blood relationship and decomposition outside the blood relationship, is undoubtedly a surface analysis, while Kang Youwei hit the point of the issue.

Secondly, Kang Youwei discussed that “if there is a family, there will be selfishness, which will do harm to the genders and the race.” In Kang Youwei’s view, the Chinese people generally have the selfishness of rejecting social welfare, which is also rooted in the family system. Because the family system not only limits the mind

⁶²Kang Youwei. *Kang Youwei’s Two Kinds of Datong Theories*, p. 229.

⁶³Kang Youwei. *Kang Youwei’s Two Kinds of Datong Theories*, p. 229.

and vision of the family members, but also makes them form a narrow concept of family responsibility. The family members compete for the interests of other families in order to gain benefits for their own family, thereby causing harm to humanity and race. Kang Youwei said, "As family members, if they love each other to the utmost, they will absolutely think how to make fortune and reproduce. The number of members of a family is undecided, so is the desire to make fortune. If the desire is endlessly, but what they earn is limited, it is impossible to become rich; to make fortune, they will cheat for a living, steal without consideration to the shame and bribe without consideration to the friendship; Moreover, they will kill people for property, commit crimes, with no fear of death, making it a business for living."⁶⁴

Once again, Kang Youwei also discussed that "the harm of family system is a big obstacle to peace." He cited 14 obstacles that hindered reaching the peace due to family system, such as irregular customs and inconsistent education; There are more patients due to differences in health care; it is not conducive to education from a baby to a grownup; a man will love his wife more and hates others; a person only cares about his private property and ignores the public welfare, etc., "therefore, the family system is necessary at the beginning of Datong, but the largest obstacle hindering the development during the peace."⁶⁵ That is to say, the family system plays different roles in different historical periods, which is necessary at the beginning and development of Datong and does have its positive role (Kang Youwei also made a clear discussion on this)⁶⁶; however, it will become an obstacle at the peace. Therefore, "To make peace, the family system must be eliminated."⁶⁷

Elimination of family system is not to die away and become a Buddhist as advocated by the Buddhism, but to reform the family system and establish a new family. In Kang Youwei's view, leaving home and entering a temple to worship Buddha is not a good strategy for life. He said, "Being inexhaustibly supported by the parents, a person leave his/her home to seek quietness without any return to his/her parents. It is just like no repayment of debts and robbery to make fortune and then escape to other place as a rich man; is it a good way to make fortune and happiness with tricks? Is it allowed by the national law? "I think the Buddhism is subtle and broad, and convinces me to differentiate it, but leaving the parents without telling them to pursue what you want is finally unacceptable."⁶⁸

Kang Youwei's reform plan is to break through the boundaries of the family system, implement "public raising", "public education", and "public support", establish a new type of husband-and-wife relationship, to achieve the purpose of Datong of "no forbearance of leaving home, but have the fun of leaving home." The essence of "public raising", "public education" and "public support" is to transform family life or family function into social activities or social functions, so as to eliminate

⁶⁴Kang Youwei. *Kang Youwei's Two Kinds of Datong Theories*, p. 245.

⁶⁵Kang Youwei. *Kang Youwei's Two Kinds of Datong Theories*, p. 249.

⁶⁶Kang Youwei. *Kang Youwei's Two Kinds of Datong Theories*, p. 230.

⁶⁷Kang Youwei. *Kang Youwei's Two Kinds of Datong Theories*, p. 249.

⁶⁸Kang Youwei. *Kang Youwei's Two Kinds of Datong Theories*, pp. 249–250.

the status and role of traditional family in social life. “Public raising” covers gestation, birth and raising of children, which are realized in the form of maternal care service center, nursery, and child care service center; “Public education” covers the education for children and teenagers. Kang Youwei advocated the establishment of primary schools, secondary schools and universities to transform traditional Chinese private education into modern social school education; “Public support” covers social welfare undertakings such as medical care, old-age care, poverty alleviation, disabled people and funeral in the form of medical hospital, nursing home, poverty alleviation center, recovery center and crematory. The ideal goal of Kang Youwei is: “The government is responsible for the people from birth to death, instead of their parents and children. After leaving home, the parents cannot give support or teach their children and the children cannot support their parents; moreover, they could not visit each other frequently due to the long distance from home; there will be naturally no home in the mind if decision is made to leave home; as no favor is received or given, there will be no chance to let the favor down. What is to be done could be done smoothly and what is gained is that is deserved to be gained.”⁶⁹ Thus, if the family system is eliminated, the fundamental obstacle to the realization of Datong is removed.

As for the dispelling of the other eight boundaries, it is also like the discourse of this part about elimination of family boundaries, which directly points to the irrationality of various old systems and carries out extensive criticism on the basis of a large number of facts. It is not intended to detail Kang Youwei’s discourse on these aspects. Our main point is that through the discussion about elimination of family boundaries in this section, Kang Youwei’s *Datong Shu* is a richly-written book of sociology, and is the first one with institutional issue as the core of institutional sociology.

Many of the ideas that Kang Youwei elaborated in *Datong Shu*, in terms of today’s academic standards, are not only out of date, but also seem relatively flat. However, if the discussion of Kang Youwei is placed in the context of the Chinese society before the Revolution of 1911, the theoretical and practical significance can be self-evident. In a country where the family is the foundation of life, in a society where men are superior to women, and in a situation where the first task is to fight against the enemy facing the destruction of country and race, Kang Youwei could propose to eliminate the family boundaries, national boundaries and shape boundaries and carry out in-depth theoretical arguments, fully illustrating the strong spirit of theoretical criticism and academic exploration.

Kang Youwei’s discussion about eliminating family boundaries, shape boundaries and class boundaries had a major impact in the sociological studies during the period of the Republic of China. Wu Jingchao, Pan Guangdan, Mai Hunting and others have studied family and marital issues under the influence of Kang Youwei to some extent. In a long period of time, criticizing the Chinese family system, changing China’s marriage relationship, and pursuing equality between men and women have become a hot topic in Chinese sociology. It should be said that their origins were

⁶⁹Kang Youwei. *Kang Youwei’s Two Kinds of Datong Theories*, p. 251.

discovered by Kang Youwei and their perspective of critical system was also explored Kang Youwei.

The position of Kang Youwei in the history of Chinese society does not lie in his profound theoretical views, nor lie in what kind of doctrine he established. What is important is that he took the Chinese academic tradition as the foundation, absorbed the Western modern social science concept and opened a new chapter in Chinese sociology from another angle different from Yan Fu. This shows that there are two major sources of Chinese sociology. One is absorption of Chinese learning based on Western learning as represented by Yan Fu, and the other is absorption of Western learning based on Chinese learning.

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Chapter 5

Liang Qichao's Theory on New Citizen Education—Development of the Sociology Transcending the Sino-Western Contradiction



Liang Qichao is the Chinese representative who shifted research focus from ancient times to modern times in Chinese academic history, and whose academic thought launched a new era in modern Chinese academics. Liang Qichao is also a milestone in the history of Chinese sociology. He not only summarized the essentials of ancient Chinese social thoughts, but also absorbed the essence of both Western and Chinese sociological thoughts elaborated by Yan Fu and Kang Youwei. Based on the conditions of Chinese society in the early twentieth century, he expounded the sociological theories transcending the contradiction between Chinese and Western theories, in which he expressed his intent to educate new citizens and rebuild Chinese society, making fundamental contributions to Chinese sociology.

5.1 Transformation from New Text Confucianism to Modern Academics

Liang Qichao is not only a scholar, a thinker, but also a social activist and an active promoter of China's modernization. For a century, there have been both positive and negative comments on Liang Qichao. He is recognized as chief commander of the reform, the pioneer of modern academics,¹ and the royalists hoping to restore Confucianism.² These contradictory comments are caused by the complex changes of Liang Qichao's academic thoughts in addition to historical conditions. According to the periods of thoughts with the Hundred Days' Reform in 1898 and the Revolution of 1911, American scholar Levinson divided Liang Qichao's academic periods into three parts, which are the period of the Hundred Days' Reform when Liang Qichao believed in Confucianism and accepted Western studies, the period starting from Wuxu Coup to his overseas exile when Liang Qichao analyzed the Chinese social issues from the perspective of nationalism, which was the most active period of his

¹Dong (2004, pp. 1–7).

²Hou (1978).

thoughts, and the period starting from the Revolution of 1911 till Liang Qichao's death in 1929 when Liang Qichao resorted back to Chinese cultural tradition.³

In his book *Liang Qichao and the Transition of Chinese Thought* (1890–1907), Zhang Hao proposed a different view from Levinson. He believed that Liang Qichao's academic thoughts can be divided into two parts with the Wuxu Coup as the dividing line. According to Zhang Hao, Liang Qichao's thought before 1898 was not only influenced by Western scholarship, but also maintained his attachment to Chinese culture. From 1898 to 1907, Liang Qichao showed interest in the public morality and private morality. He thought highly of Western public morality, but he did not deny China's private morality.⁴ As you can see, Zhang Hao had discovered that Liang Qichao's wander between China and the West, and cannot be simply judged by the views characterized by the contradictions between China and the West.

Liang Qichao's wander between Chinese views and Western theories showed a unique academic style. It seems that his ideas were neither Chinese nor Western. However, his ideas seem to resemble both Chinese and Western theories. The factors related to his unique style are complicated. The most immediate factor is Kang Youwei's thought guiding the Hundred Days' Reform in accordance with the New Text Confucianism (Chinese learning), and Yan Fu's theory of evolution based on Spencer's sociology (Western learning). Having studied the influence of Japanese reformers like Fukuzawa Yukichi (1834–1901) and Nakamura Masanao (1832–1891) imposed on Liang Qichao, Jiang Guangxue believed that Liang Qichao's concept of freedom had been influenced by these scholars.⁵ During his exile in Japan after the failure of 1898 Reform, Liang Qichao studied a lot of Japanese scholars' works which did play a very important role in his thought transformation. However, what Liang Qichao learned from Japanese reform scholars are no more than borrowings from Western academic thoughts, which can also be regarded as the influence of Western learning on Liang Qichao.

During his exile in Japan, Liang Qichao read a lot of Western academic works. It could be noticed from his articles published in the *Qing Yi Bao*,⁶ such as *Study of Hobbes*, *Study of Rousseau*, that he had begun to delve into Western scholarship. In December 1899, invited by the American overseas Chinese, Liang Qichao stopped his journey to the United States from Tokyo when learning in Honolulu about the news of the Boxer Rebellion and Beijing's fall. He gave up his plan to the United States and returned to Shanghai. Later, he went to Singapore, then to Australia where he stayed for half a year. During these two visits, Liang Qichao had a better understanding of Western social development, social systems, and cultural concepts, and conducted more extensive research on Western scholarship. After returning to Japan in 1902, he published *Aristotle's Political Theory*, *The Theory of Evolutionary Revolutionary Kidd*, *The Theory of Bentham-A Leading Authority in Benthamism*, and *The Theory of Montesquieu*, *The Theory of Darwin's Theory and its Biography*, *The Theory of*

³Levenson (1986).

⁴Dong (2004, pp. 19–20).

⁵Jiang (2001).

⁶A newspaper started by Liang Qichao during his exile in Japan after the Hundred Days' Reform.

the First Generations of Modern Civilizations, On Ancient Greek Studies and On the Trend of Changes in Western Academic Thoughts, etc. These writings cover various aspects from ancient Greece to modern philosophy, political science, law, economics, sociology, and the overall evolution of Western academics.

It can be seen that Liang Qichao had a profound and broad academic vision, which is one of the factors causing complexity and diversity in his academic thought. Liang Qichao, living in the period of dramatic social and political changes in China, was confronted with various problems such as the crumbling Manchu administration, the extremely vicious aggression of big powers, the ensuing social crisis, and national survival at stake. The deep-rooted and rapidly changing contradictions between strength and weakness, progress and backwardness, tradition and modernity, individuals and groups, classes and countries, reforms and revolutions endowed Liang Qichao's thoughts with dramatic changes and contradictions.

Before the Wuxu Coup, Liang Qichao was mainly influenced by Kang Youwei's thoughts of *The New Text Confucianism* and *The Hundred Days' Reform*. Liang Qichao was smart and hardworking. "At the age of six, his father began to teach him to read and therefore Liang Qichao got an overview of Chinese history. As he was eight years old, he learnt to write and could write articles of thousands of words."⁷ At the age of 17, he went to Guangzhou for a provincial test and took the eighth place, passing the provincial civil service examination. In 1890 when Liang Qichao was 18 years old, he was introduced by Chen Qianqiu to Kang Youwei. Before the visit, Liang Qichao had a sense of superiority, not only because he successfully passed the provincial exam and Kang Youwei was merely a student of Imperial Academy at that time. Moreover, he believed that he did more research on ancient learning. "I felt complacent with my knowledgeability and research. His criticism of the old-fashioned academic system greatly shocked and enlightened me. He insisted that the old system should be abandoned and cleared. We had a conversation lasting from the sunrise to the sunset. I was greatly shocked. I did not know what to do at that time. I was filled in my mind with a mixture of resentment and excitement, doubts and fears. I stayed awake overnight. Tomorrow, I became a student of Mr. Kang."⁸ The remarks above show that Liang Qichao was shocked at his first visit at Kang Youwei, and he left the Xuehai Academy where he studied and became a student of Kang Youwei.

After he became a student of Kang Youwei, Liang Qichao not only listened carefully to Kang Youwei's significant lectures on Chinese academic origin and historical political evolution, but also actively participated in Kang Youwei's academic activities of criticizing ancient Chinese classics and encouraging the study of *The New Text Confucianism*. He participated in proofreading and compiling Kang Youwei's *A Study of the 'New Text' Forgeries* and *Study of the Reforms of Confucius*. He thought quite highly of Kang Youwei's criticism of ancient classics and encouragement of the *New Text Confucianism*, the *Hundred Days' Reform*, and political views. Judging from the early works of Liang Qichao, we can notice the inheritance connections

⁷Liang (1984, p. 498).

⁸Liang (1984, p. 498).

that he has with Kang Youwei have a close inheritance relationship in academic views. Liang Qichao continually demonstrated and supported Kang Youwei's political views in his works such as *On Reform* (1896), *Gu Yiyuan Kao* (1896), *Du Chunqiu Jie Shuo* (1897), and *On Mencius* (1898).

Kang Youwei's academic influence on Liang Qichao is extensive and profound. What influenced Liang Qichao most is Kang Youwei's views of humanistic pragmatism from the New Text Confucianism. Although Kang Youwei expressed his worship of Confucianism in *A Study of the 'New Text' Forgeries*, *Study of the Reforms of Confucius*, and *Dong Zhongshu's Study of Spring and Autumn Annals*, as argued by Liang Qichao, in addition to Kang Youwei's New Text Confucianism, and the New Text Confucianism of the whole Qing Dynasty is a "revival of ancient literature" in the history of Chinese academics. He said, "I would like to regard Hui and Dai's thoughts as real study of Confucian classics, and Gong and Wei's thoughts as applied study of Confucian classics. It seems to be a joke, but it is true. It was in the fourth period. The world is changing rapidly and we are now open to the world. We have made much reflection on the world changes and become suspicious of the social phenomena. Since the world is opening up, the foreign thoughts are introduced to China. We could make a comparison between these foreign thoughts and domestic thoughts, and make use of the better ones. Kang and Tan did so. The period lasting for more than 200 years can be called renaissance of ancient learning which developed gradually rather than suddenly. Now, it is prosperous like spring. I feel hopeful about the future of our field of academic thinking."⁹ Liang Qichao stated more clearly, "The two hundred years can be classified as the 'Age of Renaissance'."¹⁰ From Liang Qichao's remarks above, we can conclude that he highly appraised the New Text Confucianism in late Qing Dynasty and modern literary studies represented by Kang Youwei, which is regarded as the Renaissance in the history of Chinese academics.

In the Hundred Days' Reform, Liang Qichao is a loyal follower and firm practitioner of Kang Youwei's political reform. As a student of Kang Youwei, Liang Qichao rushed around fearing no dangers, and supported the Gongche Shangshu movement, organized the Society for National Strengthening and Shiwu School, started the *Shiwu Bao*, and publicized Kang Youwei's reform ideas, becoming an important spiritual leader secondary to Kang Youwei in the reform movement. In spite of the differences arising later on between Liang Qichao and Kang Youwei in their academic and political views, Kang Youwei did exert profound influence on Liang Qichao. Until the later years of Liang Qichao, connections with Kang Youwei could also be found at the early time.

The causes of the differences between Liang Qichao and Kang Youwei are quite complicated. Jiang Guangxue believed that Yan Fu's letter to Liang Qichao from 1896 to 1897 caused a fundamental change in Liang Qichao's academic position. According to Jiang Guangxue, after Yan Fu returned to China from the United Kingdom, he was deeply worried about China's mere use of renovated Confucius and Mencius and desired to reform the old system. Yan Fu realized that in order to change this dull

⁹Liang Qichao. *Collected Works from the Ice-Drinker's Studio · Collection 7*, pp. 102–103.

¹⁰Liang Qichao. *Collected Works from the Ice-Drinker's Studio · Collection 7*, p. 103.

state of mind, he must first convince Kang Youwei and Liang Qichao, two spiritual leaders, to change their minds. In the letter to Liang Qichao, Yan Fu aimed to inspire Liang Qichao to understand the conservative nature of Chinese traditional culture, abandon restoring the old Confucianism, open up academic horizons, and accept Western learning. Liang Qichao strongly agreed with Yan Fu's point of view. In his reply to Yan Fu, he said, "I have read the twenty-one-page book more than ten times. I could not tear myself away from the novel which I appreciate a lot."¹¹

Yan Fu's view that "Confucianism cannot be and need not be protected" came as a bolt from the blue in China where Confucianism had dominated for more than 2,000 years. Liang Qichao was greatly shocked. Besides, Kang Youwei, the head of those who favor Confucianism, also appreciated Yan Fu's efforts. In a letter to Yan Fu, Liang Qichao said, "I have never met such a person like Mr. Nanhai (Yan Fu) who has read giant works."¹² It can be seen that Yan Fu's thoughts at that time did have a great impact on Liang Qichao. Communication through letters with Yan Fu caused fundamental changes to Liang Qichao's academic and even political positions. He was no longer convinced of Kang Youwei's view of conserving Confucianism. Disagreement arose between them. He began to fight against Chinese cultural traditions represented by Confucianism, while actively cleaning up the negative factors of traditional culture, and actively studying advanced Western academic thoughts.

After the Hundred Days' Reform failed, Kang Youwei and Liang Qichao were exiled to Japan. During his stay in Japan, Kang Youwei insisted on his political stance of protecting the Emperor. He held the "clothing belt" that the Emperor Guangxu gave him, and worked loyally to restore the Guangxu's imperial power. At that time, influenced by Western bourgeois liberalism and revolutionaries such as Sun Yat-sen and Chen Shaobai, Liang Qichao began to oppose Kang Youwei's political position of protecting the emperor and Confucianism. He expressed his intent to cooperate with the revolutionaries. Liang Qichao requested Kang Youwei to resign in order to rule out Kang Youwei's restrictions on his participation in the revolution.¹³ Later, under the resolute opposition of Kang Youwei, especially during Liang Qichao's stay in America, he discovered some negative phenomena in the Western countries, which weakened his revolutionary demands. However, the revolutionary tendency indicated by his contact with Sun Yat-sen and others has already showed that the differences between Kang Youwei and Liang Qichao were significant and difficult to bridge.

After the outbreak of the Revolution of 1911, the differences between Kang Youwei and Liang Qichao were intensified. Kang Youwei had a firm stance in opposing the Revolution of 1911 and restoring the imperial system of the Qing Dynasty. He accepted Yuan Shikai's support in encouraging Confucianism and attempted to restore the Qing Dynasty together with Zhang Xun. Especially in July 1917, Kang Youwei and Zhang Xun asked Xuantong to restore the monarchy. Kang Youwei was

¹¹Liang Qichao. *Collected Works from the Ice-Drinker's Studio · Collection 1*, p. 106.

¹²Liang Qichao. *Collected Works from the Ice-Drinker's Studio · Collection 1*, p. 110.

¹³Chen (1999).

assigned vice president of the Bideyuan. Liang Qichao raised the banner of support for democracy and republic, and opposed Kang Youwei's political ideas and restoration activities. Liang Qichao resolutely opposed Yuan Shikai's restoration of the monarchy, attempted to gain independence of Yunnan Province, launched the war of protecting the country, resolutely opposed Ding Yi back to the throne, organized by Kang Youwei and Zhang Xun, supported Duan Qirui in launching a military attack on Zhang Xun, and issued a statement criticizing Kang Youwei's reactionary activities. From then on, Kang Liang and Liang Qichao completely broke up.

From 1896, affected by Yan Fu, Liang Qichao gave up protecting Confucianism. In 1917, he objected to Kang Youwei and Zhang Xun's plan to restore the monarchy. It can be shown that their differences were gradually intensified. And the main cause of their break-up lied in the different political stances rather than academic differences. During the exile in Japan, Liang Qichao made extensive studies of Western scholarship, especially the rationalism of the Enlightenment represented by Montesquieu, etc., the Bentham's utilitarianism and Darwinian evolution which are the core of modern Western academic consciousness and modernization spirit. Liang Qichao who had accepted the Western learning was bound to have opposite views to Kang Youwei who desired to protect the Confucianism and the Emperor. However, these modern academics or principles are not sufficient enough to destroy the close relationship between Liang Qichao and Kang Youwei. Although these modern academic ideas are bound to be contradictory to the Confucianism and protection of the Emperor, Kang Youwei's New Text Confucianism still has something in common with these modern learning in terms of evolutionary development, pragmatism, and stress of utilitarianism. Therefore, Liang Qichao and Kang Youwei's break-up in 1917 caused by Zhang Xun's restoration to the throne does not mean the disappearance of their academic relationship or ideological connections. In many academic works since 1917, people can still find connections between Liang Qichao and Kang Youwei.

Like Yan Fu and Kang Youwei, Liang Qichao lived in the same period when Chinese society transit from the traditional mode to the modern mode. Liang Qichao called his era in which he lived a transitional era. In his view, the transitional era is an era in which all aspects of social life undergo profound changes and which Western countries have experienced. Although Western nations were faced with the severe challenges caused by social changes in the transitional era, they managed to handle the risks and achieve social development and national prosperity. According to Liang Qichao, China was experiencing a transitional era which would bring forth challenges and opportunities to the Chinese nation. Chinese nation must revitalize itself, change its mind, and strive for national rejuvenation in the emerging transitional era. Although in such a transitional era, Liang Qichao, Yanfu, and Kang Youwei cannot have completely modern academic thoughts in which the trace of traditional elements can be found, it is improper to assign them to the traditional team.

In the transitional era, our judgment of thinkers' academic stance should be based on their major academic views and dominant academic inclination. After the Sino-Japanese War, especially during the exile in Japan after the failure of the Hundred Days' Reform, Liang Qichao's works showed a strong and significant modernity and

modern academic consciousness. Dong Defu regarded the Hundred Days' Reform and Liang Qichao's proposal of "new citizens" as a prelude to China's modernization. He considered Liang Qichao's proposal of "new citizens" and Hu Shih's initiation of new cultural movement in 1917 to be two watersheds of China's modernization. He said, "Liang Qichao started the first 'watershed', and the appearance of Hu Shih and his contributions to the Chinese ideological circle represent the second 'watershed'. From the perspectives of 'culture' and 'history', the stage for 'modern China' was built by Liang Qichao, and the prelude was made by Hu Shi."¹⁴

Zhang thinks more highly of Liang Qichao. In his view, Liang Qichao is a key figure in the transformation of Chinese culture from the traditional mode to the modern mode. He said, "In the transition from traditions to modern Chinese culture, the ideological changes that occurred in the first decade of the mid-1890s to the early 20th century should be seen as a more important watershed than the May 4th era. During this transitional period, Liang was a key figure who inherited the tradition of pragmatism in Confucianism in the late Qing Dynasty, and at the same time transformed the inherent relevance of this tradition into new personalities and social ideals symbolized by his famous national image. His ideas have become an important and permanent part of the Chinese ideological movement of the 20th century."¹⁵

I am not badgering about Liang Qichao's historical position in the Chinese cultural modernization movement. I want to clarify a basic judgment: the promotion of China's modernization is based on the principle of modernity, which is Liang Qichao's basic position. If it is true, we can explicitly incorporate Liang Qichao's profound discussions on interpersonal relationships, behavioral patterns, social stratification, social organization, social institutions, and social changes in Chinese society into the discipline of Chinese sociological history. Otherwise, Liang Qichao's rich expositions on social evolution and social structure will be listed in the history of Chinese social thoughts just like some scholars do now. Liang Qichao's ground-breaking contributions to Chinese sociology would be ignored.

5.2 Governing with Sociology

Liang Qichao claimed to have written ten articles of "On Society" consisting of 120 chapters. However, only the preface and the first article of the book can be found. Short as they are, these two documents have made profound discussions in a generalized and concise way, covering fundamental issues of sociology such as the nature, composition, functions of the society, the relationship between individuals and the society, inter-group relations, and social integration. As explained by Liang Qichao, he discussed group, gregariousness, government, group power, group arts, etc. Moreover, Liang Qichao also elaborated a large number of theoretical views on sociology in other literature. He not only absorbed and borrowed Kang Youwei and

¹⁴Dong (2004, p. 4).

¹⁵Zhang (1997).

Yan Fu's sociological thoughts, but also actively borrowed theories and methods from Western sociology. More importantly, Liang Qichao, based on his broad theoretical perspective and active theoretical thinking, published many insightful sociological views on the foundation of Chinese reality and traditional culture.

As mentioned above, Kang Youwei and Yan Fu's thoughts are the two main sources of Liang Qichao's sociological views. According to Liang Qichao himself, Tan Sitong's *Ren Xue* is also one of his sources of sociological thought. When introducing his research on sociological origin, Liang Qichao said, "Qichao asks Mr. Nanhai about government of a country. Mr. Nanhai said, 'Regarding group as the core and make corresponding reforms. If we satisfy the above two points, a nation could exist even after thousands of years.' Qichao wrote *On Reform* based on what he had learned. He made reflection on the meaning of group. The theory and argument are quite profound and abstruse. He learned from *Evolution and Ethics* by Yan Fu from Houguan, *Ren Xue* by Tan Sitong from Liuyang. He studied Nanhai's discussion. He wrote *On Group* comprising ten articles made up of one hundred and twenty chapters."¹⁶

As said by Liang Qichao, Kang Youwei's sociological discussion is his primary source of thoughts. Judging from Kang Youwei's discussion on the relationship between the emperor and the mass and historical development, the view of "regarding group as the core and make corresponding reforms." is undoubtedly proposed by Kang Youwei, which is also the fundamental view of Liang Qichao's sociology. Even the ideas of historical sociology discussed in the *Research Approach to China's History* published in 1922 were also based on this fundamental point. Therefore, when Liang Qichao said he benefited from Kang Youwei's research, he was not saying that out of modesty. However, as discussed in the previous chapter, Kang Youwei's views concerning the relationship between the emperor and the mass and gregariousness discussed in *Chunqiu Dongshixue* were influenced by Yan Fu's sociology formed on the basis of Spencer's sociology. Therefore, Liang Qichao's affirmation of Kang Youwei's influence on him was definitely affirming the influence of Western sociology on him. Since the influence of Yan Fu's *Evolution and Ethics* is affirmed, the impact of Western sociology cannot be denied. Therefore, although Liang Qichao did not mention the influence of sociology on him, he did acknowledge the impact of Yan Fu and Kang Youwei's qunxue which is certainly related to Western sociology.

Tan Sitong's *Ren Xue* is hardly a book with sociology as its main content, but the criticism of feudal hierarchy and the discussion of bourgeois humanitarianism in the book are important for Liang Qichao's sociological thinking. In the *New People* and the *New Historiography*, Liang Qichao proposed his views of equality, democracy, freedom, and philanthropy in which he broke the constraint of feudal autocracy and desired for a novel society of fairness, harmony, health, and prosperity, which were somewhat related to Tan Sitong's "people's mutual respect and equality" proposed in *Ren Xue*. Tan Sitong believed that "ren" means people should live in mutual equality and harmony. He said, "'ren' literally means two people live together with respect and equality." "Han Confucianism regards 'ren' as the principle for living together.

¹⁶Liang Qichao. *Collected Works from the Ice-Drinker's Studio · Collection 2*, p. 3.

If people did not respect each other, there would not be the world. Those who cannot treat others with respect and love are nonhuman.”¹⁷ The mutual respect and equality embodied in “ren” requires “tong” in human socialization in which the hierarchy and communication barriers among social members are removed. He said, “‘tong’ is the primary meaning of ‘ren’”, “meanings of ‘tong’ are composed of four parts: ‘tong’ between China and the other countries mainly derives from *Spring and Autumn Annals*. It is all the same all over the world. The ‘tong’ between the governor and the mass and between the male and female derives its meaning mainly from *Yi*. ‘Tong’ derives its meaning from Buddhist texts.”¹⁸ As can be judged from Tan Sitong’s statement, although what he discussed falls into sociological category, sentimental attachment to Chinese traditions is shown either in terms of speech inheritance or belongingness of views. In other words, he was trying to interpret modern issues with traditional views. In spite of this, no matter how attached he was to traditions, he put forth the core issue of sociology, namely, interpersonal relationship, which can be extended to the relationship between people and society. Actually, Tan Sitong showed much concern over and discussed the relationship between the emperor and the mass as well as the relationship between individuals and society. Therefore, it is justifiable for Liang Qichao to say that his sociological views are related to Tan Sitong’s *Ren Xue*.

In Liang Qichao’s “qunxue” (sociological theory), “qun” has two basic meanings: as a noun, a “qun” means society and a group; as a verb, it means to socialize. Compared with the “society” in Western sociology, “qun” is profound in the sense. More importantly, it is a verb, which reflects the constructive spirit of Chinese sociology at its start. In Western sociology, “society” is just a noun, although Western sociologists believe that society is the socialization of people. Simmel pointed out that only social interaction exists between people, and Marx also clearly believed that society, in essence, is the relationship formed by people interacting with each other, but the dynamic meaning in these expressions is in terms of the process of social formation, rather than using the social concept itself as a dominant verb.

It is very important to clarify the semantic issue, because society is the most fundamental concept of sociology, and the divergence of its basic meaning will inevitably lead to more complicated ambiguity. When “society” is considered simply as a noun, the objective existence of society would be highlighted, and objective analysis or external observation of society can be carried out; when “society” is regarded as “qun” (group) proposed by Liang Qichao, it shows features of both verbs and nouns, in which case “society” should be treated not only as an actual “object”, but also as a dynamic process of integrating people together. In short, as “qun” mentioned in Chinese sociology, we are talking about the dynamic process and the sense of social integration which is missing in the Western sociological

¹⁷Tan Sitong. *Ren Xue*. Annotation of Teaching and Research Office affiliated to Department of Philosophy in Peking University. *Teaching Materials on Chinese History of Philosophy Vol. 2*, p. 454.

¹⁸Tan Sitong. *Ren Xue*. Annotation of Teaching and Research Office affiliated to Department of Philosophy in Peking University. *Teaching Materials on Chinese History of Philosophy Vol. 2*, p. 457.

society. Liang Qichao said, "A Group of millions of people make up a country, and billions of people compose the world. Therefore, all the countries and even the world are composed of groups."¹⁹ Here, the group obviously consists of scattered people. In other words, it integrated the dispersed people, showing the dynamic sense as contained in a verb.

Although Western sociologists also associate society with a dynamic process, when they have to express some ideas about society from the dynamic sense, they must supplement some concepts to the concept of "society" to make it clear. For example, Liang Qichao can say that "millions of people make up a country", while Westerners must change the society into social communication, social integration, and social interaction to express dynamic meaning. That is, they must attach a verb to the term "society" to show its dynamic sense. Liang Qichao uses a single word to express both the noun meaning of a group and the verbal meaning in the sense of gregariousness. It reflects its integration of subjectivity and objectivity. Furthermore, it is a unit of activeness and passivity. When the word "qun" refers to "group", it is active. When it is treated as a referent or something to be studied, it is passive. When "qun" is explained as "gregariousness" in the dynamic sense, both the perceiver and the object are active.

Secondly, if "qun" is studied as a verb and research subject, it is bound to involve the historical principle in the research process. The so-called historical principle is nothing more than putting things into the process for analysis. The process is time, change, or movement. Therefore, historical principles and verbal "qun" are essentially the same. A strong sense of history runs through Liang Qichao's discussion of "qunxue". He always studied social phenomena in the history and examined social issues in the process. He proposed the idea of establishing a new historiography that is essentially a historical sociology studying social issues in the historical process. This point will be discussed further later.

Generally speaking, historical principles are integrated with dialectical principles. In the German classical philosophy represented by Hegel, the historical principle and the dialectical principle have reached a high degree of unity. Things can be studied as a historical process because the contradictions contained therein act as the driving force for the development and change of things, and promote the ceaseless movement of things. It is based on this point that Hegel, et al. closely related the contradiction analysis to the historical investigation of things. Liang Qichao's "qunxue" theory also demonstrated the great unity of the historical principle and dialectical principle. For instance, the unity of these two principles is reflected in his discussion of the relationship between the monarch and the mass, collective and individuals, individuals and the society, family and the state, grouping and dispersion, and gregariousness and non-gregariousness.

Liang Qichao regarded historical principles and dialectical principles as his two basic principles of "qunxue", which is of great significance to the future development of Chinese sociology. In fact, historical principles and dialectical principles can also be found in abundant documents of Western positivistic sociology established

¹⁹Liang Qichao. *Collected Works from the Ice-Drinker's Studio · Collection 2*, p. 4.

by Comte, Durkheim, etc. Comte's proposal of three-staged social development and Durkheim's discourse on the types of social solidarity and religious forms also more or less show historical principles and dialectical principles. Comte once pointed out clearly, "The positive spirit always regards the current state as the inevitable result of the previous evolution, and always attaches great importance to the reasonable evaluation of the past in order to examine the current human problems; thus, immediate escape from the pure criticism is incompatible with a sound view of history."²⁰ According to Comte, a sound view of history is a necessary principle for sociological research. He emphasized the understanding of real life in connections amid the past, present, and future, rather than pure criticism and simple negation ignoring historical connections. Comte also pointed out, "The basic consciousness of order is naturally inseparable from all empirical speculations. Through empirical thinking, researchers tend to reveal the connections between observations. And the main value of observation comes from its systematization."²¹ The systemized method involving studying connections is dialectics, which is called empirical speculation by Comte in the citation.

It is true that historical principles and dialectical principles are two indispensable principles to study social phenomena. Although these two principles are two analytical principles or interpretation principles in sociological research, they can all be found in real life. These two principles cannot be ignored. The important point is whether they can be used consciously. However, it should be noted that there is a big difference in people's understanding and use of historical principles and dialectical principles in different disciplines or different schools. When Comte presented the empirical speculation, in spite of his use of the German dialectics characterized by the two core concepts of connection and system, Comte wanted to draw a clear distinction with German philosophy based on his understanding of dialectics.

Comte added a dialectics empirical qualifier to dialectics. He intended to use the empirical principle to reinvent dialectics. Furthermore, Comte tried to change the abstract metaphysical dialectics into a down-to-earth empirical science. That is to say, he intended to combine the dialectics with the empirical principles including truth, usefulness, certainty, precision, etc. More importantly, dialectics needs to develop from absoluteness to relativeness, from abstraction to concreteness. It should be affirmed that Comte's efforts are of important academic and practical significance, and these efforts have been further promoted by some important representatives of contemporary Western sociology. For instance, in sociological works of Norbert Elias, Giddens, and Bourdieu, the combinations of historical principles, dialectics, and empirical research are clearly shown. It is precisely because of the combination that their sociological writings have made unprecedented progress on contemporary human social issues, and produced a profound impact.

When Liang Qichao researched on sociological studies, historical principles and dialectical principles were being carried forward in Western sociology. Not only did German sociology represented by Simmel and Weber adhere to clear historical

²⁰Comte. *On Positive Spirit*, p. 41.

²¹Comte. *On Positive Spirit*, p. 41.

principles and dialectical spirits, but also American social psychology represented by George Herbert Mead adhered to these two principles to a large extent. Liang Qichao, who made extensive studies of European and American society, could not be immune to their influence. However, when Liang Qichao was doing sociological studies with historical principles and dialectical principles, he did not neglect the empirical principles. In his discussion of sociological studies, the principle of “verifying with facts” was repeatedly used.

“Governing society with ‘qun shu’” is the core issue in Liang Qichao’s sociological study. Liang Qichao said, “The society governed by the sociology will be powerful. Otherwise, it will be a failure. Your failure is favorable to your competitors.”²² What is the “qun shu”? Liang Qichao said, “A Good governor of a country understands that the monarch and the civilians live in the same group or society. Since he understands that he is a member of the group, what he often does is to unite the people in a group rather than let the group break apart. This is what ‘qun shu’ is about.”²³ What is opposite to “qun shu” is “du shu” on which Liang Qichao made a more distinct discussion. He said, “What is du shu? Everyone realizes their existence while ignoring the existence of the world where he or she lives. The monarch cares about his or her palace, officials about their rank of nobility, farmers about their farmland, workers about their industry, merchants about their prices, individuals about their income, families about their affluence, tribes about their development, clans about their surnames, teachers about their teaching, student about their learning. All of these people total four hundred million and make up a country.”²⁴ It can be seen that “qun shu” and “du shu” are regarded by Liang Qichao as the two principles of ruling or governing the society. He recommended “qun shu” which unites people while denying “du shu” that divides the society.

“Qun shu” is the technique of ruling. It covers the tactics of the king or the ruler to integrate the society into one without letting it fall apart. However, in order to exercise these tactics, the head of the country must first understand that he is a member of the group. He has to understand the truth lies between the society and individuals, which is also the relationship between the society and individuals. Otherwise, it is impossible for him to consciously govern the society with “qun shu”. Therefore, governing with “qun shu” reflects the objective principle of managing things according to their nature. “Du shu” is something of self-interest shared by everyone, and it is also a technique used by party organizations that merely care about their local interests and disregard the overall social interests, which causes the disunity of the society. Therefore, socializing with “du shu” not only causes the ruler’s inability to effectively integrate the society, but also causes the members of the society and the social groups to merely care about their own interests and harm the overall interests of the society. Consequently, the society cannot exist as a whole, four hundred million Chinese people make four hundred million countries, and thus no country exists any longer.

²²Liang Qichao. *Collected Works from the Ice-Drinker’s Studio · Collection 2*, p. 4.

²³Liang Qichao. *Collected Works from the Ice-Drinker’s Studio · Collection 2*, p. 4.

²⁴Liang Qichao. *Collected Works from the Ice-Drinker’s Studio · Collection 2*, p. 4.

Liang Qichao did not completely deny “du shu”. He believed that the choices of governing tactics should be based on specific historical conditions. In Liang Qichao’s view, “In the turbulent society, du shu is often preferred while ‘qun shu’ (sociological tactics) is better in the peaceful society.”²⁵ The reason is that at different times, people have different psychological characteristics and qualities. In a turbulent society full of disorderly fight, people do not have a sense of collective. What they care about are merely their own personal interests rather than those of the overall society. At that time, one-sided implementation of ‘qun shu’ would not necessarily bring about social order. In this case, “du shu” is preferred. Liang Qichao’s “du” means autocratic. It is another case for a peaceful world. In the society where good social order prevails, not only does society maintain stable order, but people’s social consciousness and collective consciousness also increase. In this case, “the society must be governed with qun shu.”

Liang Qichao believed that the reason why Western society can achieve stable and sustainable development is directly related to its long-term practice of governance with “qun shu”. “The goodness of the ‘qun shu’ has been a hundred years since the era, and its ambition is also true.”²⁶ However, the experience of Western society cannot be simply copied. Because China and Western countries have different historical conditions, and their social members have different qualities, it cannot be simply copied. Otherwise you will get the opposite effect. He pointed out, “If we copy Western patterns on the basis of our conditions, we are disguising a sheep with the appearance of tiger. We need to adapt to the changes and make the right choice.”²⁷ Although governing with “qun shu” is a manifestation of social progress, when the society has not yet developed to a certain extent, people’s ideology still stays in a state when they merely care about self-interest rather than the society. In that case, a simple implementation of “qun shu” will produce the opposite result. Therefore, what is important is to improve the quality of the citizens.

Liang Qichao did not think that Westerners had done perfectly well in utilizing “qun shu” because he believed that they utilized “qun shu” merely in their own countries. Between countries, they still practice “du shu”, which disunites the world. Liang Qichao pointed out, “As far as I know, nations are ‘quns’ (societies) and the world can also be treated as a ‘qun’. In Western countries, the ‘qun shu’ is practiced merely within their own countries. In other words, ‘qun shu’ has not yet been used in the world as a society on the whole.”²⁸ The world is considered as a whole, within which “qun shu” should be practiced in order to achieve the harmony around the world. It manifests the influence of Kang Youwei’s Datong thought on Liang Qichao’s “qun xue”.

As Kang Youwei did in discussing social institutions in the *Pandect of Practical Reasoning and Public Law*, Liang Qichao also discussed his views on the concept of group and gregariousness from the perspective of natural axioms. He said, “The

²⁵Liang Qichao. *Collected Works from the Ice-Drinker’s Studio · Collection 2*, p. 4.

²⁶Liang Qichao. *Collected Works from the Ice-Drinker’s Studio · Collection 2*, p. 4.

²⁷Liang Qichao. *Collected Works from the Ice-Drinker’s Studio · Collection 2*, p. 4.

²⁸Liang Qichao. *Collected Works from the Ice-Drinker’s Studio · Collection 2*, p. 4.

theory concerning groups is the axiom of the world. The earth and the planets form a group, the sun and the stars make up a group. Within a group, they attract each other, and never allow any member to fall. Otherwise, the universe will be ruined. Sixty-four primary matters mix with each other irregularly subject to changes and produces various things.”²⁹ Here, Liang Qichao not only regarded the existence of groups and the trend of gregariousness as a natural law that is based on the inherent contradiction of things, namely, the dialectical relationship between “attractive force” and “repulsive force”.

Liang Qichao saw “attractive force” and “repulsive force”, the two contradictory opposites as the driving force for “neng qun” and “fen qun”. He said, “There are two forces in the world, with one as ‘attractive force’, and the other ‘repulsive force’. In the world, they are the only two forces whose combined sum remains unchanged. They will neither increase nor decrease. If one increases, the other will decrease. As a result, some can live and get on well with others with abundant interaction and cooperation, while others cannot get on well with other people. Moreover, some groups are powerful while some are weak. Those who are uncooperative will be surely defeated by those who are cooperative and united. Also, those who are weak will be acquired by means of merger by those who are powerful.”³⁰ In other words, the bigger the attractive force is, the smaller the repulsive force is. The attractive force is the power to live and cooperate with others. Therefore, the cooperative force will increase with the attractive force. When the attractive force of one thing increases, the attractive force of another thing will decline whose repulsive force will increase. Thus, those who have great attractive force can be cooperative and get on well with others, while those who have strong repulsive force will be disunited. Liang Qichao supported this point with a disc and a piece of magnet. He said, “When the magnet is put on a disc, the magnet will become sticky with the disc. As we move the magnet, the disc will be attracted to magnet. It means that the magnet has greater attractive force than the disc.”³¹ From what is discussed above, we can conclude that “neng qun” and “fen qun” is a pair that compete with each other. The increase of one presupposes the decrease of the other.

The attractive force of “neng qun” can evolve and develop. Species or groups evolve and develop at different paces. Therefore, the species or groups who are slower in evolution will be defeated by those who develop faster. “Since the beginning of the earth, there have been many different species on the earth. According to the law of natural evolution and alternation, the later groups will gradually become more powerful while the previous group will gradually be weaker. Westerner scientists name it natural competition.”³² Liang Qichao used the evolutionary theory of natural choice to interpret the importance of attractive force and “neng qun”, and believed in the greater role they play in social life. “In the old times, there are aborigines living in Americas, Africa, and Australia. However, after the visitors from foreign continents

²⁹Liang Qichao. *Collected Works from the Ice-Drinker's Studio · Collection 2*, pp. 4–5.

³⁰Liang Qichao. *Collected Works from the Ice-Drinker's Studio · Collection 2*, p. 5.

³¹Liang Qichao. *Collected Works from the Ice-Drinker's Studio · Collection 2*, p. 5.

³²Liang Qichao. *Collected Works from the Ice-Drinker's Studio · Collection 2*, p. 5.

came and settled there, these aborigines gradually disappear. Uncultivated groups failed in the competition with civilized groups. “The more advanced the world is, the greater the collective power is. The group whose collective power is not big enough will face the danger of being defeated.”³³

Liang Qichao also put forward the idea that the intensity of competition between different groups is in direct proportion to the degree of their closeness, which he believed is a law shared by human society and nature. He pointed out, “it is true that different species compete against each other. The closer they are to each other, the fiercer their competition will be.”³⁴ The “neng qun” or gregariousness determines the result of the competition between similar groups. Gregariousness or unity could help gather power and therefore strengthen its competitive force. Otherwise, their power would be reduced and consequently they will be destroyed. Liang Qichao also believed that the strength of the group should not be judged based solely on the size of the group. Some smaller groups, if they have stronger internal suction, can also obtain a stable position in the competition. “Weak nations like Denmark, Netherlands, Belgium, and Switzerland can stand amid the European powers, because their power of unity is not weaker than the great powers. Amid fierce competition, if their unity were not sufficient enough to keep them alive, they would have been gradually eroded and finally die out. If the Hui people in Turkey, the brown people in India, and the Miao people in the Americas, were not weak, they would have survived.”³⁵

Liang Qichao also discussed the issue of unity and disunity from the perspective of biological evolution, which is obviously influenced by Spencer and introduced by Yan Fu. Influenced by Spencer’s view of social organisms, Liang Qichao pointed out that social groups, like biological organisms, have their constituent elements that play their respective roles in social organisms. “In a group, each member is supposed to perform its respective functions and produce its power. If one member is missing, or the members do not cooperate with each other, the group will decline soon.”³⁶ When the organism is intact, the power of its function and vitality relies on their gregariousness. Thus, Liang Qichao regarded gregariousness as the primary element shared by human society and biological organisms in their development. “All those who are immortal satisfy the first sense of gregariousness.”³⁷

Liang Qichao even regarded gregariousness or unity and disunity as strategies for competition between groups. In his view, gregariousness is the priority for social survival and development of a group, and disunity is a deadly factor of extinction and failure for groups and society. Therefore, Liang Qichao pointed out, “There is no exception among the head of nations. The place where Shun managed became a town one year later and a capital three years later, and King Wu had three thousand civilians, because both of them could unite the nation. *Spring and Autumn Annals* says, ‘Liang disappears. As is said, ‘The fish is rotten and died.’ The extinction of a

³³Liang Qichao. *Collected Works from the Ice-Drinker’s Studio* · Collection 2, pp. 5–6.

³⁴Liang Qichao. *Collected Works from the Ice-Drinker’s Studio* · Collection 2, p. 6.

³⁵Liang Qichao. *Collected Works from the Ice-Drinker’s Studio* · Collection 2, p. 6.

³⁶Liang Qichao. *Collected Works from the Ice-Drinker’s Studio* · Collection 2, p. 5.

³⁷Liang Qichao. *Collected Works from the Ice-Drinker’s Studio* · Collection 2, p. 5.

nation is caused by disunity and conflict within its nation.”³⁸ In short, gregariousness makes a country while disunity perishes a country.

Liang Qichao's discussion on gregariousness and disunity is not profound theoretically, but it is far-reaching. On the one hand, Liang Qichao's exposition shows that he closely associated the study of sociology with the most important issues facing Chinese society. China was facing the danger of disintegration and was in a state of disunity when Liang Qichao accepted Kang Youwei's proposition of “Regarding group as the core and make corresponding reforms.” At the same time, he accepted Yan Fu's series of views on social gregariousness and regarded gregariousness as a primary factor for national survival and social development. Finally, he decided to write a book titled the *Study of Sociology* composed of ten articles comprising one hundred and twenty chapters centering on gregariousness and qunzhi. Therefore, although Liang Qichao's theory discussion on sociology is rare, his concern over Chinese society and his sense of mission can be clearly seen in his highly concise discourse. This is an obvious difference between Chinese sociology in its early days and Western positivistic sociology that advocates the exclusion of value judgments.

Liang Qichao, together with Kang Youwei and Yan Fu, regarded gregariousness as the core issue of sociology, which differentiated Chinese sociology from Western sociology in the early period. Although Western sociologists have also discussed social integration and group solidarity from various perspectives, Durkheim's discourse on mechanical solidarity and organic solidarity of society, Simmel's discussion on the integration and internal relations among social groups, to name a few, these discussions, in essence, are quite similar to Liang Qichao's discussions on gregariousness. However, no matter how complete or profound these Western proposals are, the judgments on the fundamental driving force made by Western sociologists for social development are different from those made by Chinese scholars such as Liang Qichao.

A common view among Western sociologists is that social division of labor and social differentiation are the most basic prerequisites and the most basic driving force for social development. Therefore, Durkheim believed that only when organic solidarity is based on detailed social division of labor can it be efficient solidarity of vitality, stability, and positive function; on the contrary, mechanical solidarity in a traditional society with unclear division of labor and low degree of differentiation, no matter how neat and rigorous the form is, is fragile and lacks vitality. Weber also emphasized the issue of coordination and integration within the organization when discussing the bureaucracy. However, like Durkheim, he also believed that a high degree of division of labor is a prerequisite for the efficient and standardized organization. According to Marx, Vilfredo Pareto, and Talcott Parsons, differentiation or division of labor is the priority for social development.

In China, where labor division and social differentiation are very inadequate, Liang Qichao, et al. did not merely follow the Western scholars' emphasis on division of labor and differentiation, but instead were keen on gregariousness. Of course, the division of labor or differentiation is different from gregariousness in denotation.

³⁸Liang Qichao. *Collected Works from the Ice-Drinker's Studio · Collection 2*, p. 7.

Labor division and differentiation are viewed mainly in terms of social roles and social functions, while the gregariousness is viewed mainly in terms of the connection between members of society or group. However, differentiation and gregariousness, as the two starting points of sociological research, are still opposite to each other in some aspects. The former emphasizes division, while the latter stresses solidarity or unity. Western sociologists' view of seeing differentiation as the basis of social development is widely used as universal principles. In contrast, Chinese sociologists such as Liang Qichao also regard gregariousness as a universal social law. Therefore, it cannot be concealed that they are contradictory in terms of the starting point.

5.3 “New Historiography” Studying the Sociological Evolution

According to the criteria of traditional discipline classification, the main field of Liang Qichao's academic research is historiography rather than sociology. However, Liang Qichao's view of historiography is a new historical view that presents a revolutionary challenge to traditional historiography, and as for his basic viewpoints and methodological principles, it can be found that the “new historiography” he advocated is historical sociology. It can even be said that Liang Qichao's series of expositions on “new historiography” is his most important contribution to Chinese sociology. Therefore, studying Liang Qichao's “new historiography” is an important task in the study of Chinese sociological history.

Liang Qichao read many Chinese historical literature and left many important documents in the field of Chinese historiography, such as *On the Trend of Chinese Academic Thought Change* (1902), *New Historiography* (1902), *On the History of Chinese Autocratic Evolution* (1902), *On the Success and Failure of the Compilation of Chinese Statute Law* (1904), *Memoirs of the Coup d'Etat of 1898* (1898), *Intellectual Trends in the Ch'ing Period* (1920), *The History of Political Thoughts in the Pre-Qin Dynasty* (1921), *Methodology in the Study of Chinese History* (1921), *Chinese Literature and Its History* (1924), *China's Nearly Three Hundred Years of Academic History* (1924), *Chinese Cultural History* (1927), *Methodology in the Study of Chinese History* (Supplement) (1926, 1927), and so on, and these important documents are valuable materials for later generations to study the changes of Chinese history, especially modern history, and the new historical thoughts repeatedly discussed therein have direct reference significance for the construction of Chinese historical sociology.

Liang Qichao was very passionate about studying Chinese history and believed that Chinese history contains rich ideas and splendid culture, and if it is deeply explored, it will definitely play a huge role in promoting the wisdom of the people and promoting modernization. However, he argued that in order to carry out historical research that is beneficial to the evolution of Chinese society, it is necessary to carry out a thorough transformation of Chinese traditional historiography. Otherwise,

Chinese historical research will not benefit the real society, and will be completely driven out of the circle of learning within ten years.”³⁹ He said, “Among the Western disciplines today, historiography is the only discipline developed in China. The scholars engaged in historiography have the most profound knowledge and are the most important people. They set a good example for the nation and provide the source of patriotism. The reason why the European nationalism is so developed and the countries are so progressively civilized is partially related to historiography. However, there is no such discipline in the country in trouble. If there is history in such country, won't the people be united? Won't the social security be improved? Although the historiography is very popular in China, which is just a phenomenon, what are the results?”⁴⁰ Liang Qichao gave the answer that there are four major symptoms in Chinese history:

“First: People in mind know that there is an imperial court but do not know there is a state.”⁴¹ Liang Qichao believed that under the feudal autocratic system, not only the editors of Chinese history were imperial court officials, but the history of compilation was subject to strict restrictions by the emperors; moreover, the historians always regarded the history of the imperial court as the whole of Chinese history in their thoughts. “The historians in China thought that the monarch himself is the only owner of the world, and therefore, what the monarch did constitutes the history; however, such history is about why a dynasty is established, governed and lost.”⁴² From the standpoint of nationalism, Liang Qichao looked at the relationship between the imperial court and the state, arguing that the imperial court is not equal to the state, the state provides a living space or life organization of the nation, while the imperial court is only the representative of the state. He said, “If a state is compared to be a firm, the imperial court will be the office of such firm, and the person holding the imperial court's power will be the general office of the firm. If a state is compared to be a village, the imperial court will be the hall of such a village, and the person who holds the imperial court's power will be the head of the hall. Is the office set up for the firm? Is the firm set up for the office? Is the hall set up for the village? Is the village set up for the hall? It is easy to know without discussion.”⁴³ Therefore, replacing the history of a country with the history of an imperial court is a partial, unfair, incomplete viewpoint, and it is unable to understand the historical development of the entire nation.

“Second: People in mind know that there is an individual but do not know there is a group.”⁴⁴ Yan Liangqi believed that history is actually formed by the group activities. Individual heroes are only representatives of the group activities. If there is no historical stage created by the group activities, heroes will have no place to show off themselves. Therefore, it is impossible to record the heroes' individual

³⁹Liang Qichao. *Collected Works from the Ice-Drinker's Studio · Special Collection* 73, p. 28.

⁴⁰Liang Qichao. *Collected Works from the Ice-Drinker's Studio · Special Collection* 9, p. 1.

⁴¹Liang Qichao. *Collected Works from the Ice-Drinker's Studio · Special Collection* 9, p. 2.

⁴²Liang Qichao. *Collected Works from the Ice-Drinker's Studio · Special Collection* 9, p. 3.

⁴³Liang Qichao. *Collected Works from the Ice-Drinker's Studio · Special Collection* 4, pp. 16–17.

⁴⁴Liang Qichao. *Collected Works from the Ice-Drinker's Studio · Special Collection* 9, p. 3.

behaviors without the group and the stage created thereby. Otherwise, “the history of China will be a biography, containing articles in a disorderly manner, like the stone piled everywhere on the coast. In essence, it is just a collection containing countless epitaphs.”⁴⁵ In Liang Qichao’s view, if you want to write a history that is realistic, you should describe the evolution of the group as the main content. He advocated, “A noble historian is noble because he/she records how the people in a group communicate with, compete with and unify each other, which can provide a vivid description of how the people in a group live like the evolution to the readers so that they could love their group and treat it in a friendly manner.”⁴⁶

“Third: People in mind know that there were social affairs in the past but do not know there are social affairs today.”⁴⁷ Liang Qichao believed that history should not attach more importance to the ancient events than the modern ones, nor should it “compile songs and dances for a number of ancient events”,⁴⁸ but should focus on documenting the changes in modern social events. Western history pays attention to the records of contemporary historical facts, and therefore, the nearer the time, the more details it records. On the contrary, in China, the events that happened during a dynasty will generally not be recorded and studied by historiography. “Today, we want to study the facts that happened in the past 268 years, but there is no book about that.”⁴⁹ Liang Qichao believed that the reason lies in the autocracy of the feudal dynasty, which makes history exclusive to the imperial court and limits the study of historical events in folk history.

“Fourth: The facts but not the ideals are known.”⁵⁰ Liang Qichao’s ideal refers to the ideological consciousness in historical facts and the fact that historical events are composed of people’s social activities, where people’s social activities take place under the control of certain ideological consciousness or spiritual pursuit. By revealing the ideological consciousness and spiritual pursuit in historical events, we can clearly understand the profound laws in historical facts, giving useful lessons to future generations. “What is the spirit of history? Ideal. There are small groups in large groups and short times in long times, and there are clues and principles for the communication between groups and the continuation between times. How can historians decipher it? A known cause will produce a corresponding result, and therefore, what happened in the past predicts what will happen in the future; if they are recorded, it will benefit the world.”⁵¹

⁴⁵Liang Qichao. *Collected Works from the Ice-Drinker’s Studio · Special Collection* 9, p. 3.

⁴⁶Liang Qichao. *Collected Works from the Ice-Drinker’s Studio · Special Collection* 9, p. 3.

⁴⁷Liang Qichao. *Collected Works from the Ice-Drinker’s Studio · Special Collection* 9, p. 3.

⁴⁸Liang Qichao. *Collected Works from the Ice-Drinker’s Studio · Special Collection* 9, p. 3.

⁴⁹Liang Qichao. *Collected Works from the Ice-Drinker’s Studio · Special Collection* 9, p. 4.

⁵⁰Liang Qichao. *Collected Works from the Ice-Drinker’s Studio · Special Collection* 9, p. 4.

⁵¹Liang Qichao. *Collected Works from the Ice-Drinker’s Studio · Special Collection* 9, p. 4.

Liang Qichao's four criticisms on traditional historiography not only reveal the drawbacks of traditional historiography, but also express his new historiography principles with the characteristics of nationalism, realism, rationalism, and community-centeredness. On the basis of these four criticisms, Liang Qichao put forward the viewpoint of creating a new historiography.

"First, history is to narrate the phenomenon of evolution."⁵² Liang Qichao believed that there are two kinds of phenomena in the universe, one is circular, and the other is evolutionary. It is a natural phenomenon for the circular phenomenon that it starts from one cycle to another, such as the change of seasons and the movement of celestial bodies. The discipline that studies the circular phenomenon is "natural science"; Evolutionary phenomenon develops endlessly in one direction. The discipline that studies such phenomenon is called historiography. "From this point of view, it is often difficult to study any discipline in the field of history (such as political science, sociology, leveling,⁵³ and science of religion)."⁵⁴ It is worth noting here that Liang Qichao regarded all phenomena of evolution and development as objects of historical research, of course, mainly social phenomena, which have greatly expanded his vision of historiography. In fact, he included all human social phenomena in the vision of historical research, and new historiography has thus become a social science in a broad sense.

Although Liang Qichao did not directly incorporate political science, sociology, economics, and science of religion into the scope of historiography, saying that they are close to the scope of historiography, we can conclude from Liang Qichao's further exposition that he made these disciplines cross-linked with historiography. He said, "If the boundaries are defined, it could be known that the growth, development and advancement of all things will fall within the scope of history. Otherwise, they cannot fall within the scope of history."⁵⁵ This is a universal principle. In Liang Qichao's view, natural phenomena are recurring, which belong to the scope of natural science undoubtedly. Some of social phenomena are not the state of development and evolution. "Although they are born in a certain order, they will surpass their limitations in one year, ten years or a hundred years, and return to their original state." Life and death are the phenomena of real circulation, so physics, physiology, and so on are all within the scope of natural science, not history."⁵⁶ That is to say, Liang Qichao believed that historiography should study the phenomena of evolution and development in social phenomena. In the fields of politics, sociology, economics, and science of religion, all the phenomena of development and change belong to the research object of history. In this way, the relationship between historiography and other disciplines of Humanities and social sciences is not a clear-cut antagonistic relationship, but an overlapping, crossing, compatible relationship. Therefore, when Liang Qichao discussed the methodological principles of new historiography, he essentially also

⁵²Liang Qichao. *Collected Works from the Ice-Drinker's Studio · Special Collection* 9, p. 7.

⁵³Leveling is economics.

⁵⁴Liang Qichao. *Collected Works from the Ice-Drinker's Studio · Special Collection* 9, p. 8.

⁵⁵Liang Qichao. *Collected Works from the Ice-Drinker's Studio · Special Collection* 9, p. 8.

⁵⁶Liang Qichao. *Collected Works from the Ice-Drinker's Studio · Special Collection* 9, p. 8.

covered the methodological principles of other disciplines of humanities and social sciences.

“First, history is to narrate the phenomenon of evolution.”⁵⁷ On the basis of the previous principle, this principle further emphasizes that the study of history should focus on population evolution. Liang Qichao’s point of view is that there are also phenomena of evolution and development in nature. Therefore, historiography in a broad sense should also take the phenomena of development and change of nature into its own vision; otherwise, it cannot complete its task. However, historiography in a narrow sense can exclude the phenomenon of evolution in nature and only study the phenomenon of human evolution. Moreover, the evolution of human beings can only be grasped through the social activities, while the diet, living, age, illness, and death of individuals are not enough to reveal the evolution of human beings. “To seek the trace of evolution, you must study the social activities. If human beings live alone, there will be no evolution, nor will there be history. For the development of human beings, it is development of a group, but not that of an individual.”⁵⁸

Here again, it is shown that Liang Qichao’s view of historiography is closely related to his view of sociology. It can even be said that his view of historiography is a new historiography with sociology as its main content. The difference is that sociology emphasizes more on the horizontal relationship of the group, while historiography emphasizes only the vertical process of the society. Nevertheless, Liang Qichao paid attention to revealing the transverse relationship between societies or within a group as he did in sociology, even when he examined the sociological issues in the course of history. He said, “However, there are often things that Duke Zhou, Confucius, Plato and Aristotle⁵⁹ can’t know or do, how can a suckling child know and do today? To join a group, people intend to attain happiness and benefits only; relying the group to communicate, compare, compete, learn, imitate, reckon, maintain, connect, pass down and transform can improve wisdom, abilities and morality.... Nevertheless, the most noticeable in history is the social events. If they are not related to the group, regardless of what is said and done, they will not necessarily fall within the scope of history.”⁶⁰

“Third, history is to narrate the phenomenon of evolution and seek the axioms and general rules.”⁶¹ This is also a principle that Liang Qichao believed must be followed in sociology. Liang Qichao believed that academic research must involve both subjective and objective aspects. Only when the researchers ‘subjective consciousness and objective objects are unified, can academic research make great achievements. This is more important for historiography, because the phenomena facing historiography are extremely complex. If historiography cannot reveal the “axioms and general rules” contained in historical events with its ideological wisdom, then historiography can

⁵⁷Liang Qichao. *Collected Works from the Ice-Drinker’s Studio · Special Collection 9*, p. 9.

⁵⁸Liang Qichao. *Collected Works from the Ice-Drinker’s Studio · Special Collection 9*, p. 9.

⁵⁹It refers to Duke Zhou, Confucius, Plato and Aristotle.

⁶⁰Liang Qichao. *Collected Works from the Ice-Drinker’s Studio · Special Collection 9*, p. 9.

⁶¹Liang Qichao. *Collected Works from the Ice-Drinker’s Studio · Special Collection 9*, p. 10.

only list the objective phenomena simply, and cannot provide a reference for future generations.

The essence of Liang Qichao's "axioms and general rules" is what is commonly called the objective law and the commonly accepted convention, while emphasizing that historiography should grasp the universal axioms and general rules. Its purpose is not only to exclude the subjective arbitrariness of historiography research, but also to improve the participation of historiography research in real life, because only the universal research can play a broad and long-term role in reality. "We seek the axioms and general rules not for their beautiful theories but for pragmatism." Historians are also evolutionists who predict the future by the evolution of the past.⁶²

Later, Liang Qichao made a more detailed exposition of his new historical viewpoint in the *Methodology in the Study of Chinese History* showing a closer connection between his historical viewpoints and his sociological viewpoints. He went on to discuss the research object of historiography. He said, "What is historian? He or she describes the continuing activities of human society and proofreads their achievements. He or she seeks the cause-and-effect relationship, witnessing the modern ordinary people's activities." Here, Liang Qichao put forward an important concept which can be regarded as Historical Sociology—the body and phase of activity. He first explained the concept of activity: "Human beings perform activities for survival or survive for activities; in case of no activities, humanity almost disappears."⁶³ It can be seen that the concept of activity is not different from the social action discussed in sociology. Then he explained the body and phase of the activity: "For every activity, the actor is the body and the object is the phase."⁶⁴ The body is the actor, while the phase is the various phenomena that the actor and his or her activities show. Liang Qichao further interpreted the phase as the product and modality of the activity. Therefore, the body and phase of activity express the rich meanings of social activists, activity performance, activity products, and the process of their development.

Liang Qichao believed that, because people's activities in history have two aspects of body and phase, historians should not regard activities in history as simple matters. Activities in history have complex structures, so historiography should carry out structural analysis of historical activities. "History is an organized narrator, taking into account the bodies and phases of activities. Therefore, it is a non-active matter."⁶⁵ Here, the concept of structure and the method of structure theory have been introduced, which further shows the close connection between Liang Qichao's historical theory and sociology. Structure and structural analysis are the basic concepts and main methods of sociology. Liang Qichao apparently introduced structure and structural analysis into the study of history from sociology.

It is also worth noting that Liang Qichao raised the issue of "the total achievements of activities and their causality". The so-called "total achievement" refers to: "There

⁶²Liang Qichao. *Collected Works from the Ice-Drinker's Studio · Special Collection* 9, p. 11.

⁶³Liang Qichao. *Collected Works from the Ice-Drinker's Studio · Special Collection* 73, p. 1.

⁶⁴Liang Qichao. *Collected Works from the Ice-Drinker's Studio · Special Collection* 73, p. 1.

⁶⁵Liang Qichao. *Collected Works from the Ice-Drinker's Studio · Special Collection* 73, p. 1.

must be achievements in the event and then you can make records, not to speak. However, for a person with achievements, he or she is not assessed based on its success or failure in career, but his or her contribution to the whole society on the records. In essence, it is the general ledger.”⁶⁶ There are two inspirations: First, the study of history, in fact, more than historiography, and sociology seems to have the problem of whether to study social activities with achievements; Second, attention should be paid to generalizing and evaluating the evolution of social development.

Liang Qichao proposed that historiography is not to study all human activities, but to study those activities with achievements. This is a selective study, that is to say, those negative human activities are not in the research object of historiography. Whether this idea is feasible or not is questionable. For example, Yuan Shikai’s restoration of the imperial system is obviously not an activity with achievements, but is this not worth studying? Actually it is not, because there are still some negative factors that are worth learning. Of course, if you do not just understand the grades from a positive perspective, and the results are all achievements, this may be easy to make sense. However, it is worthwhile to learn that all disciplines should focus on the study of positive activities, and should not only stay on a negative stand to expose the dark aspects of society. Because human society is the mainstream in the positive and positive aspects, and the activities that leave meaningful results are the mainstream. Therefore, it is realistic to take active human activities as the main research content.

To summarize the total scores of human activities, Liang Qichao referred to the unity of individual performances and the achievements and contributions of people as group and society. This is consistent with the previous point of view that emphasizes the status and role of the group. It is a basic viewpoint of Liang Qichao to grasp the development and evolution of society from both personal and social aspects, which reflects the most fundamental problems of Chinese society, and needs to be further discussed later.

After Liang Qichao made the above discussion, he also discussed the main content of Chinese historical research. From this discussion, it is also clear that he was indeed pursuing a new discipline of history and sociology—historical sociology. He listed 22 pieces of main contents of Chinese historiography, covering the economic, political, and cultural life of Chinese society. From the perspective of disciplinary relevance, the most overlapping content with sociology, such as ethnic migration and national integration, cultural exchanges and conflicts of ideas, class institutions and organizations, living conditions and living standards, population fertility and population mobility, social differentiation and class struggle are all core contents of sociological research.⁶⁷

Liang Qichao also summarized the fundamental purpose of his 22 research missions: “First, it shows the traces of the establishment and development of the Chinese nation, and it is recommended that it can preserve the grand cause and see if it has a sign of decline; Second, explain what the basic culture of the Chinese nation is, how the conflict between my ethnic group and others is and what the result is. Third,

⁶⁶Liang Qichao. *Collected Works from the Ice-Drinker’s Studio · Special Collection* 73, p. 2.

⁶⁷Liang Qichao. *Collected Works from the Ice-Drinker’s Studio · Special Collection* 73, pp. 5–7.

explain what the basic culture of the Chinese nation is. How it interacted with other parts of culture in the world. Fourth, explain the position and characteristics of the Chinese nation in the whole humanity, and its future responsibility to all mankind.”⁶⁸

After the mission and purpose were clear, Liang Qichao also proposed ways to complete these tasks and objectives—revealing the causal relationship of the “Historical Group” activities. Kang Youwei thought:

“First, a ‘historical group’ should be drawn as the research scope. In the name of the historical group, which I created, is slightly similar to the meaning of a record of historical events’.”⁶⁹ The historical group created by Liang Qichao has both meanings in time and space, that is, the researcher’s grasp of the activities of a certain social group in a certain historical period, such as “the world war of 1914–1919” and “Chinese nation’s negotiations with the Xiongnu (an ancient nationality in China) before two millenniums”, which have both a time span and an activity group performance. It can be seen that the historical research object is grasped by the concept of historical group, so that the historiography has entered a real and specific social level, which has both historical clues and spatial presence. Moreover, the historical group can choose itself because of the research needs, so that the history research has flexibility.

“Second, the organization of the group member and the capture of the group entity.”⁷⁰ This shows that Liang Qichao emphasized that it is necessary to grasp the integrity of the historical group from the relationship between the part and the whole and pay attention to the organic connection of its components. He pointed out, “The so-called ‘group members’ are the various historical materials that make up this historical group. ... The so-called ‘group entity’, this group of historical sites, are combined into a life—alive, the whole. The writer of the history must take this whole part of the ‘whole and live’ in the mind. However, it is not easy to do it. In addition to analytical research, intuitiveness is still needed.”⁷¹

“Third, always pay attention to the relationships outside the group.”⁷² Liang Qichao was still insisting on the relationship between the historical groups from the dialectical universal connection. He believed that the historical group is a kind of division for the convenience of research, but in the actual process, social groups are not independent, but interdependent and mutually interacted or affected with each other and cannot be separated and separated. What a group did is often produced by the interaction with or influence from by the other groups. “Therefore, to known the truth of a historical group, we should look at the group in another different way.”⁷³ Relationships outside the group can be divided by time and space, which involve political, social, economic, and cultural social life.

⁶⁸Liang Qichao. *Collected Works from the Ice-Drinker's Studio · Special Collection* 73, p. 7.

⁶⁹Liang Qichao. *Collected Works from the Ice-Drinker's Studio · Special Collection* 73, p. 118.

⁷⁰Liang Qichao. *Collected Works from the Ice-Drinker's Studio · Special Collection* 73, p. 118.

⁷¹Liang Qichao. *Collected Works from the Ice-Drinker's Studio · Special Collection* 73, p. 118.

⁷²Liang Qichao. *Collected Works from the Ice-Drinker's Studio · Special Collection* 73, p. 118.

⁷³Liang Qichao. *Collected Works from the Ice-Drinker's Studio · Special Collection* 73, p. 119.

“Fourth, recognize the ‘personality’ of each of the historical groups.”⁷⁴ The so-called “personality” refers to a person who is dominant in the historical group or group activities and can influence the overall situation. Liang Qichao believed that although the historical group is formed by the actions of the majority, the group members have different positions in the group. The activities of any group are always dominated by a certain person or some people. They are not only the promoter of changes in the group movement, but also a representative of the group’s purpose, will, and behavior. “The person dominant in the position is the ‘personality’ in the history.”⁷⁵ Emphasizing the role of individual historical figures embodies Liang Qichao’s principle that the relationship between individuals and groups or individuals and society is the core issue of studying social progress.

“Fifth, study the basics of core of historical sites.”⁷⁶ This is to emphasize the basic role of individual psychological activities in the historical group. Liang Qichao’s point of view is that historical sites or historical groups are carried out under the influence of human psychological activities. Therefore, studying the psychological activities of the “personality” that govern the group, such as feelings, emotions, attitudes, interests, and personality, is very important. He also believed that people’s psychological activities are very complicated and cannot be treated simply. He proposed to grasp from both positive and negative aspects: The positive aspect is to pay attention to the “personality” to actively influence the members of the society to actively participate in group actions with their personal charisma; The negative aspect is to pay attention to the “personality” to take advantage of the negative security mentality of members of society, expand their power, improve their status, and gain their own interests.

“Sixth, study the basics of a historical artifact.”⁷⁷ The things that Liang Qichao mentioned are similar to those defined by Durkheim. He said, “What is a thing? It is the environment that is treated with the mind. To be more specific, it is the state of nature, inherited customs, laws, political phenomenon, economic phenomenon, resistance to other society in mind.”⁷⁸ It can be seen that what Liang Qichao said is not a thing that exists as an entity, but an externality that is relative to psychological phenomena, that is, what Durkheim called objective, external, and mandatory fact to human psychology.

From Liang Qichao’s definition of the historical things, it can be found that he had an important connection with Durkheim’s understanding of social phenomena other than psychology. Durkheim pointed out, “What is a thing on earth? Just as things that are known from the outside are opposite to things that are known from the inside, and things and ideas are also opposite. Any cognitive object that intelligence cannot understand naturally; Everything that we cannot form a precise concept with a simple

⁷⁴Liang Qichao. *Collected Works from the Ice-Drinker’s Studio · Special Collection* 73, p. 119.

⁷⁵Liang Qichao. *Collected Works from the Ice-Drinker’s Studio · Special Collection* 73, p. 119.

⁷⁶Liang Qichao. *Collected Works from the Ice-Drinker’s Studio · Special Collection* 73, p. 120.

⁷⁷Liang Qichao. *Collected Works from the Ice-Drinker’s Studio · Special Collection* 73, p. 121.

⁷⁸Liang Qichao. *Collected Works from the Ice-Drinker’s Studio · Special Collection* 73, p. 122.

psychoanalytic approach; It is a thing that can only be finally understood on condition that the spirit is freed from self and through observation and experimentation, gradually shifts from the most superficial and easiest sign to the indescribable and deepest sign. Therefore, to examine a certain kind of facts as objects is not to classify them into this or that real category, but to observe them with a certain mentality.”⁷⁹

You will discover that after comparison of Liang Qichao's definition of historical things with Durkheim's definition of social facts, they are very similar. Liang Qichao did not mention Durkheim's influence on the social facts as objects. Is this the same concept that Liang Qichao himself derived from Durkheim's basic concept of empirical sociology? Although it is not ruled out that this is possible, Liang Qichao had extensively read Western academic works and had a strong interest in sociology. In particular, Durkheim's view on the sociological method published in 1895 was fully elaborated, while Liang Qichao's views were published in 1922; he is likely to be influenced by Durkheim to discuss the views of historical sites, perhaps indirectly by Durkheim's influences through other scholars' discussions.

“Seventh, measure the limits of both possibilities from the perspectives of mind and thing.”⁸⁰ Liang Qichao believed that the historical process is essentially a process in which people change foreign objects under the control of their own ideological consciousness. He called it the process of conquering the thing with the mind. The questions raised by Liang Qichao are: Is there a limit to the possibility of conquering the thing with the mind? Is there a limit to the possibility that the thing is conquered by the mind? His answer is: “If the infinite universe is treated as a history, it is limitless; If it is from the points of view of ‘then’ and ‘here’, then both have clear limits. Within the double limits, the degree of progress of the mind is compared with the degree of obstacle of the thing to determine if the historical direction is right or wrong.”⁸¹ Here, Liang Qichao was expounding the boundary between the mind and the thing from the infinite and finite dialectical relationship.

“Eighth, observe the object of mind.”⁸² Liang Qichao put forward the task of revealing causality in historical research. He said, “The casualty depicts clearly the relationship between cause and effect. The casualty of historical site is constant and complex and even incredible, and without deep observation and close exploration, the inference is rarely correct.”⁸³ Taking the Righteous Harmony Society as an example, he discussed the complexity of casualty, and elaborated on the concept or view point of “kinship (direct destiny)” and “intermediate destiny (indirect destiny)”, “main destiny” and “assistant destiny”, “the cause and the destiny interacts with each other to produce the ‘result’”, “the cause and the destiny produce the result and then the result becomes another cause”.⁸⁴

⁷⁹Durkheim. *The Rules of Sociological Method*, p. 7.

⁸⁰Liang Qichao. *Collected Works from the Ice-Drinker's Studio · Special Collection 73*, p. 122.

⁸¹Liang Qichao. *Collected Works from the Ice-Drinker's Studio · Special Collection 73*, p. 122.

⁸²Liang Qichao. *Collected Works from the Ice-Drinker's Studio · Special Collection 73*, p. 123.

⁸³Liang Qichao. *Collected Works from the Ice-Drinker's Studio · Special Collection 73*, p. 123.

⁸⁴Liang Qichao. *Collected Works from the Ice-Drinker's Studio · Special Collection 73*, pp. 123–126.

From the above eight-point discussion of Liang Qichao's research on the causal relationship of historical groups, it is more clearly shown that his research is closely related to sociology. This close relationship is not only reflected in the research object—the historical group, but also in the research method—focusing on the seven relationships of the historical group, that is, internal relationship between the constituent elements of the historical group as a whole, external relationship between different historical groups, relationship between historical figures of the historical group and the historical group, positive and negative psychological effects of the historical group, physical environment of the historical group, the limitations of the function of the mind and the thing, and cause and effect of the historical group.

Liang Qichao not only expounded the methodological principles of historical sociology, but also used them to discuss social-historical phenomena. The most representative work is his *Chinese Cultural History* written in 1926. This work is a typical one about historical sociology. It seems to be an unfinished work, because there is only one article, social organization. This work contains eight chapters that address issues in the sociological vision of matriarchal and patriarchal society, marriage, family and patriarchal clan system, surname, class, township governance, city, etc. In the discussion of each chapter, Liang Qichao often quoted sociological viewpoints, showing a strong sense of sociology. Liang Qichao's discourse has always been carried out in the vertical and horizontal relationship between history and reality. It not only pays attention to historical process investigation, but also pays attention to structural analysis, institutional analysis, and functional investigation of various issues. Therefore, Liang Qichao's *Chinese Cultural History* can be regarded as an important historical sociology work.

In short, Liang Qichao's new historiography is a fusion of history and sociology. He incorporated sociology into historiography and incorporated the discipline innovation from the historical perspective into sociology. The result is the construction of Chinese historical sociology. Although Liang Qichao himself did not propose the concept of historical sociology, his purpose was to reform historiography and required that historical research be directed to social life with social groups as the main content; however, just like Durkheim did not care about whether to propose sociological concepts, Liang Qichao, according to whether the content of sociology is discussed and whether the basic principles of sociological research are clarified, regarded that Montesquieu and Rousseau were pioneers of sociology; we can also rely on Liang Qichao's clear discussion on basic content and basic principles of historical sociology to identify him as a pioneer of Chinese historical sociology, and even as the founder of Chinese historical sociology.

The self-definition of contemporary historical sociology can also show that Liang Qichao indeed made a pioneering contribution to Chinese historical sociology. Dennis Smith, a British historical sociologist, made a clear summary of the disciplinary nature and evolution of historical sociology. He said, “In short, historical sociology is to study the past with the aim of exploring how society works and changes. ... Some historians and sociologists are committed to the development of historical sociology, exploring the interpenetration of past and present, events and operations, actions

and structures. They strive to combine clarification of concepts, comparative induction and exploration experience.”⁸⁵ Needless to say, Dennis Smith's definition of the essence of historical sociology is fully reflected in Liang Qichao's rich discourse on new historiography.

Like many historical sociologists, Dennis Smith believed that sociological research should be closely integrated with historical research, which is evident for classical sociologists. He believed that the historical sociology that combines sociology with historiography has experienced two rounds of changes. “The first round lasts for a long time, from Montesquieu and David Hume, Alexis de Tocqueville and Marx to Durkheim and Weber and finally fell into the right-wing and left-wing totalitarian walls in the late 1920s.”⁸⁶ Since the 1960s, historical sociology has re-emerged, ushering a second wave in the writings of Elias, Foucault, Habermas, and Giddens.

It is also a coincidence that, as historical sociology declined in the West, Liang Qichao was carrying forward the principles and methods of historical sociology in China. Later, Pan Guangdan, Liang Shu, Fei Xiaotong, etc., also paid great attention to combining sociological research with historical studies. Especially worth mentioning is the historian Zhou Gucheng, who published three works from 1930 to 1933: *The Structure of Chinese Society* (1930), *Changes in Chinese Society* (1931), *The Status Quo of Chinese Society* (1933). In these three works, Zhou Gucheng extensively discussed the structure, historical development, and realistic contradictions of Chinese society from the close connection between history and reality, leaving a rich historical sociology thought for future generations. Regrettably, Zhou Gucheng's contribution to historical sociology has long been ignorant.

5.4 Nation-State Theory in the Transitional Era

Liang Qichao regarded the Chinese society he faced as a transitional era. This is the basic premise for his formation and publication of various academic views. In particular, the theoretical views on sociology are based on this basic judgment. The so-called transitional era is a historical period of rapid social change between the unchanging and the changed. Liang Qichao said, “China today is the China in the transitional era. The transition has broad and narrow meanings. In a broad sense, it is non-transitional era of the world at any time and place. The population and the ranks evolved. For example, water flows constantly wave after wave, and therefore, there is no end to progress, that is, the transition is endless. If there is no transition in a day, then humans will almost disappear. In a narrow sense, there is often a period of pauses and transitions among the group, which are mutually reinforcing and mutually contiguous, and it is transition phase. When each wave reaches its peak, this is the

⁸⁵Denis (2000, p. 4).

⁸⁶Denis (2000, pp. 2–3).

phase of pause.”⁸⁷ It can be seen that in the long human history, human society is in transition all the time, but for a certain group, there is a relatively calm and complex transition, while Chinese society is in this narrow transition period.

In Liang Qichao's view, the changes in the transitional era are general, and profound changes would be made in politics, culture, and even customs and people's psychological state. “The status quo of China today is like running a boat that initially sails off the coast and midway, that is, the time when it just leaves one bank and has not arrived at the other bank. In a broad sense, the people hate the dictatorship but have not organized a new polity to replace it. It is also a political transitional era; the scholars criticize the old learning with no fresh ideas and shortcomings, but have not opened up new academic circle to replace it. It is also the transitional era of learning; the society is both tired of the customs with three cardinal bondings and false rites, but has not studied the new morality to replace it. It is also the transitional era of ideal customs. In a narrow sense, the cases have been burned, and there is no new code; the imperial examination system is changing, and there is no new education; the culprits are punished without new talents; Beijing is ruined and there is no new capital.”⁸⁸

Liang Qichao also discussed the status and living conditions of everyone in the transition era. In his view, the transition era is a historical period of hope and risk. On the one hand, rapid changes have given birth to unlimited vitality. As long as you work hard, you can seize opportunities and achieve rapid development. “Only in the transition era could the Kun (a big fish in the ancient legend) and Peng (a large bird in the ancient legend) travel south for 90,000 miles and break; Rivers will finally flow into the sea after thousands of miles; The impressive manner of a great country has a promising future...., in the transitional era, it provides a great stage for the heroes of the ages, which is a necessary road for the nations to survive from death to birth, from bad luck to good luck, and from poor to rich. How beautiful is the transition era.”⁸⁹ However, opportunities and risks coexist. Liang Qichao also pointed out, “People curb the transitional era and are afraid of it. In case of temporary shortage, they will suffer from hunger and cannot move on but will in a tight corner; a ship cannot be pulled to the shore due to strong wind, otherwise it will be damaged. ... Moreover, the national transition depends on the individual transition and its interests, whichever is more serious. If the target is incorrect, it may be committing suicide; if the navigated road is not correct, you will be lost. Therefore, the transitional era determines if the nationals survive or die, exploit or are exploited, slave or are slaved, become poor or rich, etc.”⁹⁰

Although Liang Qichao did not directly discuss changes in social form, as far as his content is concerned, all aspects of social life are in the transitional era that he pointed out. Therefore, he actually discussed the overall change in social structure, which has much in common with the social transformation that the academic community

⁸⁷Liang Qichao. *Collected Works from the Ice-Drinker's Studio · Special Collection* 6, p. 27.

⁸⁸Liang Qichao. *Collected Works from the Ice-Drinker's Studio · Special Collection* 6, pp. 29–30.

⁸⁹Liang Qichao. *Collected Works from the Ice-Drinker's Studio · Special Collection* 6, p. 28.

⁹⁰Liang Qichao. *Collected Works from the Ice-Drinker's Studio · Special Collection* 6, p. 28.

is now discussing. However, although Liang Qichao talked about various aspects of social life, his focus was different from the social transformation discussed in the current academic circles. In the past ten years, social transformation research has been a major hotspot in the domestic sociology community. Many scholars have paid active attention to this topic and published many academic achievements. However, people's main focus is usually on the polarization of the rich and the poor, class restructuring, population movements, institutional changes, etc., also known as external social phenomena. Liang Qichao, on the other hand, paid more attention to the internal social phenomena, but these external social phenomena, that is, the various spiritual phenomena or psychological phenomena that people have produced in the transitional era. He called them morality, vitality, morale, etc.

In *On the Transitional Age*, Liang Qichao discussed "the characters at the transitional age and their necessary virtues." He said that the "necessary figure" is the heroic character, and "his necessary morality" is the psychological quality and spiritual pursuit necessary for heroes. Although Liang Qichao is not a supporter of the historical view of heroes, he attached great importance to the fundamental role of the general public in the development of history, but he also attached great importance to the important role of heroes. In his view, social development changes are not going hand in hand. Heroes must play a role in guiding new trends and leading new voyages. He pointed out, "The times produce their heroes and the heroes decide the course of history." The heroes and their times have a cause-to-effect relationship.⁹¹ In the transitional era, if the society wants to break through the heavy resistance and seek progress, the role of the hero is particularly important. The heroes in the transitional era must adapt to the historical conditions of the transitional era, that is, the morality required by the transitional era before playing the role of a hero. Liang Qichao proposed that heroes in the transitional era should have three virtues: "Adventurous", "tolerance", and "identification and selection" which are aimed at encouraging people to be brave and daring, to be determined, to persevere, to judge the situation, and to be good at selection. With these three virtues, a person can take on the responsibility of the nation.

Liang Qichao once summed up the national spirit that he hoped to strive for as a national morale. In his view, those pragmatists who only focused on the study and introduction of Western technology did not identify the root cause of China's weaknesses. Seeking civilization from the shape and essence is like a dead-end, obstacles lie everywhere, but there is no other way out, and it is bound not to reach its purpose, and even abandon its former merits. Seeking civilization from the spirit is like dredging the river; once its source is dredged, it will flow down in a rushing torrent to a far distance, and is unstoppable. What is the spirit? It is the national vitality.⁹² The vitality of Liang Qichao's theory is just what people usually call the national spirit. He believed that this kind of vitality permeates all aspects of people's daily life, and its most important manifestation is the spirit of independence.

⁹¹Liang Qichao. *Collected Works from the Ice-Drinker's Studio · Special Collection 6*, p. 30.

⁹²Liang Qichao. *Collected Works from the Ice-Drinker's Studio · Special Collection 6*, p. 62.

Although the spirit of independence pursued by Liang Qichao also includes individual self-reliance, self-improvement, and self-selection, when it comes to the country's peril, he first referred to the national independence and self-determination spirit, and the specific expression is the formation of national nationalism. In his article *Youth China*, which was widely circulated by people and caused strong shocks in Chinese society, Liang Qichao regarded the formation of the concept of a nation-state and the founding of a nation-state as the fundamental life of the Chinese nation. Liang Qichao believed that the Japanese and Westerners regard China as the old empire, thinking that China is old and weak. This is a slander of the Chinese nation. The Chinese nation is not only a dying empire, but a vigorous and thriving young China. Why? Liang Qichao said, "Although ancient China had the name of a country, it did not have the form of a country, and it is a country of families, a country of chieftains, country of princes, or a country of autocracy. All in all, though of different kinds, they have one part of the system which the state ought to have, and the other part they lack. Just as a baby changes from an embryo to a child, one or two limbs of his body begin to develop and form first, and the other parts, though they are essential, have not yet attained their usefulness."⁹³ In short, the old China was an imperfect country, and the fundamental reason was that the Chinese did not establish a nation-state with nationalism.

Liang Qichao's nation-state is a modern state marked by national autonomy, autonomy, and self-exercise of sovereignty. It is a democratic country that acts in accordance with the law and forms a rational order, marked by the broad awakening and active participation of the people. "What is a country? It is the business of the people who own the land, live on it and govern it. They make their own laws and obey them; all are sovereign and all obey the law. If so, it can be called a worthy country."⁹⁴ The Western countries have established such a nation-state, and the Chinese nation is building such a nation-state. Therefore, the Western country is a strong country, while China is a juvenile country. Therefore, China is not old and weak, but has full of vitality and a promising future.

For the young China, Liang Qichao believed that the most important thing is the ideal. "The ideal is the greatest force in the world, which can produce various customs and various undertakings."⁹⁵ However, Liang Qichao regretted that there were still many people in the country who were trapped by the old ideals, and therefore, it is difficult to build new undertakings and new countries. Why do some people still stick to the old ideals, such as Kang Youwei? The root cause is that Liang Qichao believed that the most important thing is that these people did not have a clear national consciousness or national consciousness, but instead equated the court as a nation and a country, thinking that saving the court is to save the nation and save the country. Therefore, Liang Qichao repeatedly published articles many times and repeatedly discussed his nationalism or national state theory, with the aim of awakening the people's national spirit and national consciousness.

⁹³Liang Qichao. *Collected Works from the Ice-Drinker's Studio · Special Collection* 5, p. 9.

⁹⁴Liang Qichao. *Collected Works from the Ice-Drinker's Studio · Special Collection* 5, p. 9.

⁹⁵Liang Qichao. *Collected Works from the Ice-Drinker's Studio · Special Collection* 5, p. 14.

Although the issue of nation-state is first and foremost a political issue, Liang Qichao gave it a strong sociological meaning. Liang Qichao's national concept and state concept were greatly influenced by the political scientist Bollen's rationale. He basically followed the definition of the concept of nation and state by Bollen's rationale. Liang Qichao argued that the definition of a nation in Bollen's rationale is mainly based on eight points: "(1) Live in the same place; (2) Maintain the same blood relationship; (3) Have the similar body shapes; (4) Speak the same languages; (5) Write the same characters; (5) Believe in the same religions; (7) Enjoy the same customs; (8) Live on the same things. These eight points can distinguish a nation from others, making it special; after passing down from generation to generation, a nation is formed."⁹⁶ The definition of the nation in Bollen's rationale has a distinct sociological perspective, emphasizing the national geography, blood, language communication, cultural traditions, group functions, and transmission of times. Also, Liang Qichao also interpreted the concept of the country of Bollen's rationale as a concept of organism. He said, "The state is not only to gather its people or not only a carrier of government and treasure systems. It also has its own will and actions. It is hard to give it a name, and therefore, it is named organism."⁹⁷

The relationship between the nation and the country has a relationship between content and form according to Liang Qichao. Specifically, the nation characterized by the identity in terms of region, blood, form, language, customs, culture, and economic and social life makes those real broad masses of people who have survived together form a social organism with will and action through various connections, and this organism is the state. Therefore, Liang Qichao's concept of nation-state is the unity of content and form, and this unity has obvious sociological characteristics. That is to say, when Liang Qichao discussed the issue of the nation-state, he valued not only its political function, but more importantly, it is the actual content and basic form of a social phenomenon. For this reason, Liang Qichao emphasized the specific understanding of the essence and function of the state from four aspects of social structure or social relations: "For an individual, there is a state. For an imperial court, there is a state. For people not of the same clan, there is a state. For the world, there is a state."⁹⁸

"For an individual, there is a state" is essentially to emphasize from the relationship between the individual and the society that the people should have a sense of gregariousness and that the people are integrated into a social organism with unified wills and unified actions. "For a primary group, there are people of clan but no people of state. People of clan and people of state are distinguished in a civilized and non-civilized manner. Is there any difference between the two? The people living in a clan, which is thought to be traditional, is called the people of clan; People with a sense of state and that can spread politics are called people of state. If there are no people of country, there will be no country."⁹⁹ That is to say, Liang Qichao believed

⁹⁶Liang Qichao. *Collected Works from the Ice-Drinker's Studio · Special Collection 13*, p. 72.

⁹⁷Liang Qichao. *Collected Works from the Ice-Drinker's Studio · Special Collection 13*, p. 70.

⁹⁸Liang Qichao. *Collected Works from the Ice-Drinker's Studio · Special Collection 4*, p. 16.

⁹⁹Liang Qichao. *Collected Works from the Ice-Drinker's Studio · Special Collection 4*, p. 16.

that the people with national consciousness are the foundation of the state's existence. It is necessary to educate the people who exist as individuals to become the ones with a clear national consciousness and unite them as a social organism so that the state can exist in a stable manner. "To get it united, supported without shortage, protected and saved without delay, and benefited endlessly, each individual must take everything into consideration before speaking and action; otherwise, a group cannot be formed and humanity will be lost, which should be given top priority in the state thoughts."¹⁰⁰

"For an imperial court, there is a country", which is intended to point out the difference between the government and the state and oppose the misconception that the government and the court are equated with the state. As mentioned above, Liang Qichao believed that the relationship between the imperial court and the state is like the relationship between the office and the company, the hall and the village. The former is only the representative of the latter. It is particularly important that Liang Qichao believed that the relationship between the imperial court and the state should be governed by the system, that is, the imperial court or government should be established through the institutional procedures recognized by the people. Otherwise, the court or the government is illegal. "If the imperial court is formally established, it is the representative of the country, and loving imperial court means loving the state; If the court is not formally established, the imperial court will do harm to the state and correcting the imperial court means loving the state. This is the second meaning of national thought."¹⁰¹

"For people of not the same clan, there is a state", which emphasizes the further clarification of the national consciousness of the people in the relationship between nations or between states. Since the nation or the state is established in specific regional, linguistic, traditional, and economic living conditions, it has its obvious particularity, and therefore, the opposition and exclusion between the two in terms of interests and rights are inevitable. Therefore, Liang Qichao believed that, "There must not be in conflict between states, the name of a state should be acceptable by its people." Therefore, the true patriot, although there are foreign sacred philosophers, will not be obeyed under its sovereignty, and will not let the slightest right to other nation rather than let the people of the state shed blood."¹⁰² This is calling on the people not only to have patriotism, but also to be brave in fighting for sovereignty and defending the independence and rights of the nation-state.

"For the world, there is a state", which requires that the nation-state be placed in the world structure and world relations to clarify its status and significance. Here, Liang Qichao directly criticized Kang Youwei's cosmopolitanism. He believed that although cosmopolitanism is a beautiful ideal, it cannot be pursued as a realistic goal, because the real world is a process driven by competition that brings all kinds of conflicts and momentum to world civilization; therefore, competition cannot be stopped and should not be stopped. Under the historical conditions of continuous

¹⁰⁰Liang Qichao. *Collected Works from the Ice-Drinker's Studio · Special Collection 4*, p. 16.

¹⁰¹Liang Qichao. *Collected Works from the Ice-Drinker's Studio · Special Collection 4*, p. 17.

¹⁰²Liang Qichao. *Collected Works from the Ice-Drinker's Studio · Special Collection 4*, p. 17.

competition, it is impossible to cancel the state and enter the cosmopolitan world. "The competition produces civilization. If the competition stops one day, the progress of civilization will stop immediately. The individual competition produces a family, the family competition produces a village, and the village competition produces a state. The state is the largest circle of the group, and the climax of competition. If the state boundaries are eliminated, there will not be competition. What is impossible to be done is done. If there is no competition, won't the civilization stop?"¹⁰³

In short, Liang Qichao's theory of nation-state is neither pure political nationalism nor pure cultural nationalism, but highly values the social nationalism that recognizes and answers nation-state issues in social relations or social structures. Political nationalism is a typical example of civil rights in the French bourgeois revolution. It emphasizes the rights of civilians to participate in politics and vote through elections. The political nationalism with civil rights as the main content is also the basic content of the Three People's Nationalism established by Sun Yat-sen; Cultural nationalism is more moderate. It emphasizes the particularity of national cultural traditions, emphasizes the differences between the nation and other ethnic groups in terms of historical evolution, customs, and ideas, and uses this as a basis to resist the penetration of foreign cultures and the influence of other nations on its own nation. From this point of view, Liang Qichao's theory of nation-state cannot be attributed to political nationalism, nor to cultural nationalism, but to social nationalism.

The so-called social nationalism emphasizes the consideration of the issue of nation-state in the perspective of the internal structure, external relations, living environment, and historical evolution of the nation. From Liang Qichao's above discussion on the nation-state, it can be clearly found that his nation-state thought demonstrates typical social nationalism. Also, it should be pointed out that Liang Qichao's social nationalism is closely related to his sociological thinking. He repeatedly discussed his national state views from the aspects of group, gregariousness, group consciousness, personal and group relations, social organisms, etc. Therefore, his theory of nation-state can also be regarded as an important part of his sociology.

5.5 Theory on Social Reconstruction of the Cultivation of New People

It is precisely because of the discussion of the nation-state problem from the perspective of sociology that Liang Qichao did not develop his own theoretical vision from the power or concept of certain political state theory and cultural state theory. He paid more attention to the individual who constitutes the nation and the state and his activities, and he said, "A state is established by its people. In a state, people look like the four limbs and five visceral veins. No person could survive in case of broken limbs, damaged organs, ruptured veins and blood drain. Thus, a state could not run

¹⁰³Liang Qichao. *Collected Works from the Ice-Drinker's Studio · Special Collection 4*, p. 18.

if its people are not civilized, coward, disunited and unconscious.”¹⁰⁴ Here, the relationship between the people and the state is viewed from the perspective of a social organism. If the state is treated as an organism, the people are its constituent part or element. Therefore, if a nation-state is hoped to be prosperous and powerful, it must pay attention to the existence of its people. “To make a state safe, rich, honorable, and powerful, it is a must to educate new people.”¹⁰⁵

The so-called theory on new people is to remove the old national consciousness and shape the new national characters. Liang Qichao believed that this is the most urgent task for saving the Chinese nation at the time of its peril. He said, “I want to say that cultivation of new people is the most urgent task, and there are two roots in his arguments: Internal governance and external diplomat.”¹⁰⁶ From the perspective of the nation-state, Liang Qichao believed that since the state is composed of the people, the ideology and behavioral quality of the people are the foundation of the state’s strengths and weaknesses. According to this, he opposed the ability and behavior only from the government and officials to analyze the rise and fall of the state. “A group of blind people can’t become Li Lv. A group of deaf people can’t become Shi Kuang. A group of coward people cannot become Wu Huo.” What kinds of people cultivate what kind of government officials. As you sow, so shall you reap.”¹⁰⁷ According to this, Liang Qichao compared the relationship between government officials and the people to the relationship between the thermometer and the temperature, which means that the behavior and quality of the government and its officials are rooted in the people, only the minds of the broad masses of the people. Only when the quality of consciousness and morality is improved could the government and its officials be fundamentally changed and could the state’s prosperity be provided with a solid foundation.

Judging from the external relations of the Chinese nation, Liang Qichao also came to the conclusion that it is imperative to educate the new people. In his view, European countries have been able to make great strides since the sixteenth century, “all of them are driven by nationalism.”¹⁰⁸ The basic content of European nationalism is: “The people of the same race and with the same languages, religions, and customs are treated as one people, who will establish an independent, self-governing, well-organized government, and seek the public interest and protect it from other nations.”¹⁰⁹ With the support of this nationalism, all European nations continued to grow in strength. By the end of the nineteenth century, nationalism had developed into national imperialism. What is national imperialism? The strength of its people is so powerful inside that they have to expand his power in other places.”¹¹⁰ Therefore, the development of European nationalism to national imperialism is based on the

¹⁰⁴Liang Qichao. *Collected Works from the Ice-Drinker’s Studio · Special Collection 4*, p. 1.

¹⁰⁵Liang Qichao. *Collected Works from the Ice-Drinker’s Studio · Special Collection 4*, p. 1.

¹⁰⁶Liang Qichao. *Collected Works from the Ice-Drinker’s Studio · Special Collection 4*, p. 2.

¹⁰⁷Liang Qichao. *Collected Works from the Ice-Drinker’s Studio · Special Collection 4*, p. 2.

¹⁰⁸Liang Qichao. *Collected Works from the Ice-Drinker’s Studio · Special Collection 4*, p. 4.

¹⁰⁹Liang Qichao. *Collected Works from the Ice-Drinker’s Studio · Special Collection 4*, p. 4.

¹¹⁰Liang Qichao. *Collected Works from the Ice-Drinker’s Studio · Special Collection 4*, p. 4.

improvement of the strength and quality of the people. This means that the history of the development of the Western nation-state has proved that the cultivation of new people must be a fundamental task.

More importantly, the nature of national imperialism's aggression against the Chinese nation also determines that it is imperative to educate the new people. In Liang Qichao's view, modern national imperialism is different from ancient imperialism. The imperialists such as Alexander, Charlemagne, Genghis Khan, and Napoleon were mainly urged by personal ambitions to rely on individual abilities and charms to wage war and conquer other nations. The contemporary national imperialism is expanding outwards by virtue of the tension of the nation and the full power of the nation, but the personal ability and desire. The aggression facing the Chinese nation is precisely the expansion of contemporary national imperialism. "Today, it is hoped to resist the national imperialism of the powers and save the souls." Only nationalism could achieve this goal. To implement nationalism in China, it is must to educate new people."¹¹¹

The cultivation of new people is regarded as the foundation of implementation of nationalism and the establishment of nation-state. However, the cultivation of new people is not a complete break with the tradition of the Chinese nation, but an innovation in inheritance. Liang Qichao pointed out, "The cultivation of new people does not not discard all old traditions of the people. There are two meanings of new people: First, improve what is existing; second, make up for what does not exist. If either of them is missing, it does not work."¹¹² Here, it once again shows that Liang Qichao consistently adhered to the Chinese and Western integration principles. Although the theory of new people highlights "new", it is not a complete abandonment of traditions, but exploration of the essence during the study of new ideas and new knowledge from external nations, for the reason that "Where a state can stand in the world, it must have its own unique characteristics. From moral laws to customs, literature, and arts, there is an independent spirit that is passed down from grandfathers to sons and then to grandsons. In this way, they form groups, a state is established, and this is the source of nationalism. Our compatriots can run the state in the Asian continent for thousands of years. They must have their own characteristics, be magnificent and noble and different from those of other groups. We should save them and not lose it."¹¹³

Improve what is inherent in the nation but not inherit in a simple manner; perform meticulous cultivation, careful conditioning, and elimination of weaknesses, and embrace the essence, to transform, educate, forge, and refine it. Therefore, this is a positive dialectical attitude toward the cultural traditions and spiritual customs of the Chinese nation. It is different from the conservatives who simply maintain the Chinese cultural tradition at the time, and the radicalists who want to completely abandon the Chinese cultural tradition. In particular, Liang Qichao stressed that it is necessary to take active measures to shape the national spirit. Here, it recognizes

¹¹¹Liang Qichao. *Collected Works from the Ice-Drinker's Studio · Special Collection 4*, p. 5.

¹¹²Liang Qichao. *Collected Works from the Ice-Drinker's Studio · Special Collection 4*, p. 5.

¹¹³Liang Qichao. *Collected Works from the Ice-Drinker's Studio · Special Collection 4*, p. 6.

the backwardness of the Chinese nation in ideology, affirms the vitality that can further develop, and also adheres to the principle of active construction of the spirit of national culture. In fact, this is a constructivist claim.

Although Liang Qichao has not used the concept of constructivism, the constructivist principles elucidated by the contemporary sociology can be seen everywhere in Liang Qichao's exposition on Chinese social issues, especially his theory of cultivating new people, which more clearly expresses the subjectivity and aggressiveness of the principles of constructivism. If the primary feature of constructivism is to emphasize the subjective consciousness and active behavior to reconstruct the objective reality, then this should be said that Liang Qichao, including Kang Youwei and Yan Fu, has a common theoretical feature of early Chinese sociologists. This is clearly different from Comte, Durkheim, and Weber's objectivist position emphasizing the principle of objectivity and rejecting subjective evaluation and subjective role.

Liang Qichao believed that the ideology in the Chinese cultural tradition includes the norms of behavior and the spirit of life that can educate individuals, families, and villages. However, it lacks the nationalist spirit of integrating the whole nation and seeking self-reliance of the nation, so it cannot cultivate the modern national consciousness or national qualifications of people. In the era when the imperialist powers divided up China, the national consciousness of the Chinese and the national qualifications that can exercise the national rights are the foundation of the nation-state. However, if the traditional culture cannot find such a source, then it is necessary to learn from foreign countries and learn from Westerners the experience to construct the national spirit and national qualifications of the Chinese nation. "To strengthen our country, it is necessary to study the ways of independence from all nations, and absorb their merits to make up our weaknesses."¹¹⁴ In particular, we should learn from foreign advanced academic ideas and transform and nurture the Chinese people's morality, wisdom, and power, which are the basic content of the cultivation of new people.

In terms of morality, Liang Qichao believed that the first priority is to establish the morality of the Chinese. In his opinion: "What our people is missing the most is public morality. What is public morality? The reason why a group is called group and a state called a state depends on the morality. People are gregarious animals. (As the Western Confucianist Aristotle said) If human beings are not gregarious, they will be no different from animals. It's not correct that we are a group groundlessly, but because something runs through and connects us, which is called 'public morality', then we become a crowd. There must be a thing that serves as a contact, which is upheld by the group. Something like this is public morality."¹¹⁵ It can be seen that Liang Qichao still defines the concept of public morality from the basic perspective of sociology. Its essence is merely a virtue that people help each other, safeguard the rights and interests of group, nation and state. It is an overall social consciousness or the spirit of nationalism reflected in the people.

¹¹⁴Liang Qichao. *Collected Works from the Ice-Drinker's Studio · Special Collection 4*, p. 6.

¹¹⁵Liang Qichao. *Collected Works from the Ice-Drinker's Studio · Special Collection 4*, p. 12.

Liang Qichao believed that although the Chinese nation has attached importance to moral education since ancient times, it has emphasized the private morality but not the public morality. He pointed out, "China's morality developed early. Although it focused on private morality but not public morality, from Analects of Confucius and the works by Mencius, most of them taught private morality, with public morality accounting for less than one percent."¹¹⁶ Compared with Western morality and ethics, the characteristic of Chinese traditional morality attaching more importance to private morality but less importance to public morality is more obvious. In modern Western morality and ethics, the most talked about is the moral ethics between groups such as family ethics, social ethics, and national ethics or of the society as a whole; The traditional Chinese morality is mainly about the private morality and ethics between the monarchs, the father and the son, the husband and wife, friends, etc. It is this kind of moral education that has been unilaterally emphasized for more than 2,000 years that has made the Chinese nation lack group consciousness and national spirit.

Liang Qichao did not despise private morality because of emphasizing public morality. He believed that the key to the existence of each of them is how to correct the relationship between the two. "If everyone improves his or her own body and mind and keep his or her integrity, this is private morality; if everyone does the same for others, it is public morality." Both are indispensable in life. If there is no private morality, it is not established. A state cannot be established by the people that are despicable and filthy, hypocritical, brutal and coward; if there is no public morality, people cannot be unified. Although there are countless people who are willing to be good and sincere, a state cannot be established."¹¹⁷ Since a state cannot be established with only private morality and only public morality, the two should be provided. However, under the realistic conditions of private morality being over-enhanced by traditional culture, it is a wise choice to improve the public's sense of public morality and the standard of public morality as the top priority.

Liang Qichao discussed the necessity of establishing public morality from the survival and downfall of the nation-state and the obligations of the nation. In his view, the relationship between individual and group and between people and state is like that between children and parents; if the individual or the citizen enjoys the interests of the group and the state, he or she should be obliged to return the group and the state as the child honors the parents. "Without the group or the state, the life and property cannot be protected, the wisdom and abilities cannot be attached, and a person will not be able to live in the world." Therefore, the person with great ambition should have the obligation to return the group and the state. If this obligation is given up, regardless of good person or a wicked person in terms of private morality, he or she will do harm to the group and the state."¹¹⁸ Therefore, even if no harm is done to the group and the state, those who restrain themselves, aloof from politics and material pursuits, whitehanded and have not made any contributions all fail to serve the group and the state.

¹¹⁶Liang Qichao. *Collected Works from the Ice-Drinker's Studio · Special Collection 4*, p. 12.

¹¹⁷Liang Qichao. *Collected Works from the Ice-Drinker's Studio · Special Collection 4*, p. 12.

¹¹⁸Liang Qichao. *Collected Works from the Ice-Drinker's Studio · Special Collection 4*, p. 14.

Thus, public morality is understood from the heights of good and evil, which not only becomes a moral norm of the highest realm, but also is regarded as the fundamental support for the rise and fall of the group and the country. “Therefore, public morality is the source of the states. It is good if it benefits the group and it is evil if it does harm to the group. (If it does harm but no good, it is big evil and if it does no harm or good, it is small evil.). This makes sense everywhere.”¹¹⁹ It can be seen that Liang Qichao’s purpose of advocating public morality is very clear, that is, to promote a new morality that benefits both the group and the state. This new morality is the spirit of the times to save the Chinese nation in distress and is the root of the new people. Liang Qichao pointed out with confidence: “In this case, we were born in this group. Today, it is appropriate to understand the trend in the world, and think of what is favorable to our group to develop a new morality, a way to unify, treat in a friendly manner and improve our group. It should not be treated as the precedent kings and sages told, but a plan should be made to develop. Knowing that there is public morality, new morality is developed and new people are cultivated.”¹²⁰

Although Liang Qichao regarded public morality as the foundation of the state’s education, he did not neglect private morality because he emphasized public morality. As regards public morality and private morality, Liang Qichao believed that private morality has a more fundamental status. He argued that public morality and private morality are not opposite to each other, but a kind of “belonging” relationship. “The so-called public morality, on his own body, means the public morality of a group. As for the role in constituting this ontology, it is the morality of an individual produced from the group’s public concept. A group of blind people can’t become Li Lv. A group of deaf people can’t become Shi Kuang. A group of coward people cannot become Wu Huo. Therefore, one person will not produce the private morality. Thousands of these people are impossible to produce the public morality. It is very clear.”¹²¹ It can be seen that Liang Qichao believed that public morality is based on private morality, or that private morality is more fundamental.

The premise of regarding private morality as the basis of public morality is that public morality and private morality are essentially the same kinds of morality, but the difference is that the relationship of treatment is different. When an individual treats with his or her morality the group in which he or she lives and safeguards the interests of the group, then the individual’s morality is public morality, and when the individual treats with his or her morality other individuals, then the individual’s morality is private morality. It is worth noting that, in Liang Qichao’s view, although public morality and private morality are essentially unified, in terms of its form and function, public morality is a derivative of private morality. Only one person has excellent personal morality could he or she form good public morality. Otherwise, having public morality is nothing but empty talk. “Public morality is the derivative of private morality. Knowing the private morals without knowing the morals, the missing one can be derived; when the private morality is despised and the public

¹¹⁹Liang Qichao. *Collected Works from the Ice-Drinker’s Studio · Special Collection 4*, p. 15.

¹²⁰Liang Qichao. *Collected Works from the Ice-Drinker’s Studio · Special Collection 4*, p. 15.

¹²¹Liang Qichao. *Collected Works from the Ice-Drinker’s Studio · Special Collection 4*, p. 119.

morality is relied on in a false manner, nothing could be derived; therefore, if the private morality is developed, it is still half a way from the public morality.”¹²²

In Liang Qichao's discourse, private morality has two basic meanings: “Loving oneself falls within the scope of private morality, that is, the way for an individual to communicate with others is still within the scope of private morality.”¹²³ Loving oneself is self-discipline, and the communication between an individual and another individual, although it is already a social interaction, is still regarded as a private matter because it does not involve group relations, and it is still private morality. It is obviously not appropriate for Liang Qichao to make further analysis of the private morality of oneself and others, and to completely equate the two. Loving oneself is self-discipline and is the moral internalization of the moral subject or the subject of the act, and it is self-consciousness that dominates the process of this behavior; the interaction between individuals, although not rising to group relations, is not a private matter after all. The contradictions between different subjects will be manifested in private interactions. At this time, the role of social relations must be reflected to some extent. In the words of modern philosophy, loving oneself is the moral consciousness and moral behavior of the subject, while the private morality relationship between the individuals is the moral consciousness and moral behavior between the subjects.

In this sense, the moral issue between individuals should not be completely attributed to private morality, because it already relates to the social relationship between different subjects. However, Liang Qichao's definition can be justified. Based on the theory of sociology, he defined the two concepts of private morality and public morality. Public morality is the virtue of a group or a community. It is the virtue of Spencer's organism. Liang Qichao usually used group, community, or organism as the same meaning concept as society. However, in terms of group, community, and social organism, these concept-based concepts are different from social concepts. When people refer to a phenomenon as a certain body, they must realize that this is a kind of phenomenon with boundaries. The extension of social concept is broader than that of the concepts of group, community, and social organism. More importantly, the most important meaning of society is the relationship between people. As long as people interact, it means a society has been created, and it is not necessary to form a community before forming a society. Liang Qichao failed to clearly define the relationship between the group and the society, that is, it failed to explain that the group is only one of the social phenomena, but not all, and the activities outside the group are regarded as personal relationships, and even personal interactions are also known as the private morality opposite to the collective morality. In fact, once an individual is involved in a relationship, he or she has become the one in the society, and the relationship between individuals has become a social relationship. In this sense, the private morality between individuals should be regarded as the morality of society.

From the above, we can clearly see the clues of Liang Qichao's new people's theory. He argued that in order to establish a strong nation-state, the cultivation of

¹²²Liang Qichao. *Collected Works from the Ice-Drinker's Studio · Special Collection 4*, p. 119.

¹²³Liang Qichao. *Collected Works from the Ice-Drinker's Studio · Special Collection 4*, p. 12.

new people is the first priority, and the primary goal of cultivating new people is to cultivate the public morality of the people. The foundation of public morality is private morality, and thus, the relationship between public morality and private morality must be correctly recognized and dealt with. A clear clue throughout this rich discussion is the relationship between the individual and the society. Although Liang Qichao failed to directly put forward the relationship between the individual and the society, it discussed the relationship between the private and the public; moreover, although the relationship between the private and the public is different from that between the individual and the society, the group or the community is the basic form of the society after all. Discussing the relationship between the individual and the group or community is also to discuss the relationship between man and society on a very important level.

The relationship between man and society has always been the most basic research object of sociology. Whether it is the various sociological theoretical contents elaborated by classical sociologists such as Comte, Durkheim, Weber, Marx, or theoretical differences and theoretical contradictions between them, the relationship between man and society is a core clue that runs through their various discourses. If the classical sociology is divided into three major factions: positivism, comprehension, and practicalism, then their differences can be summarized as the opposition of the three starting points, that is, starting from society, starting from the individual, and starting from practice. But no matter where you start, it will be closely related to the questioning of the relationship between man and society. The society is formed during the personal communication. Individuals must exist in society, while practical activities are the production activities and interactions of people in society. Therefore, although the three major traditions of sociology have their own starting points, the most basic research objects in the sociological field of view of human and social relations cannot be abandoned in their content. The difference is the basic positions or methodological principles.

Liang Qichao's theory on the relationship between private morality and public morality and the relationship between man and society are not only different from the empirical sociological positions of Comte, Durkheim, et al., but also from the practical position of Marxism and Weber's personal social action. When Liang Qichao emphasized that private morality is more fundamental, this means that in Liang Qichao's view, individuals have a more basic position in sociological research; therefore, sociology must study personal morality, behavior, and its role in society, and should not only emphasize sociological concerns about social issues and exclude thinking about individual issues. Liang Qichao's principle of individualism is consistent with his political ideal of establishing a modern nation-state, because he believed that the premise of establishing a modern nationalist state is the cultivation of modern nationals, not cultivating the people staying in a closed, conservative, selfish, and cowardly state into modern citizens with a higher consciousness. In this way, the modern nation-state is a castle in the air and cannot be a reality.

Discussion of the relationship between individual and society from the relationship between private morality and public morality makes Liang Qichao's study of Qunxue or sociology have a strong value evaluation. This is significantly opposite to

Durkheim and Weber's discussion of the relationship between individual and society from the standpoint of value neutrality. Although Liang Qichao constantly quoted the views of socialists such as Spencer to discuss the relationship between private morality and public morality, he never concealed his own value judgments like positivists such as Spencer. He did not conceal the principle of sociology or Qunxue that he understood to serve his own ideals of value, while his most urgent value ideal is to build a modern nation-state. The most fundamental value proposition is to transform the backward national character and rebuild the Chinese society to win a new living space and development realm for the Chinese nation.

The difference from Western classical sociology is also reflected in the fact that Liang Qichao's main focus on rebuilding society is not a social division of labor, class struggle, social system reform, etc. His focus is first on the national transformation of ideology and moral quality. It should be said that Liang Qichao's proposition was in line with China's reality. The ideology and moral quality of the Chinese people who have been cast in the feudal culture for more than 2,000 years are not only old-fashioned and untimely, but also the narrow-mindedness of themselves and the family, which is itself a serious obstacle to building a modern nation-state. This state of mind and moral idea cannot be completely reformed. Even if it wins some kind of economic or political success, the solution can only be made to a problem on the surface. The fundamental situation of the people as the foundation of the nation and the country remains the same. It is also necessary to constantly reproduce those ups and downs and declines. Therefore, Liang Qichao's proposal to shape the new people and fundamentally rebuild the Chinese society is far-sighted. To this day, his claim is worthy of serious reference.

Liang Qichao's exposition on private morality and public morality deserves a bit of attention, that is, he linked this issue with the Chinese social nature, cultural traditions, social identity, etc. In his view, morality is not abstract, and it is not possible to simply copy foreign virtues. Because different cultures have different natures and different systems, their moral ethics and ideas are inevitably different. Simply introducing or changing foreign people with moral concepts for the original moral principles is difficult to work out. "To put morality into practice, it is subject to different restrictions due to different social properties. The sublime words of sages, whereabouts of the ancestors, and this subtle body are passed down to me with it, and that's why the society should support me. If I want other societies to support me all of a sudden, how easy is it? There were several rulers governing with the religions systems as well as those governing with laws after analysis with the original nature of Western morals. Can these three be possessed in China today? I don't think so. In this case, it is impossible to cultivate new citizens with the new morality, just like making a mirror out of a brick or cook meals with sand."¹²⁴

¹²⁴Liang Qichao. *Collected Works from the Ice-Drinker's Studio · Special Collection 4*, p. 132.

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Chapter 6

Liang Shuming's Cultural Sociology



Liang Shuming (1893–1988) is a scholar who had imposed great influence in the history of modern Chinese academic history. His discussion mainly focuses on the fields of Neo-Confucianism and the comparison of Chinese and Western cultures. In recent years, his theories and thoughts, especially those concerned with rural theoretical construction and rural practical construction, have been repeatedly discussed by other sociologists when studying Chinese sociology. In fact, in all the writings, few works are titled Western sociology, and Liang Shuming expounded the sociological theory of culture with distinctive Chinese characteristics, which not only started a new page for Chinese sociology, but also provided valuable reference for the study of general cultural sociology.

6.1 Fundamentals of Life and Society

Liang Shuming is a scholar who is very active in both thought and action. When he graduated from high school in 1911, the Xinhai Revolution broke out. He participated in the “Beijing-Tianjin Alliance” and behaved actively in the Revolution of 1911. After the victory of the Revolution of 1911, Liang Shuming, as a reporter of the “Republic of China”, had frequent and close contact with government officials. He described in *Minguo Bao*, “Now I am a journalist endowed with right of attendance at hearings, the Provisional Senate in the first year (1912) and both Houses of the Congress in the second year of the Republic of China are the places that I haunt. The headquarters of Chinese Revolutionary Alliance and the Nationalist Party after reconstruction, and the State Council are also the places that I often visit. And I often appear in the Republican Construction Association (formally the Democratic Party) and the Democratic Party (formally the Progressive Party). At that time, the separation and reunion of the parties in the parliament, the reorganization of the State Council, and manipulations of Yuan Shikai are all impressed on my mind.”¹

¹Shuming (1990, p. 687).

It can be seen that Liang Shuming, who just left school and entered the society, was a passionate young man rather interested in political life.

However, the experience of frequent visits at the officialdom gradually dispelled Liang Shuming's political enthusiasm. He witnessed the official politicians contending for power and profit, each trying to cheat or outwit the other. There is no aboveboard and righteous revolution at all for people. As he recalled, "The 'revolution', 'politics', 'great people'... seemed to be 'nothing special'. I have witnessed lots of indecency, vulgarity, acrimony, malevolence, brutality that could not be seen at school. I feel bored of and disgusted about all of these."² Great depression occurred to Liang Shuming as his political enthusiasm and revolutionary ideals declined in the face of the dark official phenomenon. The future of his life and society is hopeless, which caused his two attempts to commit suicide in 1912. Later, Liang Shuming turned to Buddhism in pessimistic disappointment and tried to achieve a comprehension about the sorrow of life by learning about Buddhism.

As he was a middle school student, Liang Shuming was quite optimistic about life and determined to reveal the fundamental rules governing life and society and to explore the future of China. He said, "Since I entered secondary school at the age of fourteen, I have been striving upward, which drove me to the study of two issues. One is the life people live for and the other is the social problems regarding where China should go. These two issues are interrelated and cannot be completely separated."³ His research on the issue of life told Liang Shuming that the hardships in life are caused by thoughts, so subjective mentality should be studied and reflected on; the study of social problems contributed to his discovery that the fundamentals of social issues lie in culture, and therefore the development and function of culture should be studied.

Liang Shuming believed that he started his Buddhist studies due to his pursuit of subjective psychology. When asked why he was interested in Buddhism, he said, "I was puzzled about my life when I was fourteen or fifteen years old. I realized that the maid did cooking and washing every day. Washing was really a tough task. When asked if she felt painful or exhausted, she said she had been used to it. It seemed that she did not feel painful, and she always had a smile on her face. But as for me, my family is fairly rich, and I am the youngest son at home. I am loved by my parents. It seems that I should not be dissatisfied. But I often felt very depressed. Why? After careful thinking, I came to find out that the bitterness of our life is not caused by the outside world (environment), but by us ourselves, which means that the cause is subjective. The root cause is desire. Satisfaction produces joy while dissatisfaction makes pains. People's desire is endless."⁴ It is such attitude to life that prompted Liang Shuming to resort to Buddhism. "The point I want to clarify is that I acquired the above thoughts not through the Buddha's books. Instead, I first had this thought in my mind and then went to the Buddhist books."⁵

²Liang Shuming. *Self-Learning Course. Complete Works of Liang Shuming* 2, p. 687.

³Wang (2004, p. 31).

⁴Wang Donglin. *Record of Liang Shuming's Questions and Answers*, p. 47.

⁵Wang Donglin. *Record of Liang Shuming's Questions and Answers*, p. 47.

It can be seen that Liang Shuming turned to Buddhism as a result of his pessimism and disappointment with the political darkness, but his search for a painful understanding of life in Buddhism is not a negative behavior, but a positive ideological attempt. Of course, compared with Christianity and Confucianism, Buddhism is obviously more negative. Liang Shuming later repeatedly talked about this point. However, Buddhism's introspection of subjective mentality is undoubtedly of profound significance in a certain aspect. In fact, human life is constructed by subjective mentality and external things. According to Giddens, life is merely a process in which subjective structure and objective structure are constantly and mutually structuralized. Scientific investigation into the outside world helps us explore the content and laws governing the objective structure, while Buddhism offers a reflection on what's inside us and explains the implications and significance of the subjective structure. Liang Shuming achieved a deep understanding of the inherent subjectivity of life through the study of Buddhism, and made a good preparation for his interpretation of social development from the perspective of cultural aspect, i.e., the subjective aspect of social life.

In October 1917, at the invitation of Cai Yuanpei, President of Beijing University, Liang Shuming went to Peking University as a teacher. During his seven years of teaching at Peking University, Liang Shuming made an ideological shift from Buddhism to Confucianism. Recalling the experience of Peking University, Liang Shuming said, "I was hired to teach at Peking University because Cai Jiemin (Cai Yuanpei) wanted to offer a course of Indian philosophy. Confucian philosophy occurred to my mind when I first entered the Beijing University. At that time, I did little research on Buddhism or Confucianism, and I was more interested in Buddhism. Since I had decided to teach at Peking University, I would make a clear understanding of Confucius and Sakyamuni. Therefore, I made up my mind to get a clear understanding of the academics of Shakya and Confucius, at least to make myself understood in the classroom. I could remember, on my first day at Peking University, that I met President Cai in the principal's office. I asked him about his attitude toward Confucius. Why did I ask Confucius rather than Sakyamuni? That's because Confucius's academics was the focus of debate on the campus of Peking University on the eve of 'May 4th Movement'."⁶ It shows that Liang Shuming turned from Buddhism to Confucianism, which signified not only his change in academic concern but also his attempt to deal with social reality and try to shift from academic research to changes in social reality.

As Liang Shuming said, when he went to teach at Peking University on the eve of the May Fourth Movement which went against Confucianism, one of the most popular slogans among young students at that time was "eliminating the Confucian Store". However, as Chinese young students responded to the call of Chen Duxiu and Hu Shih and advocated the replacement of Confucianism with science and democracy, Liang Shuming held a completely opposite view. Liang Shuming said, "The *New Youth*, a magazine, made a fierce attack against Chinese traditional culture. However, those favoring Confucianists did not feel painful; it seemed as if those words were irrelevant

⁶Wang Donglin. *Record of Liang Shuming's Questions and Answers*, p. 60.

to them and as if they felt nothing though they were wounded by the opponent. However, I could feel great pressure on me and believed that the problem cannot be ignored and something should be done to solve the problem.”⁷ Liang Shuming had planned to teach Indian philosophy at Peking University, but he believed that the ideological tendency of the May Fourth Movement was one-sided and should be corrected. Therefore, from the standpoint of cultural conservatism, he began to pursue the true meaning life and society and made a comparative study of Eastern and Western cultures. He recalled, “I concentrated on the study of Eastern and Western cultures and their Philosophies rather than merely teaching the courses prescribed by the University. Unfortunately, no one had made a comparison between Eastern and Western cultures. At that time, many friends said to me that the topic was too general to study. However, I am serious about my life and the way of living life. Failure to achieve somewhere in what I am working on would generate a distance in my mind. Therefore, I would not give up unless I find what I want.”⁸ Liang Shuming even posted an advertisement in the *Peking University Journal*, trying to bring together some scholars who were interested in studying oriental culture or oriental philosophy to do some research together. However, there were very few respondents. It is obvious that it was overwhelming at that time to advocate Western culture and defy oriental culture.

In 1920, Liang Shuming began to teach Eastern and Western cultures and the corresponding philosophies. The contents of the lecture were recorded by Chen Zheng, part of which was published in the magazine *Juvenile China*. Although Liang Shuming's efforts did not exert much influence at Peking University, it did outside Beijing. In 1921, at the invitation of the Shandong Provincial Department of Education, Liang Shuming went to Jinan to teach Eastern and Western cultures and the corresponding philosophies. The lectures that he gave during the 40 days were recorded, compiled and edited. In 1921, a book titled *Eastern and Western Cultures and their Philosophies* was published in Beijing. The book produced great effect soon and was reprinted 5 times in a year. It is said that more than 100,000 copies were sold.⁹ The most prominent influence of the book is that During the May Fourth Movement when people were generally disappointed at or even abandoning Chinese traditional culture, especially Confucianism, Liang Shuming profoundly compared Western culture, Chinese culture, and Indian culture in detail and explained about their respective advantages and disadvantages. According to him, although the Eastern culture had its shortcomings, the Eastern culture was not completely outdated or degenerated. In European culture, there were still positive elements that could not be underestimated. Liang Shuming's views stimulated some people to rethink about Chinese culture. In particular, some believed that Confucianism still played a role in promoting social transformation and social development in China. Some people got rid of the simple pursuit of Western culture and turned to Confucianism where they hoped to look for thoughts resisting Westernization and to revive China.

⁷Liang Shuming. *Complete Works of Liang Shuming* 2, p. 12.

⁸Wang Donglin. *Record of Liang Shuming's Questions and Answers*, pp. 60–61.

⁹Zheng (1999, p. 37).

The book, *Eastern and Western Cultures and their Philosophies*, marks Liang Shuming's shift from Buddhism to Confucianism and also his creation of Neo-Confucianism. It is in the meanwhile a symbol of his research on cultural sociology. Although Liang Shuming did not claim to have studied cultural sociology, it is safe to say that he made abundant and innovative research in the field of cultural sociology. In Western sociology, Karl Mannheim is a sociologist who made remarkable achievements in cultural sociology. He defined cultural sociology as "a scientific study of cultural phenomena from the perspective of sociology." "First, it should at least clarify the applicability of sociology at the conceptual level. Second, it should design a unique compositional process of the cultural concept of sociology. In other words, the changes in the process of cultural formation or those of the concept in such process should be determined on the basis of the fact that the formation of any culture can be studied from the perspective of sociology. And it needs to be found out what unique attitude reacts in accordance with such concept."¹⁰ The definition given by Mannheim seems to be somewhat complicated. In fact, what he was expressing is quite clear. In cultural sociology, cultural phenomena should be studied from the perspective of sociology. The basic concept can be used to explain the formation, development, and changes of culture. According to Mannheim's definition, the thoughts and views discussed in *Eastern and Western Cultures and their Philosophies* are actually profound theories of cultural sociology.

In *Eastern and Western Cultures and their Philosophies*, Liang Shuming first defined culture as a kind of life in human society, i.e., the way of life in the usual sense. This is undoubtedly a way of studying culture from the perspective of sociology. Secondly, Liang Shuming investigated the formation and development of Western culture, Chinese culture, and Indian culture. And he proposed the theory of three cultures whose contents not only involve the historical conditions, modes of thinking and value orientations of the formation of the three cultures, but also cover social structure, social institutions, and basic issues or concepts in sociology such as customs, habits, and behavioral patterns. Although Liang Shuming often claimed to be discussing the philosophical issues of the East and the West, it is safe to say he proposed the theories of cultural sociology as far as its content is concerned.

Many of the cultural and sociological ideas discussed in *Eastern and Western Cultures and their Philosophies* were further developed or promoted in later works such as *The Theory of Rural Reconstruction*, *The Substance of Chinese Culture*, and *Human Mind and Human Life*. Many scholars think highly of Liang Shuming's academic thoughts. However, what people affirmed most about Liang Shuming's academic contributions is not the rigor and systematicness of his thoughts and theory but the fact that he opened up a new academic perspective in China and started a new trend of inheriting and promoting national cultural traditions. As Liang Shuming judged himself, he was more than a scholar. More importantly, he was an activist with practical consciousness, who always took his initiative and had in mind the issues concerning China's social development. He said, "I once said that I didn't have the intention to write books and set up a theory. It's just that there are always

¹⁰Mannheim (2002, p. 39).

problems in my mind. For me, I will never ignore the problems on which I will make research to solve them. I've done some thinking on these various problems. Since what is problem for me is probably the problem for most people, it is no harm to share with them what I have in my mind.”¹¹

Liang Shuming not only wrote about problems, but also made lots of practices related to these problems. In 1924, Liang Shuming submitted a resignation that had been prepared for a long time, and left Peking University. At the invitation of Wang Hongyi, a scholar of Shandong cultural conservatism, he went to Caozhou No. Six Middle School and worked as the sixth principal. His intention of working as the president of the School is that he intended to transform the School into Qufu University with the support of Wang Hongyi, etc., hoping to promote Chinese traditional culture. Scholars tried to explain Liang Shuming's resignation as a teacher at Peking University and mentioned many reasons, but the most fundamental thing is that Liang Shuming attempted to put the Neo-Confucianism into practice. At that time, Peking University was the center of education characterized by Western style in China, which undoubtedly occupied a dominant position. Therefore, it was not easy to promote and develop Neo-Confucianism there. Wang Hongyi was the Shandong Provincial Educational Commissioner. When Liang Shuming gave a speech on *Eastern and Western Cultures and their Philosophies* in Jinan in 1921, Wang Hongyi et al. began planning to establish Qufu University with the purpose of promoting Eastern culture, i.e., Confucianism. He intended to make Qufu University an education center of traditional Chinese culture opposed to Peking University. This idea aroused Liang Shuming's great interest. It is true to say that Liang Shuming had an excellent opportunity to realize his dream of promoting Confucianism.

With great passion, Liang Shuming worked hard to prepare for school running in Caozhou. However, things did not go well. Although Liang Shuming made some achievements in the establishment of Qufu University and the promotion of the teaching reform of Caozhou No. Six Middle School, he finally failed in the establishment of Qufu University due to many difficulties. In 1925, Liang Shuming resigned from the post of the principal of Caozhou No. Six Middle School and returned to Beijing with disappointment. In July 1926, the Northern Expedition broke out. Liang Shuming's old friend named Li Jishen and others came to Guangdong to persuade him to participate in the revolution. In May 1927, Liang Shuming held the goal of practicing the “township governance” plan in Guangdong. “Township governance” referred to the implementation of rural autonomy, which was later renamed as “village governance” and “rural construction.” Li Jishen, Director of the National Revolutionary Army Headquarters, Chairman of the Kuomintang Guangzhou Political Branch, and Chairman of the Guangdong Provincial Government, agreed to Liang Shuming's plan of “township governance” pilot in Guangdong.

Liang Shuming made in Guangdong several speeches on the implementation of the “township governance” scheme, which were not productive. He realized that the conditions for carrying out “township governance” in Guangdong were still immature, so he left Guangdong in 1929. In 1930, Liang Shuming participated in the “township

¹¹ Shuming (1988, p. 1).

governance” movement started by Wang Hongyi, etc., in Henan Province. In January 1931, at the invitation of Han Fuqu, the chairman of the Shandong Provincial Government, he went to Shandong to establish Shandong Rural Reconstruction Institute in Zouping County located in Shandong Province, where he worked on the famous rural construction movement for seven years. During this period, Liang Shuming not only conscientiously led the rural construction movement, but also formed a theory of rural construction that occupies an important position in his academic thoughts. The *Final Awareness after Chinese National Self-rescue Movement* and *The Theory of Rural Reconstruction* are his two Representative works written in that period.

Although “township governance” and “rural reconstruction” cover lots of contents, their core or essence is cultural construction. Liang Shuming educated farmers and transformed the countryside based on his cultural views of Neo-Confucianism. In this regard, “township governance” and “rural reconstruction” were the practical forms carried out in line with Liang Shuming’s Neo-Confucianism and were the basic content of his cultural sociology. Moreover, Liang Shuming’s practice of rural reconstruction in Guangdong, Henan, Shandong, etc., also enabled him to get an in-depth and specific understanding of China’s social structure, behavior, etiquette system, social organization, values, and economic and social development. His cultural sociology has also been enriched and developed in this process. Some contents discussed in *The Substance of Chinese Culture* completed in 1946 and *Human Mind and Human Life* accomplished in 1975 are closely related to his 10 years’ experience of rural autonomy or rural reconstruction.

The “rural reconstruction” movement stopped because of the outbreak of the War of Resistance against Japan. After 1937, Liang Shuming actively participated in the Anti-Japanese National Salvation Movement. He served as a member of the Senate of the National Defense Council headquartered at Nanjing and a member of the National People’s Political Consultative Conference. In 1939, he alone went to Yan’an for a visit and held talks with Chairman Mao Zedong. In 1939, Liang Shuming and Shen Junru, Huang Yanpei, Zhang Lan and others established the Association for Unification and Founding of China in Chongqing which was reorganized into the China Democratic Political League in 1941. Liang Shuming was elected as a member of the League Standing Committee. From 1942 to 1945, Liang Shuming worked for the anti-Japanese national salvation movement in Guilin, Guangxi, and wrote *The Substance of Chinese Culture*. After the founding of New China in 1949, Liang Shuming supported the new government and praised the Chinese Communist Party for its great achievements in ending the split and building a new China. In early 1950, at the invitation of Mao Zedong and Zhou Enlai, Liang Shuming left Sichuan for Beijing. In October 1951, he was added as a member of the National Committee of the Chinese People’s Political Consultative Conference. He served as a member of first, second, third, and fourth CPPCC and member of the Standing Committee of the Sixth National Committee of the CPPCC.

On June 23, 1988, Liang Shuming died of illness in Beijing at the age of 95. Liang Shuming dedicated himself to exploring human life and promoting social progress. Although he did not write for the sake of learning, his doctrine contains rich insights and has played a pioneering role in the development and evolution of

Chinese modern academic thought. Liang Shuming developed his own academic vision in the three grand major cultural traditions of the West, China, and India, and tried to summarize the advantages and disadvantages of the three major cultural traditions in a concise way. However, since his analysis of some more specific and complex issues is deficient, he has a bias in his works. However, in spite of the deficiencies in Liang Shuming's thoughts, as a representative of Neo-Confucianism, he made a comparative study of Eastern and Western cultures, and discussed the influence of cultural differences on social development orientation and development mode, which laid a solid and firm theoretical foundation for sociological research on social development, overcoming the pure objectivity of scientism and studying from the subjective perspective. Therefore, he opened up an academic path with broad prospects.

6.2 Subjectivism of Cultural Root

Liang Shuming defined culture as “the life-style of a nation”. The life style refers to its usual sense. In this regard, Liang Shuming's definition of culture is not complex. However, more contents deserve our analysis. Liang Shuming said, “As far as I am concerned, culture is no more than a nation's life in various aspects, which can be boiled down to three aspects as follows.

- (1) Spiritual life: religion, philosophy, science, art, etc., where religion, literature, and art are mainly related with affection and philosophy and science mainly associated with reason.
- (2) Social life: our life concerning people around us—family, friends, society, country, and the world—are all part of social life, such as social organization, ethical habits, political systems, and economic relations.
- (3) Material life, such as eating and drinking, living and enjoying, survival of human beings in the natural world.”¹²

In a nutshell, culture can be defined in two ways, i.e., narrow sense and broad sense. Culture in a narrow sense is equivalent to the first aspect of Liang Shuming's definition, which refers to the spiritual life or ideology, while the culture in a broad sense includes spiritual life, social life, and material life. Therefore, Liang Shuming clearly defined the culture in a broad sense. Two points are worth noting in Liang Shuming's definition of culture.

The first point is the nationality of culture. Although Liang Shuming discussed culture in a broad sense, he highlighted the nationality of culture. To put in another way, unlike some Western scholars who discuss culture from the universal perspective or the same angle, he did in a different way because culture is believed to cover various

¹²Liang Shuming. *Eastern and Western Cultures and their Philosophies*. *Liang Shuming's Academic Essence*, p. 7.

aspects of national life. That is to say, different nations have different lifestyles, and therefore have different cultural styles.

During the May Fourth Movement, people were keen on the differences between Western culture and Chinese culture. They studied mainly by comparing the advanced and backward cultures. Liang Shuming did different things. He believed that different nations have different lifestyles, and therefore have different cultural patterns. To highlight the nationality of culture is to emphasize the particularity and diversity of culture. Only by acknowledging this point can we compare different national cultural models, and thus distinguish different cultures of different nationalities and analyze their advantages and disadvantages. In this sense, emphasizing the nationality of culture is the premise of Liang Shuming's research on cultural sociology.

What comes the second is the sociality of culture. Culture in a broad sense covers essentially human activities and the results of these activities. And human activities must be carried out in social relations. Therefore, to discuss culture in a broad sense, we must talk about "family, friend, society, country and the world" and examine "social organization, ethical habits, political systems, and economic relations," and only by deepening to this level can we truly grasp the specific content of culture. Although Liang Shuming regarded social life as an aspect of culture, in the actual discussion of culture, he never separated the spiritual life and material life of culture from social life. It can even be said that his views on culture are also the analysis and interpretation of social life.

Generally speaking, people usually discuss cultural patterns and cultural changes at the social level. However, it is not common to study social lifestyles in terms of family, friends, society, ethical habits, organizational systems, and economic relations as done by Liang Shuming. It should be affirmed that Liang Shuming's study of culture at the level of social life has essentially developed the main scope of sociology. The main scope of sociology is developed through the investigation of the forms of social life (families, groups, organizations, communities, etc.) and operating systems of social life (customary habits, moral ethics, political and economic systems, etc.) These two aspects had been discussed clearly by Liang Shuming. It can be seen that Liang Shuming's research on culture shows strong sociological characteristics at the starting point.

Liang Shuming further questioned the roots of culture. In his view, although cultures are manifested in all aspects of human social life, or the expressions of culture are diversified, cultures have the same root. The cultural root of human common nature is "desire". He said, **"What is culture? It is no more than way of life for that nation. What is life? Life is endless 'desire'—a little similar to Schopenhauer's so-called 'will'—and the constant satisfaction and dissatisfaction."**¹³ Here, Liang Shuming was indeed revealing the roots of culture, and this root cause, i.e., "desire", is the profound basis for Liang Shuming's disclosure of cultural patterns, rise of culture and cultural changes. It is also the basic starting point for his understanding of life and society. It is based on 'desire' that Liang Shuming realized his unification

¹³Liang Shuming, *Eastern and Western Cultures and their Philosophies*. *Liang Shuming's Academic Essence*, p. 10.

of the mode of thinking and basic principles in the study of Buddhism, Confucianism, and cultural sociology.

Since Liang Shuming thought that his "desire" is similar to Schopenhauer's will (generally translated to "Yi Zhi" in the Chinese philosophical community. Therefore, it is necessary to analyse the concept of Schopenhauer's "will". People generally refer to Schopenhauer's theory of will as irrational voluntarism. It should be true that this title is not only practical but also simplified. It is clear that people were criticizing Schopenhauer's theory of will judging the position and principle of rationalist philosophy. Schopenhauer did have an irrational side. However, he did not completely negate reason. The reason he negated is the logical reason and scientific reason that had dominated the European ideological and cultural fields since the Enlightenment.

German speculative philosophy can be a representative of logical reason represented by Hegel. Hegel interpreted the changes in life society and the universe as the development of absolute ideas, and as the inference of conceptual logic. The nature and evolutionary laws of things can only be traced in the deduction of abstract logic. Of course, Hegel cannot directly attribute the development of history and nature to the development of conceptual logic. The essence is that human beings use their own ideas to understand the objective world. He did not interpret the formation and development of understanding as the materialists did by starting with sensation. He revealed the dialectical process of human understanding of the world from the evolution of rational logic.

Schopenhauer believed that people's treatment of human understanding of the world as the logical grasp of subjective rationality on objective objects is actually the simplification and objectification of people's understanding of the world. Schopenhauer's basic proposition beyond common sense is, "The world is my representation." Schopenhauer's "representation" is similar to but different from Comte's "phenomena." For Comte, the phenomenon is the emotional impression that the thing-in-itself leaves by stimulating the senses of the human being, and the thing-in-itself is the object of the human ideology. According to Schopenhauer, representation is not generated through the stimulation of the object. It contains both the impression that perceptual perception provides to human beings and the concept that intellectuality forms in conceptual thinking. It is a comprehensive consciousness activity. It is prominently featured by the presentation inseparable from perception.

Another important feature of the will is its immediate unity with the body. In Schopenhauer's view, man is not a pure cognitive subject. Otherwise, man is a winged-angel without body. Because people can't just think logically, they must first rely on their own bodies to exist in the world, and then they can think logically. The body's sensation of the world is the starting point for people to understand the intuitive world. The will be contained in the body, which is not in clear logic, is the basis and motivation of human consciousness and action. Schopenhauer said that it was the will that "provides the subject the key to understanding the phenomenon, disclosing and pointing out its essence, and its meaning and internal motivation of acts.... Each real activity at the request of his will is immediately and inevitably the

movement of his body; if he did not realize that the will activity is manifested by the movement of the body, he has not truly requested this activity.”¹⁴

According to Schopenhauer’s definition, the will, as a comprehensive conscious activity that is directly unified with the perceptual perception and physical existence, is the premise and basis of logical thinking. It is not the object waiting to be logically improved and purified as described by the rationalists. Therefore, Schopenhauer fundamentally denied the dominance of logical reason, and also fundamentally denied the dominant position of scientific reason. Scientific reason is essentially the same as logical reason, because the scientific reason that is universalized by Galileo, Newton, etc., is consistent with logical reason in terms of thinking mode and pursuit of goals. They both think that it is only through logical reasoning and judgment can human being achieve a correct understanding of objective objects, and the perceptual consciousness unified with physical activities cannot be clear enough unless it is abstracted into conceptual logic.

Liang Shuming believed that his “desire” is similar to the will of Schopenhauer, which means that, as Schopenhauer did, he revealed the roots of cultural formation and development from the perspective of comprehensive perceptual consciousness not conceptualized into logical thinking but positioned at the perceptual level and unified with physical action. Since Liang Shuming understood culture in a broad sense and mainly examined culture in various forms and systems of social life, his discussion of cultural roots was revealing the roots of the existence and change of human social life as a whole. Schopenhauer saw the will as the essence of human survival and development. Liang Shuming’s consistence with Schopenhauer in understanding the roots of cultural and social life is inseparable from the fact that both of them were influenced by Indian Buddhism.

As mentioned above, Liang Shuming studied Buddhism in the middle school period due to his questioning the hardships and pains of life. The influence of Buddhism on him was mainly shown in his article *Jiu Yuan Jue Yi Lun* published in 1916. To “Jiu Yuan Jue Yi” is to “Jiu Xuan Yuan Zhen” and to “Jue Xing Zhi Zhi Yi”, which is to explore the world’s origin and dissolve the doubts of life. Liang Shuming said, “There are two ways of studying the roots. One is ‘dharma-nature’, and the other ‘dharma-character’, ‘dharma-nature’ derives from the West. The French doctor Gustave Le Bon’s theory is the only one seeming quite close to it.”¹⁵ Gustave Le Bon went against the materialist ontology and held that the world is not determined by the eternal material and that the matter is formed by the constant movement and differentiation of the atom, and the atom arises in the movement of the etheric vortex. “How does the vortex motion along with the force it generated lose the self and disappear in the ether? Like the vortex in the liquid, it loses its peace and the water moves with it and radiates. And then it disappears in the liquid.” Le Bon summed up his point of view: “First, it gathers the power in the matter. Second, the power gradually dies down. Thus, a cycle forms. A new cycle occurs after every tens of millions of

¹⁴Schopenhauer (1981, p. 151).

¹⁵Shuming (1993, p. 90).

years.”¹⁶ Le Bon used vortex motion of ether to explain the cycle of the world. Liang Shuming believed that this world view is the same as that of Buddhism. He pointed out, “Le Bon’s so called primary noumenon, which is the vortex is quite similar to Tathagata-garbha or Alaya *The Awakening of Faith* says,” *On Faith in Mahayana Theory* states, “The gold will not generate or disappear, but the gold ware will. If you want to extract gold from gold ware, you will be trapped in eight senses. The two are different but the same. They contain and generate all laws in the world.”¹⁷ Liang Shuming drew a conclusion, “Origin means Asvabhava, and therefore, Asvabhava means real svabhav....All laws are Asvabhava in dharmadhatu.” That is to say, the world is not changing, blank and indefinite.

In the same perspective, Liang Shuming went on and proposed three rules. He said, “It is inconceivable. The nature has no rules to follow. Virtue has no rules to observe.”¹⁸ These three rules are the result of deduction through theory of world indefiniteness. The first rule means that the indefinite world cannot be understood through human thinking. The second rule means that since the world is indefinite, the natural law does not exist and cannot be understood. And the third rule means that morality and ethics are not real. In other words, Liang Shuming, based on the doctrines of Buddhism, completely negated world thing-in-itself along with human cognitive power, natural laws and moral code of social life.

Liang Shuming provided two paths of life as an answer to “jue xing zhi yi”. The first is a path which is cynical, free from abyss of misery, transcending worldly affairs. Because the world is indefinite, uncertain, and unintelligible, life is in a state of utter ignorance. People cannot exclude their feelings and desire. In the world of uncertainty, people find feelings and desire are difficult to realize. And also, people will definitely suffer from endless pains caused by frustration. The best way for people to get rid of pain is to suppress their desire. As for the second path, although suppression of desire is the best choice, most people cannot completely eradicate their desires or get rid of worldly affairs. Therefore, the first path is not easy. Then, we can choose the second path. In the second path, people follow the way people evolve and arrange their life according to social norms. In other words, people cannot go against the trend. They should reduce their desires to avoid pain.

Buddhism has a greater influence on Schopenhauer than on Liang Shuming. During his college years, Schopenhauer had a strong interest in Indian Buddhism. He believed that many doctrines in Buddhism about the uncertainties of life and the source of suffering corrected the European philosophy that overestimated the rational logic. Schopenhauer himself agrees with Buddhism’s basic view that everything in the world is erratic. Dominated by desires, people have to pursue a never-ending pursuit in the world where there are no rules to follow. As a result, people are caught in a boundlessness sea of suffering and are involved in the never-ending tragedy. People’s inability to extricate themselves out of misery is caused by their own desire, so only abstinence can make people free from hardships and pains.

¹⁶Liang Shuming. *Jiu Yuan Jue Yi Lun*. *Liang Shuming Collection*, p. 92.

¹⁷Liang Shuming. *Jiu Yuan Jue Yi Lun*. *Liang Shuming Collection*, p. 92.

¹⁸Liang Shuming. *Jiu Yuan Jue Yi Lun*. *Liang Shuming Collection*, p. 95.

It was Buddhism that made Schopenhauer attribute all the hardships of the world to the sins of the will. Because it is the will (the desire in the Buddhist theory) as the driving force that promotes people to greedily demand, compete, and even fight and plunder. What people face in their pursuit is nothing but the objectification of the will. Therefore, people must restrain and control their will. And once they make it, “With voluntary negation and the abundance of the will, all the bustles and bustles for profits are nowhere to be found. With the disappearance of will, the phenomena related with the will also disappear. At the end, the basic forms of these phenomena, i.e., time and space, and the final basic form, i.e., subject and object disappear, too. Without will, representation cannot exist, nor the world.”¹⁹ Once this is achieved, it will enter the best realm of life—Nirvana free from all troubles, obtaining real freedom.

To sum up, Liang Shuming attributed the root of culture to will. Not only was the concept of “desire” similar to Schopenhauer’s will, but also the ideological source for the formation of this view was the same as Schopenhauer’s. However, there are important differences between them. On the one hand, Schopenhauer had been constant in his judgment that people have to restrain their desire to get rid of the endless sea of bitterness. On the other hand, Liang Shuming later shifted from Buddhism to Confucianism and accordingly changed his pessimistic stance, and started to believe that desire is no longer a negative factor people have to restrain, and that it serves as the prime power in the expansion and development of culture.

Liang Shuming attributed the root of culture to will, which is not only a very clear subjectivism of cultural roots, but also subjectivism of social existence and social changes because he discussed cultural roots in a broad sense and mainly in terms of social life. On the root of cultural and social development changes, there have always been subjective and objective theories. Plato is one of the earliest objectivists in Europe. Although he essentially believed that the essence of culture and social life lies in the spirit, he was talking about the objective spirit—the concept of absoluteness, and the real life and various ideas in the world are just participation of the objective absoluteness. Therefore, Plato’s view on the roots of social life and cultural phenomena is clear objectivism. Plato’s social and cultural theory of subjective roots was inherited and deified in European Christianity, and the objective absoluteness became the God that exists in the kingdom of Heaven. Christianity believed that God is the noumenon of all things in the universe and the creator of everything in the world, so Christianity is undoubtedly the objectivist of the cultural and social roots.

Started by Plato, the spirit of objectivism strengthened by Christianity was expressed in various ways in Europe. Montesquieu attributed the different characteristics of the various ethnic groups in terms of behavior, customs and legal systems to the differences in the geographical environment; Marx referred to various cultural forms, legal systems, and government structure as superstructures. He believes that the root cause of their development and changes can only be found in the change of production mode based on the level of productivity; positivists such as Comte,

¹⁹Schopenhauer. *The World as Will and Representation*, p. 562.

Spencer, and Durkheim obviously treated cultural phenomena as physical phenomena or biological phenomena, trying to find an objective law that does not change with human will. These scholars of objectivism have one thing in common. They are looking for cultural factors existing outside culture, and these factors, which are regarded as the basis of cultural development changes, are relatively stable.

The direct reason for looking for a relatively stable theory that can serve as an objective basis for culture maybe that culture itself is an unstable factor. People often fall into an erratic state of mind in the face of various cultural concepts and cultural patterns. Therefore, only by going beyond culture can we get a relatively stable understanding of the infinitely complex social phenomenon. However, all the factors found outside of the culture, no matter whether they are absolute philosophy, God of heaven, geographical environment, and economic factors, fall into the category of externalisms of cultural generation and development, and are the basis for discovering culture beyond culture. It should be affirmed that the existence and development of anything not only is external, but also has an internal basis. From the point of view of dialectical philosophy, the external factors are only the environment or conditions for the development of things and the internal factors are the basis for the development of things. Therefore, while many thinkers are looking for an external and objective basis for culture, there is also a group of thinkers looking for internal subjective basis for cultural development and changes.

For the first time, the ancient Greek philosopher Protagoras proposed to look for the basis of the world from human beings. As he declared that "man is the measure of all things," he believed that the declarer should make his decision in accordance with his own principle and demand. And also she thought that man is supposed to judge exterior objective things. If we say Plato aroused the attention of Europeans to the outside world, we can say Protagoras called for people to affirm themselves and return to themselves. This should have been the two aspects for understanding the world and knowing about the indispensable aspects of life. However, as a result of the millennial Christian respect for the Kingdom of Heaven, the subjective pursuit of Europeans has always been relatively weak. However, no matter how rigid and profound the Christian doctrines are, human's self-affirmation and exploration of the basis of life or cultural root have never stopped.

The Italian thinker Vico proposed to reveal life and understand society from the human creations—language, mythology, art, history, etc.—to establish a new science different from the natural science that pursues objective laws alone; the French materialists such as Julien Offray de La Mettrie, Claude Adrien Helvetius, Paul Heinrich Dietrich, firmly believed in the objectivism in terms of the view of nature, emphasizing that matter is primary while consciousness is secondary. However, when confronted with human social life, especially the ideology and culture, they gave up the objective materialistic principle and turned to human beings and human thoughts for the subjective roots of social history and ideology and culture.

It is Schopenhauer who firmly revealed the basis of social history and ideology and culture from the subjectivity of human beings, and Schopenhauer's subjectivist position is inspired by Indian religious concepts. This shows that in the reflection on the nature of life, history, and culture that human beings have always been pursuing,

both subjectivism and objectivism existed in Europe which evolved into two ideological clues. In the world, subjectivism appeared as opposed to objectivism dominating Europe. It is the view on the stance of Indian religion. Schopenhauer broadened subjectivism in Europe with the help of the subjectivism of Indian religion. Soren Kierkegaard, Nietzsche, Heidegger, Sartre, etc., made a remarkable contribution, endangering objectivism built up in several thousands of years.

Therefore, Liang Shuming's subjective theory on cultural roots arose in a profound academic background rather than out of accidental perception. Emphasizing the subjective fundamentals of life and culture are of positive significance that cannot be underestimated, especially at the time when China was confronted with the crisis of being divided by big powers. A universal theoretical phenomenon is that all doctrines that emphasize objective principles often recognize external inevitability, irresistible objective regularity, or even possibly fatalism; all doctrines that emphasize subjective principles tend to advocate initiative and promote the role of the subject in choice making. They tend to insist that people should fear no difficulties and bravely meet all the challenges. Of course, there are also subjectivists like Schopenhauer who are pessimistic, but most scholars, such as Nietzsche, Heidegger, and Sartre, who emphasized subjectivity, held positive and enterprising attitudes toward life and stress social practices that transcend predicament. Like Nietzsche, etc., although Liang Shuming believed that life is difficult, he still adhered to a positive and enterprising spirit, which is very prominent in his leadership of the rural reconstruction movement.

6.3 Pluralism of Cultural Direction

Since the root of culture is will, and this is the same for any nation, how can different cultures differ? This is the question that Liang Shuming raised after revealing the cultural roots. Liang Shuming pointed out that the way to answer this question should be: **“For the same nation and for the same life, why does his life show two different colors? However, his original lifestyle is intended to be divided into different directions based on its desire, thus two different lifestyles are shown. However, to seek the root or source of a culture, you only have to find out the intention of the roots of such culture and how the direction of this culture is different from the other. To find out how this direction is different, it is not difficult to see at a glance if you know his specific color to derive his original starting point.”**²⁰ That is to say, although the root of each national culture is desire, the desire has different goals, thus forming different pursuit directions and different life problems; and the cultural activities of each nation are aimed at solving life problems. Hence, this has fundamentally determined that the cultures of different nations have different directions in the process of formation and development.

²⁰Liang Shuming. *Eastern and Western Cultures and their Philosophies. Academic Essence of Liang Shuming*, p. 10.

In Liang Shuming's view, the life problems are very complicated, but it is nothing more than three major problems: Man and nature, man and man, and man and their lives. Furthermore, Liang Shuming's three major life problems are the relationships between man and thing, man and man, and man and the self. The relationship between man and nature or man and thing is the subjective and objective relationship between a person and an external object. It is the direction that people pursue outward. Liang Shuming called it the "original way". He said, this way is "to struggle to get what is required, and to try to meet his requirements; In other words, it is the attitude of struggle. When you encounter any problems, you are going to start with the front. The result of this kind of start-up is to transform the situation so that it can meet our requirements. This is the way of life."²¹

This outward and forward direction is the way in which Western culture develops. "For the Western culture today, everyone knows that its origins are from 'Renaissance', and the so-called 'Renaissance' is given no other explanation, that is, Westerners adopted what we call the 'first way' from that era."²² Yan Liangqi believed that this forward Western cultural direction had been formed in ancient Greece. Ancient Greek culture is a kind of culture with the goal of happiness in the world. To realize the happiness of the world, we must recognize the objective object and conquer the external nature with a positive attitude. Therefore, the ancient Greek culture as the source of Western culture has explored the forward and outward direction of Western culture. In the Middle Ages, although Western culture seemed to have turned around because of Christian rule, that is, from forward to backward, advocating asceticism, limiting the enterprising spirit of understanding objective and conquering nature, but after the Renaissance, Western culture reenergized Ancient Greece's positive and forward-thinking spirit, and the cultural direction of medieval Christian theology to heaven is transferred back to the human world.

Liang Shuming believed that Western culture has formed a different characteristic from Eastern culture because of its insistence on the way forward. It is most prominently manifested in three aspects. He called it the "three special colors" of Western culture:

- (1) Conquering the splendid colors of nature The material life of Western culture shows the characteristic of conquering the nature. Isn't it the attitude toward forward struggle for nature? Isn't the so-called material civilization a result of the transformation of environmental requirements?
- (2) The splendid color of scientific method The scientific method should change the status quo, break it, analyze it and observe it; isn't it an attitude to overcome the opposite thing from the front? Scientific spirit imposed on various kinds of ideas, doubts over beliefs breaking the "mopping up", isn't it the result of rapid forward progress?

²¹Liang Shuming. *Eastern and Western Cultures and their Philosophies. Academic Essence of Liang Shuming*, pp. 33–34.

²²Liang Shuming. *Eastern and Western Cultures and their Philosophies. Academic Essence of Liang Shuming*, p. 35.

- (3) The splendid color of democracy Isn't it the result of democracy that fights against various authoritarian forces? Isn't this the attitude requiring that people move forward?²³

Liang Shuming referred to the positive and outward direction of the West as the "first direction" and "original direction". On the one hand, it affirms that this direction is primordial and fundamental, that is, human, in order to survive and develop, must first face any natural contradiction. We must understand nature and influence nature in terms of understanding and practice in order to obtain the necessary material life materials. Therefore, this direction is "first" and "original"; On the other hand, Liang Shuming called Western culture like this, and it is regarded as the first level of meaning. Above this level is Chinese culture and Indian culture. Western culture not only fails to reach the level of Chinese culture and Indian culture, but also it will eventually develop into these two levels.

Liang Shuming believed that Chinese culture is taking the second direction that is a completely different direction from Western culture. He said, "We will first compare Westernization and Chineseization: The first is conquest of nature in the Western material life, which China does not have and complete; The second is the scientific method of academic thought of Westernization, which China does not have; The third is "democracy" in terms of "Westernization of social life", which China does not have. It is difficult to find out the positive side of China in almost all these three aspects that cannot be completed by China. Therefore, we have to ask: Is the fundamental direction of Chinese culture still the same way as the Western culture so that no Western achievements are made because of slow progress? Or follow a way different from the West to make achievements, and have a negative side and a positive side?"²⁴

Liang Shuming's question was targeted because it was during the May Fourth Movement that when scholars talked about Chinese and Western cultures, and generally believed that Chinese culture was clearly behind the Western culture. However, Liang Shuming held a different from this universal view. He believed that Chinese culture cannot be attributed to a conservative culture that is lagging behind the Western culture. This essentially simplifies the very complicated problem. He pointed out, "I can assert that if Westernization is different from ours, and China is completely closed to the outside. Even after three hundred years, five hundred years, and one thousand years, there will not be these ships, trains, flying boats, scientific methods and the spirit of 'democracy'. This means that: The Chinese are not taking a route with the West because China is developing too slowly. If taking the same route but taking short-cuts, China will catch up one day; If China and the West take different route, no matter how long it takes, China will not go to the place where the Westerners have reached! The latter is really in line with the situation in China. In essence, the Chinese have a different attitude from the Westerners, that is, he is not

²³Liang Shuming. *Eastern and Western Cultures and their Philosophies. Academic Essence of Liang Shuming*, p. 35.

²⁴Liang Shuming. *Eastern and Western Cultures and their Philosophies. Academic Essence of Liang Shuming*, p. 42.

taking the first direction forward. The Chinese people are law-abiding and contented, have few desires, and keep fit, and there is no requirement to advocate materialistic pleasure.”²⁵

It should be affirmed that Liang Shuming's analysis and judgment are basically in line with the characteristics of Chinese traditional culture. As far as the mainstream of Chinese traditional culture is concerned, not only in the academic genre, but also in the Western Renaissance, the ideological doctrine of material desire and realistic enjoyment of publicity is rarely publicized, and in real life, people also practice self-denial and moderation, reconciliation, and other conservative living standards. Liang Shuming's conclusion is: The Chinese are taking the second road, that is, the Chinese culture is developing a second way. “When encountering any problems, it is not required to find a solution and change the situation, but to pursue own satisfaction in this situation. ...What to start from does not lie in the front, and the eyes do not look forward, but to the side; He didn't want to struggle to transform the situation, but to think back and take things as they are. The way he handles the problem is just a reconciliation of his own desires.”²⁶

“Looking to the side” is indeed a major feature of the Chinese thinking about problems and practicing life. The essence of looking to the side is to put an interpersonal relationship in a crucial position, and even to see an interpersonal relationship as an insurmountable prerequisite for thinking and solving all problems. If Westerners think about and deal with the problems they face from the relationship between man and nature, subject and object, then the Chinese think about and deal with the problems he faces from the relationship between man and man, subject and subject. Even if it is a question about natural things or objective objects, the Chinese are accustomed to putting it in the relationship between people in order to carry out more in-depth thinking and practice. This is the characteristic of the ethical society that Liang Shuming later summarized.

“Looking to the side” is to see the world of life where an interpersonal relationship is supreme. Because looking to the side is not only to see the same world around me as others, but also to determine a life attitude that is afraid of risk, reconciling contradictions and avoiding competition, and then advocating reconciliation and holding a generous way of dealing with people. This attitude of life and way of life limit the pioneering spirit of forging ahead, struggling forward, and pursuing innovation, but in social life, it leads people to focus on maintaining a tolerant and harmonious social order. Therefore, this second direction of Chinese culture also has its positive side.

From the perspective of material life, Chinese enjoyment of material life such as food, clothing, housing, and transportation is indeed much lower than that of Westerners. However, “all Chinese people enjoy their living not so good as Westerners,

²⁵Liang Shuming. *Eastern and Western Cultures and their Philosophies. Academic Essence of Liang Shuming*, p. 43.

²⁶Liang Shuming. *Eastern and Western Cultures and their Philosophies. Academic Essence of Liang Shuming*, p. 34.

but the happiness that Chinese enjoy is more than Westerners. Therefore, the happiness that we enjoy comes from the enjoyment, not from the things we enjoy—those wearing expensive clothes may not be happy, and those wearing cheap clothes may be very happy; with their natural and harmonious attitude, Chinese will enjoy the happiness if there is, while the Westerners are eagerly pursuing their enthusiasm but are sorrowful and depressed; although they have gained a lot, they have never enjoyed it well.”²⁷

From the perspective of social life, the Chinese respect the Confucian ethics, which also leads to some negative aspects, for example, many rules and regulations restrict personality and freedom, and social vitality is also suppressed. However, there are many aspects of Chinese social life that are better than Western social life. In dealing with interpersonal relationships, Westerners always start from the self, carelessly and unreasonably. “Words are friends of the rights and obligations and legal relationship, even between the father and the son. In this way, life is really unreasonable, and it is too bitter”.²⁸ The Chinese put ethics and morality in the first place, and there is no boundary or rights and obligations between people, which is called filial piety, indicating affection is respected.”^③ Therefore, people are close to each other, not as indifferent as the Westerners.

From the perspective of spiritual life, Liang Shuming basically had a negative attitude toward the spiritual life of the Chinese, but he believed that Confucius’ thinking has a high realm. In his view, compared with the West, China is far behind in the spiritual life than the West. In terms of religion, literature, and art, China lacks a lofty and positive spirit and fails to develop to a higher level. Although Confucius’ thinking is at a high level, it has not been universally popular in China. He said, “The so-called second way is not to move forward or backward, but it has its own positive spirit, but only for tolerance and perfunctor. Chinese are mostly tolerant of the perfunctory, but Confucius’ attitude is not to tolerance the perfunctory. No one does not enjoy himself. If only this could the second way have its positive side.”²⁹ If everyone can self-cultivate and improve themselves and enter a beautiful realm of harmony with others from the heart, the morality and spiritual standards of the whole society will not enter a positive and upward level. Therefore, “only this is the only good route for the second way. We say that the second road is intended to reconcile and neutralize. Tolerance, endurance and perfunctoriness are also a kind of reconciliation, but only self-complacent is true reconciliation.”³⁰

The third way is the direction of Indian culture. “People walking this way solve the problems with a method different from the first two. In case of a problem, he wants

²⁷Liang Shuming. *Eastern and Western Cultures and their Philosophies. Academic Essence of Liang Shuming*, p. 47.

²⁸Liang Shuming. *Eastern and Western Cultures and their Philosophies. Academic Essence of Liang Shuming*, p. 48.

²⁹Liang Shuming. *Eastern and Western Cultures and their Philosophies. Academic Essence of Liang Shuming*, p. 49.

³⁰Liang Shuming. *Eastern and Western Cultures and their Philosophies. Academic Essence of Liang Shuming*, p. 49.

to cancel the problem or request at all.”³¹ Liang Shuming called it the direction of “turning back to request”. This way is considered to be a violation of human nature. Because human beings must first obtain the material for material life from nature in order to maintain their own lives, and human desires will not stay at a level forever, which will continue to improve as conditions change; this determines that human beings must constantly improve their cognitive abilities and production levels. These basic activities are in the forward direction in the words of Liang Shuming, which are the most basic development of human nature. What Indian culture pursues or develops is the direction opposite to this direction, and therefore, it is contrary to the direction of human nature. “Indians are neither as happy as Westerners nor as satisfied as Chinese people. He is striving for relieve from this life; It is neither forward nor neutral, but it is flipped backwards, that is, what we call the third way.”³²

In this way, Liang Shuming summarized human culture into three major directions. His conclusion is: “The life of all human beings is about the same as these three paths: (1) Requesting to the front; (2) Changing, reconciling, and neutralizing the meaning of oneself; (3) Turning around to request; these are three different directions. These three different directions are very important, on which all our statements about observation of culture are based.”³³ It can be seen that Liang Shuming's generalization and analysis of the three major directions of culture are not only the description and classification of cultural phenomena, but also a methodological principle for studying human cultural phenomena.

In terms of methodology, Liang Shuming's three major directions are rational. Because in a highly general sense, human social life is indeed divided as Liang Shuming did, that is, human social life can be basically attributed to three basic relationships: Man and nature, man and man, man and self. Although Western culture, Chinese culture, and Indian culture contain the three aspects in terms of their actual content, in terms of the main characteristics of the three major cultural forms, they do, as Liang Shuming said, highlight one aspect of the three basic relationships of social life, and then form the three major cultural directions.

Liang Shuming's three major cultural directions have aroused strong repercussions after the publication of *Eastern and Western Cultures and their Philosophies*. Those who agree with it argue that the most important value of the three major cultural directions is to establish an important position for Chinese culture, confirm the reasonable factors and positive significance of it, and resist the notion that Chinese culture is far behind the old culture of Western culture, and plays a very active in enhancing the self-confidence of the Chinese nation, inspiring the national spirit, and resisting the invasion of foreign enemies. There are a lot of people criticizing it. Hu Shih's criticism is the most intense. In Hu Shih's view, Liang Shuming's three major

³¹Liang Shuming. *Eastern and Western Cultures and their Philosophies*. *Academic Essence of Liang Shuming*, p. 34.

³²Liang Shuming. *Eastern and Western Cultures and their Philosophies*. *Academic Essence of Liang Shuming*, p. 44.

³³Liang Shuming. *Eastern and Western Cultures and their Philosophies*. *Academic Essence of Liang Shuming*, p. 34.

cultural directions are a theory that simply summarizes and arbitrarily concludes the cultural phenomenon of infinitely rich content, which is absent from specific analysis and in many respects is not in line with the reality of Eastern and Western cultures. For example, Hu Shih believed that the culture of each nation has both the forward side and the backward side, there is also a self-reconciled side, Western culture, Chinese culture, and Indian culture are forward, neutral, and backward, and it is obvious to grab one point, regardless of the rest.³⁴

Hu Shih's criticism of Liang Shuming clearly has its rationality, because not only the culture of each nation exists in various forms, but also has special characteristics and many commonalities. The culture of one nation also contains very rich content, showing a variety of goals and values. Therefore, the use of three major cultural directions to summarize the cultural traditions of various nations of the world and one direction to summarize the cultural traditions of a nation will face a problem of the halo effect. However, any generalization is an abstraction, and it is necessary to make key and non-key choices for rich features. Liang Shuming's three major cultural directions state that focusing on European culture, Chinese culture, and Indian culture or with the three cultural traditions as a representative, the human cultural phenomena are grasped in a macro manner. This not only shows that Liang Shuming's generalization has its realistic basis, not groundless empty discussion; moreover, because these three cultural traditions in history or reality are typical and representative cultural traditions, it is a universal interpretation of human cultural phenomena. What is especially important is that Liang Shuming's summary of the different characteristics of the three major cultural directions is a conclusion drawn by comparing the three major cultural traditions, revealing the prominent features of each of the three major cultural traditions, rather than the summary of the full content of them. In this regard, Hu Shih's criticism is not one-sided.

Liang Shuming also analyzed the future trend of culture and put forward the "review of the three phases of world culture." As mentioned above, although Liang Shuming believed that it is not possible to simply say that which of the three cultures are superior or inferior, these three cultures should be developed in turn, and the second culture and the third cultural direction should only be fully developed in the first cultural direction. The reason is that the first cultural direction is to solve people's material life. Only when the material life needs are met, social life and spiritual life can develop on a stable basis. This view is obviously influenced by Marx's historical materialism, although he is often critical of Marxism.

In Liang Shuming's view, although the three major cultural directions are logically required to be carried out in turn, in reality, Western culture, Chinese culture, and Indian culture are not all based on this logic. Western culture basically follows this logic. Except for the transformation into the third cultural road for more than 1,000 years in the Middle Ages, the Western cultures since the ancient Greek period and the Renaissance were devoted to the pursuit of the first cultural direction, thus achieving the high development of material civilization. When the material civilization of the West accumulates to a certain extent, the problem of the second

³⁴Zheng Dahua. *A Critical Biography of Liang Shuming's Academic Thoughts*, p. 91.

cultural direction is placed in front of the Westerners, and it should be changed from the first cultural direction to the second cultural direction. However, instead of consciously doing this kind of turn, Westerners have extended the aggressive and forward-looking approach to nature to the relationship between man and man, which has led to cruel economic competition. "Since Westerners held this attitude,³⁵ they had always changed the environment outside to satisfy this attitude, resorting to the outside instead of the inside and resorting to others instead of themselves. They would change the nature if involved in nature, and change the society if involved in the society. Therefore, they conquered nature, defeated authority, made new tools, developed new systems, and completed transformations one by one until great progress is made and ideal world is created, thus putting an end to this road!"³⁶

The so-called end of this road means that the central task of human society has shifted, from the acquisition of material wealth to the coordination of interpersonal relationships. Liang Shuming pointed out, "The so-called survival problem has been eliminated, which does not mean that it is not present at this time, but means that if there are arrangements for production distribution, survival will not be a problem. The problem in people's minds is not survival, but elsewhere."³⁷ "Human beings will shift from the relationship between man and material to that between man and man."³⁸ This view of Liang Shuming was a prediction of the development of human society at that time. It should be said that this prediction is very great. After less than half a century, this prediction came true in western developed countries.

In 1967, American sociologist Daniel Bell published *The Coming of Post-Industrial Society*, in which a large number of facts demonstrated that the era of material production as the central task is about to pass, and the post-industrial era, which is centered on the task of interpersonal relations, has arrived. The most convincing basis for drawing this conclusion is the major adjustment of the industrial structure of the developed countries represented by the United States. By the 1960s and 1970s, the industrial structure of the Western developed countries had been adjusted from the original secondary industry as the dominant position to the tertiary industry as the dominant position. The proportion of the tertiary industry in the United States reached more than 60%. The tertiary industry with cultural education, network information, and tourism services as its main content is essentially different from the contradiction between the primary industry and the secondary industry. The primary industry and the secondary industry are essentially the fundamental task of solving the contradiction between man and nature, that is, obtaining material wealth from nature through agricultural production and industrial production; the contradiction directly faced by the tertiary industry is not the contradiction between man

³⁵Refers to the forward attitude of the first cultural direction.—Author's Note.

³⁶Liang Shuming. *Eastern and Western Cultures and their Philosophies, Academic Essence of Liang Shuming*, p. 56.

³⁷Liang Shuming. *Eastern and Western Cultures and their Philosophies. Academic Essence of Liang Shuming*, pp. 56–57.

³⁸Liang Shuming. *Eastern and Western Cultures and their Philosophies. Academic Essence of Liang Shuming*, p. 57.

and nature, but the contradiction between people. In the tertiary industry, people use their own labor to directly provide services to others, and develop the interpersonal relationship. Daniel Bell believed that this is the most profound change in the history of human society. He called it the advent of post-industrial society.

Although Liang Shuming did not explicitly propose the concept of post-industrial society like Daniel Bell, the idea of Liang Shuming is very similar to that of Daniel Bell. That is, after the development of material production to a certain extent and solving the problem of lack of living materials, the central task of human society will shift and the contradiction between man and man will inevitably become the central task of society. However, Liang Shuming explicitly raised the issue of shift of value and lifestyle, which studied deeper than Daniel Bell. Liang Shuming pointed out, “In the past, the maintenance of law and order in society, in any case, cannot be said to be not mandatory, that is, treating man as a thing. Human beings could no longer afford this attitude, and the society that has been transformed with economic correction cannot be separated from the unity of things. It should always be handled properly between man and man. In the past, it can be said that in the era of material dissatisfaction, human beings must resort to the outside to make up the material deficiency, and resort to themselves to calm down the spiritual restlessness. In terms of material life in the past, human beings seem to shift from the era of acquisition to the era of enjoyment—it is difficult to acquire but enjoy! If you ask how to get it, you have to move forward for request. If you ask how to enjoy it, why not move forward to request? All of these are the major situations that make the first direction—the Western attitude cannot be transferred to the second direction—China’s attitude.”³⁹

Although Liang Shuming clearly pointed out that China’s second cultural direction can solve the problem when the first direction of Western culture progresses to a certain extent, that is, the interpersonal relationship problem after the living materials shortage problem is solved, he did not think that the facts that the second cultural direction that China has already launched for the development of Chinese society is reasonable, on the contrary, he believed that it is a congenitally deficient advancing direction. Liang Shuming’s consistent view is that culture itself does not matter whether it is good or bad, advanced or backward. The difference is that it is suitable for the time. “At the beginning of human culture, we must not walk on the first road. The Chinese are like this, but they make a turn to the second road midway, and walk ahead in time, producing a precocious human culture. However, if the first issue is not settled, it is a must to take the first road. Is it possible to take the second road? Therefore, only an unclear journey can be taken without voluntariness, and the world under the first problem will experience great failure.”⁴⁰

Similarly, Liang Shuming believed that Indian culture is also an untimely precocious culture, even a precocious culture that goes faster than Chinese culture. He said, “Indian culture is also a precocious human culture. He took the third road

³⁹Liang Shuming. *Eastern and Western Cultures and their Philosophies. Academic Essence of Liang Shuming*, p. 57.

⁴⁰Liang Shuming. *Eastern and Western Cultures and their Philosophies. Academic Essence of Liang Shuming*, p. 65.

before finishing the first and second roads. His behavior is too strange, and the value of his culture can never be recognized by the world. Nothing good is shown, and no one dares to despise it.”⁴¹ When confronted with the reality of Chinese society, Liang Shuming had a clear negative attitude toward Indian culture. To sum up, Liang Shuming started from the reality of China and believed that the attitude of the Chinese towards the three cultures is: “First, the attitude to rejecting India should not be reserved; Second, the Western culture is fully accepted, and fundamentally changed, that is, its attitude must be changed; Third, the original Chinese attitude is held again in a critical manner.”⁴² It can be seen that Liang Shuming is not sticking to traditional Chinese culture as some people have accused. He not only advocated critically treating Chinese traditional culture, but also advocated critically absorbing Western culture. Therefore, Liang Shuming's cultural direction is a positive cultural concept.

6.4 Ethical Society and Occupational Differences

The Essence Of Chinese Culture, which started to be written in 1942 and published in 1949, is a typical cultural sociology work, because Liang Shuming in this work further deepened some ideological views discussed in *Eastern and Western Cultures and their Philosophies*, highlighted the in-depth and systematic analysis of China's social structure as a direct research subject, made a family-based and ethics-based qualitative conclusion of Chinese society, and from the family system, ethical relations, social organizations, moral religions, rational principles, class countries, etc., made a rich discussion on the situation and characteristics of China's social structure, forming an ethical social structure theory that has an important influence in the history of Chinese sociology.

In *The Essence of Chinese Culture*, Liang Shuming pointed out that he should discuss cultural issues from the social life of China. This not only adheres to his general cultural concept, but also highlights the focus of this work. He said, “Generally, culture refers to words, literature, thought, scholarship, education, publishing, etc., which is in a narrow sense. The culture that I am talking about today is what everything in my life depends on. It is meant to indicate that culture is a very real thing. The original meaning of culture should cover economy, politics, and even everything.”⁴³ “Culture covers everything, but the book can't.” “China has always made detailed records of human affairs but been ignorant of physics. It is also discussed here in terms of its social life.”⁴⁴ This not only shows that Liang Shuming

⁴¹Liang Shuming. *Eastern and Western Cultures and their Philosophies. Academic Essence of Liang Shuming*, p. 65.

⁴²Liang Shuming. *Eastern and Western Cultures and their Philosophies. Academic Essence of Liang Shuming*, p. 66.

⁴³Shuming (1994, p. 133).

⁴⁴Liang Shuming. *The Essence of Chinese Culture. Selected Works of Liang Shuming*, p. 134.

wanted to discuss culture in the perspective of life society, but also shows that he is not developing the theoretical perspective of empirical sociology to reveal the objective stipulation of social life, but to study the spiritual or conceptual perspectives of subjective regulation of social life from the aspects of ideas, morality, and ethics, that is, the perspective of emotional theory that we will discuss further later.

Liang Shuming's spiritual or theoretical perspective is based on the analysis of Chinese cultural individuality. He first summarized the individuality of Chinese culture from seven aspects: Self-creation, clear characteristics, persistent existence, assimilation of other national cultures, inclusive of other national cultures, precociousness, and wide range of influence. Liang Shuming believed that these characteristics of the Chinese national culture show the essential characteristics of the Chinese national culture. He said, "Here, we are so unwilling to ask: What is Chinese culture? Is it just a pile of things at a certain space in geography during a certain period of history? Is there a meaning or spirit that can be referred to? From the strength of the above-mentioned Chinese cultural personality, it is quite fascinating to see that its foundation is profound, and therefore, it plays a great role; from the beginning to the end, from the surface to the center, there must be a meaning or spirit. If there is, can you point it out so that everyone can understand why it is, and there is a vivid meaning or spirit that is reflected in the mind?—The book *The Essence of Chinese Culture* wants to try to complete this job."⁴⁵ It is very clear that Liang Shuming believed that the personality of Chinese culture can be attributed to value ideals or spiritual pursuits. In essence, it is pointed out that to understand Chinese culture, it is a must to subjectively examine and interpret. Otherwise, the essential characteristics and spiritual essence of Chinese culture cannot be understood.

In Liang Shuming's view, there are also value ideals and spiritual pursuits in Western culture, which are mainly reflected in the two aspects of science and religion. The value ideals and spiritual pursuits of Chinese culture do not lie in science and religion, but in moral ethics and emotional communication. Why is this difference? Liang Shuming traced back to the basic unit of social life, the family. He pointed out, "Family life is the first social life of the Chinese; the relationships between relatives, neighbors, friends, etc., are the second most important social life of the Chinese. These two social lives concentrate on the requirements of the Chinese, scope the activities of the Chinese, and stipulate the moral conditions of their society and the political legal system."⁴⁶ Think of the family as the most basic aspect of Chinese social life, is the "first life", which means that other aspects of life are built on family life.

Based on this, Liang Shuming criticized Feng Youlan's view of the Chinese family system from changes in production methods. Feng Youlan believed that the fundamental reason why China's social life is based on the family is that China has not undergone an industrial revolution. After the industrial revolution, the production mode in Europe has changed from agricultural production to industrial production. Agricultural production can be carried out on a household basis, while industrial

⁴⁵Liang Shuming. *The Essence of Chinese Culture*, p. 4.

⁴⁶Liang Shuming. *The Essence of Chinese Culture*, p. 12.

production is socialized production that will inevitably break through the boundaries of the family, and family life will inevitably become socialized accordingly. If China also carries out an industrial revolution like Europe, then China's family life will also undergo social changes. Feng Youlan is actually insisting on Marx's view that the mode of production is the most basic driving force for social development and change. Although Liang Shuming did not deny that the industrial revolution can promote the change of social lifestyle, he argued that the family-life-based Chinese society cannot be attributed only to the type of industry or production methods, but the role of the etiquette system, emotional needs, cultural personality, etc., should be seen.

Furthermore, Liang Shuming advocated seeing the fundamental status of Chinese families from the relative independence of culture and even the role of economic life. He pointed out, "China has always been an agricultural society that has not undergone industrial revolution; Chinese traditional customs and customs should be undoubtedly adapted to it. In particular, there are few changes in the culture of the second millennium. It is not difficult to imagine that the mutual adaptation between the economic base and its superstructure has reached a high level, with the right, left, front, top and bottom tightly fit. But we have no reason to judge that all the Chinese customs are formed for this economic decision. On the contrary, it may not be possible to advance to the industrial revolution for more than two thousand years of production methods and production tools in China, but it is being influenced by its customs and customs."⁴⁷

Liang Shuming fully exerted the family-based view. He started from the family as the most basic living unit and production unit in China. He believed that various systems and various levels of social life can be found in the family. The family has an ontological significance in life in Chinese society. He said, "There is a home-based production method, that is, a home-based production system. There is a family-based production system, that is, a family-based social system. In a family-based social system, all social organizations are family-centered. All the relationships between man and man must be involved in the family relationship. In the so-called five ethic relationships in the old days, namely those between the monarchs, fathers and sons, couples, brothers, and friends, the family relationships accounted for three. The rest two, although not about the family, are also based on the family. For example, the monarch is treated as a father and friends as brothers."⁴⁸ He even made this conclusion: "The Chinese family system really determines the fate of China's social economy and even the fate of China's entire culture!"⁴⁹

Liang Shuming quoted the Japanese scholar Inaba Junshan's argument to support his own views: "The only barrier to protecting the Chinese nation is its family system. The support of this system is strong, and I am afraid that the Great Wall cannot match. Generally, all scholars have said that the destruction of the spirit of the family system in ancient Rome was the result of Christian invasion of Rome. However, since the

⁴⁷Liang Shuming. *The Essence of Chinese Culture*, p. 32.

⁴⁸Liang Shuming. *The Essence of Chinese Culture*, p. 27.

⁴⁹Liang Shuming. *The Essence of Chinese Culture*, p. 36.

introduction of the Nestorianism in the Tang Dynasty and missionary work during the Ming and Qing Dynasties, it was definitely affected by Christianity, but the family system remained unchanged. In turn, there is a tendency to make Christians familized. Buddhism has a longer history in China; but it is quite natural that Buddhism has surrendered to this family system. What a great miracle in the world! We say that there is a gap between China and the European and American society, which is a fact.”⁵⁰

A further problem is that Chinese society is family-based, while Western society is group-based. If it is not the industrial revolution that determines this difference, then what determines this difference? Liang Shuming insisted on his consistent position and pursued the root causes of the differences between East and West from the subjective aspect of culture and social life. In his view, it is religion that determines the differences between family-based and group-based views between China and the West. He said, “As far as I can see, religious issues are a watershed between Chinese and Western cultures. Ancient Chinese society and Greek-Roman society are not far from each other. However, the cultural development of the West in the future is centered on the religions such as Christianity; China adopted the non-religious Zhou Kongjiao education as the center. Afterward, the two social structures evolved differently. Zhou Kongjiao’s education is ‘very high-minded and moderately mediocre’, which in the life of the patriarchal society has not changed suddenly (not changed), but refines the literary style to enhance the spirit. China gradually turned to ethic as standard, and family life continued thereafter. In the West, Christianity shifted to large group life, while the family was despised and the family was split, which is the general trend.”⁵¹

Liang Shuming discussed the inevitability of the formation of Western group lifestyles from the essential characteristics of Christianity. The ancient Greek and Roman society originally had many similarities with the Chinese pre-Qin society. Later, Christianity exerted a powerful transformation effect on Western social life, which made Europe form a group society that transcended the family tradition. The reason why Christianity can exert such a profound transformation effect on social life is, according to Liang Shuming, is determined by its essential characteristics. Liang Shuming summed up the three characteristics of Christianity: “First, God is absolutely unique.” This feature of Christianity allows it to exclude other religions and unify European cultural awareness; “Second, love all people, take God as the father, and treat all people as brothers,” which is a direct negation of family relationships and family system, and reduce the relationships between father and son and between relatives to the same brotherhood relationship; “Third, detached from the secular.” Family life is the most common and basic secular life. Christianity advocates transcending the secular, and it is inevitable to despise the family life.

⁵⁰The original by Inaba is published in the Japanese magazine, *Oriental Magazine*, entitled *The Characteristics of Chinese Society and Culture*. This is quoted in Vol. 2 of *Wai Shu* by Mr. Liu Jianquan, Shuangliu.—Original Note.

⁵¹Liang Shuming. *The Essence of Chinese Culture, Selected Works of Liang Shuming*, p. 144.

These principles of Christianity not only promoted the disintegration of the family system and the despising of family life, but also gave birth to the Western group concept and established the group life. The social role of "God is absolutely unique" is to require people to recognize a unified belief pursuit and common living standards; "All people in the world are treated as brothers" contribute to the formation of group relationships within social organizations; "Detached from the secular" can make people despise personal interests and family interests, and pursue only the group's institutional principles or ideal goals. Therefore, Christianity essentially lays the foundation for ideological beliefs and institutional principles for the establishment of a group or group lifestyle in Western society.

Western group lifestyles have made Westerners have some characteristics that Chinese people do not have. Liang Shuming believed that there are four main points: "First, public perception; Second, disciplined habits; Third, organizing ability; Fourth, spirit of legality. These four points can also be collectively referred to as the term 'public morality'."⁵² Public morality is deeply anxious for Yan Fu, Kang Youwei, Liang Qichao, etc. They all thought that because of the lack of public moral consciousness, the Chinese people only know themselves but the society, the family but the nation-state. Therefore, in their view, the public morality of the people must be cultivated to save China; otherwise, the Chinese can only be divided by the powers due to disunity. Liang Shuming also believed that the lack of public morality is a serious problem for Chinese people so that they are not stronger than Westerners, but he believed that the root cause should be found before making a solution.

Liang Shuming said that while Westerners have many advantages due to their focus on group life, they also point out that they have many drawbacks. He pointed out, "For Westerners, in a tight group, the group must directly rule and interfere with individuals; when individuals are conscious, they should strive for their freedom and status in the group. Both groups and individuals should be treated separately, just like the right and the left. From the left, you could know the right, vice versa. In the West, group life is advocated, and personal personality is revealed."⁵³ Groups and individuals, as two mutually exclusive entities, have become conflicts in the struggles of Western society. When the West emphasizes personal property and individual rights, the West is an individual-centered society. The modern Western society represented by the United Kingdom and the United States is such an individual-centered society. When the Soviet Union was established, a society-centered society took place in Western society. The Anglo-American society and the Soviet society are two extreme individual or society-centered forms, which fully demonstrate the social contradictions between individuals and groups.

On the contrary, due to the lack of group concept and group life in Chinese society, personal consciousness and individual behavior are very vague and weak, and thus, the contradiction between group and individual is difficult to happen in Chinese society. "In China, due to the lack of group life, there is no way to reflect personal problems. Groups and individuals are obviously two entities in the West,

⁵²Liang Shuming. *The Essence of Chinese Culture, Selected Works of Liang Shuming*, p. 158.

⁵³Liang Shuming. *The Essence of Chinese Culture, Selected Works of Liang Shuming*, p. 169.

and the family is a virtual one. The Chinese have promoted the family relationship from the middle, and the ethical organization society has melted the two ends of the individual and the group (the two ends seem to be nothing to him)."⁵⁴ The so-called "organizing society with ethics" means that Chinese people rely on the connection and maintenance of interpersonal relationships to develop social life. Liang Shuming said, "When a person is born, he or she is related to some people (parents, brothers, etc.), and will always live in a relationship with others (cannot leave society). So, people live on various relationships. Such a relationship is an ethic. Ethic means a relationship between two people; it means that people are communicating with each other. The relationship is generated during the interpersonal communication."⁵⁵ However, the closeness of ethical relationship generated during the communication between man and man is different because the different importance to man. In ethical relations, "the relationship between father and son in a family is a natural basic one; therefore, the ethics give the first priority to the family."⁵⁶ Then, with the increase of age and the expansion of social interaction, ethical relations are expanding into a wider range.

Compared with the Anglo-American society and the Soviet society, the former focuses on the individual, and thus, it is an individual-centered society; The Soviet Union is focusing on society (the specific performance is to emphasize the collective, organization and country), and therefore, it is a society-centered society; China's focus is not on individuals, nor on society, but on the relationship between people. In this regard, the ethic as standard is also the relationship as standard. The individual as standard emphasizes individual will, personal interests, and personal status. The society as standard emphasizes collective goals, organizational systems, and state power. The two are opposite and mutually negated in terms of interests, powers, and institutions. The ethic as standard focuses not on interests, powers, and institutions, but on friendship and obligations. "Ethical relation, that is, friendship, is a kind of obligation between them. The 'li (in Chinese)' in ethic (Lun Li in Chinese), is reflected in this affection and righteousness. To express more the closeness, this affection and righteousness are highlighted, such as 'master (Shi Fu in Chinese)' and 'student's son and grandson (Tu Zi Tu Sun in Chinese)' for a teacher-student relationship; 'Parent-like official (Fu Mu Guan in Chinese)' and 'people under the jurisdiction of their official (Zi Min in Chinese)' for the official-people relationship; In a neighborhood relationship, they called each other 'uncle', 'brother', etc. All kinds of relationships in the whole society are familized to strengthen ties between each other and emphasize the righteousness."⁵⁷

Liang Shuming investigated the role and performance of ethical relations in Chinese social life from economic, political, and religious perspectives, with the basic conclusions that: At any level, the ethical relationship with the affection and righteousness as the core is put in the first place. The ethical relationship emphasizing

⁵⁴Liang Shuming. *The Essence of Chinese Culture. Selected Works of Liang Shuming*, p. 169.

⁵⁵Liang Shuming. *The Essence of Chinese Culture, Selected Works of Liang Shuming*, p. 171.

⁵⁶Liang Shuming. *The Essence of Chinese Culture, Selected Works of Liang Shuming*, p. 171.

⁵⁷Liang Shuming. *The Essence of Chinese Culture. Selected Works of Liang Shuming*, pp. 171–172.

affection and righteousness is the basic starting point or the most basic behavioral basis for the Chinese to observe life, deal with problems and practice life. Based on these judgments, Liang Shuming concluded that Chinese society is an ethical society.

Focusing on the affection and righteousness and centering on ethics show that Chinese society has stronger integration power than Western society, and the role of integration is to enhance the unity and identity of society. Therefore, Liang Shuming's point of view is faced with how to answer and interpret China's social differences or social stratification. When Liang Shuming published *The Essence Of Chinese Culture*, New China was founded; Marxist class analysis principles and class struggle views undoubtedly dominated the academic and political circles, but he not only did not use Marxist views to analyze China's social stratification. On the contrary, based on his interpretation of Chinese history, he concluded that Chinese society has no class and only professional distinction.

Liang Shuming discussed the nature of class, the occurrence and evolution of Western social classes, the fact that China had no class from ancient times, and China as a society with professional distinction rather than class distinction, etc. Liang Shuming pointed out, "We must seek at the struggle of economic politics so that a class is a class."⁵⁸ "When economic exploitation of others is feasible and land and other resources are occupied in politics, class is generated."⁵⁹ It is obvious that Liang Shuming has no disagreement with the Marxists about the nature and occurrence of the class. Although he further emphasized the class opposition from a cultural perspective, the understanding of class definition, class occurrence and development is still consistent with Marxism. Liang Shuming believed that three points should be paid attention to on the class issue: "First, all superstitions are formed to make the division of the class severe; Second, the customary system produces different marriages between classes; Third, the class hereditary system, or in fact, is equal to the hereditary."⁶⁰ These three points further defined culturally the class and class opposition. Lenin did not mention these three points when defining the class. However, these three points of Liang Shuming can be regarded as the supplement of class and class opposition, which are not opposite to the class views of Marxists such as Lenin.

Chinese Marxists are firmly convinced of Marx's theory of class and class struggle, and have carried out an extensive class analysis of Chinese society and launched large-scale class struggles in both urban and rural areas. These are undisputed historical facts. However, according to Liang Shuming's point of view, these class analysis theories and the history of class struggle seem to be a misunderstanding. Liang Shuming believed that from the reality of China in the past 100 years, China had no class in the history of more than 2,000 years. Because "the Chinese society a hundred years ago, as generally recognized, has never changed a lot in two thousand years from the Qin and Han Dynasties. I often say that it is in a state of circling, and there is no possibility of a fundamental change. Therefore, the situation 'a hundred

⁵⁸Liang Shuming. *The Essence of Chinese Culture. Selected Works of Liang Shuming*, p. 144.

⁵⁹Liang Shuming. *The Essence of Chinese Culture. Selected Works of Liang Shuming*, p. 144.

⁶⁰Liang Shuming. *The Essence of Chinese Culture*, p. 144.

years ago' is almost the same as that in 'two thousand years'.⁶¹ Therefore, Liang Shuming demonstrated that Chinese society has no class based on the reality he has seen.

My family grew up in the north and lived in the north for two generations. It can be said that I am already a northerner. Of course, what I saw are still in the conditions in the north. In the north, most people have land. Although the counties near the Peiping (the old Shuntian Prefecture) have a lot of "banner land" (all owned by the noble of Eight Banners), they have the permanent tenant right of their land. For example, it is not allowed to increase rents and occupy the land. It seems that the ownership of landlords is equally divided (such as the ground right and underground right in the south). I used to work in the rural areas of Henan and Shandong provinces. Although there were also landlords, there was no such thing as a centralized monopoly according to the masters. In particular, Zouping, where I stayed for a longer time, had very few people without land. I organized the cadastre in Zouping County. In the first half of 1937, a major problem occurred, and the anti-Japanese war was launched. There were no statistical reports at hand. But it can be said: More than 90% of the people in the county had land, but some had very little land. This situation is exactly the same as Dingxian County, Hebei Province, another rural work area. Dingxian County had a large book of *Ding County Social Profile Survey* that contained reports on the issues during that period. According to the report, they conducted surveys in three different townships: In one district, there were sixty-two villages and ten thousand four hundred and forty-five households; in one district, there were seventy-one villages and six thousand five hundred and fifteen households; in one district, there are sixty-three villages and eight thousand and sixty-two households. In summary, the conclusions are as follows:

1. More than 90% of people had land.
2. Landless people (including those who do not work for farming) accounted for less than 10%.
3. Those who have more than 100 μ of land accounted for 2%;
4. Those who have land but do not farm accounted for one or two percentages.

This investigation was conducted under the leadership of Mr. Li Jinghan, a social survey expert, with help of some local people, which was absolutely reliable. In this case, for a class society where some people have land but do not cultivate and some cultivate but cannot possess land, it is too far away to separate them.⁶²

From the discussion of Liang Shuming, it can be found that his judgment of no class in Chinese society seems to be inconsistent with the Marxist class analysis standard. Here is a list of Lenin's familiar definitions of class: "The so-called class is such a large group. These groups have different positions in a certain social production system in history, and the relationship with the means of production (which is mostly stipulated in law) is different, the roles played in social labor organizations are different, and the way and the amount of social wealth that is obtained for personal

⁶¹Liang Shuming. *The Essence of Chinese Culture*, p. 149.

⁶²Liang Shuming. *The Essence of Chinese Culture*, pp. 150–151.

disposal are different. The so-called class is such a group. Because of their different positions in a certain social and economic structure, one group can occupy the labor of another group.”⁶³ From Lenin's definition of class, the standard of class division is not that one group possesses the means of production and the other does not possess the means of production, but the amount of production materials occupied by each group, and the difference in their economic status and the distribution of wealth are determined.

The basis for Liang Shuming to deny the existence of class in China is: China is not the kind of “class society where some people have land and do not cultivate, and some people cultivate and cannot possess land.”⁶⁴ This is essentially a division of land for members of the society, with or without standards. However, Lenin's criteria for class division are obviously not if they have land, but how much they possess. If we analyze the land occupation in China's rural society according to the Lenin criteria of amount, even in the case of the conditions as provided by Liang Shuming about Zouping County in Shandong and Ding County in Hebei Province, it can be divided into classes; people were divided into poor peasant, low-middle peasant, middle peasant, and rich peasant based on the amount of land during the land reform; only landlords and farmhands are the two classes, as Liang Shuming said, which have land but do not cultivate and cultivate but have no land; moreover, some small and medium-sized landlords determined during the land reform mostly cultivated. Therefore, Liang Shuming's division of class based on whether there is land is obviously different from the division of class based on the amount of land, and it is impossible to establish for him to negate the latter.

However, Liang Shuming's point of view also is of important value. It warns people not to simply apply the criteria of class division in Western society, and people should comprehensively examine the problems of China's class and class issues in the historical evolution and cultural traditions of China, and should pay attention to the particularity of class division of members in the Chinese society. During the period of China's socialist revolution and socialist construction before the 1980s, there was indeed another movement that exaggerated class contradictions and artificially set off the class struggle, which was very harmful to China's social stability and economic and social development.

In addition, Liang Shuming put forward the viewpoint of professional disaggregation in Chinese society, which is also instructive for understanding the particularity of Chinese social structure. He pointed out, “The economically exploiting class and the political ruling class must come into being at the same time.”⁶⁵ “After the Warring States, from the central to the local, all those who were in power were bureaucrats. The government official is different from the aristocrat, that is, he will no longer rule for himself. He certainly enjoys the authority of ruling, but neither hereditary nor lifelong, but only serves an agent for a short term. Ruling for oneself, he will inevitably oppose the ruled; first, what is the agent? Ruling for oneself, it is believed

⁶³Lenin (1995, p. 11).

⁶⁴Liang Shuming. *The Essence of Chinese Culture*, p. 151.

⁶⁵Liang Shuming. *The Essence of Chinese Culture*, p. 154.

that he belongs to the ruling class; obviously, the agent does not. The opportunity to be an official is originally provided to everyone. As we saw at the end of the Qing Dynasty, anyone could read; anyone could take the test; According to the regulations, everyone who passes the test could be appointed an official. In this way, the ruler and the ruled are often transposed, and How comes the opposition between the ruler and the ruled?”⁶⁶ In this way, Liang Shuming further denied the existence of class opposition in China from the professionalism of political officials.

Liang Shuming is a controversial figure in contemporary Chinese academic history. This is not only because he has a broad knowledge and broad vision, but he has published distinctive opinions in many aspects. What is more important is that his vision had always focused on the transformation of contemporary Chinese social structure and conflicts with cultural concepts, the issues raised were major ones concerning the economic and social development of contemporary China. In response to these issues, he also published an ethical society in which Chinese society is based on the family. After China ended the feudal society since the Warring States, China is not a country in the sense of a nation-state. Chinese culture and Western culture have differences between involution and extroversion. The Chinese believe in affection and reason and the Westerners respect a series of thought-provoking ideas such as physics. Although many of Liang Shuming’s views can be further explored, academic courage like him who can express his independent opinions without any pressure is very admirable.

6.5 Human Mind, Reason, and Institution

In *The Essentials of Chinese Culture*, Liang Shuming also conducted an in-depth study of the rationality of the Chinese people’s behavior, which he called the thinking of the essential characteristics of the Chinese. Later, in *Human Mind and Human Life*, Liang Shuming further elaborated on the rational issue from the perspective of psychology or consciousness, and then discussed the deeper cultural sociology issues such as body, habit, and ritual system. Liang Shuming had repeatedly referred to these studies as the study of psychology. In fact, this is far from the narrow psychological research, but his development from the consistent academic perspective, that is, study of the cultural sociology of human society from the subjective aspect.

As mentioned above, Liang Shuming’s culture mainly refers to human social life, human social life starts from the desire, and the desire is a psychological phenomenon. Therefore, the study of culture must involve life, society, and even psychology. Liang Shuming pointed out, “In terms of man, it must be reflected in the mind; in terms of mind, it must be reflected in man.”⁶⁷ “The mind is not a thing, which has no shape. The so-called human mind, leaving human life, is invisible. Therefore, it is said that the human mind must be sought in human life. When it comes to human life, it must

⁶⁶Liang Shuming. *The Essence of Chinese Culture*, p. 155.

⁶⁷Shuming (1984, p. 2).

be seen in individuals and groups. A group is one that is formed based on kinship, geography, etc., and can be collectively referred to as society.”⁶⁸ It can be seen that Liang Shuming's research on the human heart or psychology ultimately points to social life.

In summing up his research on the human mind or psychology, Liang Shuming argued that he had undergone two transformations: The first time was from focusing on consciousness to focusing on instinct. The second time was from focusing on instinct to focusing on rationality. In his youth, Liang Shuming was influenced by Western utilitarianism. He believed that people's actions were carried out under the control of the utilitarian principle of benefiting and avoiding suffering. That is to say, people's actions are carried out under the control of clear consciousness activities. Liang Shuming recalled, “The first stage spanned from the age of ten to twenty-six; at this stage, I generally valued consciousness and ignored instinct.”⁶⁹ At the age of 26, Liang Shuming was teaching Indian philosophy at Peking University. Through his research on Indian Buddhism, his understanding of consciousness and instinct unconscious changed. Although Buddhism advocates emotion restraint and desire elimination, desire is a consciousness activity at the instinctive level; after all, Buddhism regards instinct as the fundamental factor dominating people's actions. Therefore, influenced by Buddhism, “I have greatly valued the instinct and its corresponding emotional impulses. During my own transformation, I found that Western academic circles, which have always valued consciousness, have turned their attention to instinct, impulsiveness, subconsciousness ... This has strengthened my self-confidence. From then on, I stepped into the second stage in terms of my understanding of human psychology.”⁷⁰

Later, Liang Shuming experienced the second change, which was marked by the concept of rationality explicitly stated in *The Essentials of Chinese Culture*. Liang Shuming's concept of rationality was influenced by Russell. When he realized the shift from emphasizing consciousness to emphasizing instinct, he believed that Kropotkin's dichotomy of human psychology was to divide consciousness into instinct and reason. At that time, his understanding of instinct was not very clear. Later, Liang Shuming gradually realized: Kropotkin's dichotomy has its drawbacks, and he believed in Russell's trichotomy of human consciousness. He pointed out, “Bertrand Russell once argued in his book *Principles of Social Reconstruction* that it is best to achieve a harmonious and balanced life with instinct, intellect and spirituality. The so-called spirituality, according to his interpretation, is centered on selfless feelings, and is the source of religion and morality in society. After cautious observing, thinking and self-reflection, I finally realized that Russell had proposed important views, which has no doubt.”⁷¹

Although Liang Shuming did not use Russell's concept of spirituality, because the concept of spirituality is somewhat mysterious, he used the concept of rationality to

⁶⁸Liang Shuming. *Human Mind and Human Life*, p. 2.

⁶⁹Liang Shuming. *Human Mind and Human Life*, p. 72.

⁷⁰Liang Shuming. *Human Mind and Human Life*, p. 75.

⁷¹Liang Shuming. *Human Mind and Human Life*, p. 82.

express selfless feelings. However, in essence, he still accepted Russell's thoughts, but the terms used were different, and the connotations were the same. He said, "Since the instinct and rational dichotomy is too simple to interpret the problems, I add rationality beyond reason to represent the affection of the human mind liberated from the animal-like instinct."⁷² In this way, Liang Shuming clearly analyzed and explained human consciousness activities from the three aspects of instinct, intellect, and reason, and these studies form clear viewpoints in *The Essentials of Chinese Culture*.

In *The Essence of Chinese Culture*, Liang Shuming first defined the concept of rationality in the general sense. He said, "In my opinion, reason is a characteristic of human beings, and it is also a feature of Chinese culture."⁷³ However, the rationality that Liang Shuming understood is different from the concept of rationality in the disciplines such as economics and sociology. Generally speaking, people usually treat equally rationality and logical thinking such as concept, judgment, and computational reasoning. Liang Shuming believed that this kind of logical thinking can only be called reason, not rationality. He pointed out, "Intellect will inevitably produce 'inaction' and then is used to the fullest; from here, it is unreasonable to produce an impersonal feeling—this is rationality. Rationality and intellect are the two sides of the mind: In terms of knowledge, it is intellect; in terms of feeling, it is rationality; the two are intimately connected."⁷⁴

Rationality comes down to feelings, and is a selfless feeling. This is really a special definition. Generally speaking, rationality is universal, and is used to convince people, indicating that rationality can be recognized by individuals as a universal principle. Therefore, rationality is a promotion of public and a denial of selfishness. If Liang Shuming interprets rationality as a principle and says that it is selfless, it is easy to understand; but if he interprets rationality as selflessness, it should be discerned. Although affection is often associated with personal feelings and experiences, it is often talked about in terms of individuality and privacy, but there are indeed two sides of private and public in terms of affection. Some affections are generated by individuals and manifested in the individual's psychology and behavior, but they do not express private interests and will, but endorsement of certain principles, or relationships with certain things, such as justice and compassion.

The rationality defined by Liang Shuming can be understood as the ideal pursuit, value criterion or moral consciousness that transcends private emotions and recognizes certain universal principles. Liang Shuming said, "The mind to calculate is intellect, while the mind to correct is rationality. The number is wrong, it is not to be self-satisfied, and it is a very favorable feeling. This feeling is selfless, not for any life problem. Analysis, calculation, hypothesis, reasoning... intellect can be used endlessly, but no assertion will be made and it is rationality to make assertions."⁷⁵

⁷²Liang Shuming. *Human Mind and Human Life*, p. 83.

⁷³Liang Shuming. *The Essence of Chinese Culture. Selected Works of Liang Shuming*, p. 210.

⁷⁴Liang Shuming. *The Essence of Chinese Culture. Selected Works of Liang Shuming*, p. 213.

⁷⁵Liang Shuming. *The Essence of Chinese Culture. Selected Works of Liang Shuming*, p. 213.

Analysis, calculation, hypothesis, and reasoning are all used for analysis and inference of objective objects, whose purpose is to accurately reflect facts, not only to pursue objective stipulations, but also to objectively define the code of conduct; however, the same does not occur to the assertion, assertion is made from the heart, expressing subjective will and subjective evaluation and reflecting the subjective and objective requirements, and this is the value principle or value evaluation that is usually said to have ideality and morality, or can be called value rationality.

When Liang Shuming talked about the differences in rationality between Chinese and Westerners, the problem became more complicated. Liang Shuming said, "The mind is a specialty of human being, from which human culture is originated. The culture whose prosperity occurred in ancient China and modern West gave full play to this kind of specialty. However, it seems that they are all biased. That is, the western culture is good at intellect but not so good at rationality. Chinese culture is good at rationality but not so good at intellect."⁷⁶ Intellect pays attention to observing and studying various objective phenomena, forming scientific knowledge without evaluation, and is not "initiating" on human actions. In sociological terms, it is only asking what it is, not what it should be. In this regard, the factual judgment given by reason has not changed significantly from the concept of intellect in the previous analysis. However, the concept of rationality is different. If rationality is a value judgment, it is not realistic that Liang Shuming said that Westerners are not good at rationality.

In fact, the westerners are not bad at rationality (value rationality). An undeniable fact is that religion is the most typical form of value rationality. Liang Shuming repeatedly pointed out that Westerners pay attention to religious beliefs, while Chinese people lack religious consciousness. Thus, it should be recognized that Westerners are good at rationality, while Chinese are not so good at rationality. It can be seen that the judgment of Liang Shuming's Westerners who are good at intellect but bad at rationality is difficult to be established. The proper judgment should be: Westerners' social life has a clear differentiation. In the fields of production practice and scientific experiments, Westerners do pay attention to rational thinking, so their production techniques and scientific knowledge are relatively developed; In the field of religious beliefs, their rational thinking is hidden, and their religious consciousness is carried out with value beliefs, and thus, the value rationality is also very strong.

In order to make the problem clear and discernible, it is necessary to discuss Liang Shuming's analysis of the two theories. In his opinion, there are two reasons: "Physics" and "rationality", where rationality is the theory of human feelings, and physics is the theory of materialism. Because the Chinese have always paid attention to human affairs but been ignorant of physics in human affairs,⁷⁷ the reason that Chinese people pay attention to is naturally the principle of human feelings, not the "physics" of objective things. In this way, Liang Shuming limits the reason for the levels of interpersonal and social life, while physics refers to the law and essence of objective things. The characteristics of reason are subjective and obtained by reason;

⁷⁶Liang Shuming. *The Essence of Chinese Culture, Selected Works of Liang Shuming*, p. 214.

⁷⁷Liang Shuming. *The Essence of Chinese Culture, Selected Works of Liang Shuming*, p. 134.

Physics is characterized by objectivity and obtained by reason. “Reason cannot be understood without the subjective likes and dislikes; Physics cannot be understood with subjective likes and dislikes. Physics comes from physical observation; Observation depends on human feelings and reasoning; People’s feelings and reasoning were originally the product of human beings’ detachment from instinct after calm down, and it is also necessary to remove all feelings and then make the best use of them. Therefore, scientists are known for their calm. But on the contrary, there are still the same points. That is, although reason is seen in feelings, it must be selfless feelings. Selfless feelings are also the product of human being’s detachment from instinct and calm down.”⁷⁸

Liang Shuming’s views on reason and physics are directly related to his judgment on the nature of Chinese society. Since Chinese society is rooted in family and ethics-centered, this fundamentally determines that Chinese people must pay more attention to rationality but less attention to physics. The basic bond that sustains the family is emotion, the family is taken as the basis of life, which means that the foothold, starting point and even basic principles of dealing with life are inseparable from emotion. Although the family has a limited kinship, after all, people have been connected, requiring a certain degree of communication and integration. When the ethical relationship is derived from family relationship, emotional dependence still exists, but as the scope of communication expands, it is necessary to achieve emotional communication in breaking private interests or personal relationships. Therefore, it is necessary to form Liang Shuming’s so-called universal principle “Unselfish emotions”, namely the reason that represents social values.

Although physics is the theory of matter, that is, the theory of physical phenomena, the fundamental reason why Westerners pay attention to physics is not the physical phenomenon itself, but the Western forward cultural direction and the value orientation of Christianity. As mentioned above, the forward cultural direction is the way to conquer nature and obtain material wealth, and so, this cultural direction must require paying attention to physics. As for the value orientation of Christianity, although it directly looks at the anti-science and anti-secular ascetic nature, Christianity refers to God as the eternal law in the kingdom of heaven, the ontology of all things, and calls for the pursuit and worship by believers. This essentially leads to an objective spirit that is consistent with scientific principles. When Westerners turn their gaze to the secular world, the eternal laws and the ontology in the kingdom of Heaven become the laws and essences of nature, that is, physics.

Therefore, the Chinese pay more attention to reason but less attention to physics, and the Westerners pay more attention to physics but less attention to reason. The essence is not only the development of two cultural directions, but also the result of two different spiritual cultivations of Confucianism and Christianity. In this regard, Liang Shuming’s exposition on reason and physics cannot simply be attributed to the psychological analysis of Chinese and Westerners, but to in-depth cultural analysis and social structure analysis. Although these analyses have certain limitations, they, after all, have grasped the different characteristics of Chinese and Westerners in terms

⁷⁸Liang Shuming, *The Essence of Chinese Culture. Selected Works of Liang Shuming*, pp. 215–216.

of values and ways of thinking, especially the exposition on the Chinese people's theory of reason, providing an important reference for the way in which Chinese people behave and communicate, rational selection and other aspects.

In recent years, Chinese sociology has carried out a lot of research on migrant workers, job-seeking behaviors of laid-off workers, interpersonal communication models, etc., and published some research results, but most have studied the rational selection methods in neoclassical economics or traditional sociology and analyzed and evaluated people's social mobility and job-seeking behavior from the principle of maximizing benefits and the rationality of tools. If Liang Shuming's above viewpoint is in line with China's reality, then the rational choice method of utilitarian pursuit and analytical calculation as the basic content to study people's social mobility and job-seeking behavior will face the problems of improper methods and misplaced principles. Because rational principles of paying more attention to reason and less attention to physics will inevitably dominate people's social behaviors of emotional supremacy and relationship supremacy, and the rational principles using computational reasoning and pursuing utilitarian to study such behaviors are obviously difficult to draw practical conclusions.

Liang Shuming discussed rationality, intellect, and instinct, which means that he completed a systematic discussion of the structure of human consciousness activities. However, Liang Shuming did not stop there because his purpose of discussion of human consciousness or human mind does not lie in the narrow psychological research, but in the deep understanding of human social life. Therefore, Liang Shuming began to explore the life. It goes without saying that life is a social life composed of human actions. To explore life, we must not only stay in the field of ideology, but also carry out research on social relations and social structure from the actions of human beings. The human action is carried out through his own body. Therefore, Liang Shuming logically put forward the relationship between the body and the consciousness. He called it the physical and mental problem.

In *Human Mind and Human Life*, Liang Shuming had a rich discussion on the physical and mental issues. He not only expressed his basic views on physical and mental relationships, but also commented on the views of Westharp, Bergson, Pavlov, Engels, etc., on body and mind issues. As far as today's research on body and mind is concerned, Liang Shuming's discourse on physical and mental issues is clearly at a relatively shallow level, but this does not mean that his research is of no value. Of course, Liang Shuming's direct discussion of the relationship between body and mind is not very instructive. For example, the discussions about the body after the mind, the body outside and the mind inside, the body superficial and the mind deep, etc., are like narration of common sense, and what is deeply inspiring is the extensible discussion based on the relationship between body and mind, the most valuable of which is the discussion of temperament, disposition, habits, and ritual systems.

As the human mind is linked with the human body, this means that Liang Shuming must inevitably present the individual in his own theoretical vision, because only those living individuals are the combination of mind and body. Once the individual is discussed, it is impossible to avoid the group problem, because the individual can exist only in the group, and can only be explained in the relationship with the

group. Groups are closely linked to customs, etiquette, and institutions that cannot exist without these groups. Therefore, paying attention to physical problems will inevitably promote the study of cultural and social life. Liang Shuming said, “In order to explain human mind and human life, it is necessary to talk about these aspects such as temperament, disposition, habits, etiquette and custom and institution. Human life is synthesized by both sides of each of the individual and the group. In terms of individual, it is composed of the former two sides; after leaving the two sides, the group life is impossible. Habits are intermediaries between individuals and groups. After analysis of these five, it is clear and it is not difficult to understand human life and human mind.”⁷⁹

Liang Shuming believed that temperament is an emotional will with a stable tendency. “In terms of emotion, I refer to the emotional will of man, and for the constant tendency of emotional will (including the action), I call it nature.”⁸⁰ Temperament is expressed by emotions and impulses such as joy, anger, sadness, and happiness derived from the mind, while the impulses are derived from the body; impulses can be discussed from emotions. If emotions are subordinate to the mind, impulses are subordinate to the body. If defined by knowing and action, the emotion is still in the earlier stage from knowing to action, and the impulse is in its later stage.”⁸¹ Because impulse is considered to be mainly in the action phase, disposition must be mentioned because it is a concept of analyzing and classifying actions. Disposition also belongs to the category of temperament, and therefore, emotion, impulse, and disposition become the three basic concepts of Liang Shuming’s analysis of human nature. Because emotion, impulse, and disposition all contain the relationship between knowledge and action, this determines that the discussion of these psychological phenomena must enter the social level, because knowledge and action cannot occur separately to individuals, they must be carried out in the form of social action in group relations. Thus, Liang Shuming entered a discussion at the social level.

From the individual behavior to the social level, Liang Shuming first discussed the habit. In his view, habit not only has the characteristics of connecting the individual and the society, but also has the quality of unifying the body and mind. He said, “Habit is both personal and social. There will be no habit without imitation, but a habit in society begins with the individual and is popular among the society. Although it begins with the individual, it has its basis, that is, habit is formed after change during the imitation and addition of new components. Its imitation is based on the existing society, which should not be forgotten. In this way, the so-called habit is a thing that goes from society to individuals and from individuals to society.”⁸² This process of reciprocating between the individual and the society must be achieved through physical practice. Therefore, the habit that begins with learning and imitation is closely related to the body, and the physical and mental relationship is unified in the

⁷⁹Liang Shuming. *Human Mind and Human Life*, p. 149.

⁸⁰Liang Shuming. *Human Mind and Human Life*, p. 149.

⁸¹Liang Shuming. *Human Mind and Human Life*, p. 152.

⁸²Liang Shuming. *Human Mind and Human Life*, p. 157.

habit. "Any founding—creation, invention, discovery—comes from a flexible mind, but any habit must be practiced and consolidated. Habit as a thing, tracing its source, is formed between the mind and the body."⁸³

These views of Liang Shuming have much in common with those of Bourdieu and Giddens on social action, practical consciousness, and habitual habits. When people talk about the views of Bourdieu and Giddens on urgency, sensibility of the former logic, habits combining physical behaviors, etc., it is considered to be an important breakthrough in traditional sociology by contemporary sociology or social theory. When discussing social action or human choice behavior, the traditional sociological theory usually analyzes them from human rational calculations and logical inferences; although Weber et al. also talked about the effects of emotional will and imitation habits on behavior, what they praised is still a tool action or legal action that rises to the rational level. Bourdieu, Giddens et al. have not affirmed the role of emotional factors or perceptual consciousness in behavior in general, but believed that perceptual conscious dominated behavior is the main behavior of human beings in daily life; only affirming from the daily life world the fundamental status of this sentimental behavior, rather than simply advocating rational choice behavior, can have a true understanding of human social action or social life.

It should be pointed out that Liang Shuming, under the condition of not being influenced by contemporary sociology, proceeded from the Chinese cultural tradition and the reality of Chinese social life to reach the same level of theoretical generalization as Bourdieu and Giddens in this view, which is indeed commendable. It is especially important that after discussing emotion, impulse, temperament, and habit, Liang Shuming further discussed the issue of the etiquette system, and then went deep into the core of cultural sociology and general sociology—the social system. Liang Shuming said, "However, the habit I cover the creation, invention, and discovery that are solved by all problems in life and can be consolidated in the personal and social implementation. For example, how to use the living utensils or firstly to strengthen personal skills; as for how to obey the rules of life in a cyclic manner, it is especially reflected in the social community."⁸⁴ Here, Liang Shuming clearly pointed out that habits have a stabilizing effect that enables certain behaviors to be implemented and consolidated. As a social behavioral rule, that is, the observance and operation of social systems, it is also inseparable from the habits of society members to implement and consolidate them.

Liang Shuming has a very important theoretical significance in linking the implementation and operation of the system with the habit. In the field of sociology, classical sociologists attach great importance to institutional issues, and Durkheim had attributed sociology to the study of institutions. Although Durkheim, Weber, et al. had long realized the relationship between the habit and the institution, they were in the pursuit of the rationalization of social life. They did not explicitly affirm the basic position of habit to the system, but advocated the transformation of people's

⁸³Liang Shuming. *Human Mind and Human Life*, p. 157.

⁸⁴Liang Shuming. *Human Mind and Human Life*, p. 157.

habits with rational principles to get rid of the ambiguity of perceptual consciousness and promote rational behavior with logical principles and computational spirit. Moreover, the tradition pursuing rationalization of sociology also has the same performance in the disciplines of economics, politics, and even philosophy. Therefore, Liang Shuming discussed the formation and operation of the institution on the basis of habit, which essentially proposed a challenge for the entire rationalist tradition. This challenge is consistent with his view that is rooted in the Chinese society and ethics-centered, and pays more attention to reason but less attention to physics.

Although Liang Shuming fully discussed the basic role of habits in the institution, he did not deny the role of rational design in the formation of institution. Liang Shuming pointed out, "There is no doubt that human reason and rationality have played a significant role in the creation of the ritual system of modern bourgeois democracy. However, both intellect and rationality cannot interpret why the current system has been delayed and has not been improved or replaced. There are obviously others that vigorously maintain their existence in addition to rationality and intellect. To know the performance of human life, not all must come from intellect and reason."⁸⁵ It can be seen that Liang Shuming acknowledged the important role of rationality and intellect in the creation and formation of institutions, but he believed that the institutions designed and implemented by rationality must be recognized and implemented in the perceptual consciousness and perceptual behaviors of human beings in order to continue steadily. This is primarily the role of habit.

These views of Liang Shuming provide profound enlightenment for understanding and explaining the institutional reforms and institutional changes in Chinese society. It should be said that since the reform and opening up, a large number of measures had been taken by the central and local governments to promote the reform of the economic and political system, and many new rules and regulations had been established. However, some well-designed and fully demonstrated systems and rules were often formalized and did not play the role of restraining actual behaviors. This universal phenomenon shows that rationally designed institutions do not necessarily become realistic ones. It is a realistic system only when it is transformed into people's habits and becomes a stable behavioral model.

A large number of institutions in China's social life are the ritual systems that have become habits in people's daily life. These ritual systems are informal, which are continued under subtle influences and passed down by customs and habits; their development and even reconstruction cannot be implemented in a relatively short period of time with specified or strong measures. Liang Shuming quoted Montesquieu as saying: "The etiquette starts from the folk customs, and the law is based on customization," and the folk custom that expresses the national cultural tradition cannot be changed by rigid means like the law. On the contrary, the folk customs and the nation are directly the same. The continuation of the folk customs is the preservation of the nation, and the change in folk customs is the completion of national assimilation.

⁸⁵Liang Shuming. *Human Mind and Human Life*, p. 166.

6.6 The Theory of Rural Construction

The theory of rural construction occupies a very prominent position in Liang Shuming's theory. His Neo-Confucianism and cultural sociology viewpoints have been combined with the reality of Chinese society in the theory of rural construction. Liang Shuming's *The Theory of Rural Construction* published in Zouping Country Bookstore in 1937 focused on his series of ideas on rural construction and is his masterpiece in this respect. Although this work was published in 1937, its thoughts were formed after long-term thinking. Liang Shuming recalled the formation of ideas in this work and said, "The insights and opinions here sprouted in 1922. Most of them were decided in winter of 1926 and matured in 1928; they were lectured at the Guangdong Local Guards Training Committee (titled *Ten Lectures of the Township Governance*). Since the spring of 1929, he wanted to write a book to describe what he wanted to express, during which he stopped and continued several times, and it has not been completed after seven or eight years from now."⁸⁶ It can be seen that he started writing in 1922 and published it in 1937, which takes 15 years. These 15 years are the period in which Liang Shuming's Neo-Confucianism and cultural sociology theory were formed and constructed, and also the period in which he was enthusiastically engaged in social construction and social education activities. Therefore, Liang Shuming's theory of thought elaborated in *The Theory of Rural Construction* is the crystallization of his Neo-Confucianism and the theory of cultural sociology combined with the reality of Chinese society.

In *The Theory of Rural Construction*, Liang Shuming first discussed the causes of the rural construction movement. In his view, the reason why the rural construction movement was to be carried out was that the Chinese villages were seriously damaged by natural disasters and man-made disasters. Floods and draught, warlords, invasion by foreign enemies, and division by powers, etc., have caused devastating damage to China's rural areas, and Chinese peasants fell into turmoil. The village is the foundation of Chinese society, and the peasants are the main body of Chinese society. Therefore, destroying the villages is tantamount to destroying the foundation of Chinese society. Carrying out rural construction is a fundamental plan for saving the Chinese nation and preserving Chinese society. Liang Shuming pointed out, "It turns out that Chinese society is based on the village and is dominated by the village; Most cultures come from the villages and are set up for the villages—so do the rule by law, etiquette, industry and commerce, etc. In the past hundred years, the aggression of imperialism directly and indirectly undermined the village, that is, what the Chinese did and all reforms and revolutions to save the Chinese nation were nothing but destruction of the villages. Therefore, the history of China in the past 100 years can also be said to be a history of rural destruction."⁸⁷

In Liang Shuming's view, the destruction suffered by the villages is general and involves all aspects of rural life, the most important of which is the destruction of the rural social organization structure. He said, "China today faces a problem that

⁸⁶Liang Shuming. *Preface to The Theory of Rural Construction*. *Liang Shuming Collection*, p. 75.

⁸⁷Liang Shuming. *The Theory of Rural Construction*. *Liang Shuming Collection*, p. 252.

the structure of the social organization that has been followed for a millennium has collapsed, but the new one has not been established; the rural construction movement is to reconstruct a new organizational structure in our national society.—This is the last layer, where the true meaning of rural construction lies.”⁸⁸ The so-called organizational structure called by Liang Shuming mainly refers to the ritual system, and the ritual system is the core of culture. Therefore, he stressed that the destruction of organizational structure also means Chinese culture has been destroyed. “The culture of society should be based on its organization, and the most important parts of the culture are the legal system and ritual customs. A mystery of Chinese culture, that is, its social structure (in general political structure, economic structure, etc.) has changed little for thousands of years. Although the society has lost its order, it will soon return. There is no fundamental change at all, and its culture is hovering and cannot advance. Until today, this unchanging social structure has fundamentally collapsed. The legal system and rituals of the past have been denied, the inherent cultural failure has been overwhelmed, and the fate of the history of the nation has never been encountered.”⁸⁹

The destruction of the culture centering on the etiquette system is called cultural lag by Liang Shuming. Liang Shuming once attributed Chinese culture to a culture of pursuing reconciliation that neither looks forward nor looks backward. This culture maintains its long-term stability with “The less change, the more reconciliation; the more reconciliation, the less change; this old culture, which has been passed down for a long time, is characterized by its extremely high degree of reconciliation.”⁹⁰ However, by the end of the nineteenth century and the beginning of the twentieth century, China’s reconciliation culture was violently shaken and difficult to reconcile under the impact of foreign culture, and showed a trend of subversion and extinction. As judged by Liang Shuming’s diagnosis: “The Chinese issue is cultural lag;—a very serious one, which manifests itself in the collapse of social structure and political impossibility.”⁹¹

Since the Chinese problem is cultural lag with the social structural collapse as the content, then the solution to this Chinese problem should start with the construction of social structure, and therefore, Liang Shuming logically proposed the task of building China’s social organization structure, which is essential to build a new social etiquette and form a new social order, “Why? Because our past social organization structure is shaped by social etiquette but national laws, everything in China is a custom that is made during the social development, and this custom is used as the way for everyone to go (order). I often say that human life is destined to be social life, while social life must rely on order. Without order, social life cannot develop. Western social order is maintained by law. The maintenance of social order in China in the past depends on ritual customs. Not only in the past, but in the future.”⁹²

⁸⁸Liang Shuming. *The Theory of Rural Construction*. *Liang Shuming Collection*, p. 262.

⁸⁹Liang Shuming. *The Theory of Rural Construction*. *Liang Shuming Collection*, p. 264.

⁹⁰Liang Shuming. *The Theory of Rural Construction*. *Liang Shuming Collection*, p. 265.

⁹¹Liang Shuming. *The Theory of Rural Construction*. *Liang Shuming Collection*, p. 266.

⁹²Liang Shuming. *The Theory of Rural Construction*. *Liang Shuming Collection*, p. 268.

The next question is how to build new rituals and form a new order. According to his judgment on the direction of Chinese culture, Liang Shuming believed that it should adopt a way that conforms to the essential characteristics of Chinese culture—cultural reconciliation. Liang Shuming opposed both the popular Westernization at that time and the rejection of Western culture, but advocated a new strategy of reconciling Chinese and Western cultures. He said, “New construction, as we say, is to build new etiquette. So, what is the so-called new etiquette? It is to reconcile the strengths of China’s inherent spirit and Western culture based on the specific facts (complete communication and reconciliation into a fact, the fact that we call it a new etiquette), which is not only theoretical communication, but also fundamental reconciliation and communication into a fact.”⁹³ Here, Liang Shuming repeatedly emphasized the need to achieve de facto communication and reconciliation, whose intention is to transcend the empty talks on ideas and concepts, and to realize the reconstruction of lifestyles and behaviors at the level of life practice, that is, the construction of new etiquette and new order.

The most important thing in building the new etiquette and the new order from the factual level is that “the Chinese must have an organization, which is necessary and needs not to be detailed. It is obvious that if the present world where the Chinese people live do not develop towards the organization, there will be no self-existence, in fact, it forces us to join an organization and shift to Westernization”.⁹⁴ This seems to be contrary to China’s family-based, ethics-based social nature, and transforms China in full accordance with Western individual standards and group society. Liang Shuming believed that there is no need to worry too much about this contradiction. On the contrary, it should be seen that there are factors in Chinese society that also are conducive to organizing a group. Chinese society that values emotions and pays attention to interpersonal relationships advocates the harmonious coexistence of social life, which provides an important foundation for the establishment of social organizations. To establish and maintain a group or organization, it must have the ability or mechanism to integrate the members of the society. Chinese people attach importance to reconciliation and neutralization in the cultural traditions and behaviors, which inevitably can provide an integrated dynamic mechanism for the group or organization.

Although Westerners have strong group consciousness and organizational pursuit of social life, they are realized under the premise of individual as standard, while the individual as standard is a separation principle for the society as a whole. This principle of separation is exactly the contrary to the principle of reconciliation in Chinese society. Therefore, they both pursue the organization of social life, but have completely different starting points. “Every group has its compatible side and incompatible side (borders), and this is a real group. Western groups seem to develop from division to combination; the future groups in China will develop from combination to division. For example, village school, town school, cooperatives, etc. in China are

⁹³Liang Shuming. *The Theory of Rural Construction*. *Liang Shuming Collection*, p. 270.

⁹⁴Liang Shuming. *The Theory of Rural Construction*. *Liang Shuming Collection*, p. 271.

all groups or organizations, all of which develop from combination to division with combination dominant, because combination comes before division.”⁹⁵

It should be pointed out that Liang Shuming’s view that Chinese people attach importance to ethical relations and advocate that reconciliation is conducive to the establishment of groups and organizations is in line with the reality of Chinese society. However, he has overestimated the ethical relationship and reconciliation consciousness of Chinese society, and only saw its positive aspects but its negative aspects. It is the social foundation of the modern groups and organizations that the West formed on the basis of the individual consciousness formed in the Renaissance. Without a clear individual consciousness, the individual status, individual rights, and personal values cannot be obtained. Even if the group or organization is established, it is formalistic, because it is premised on the existence of individuals, and vice versa. Groups and individuals, and organizations and members should be mutually premised, occur simultaneously and depend on each other. This point has also been discussed by Liang Shuming. He also argued that the relationships between groups and individuals and between organizations and members are interdependent.

Liang Shuming overestimated the role of group or organization in supporting individuals and proposed the idea of combination before division. It should be noted that a group or organization is established by the system. If the individual consciousness and individual status of the members of the group or organization are not formed, the group or organization is established. Then an inevitable problem is: A group or organization will suppress the individual consciousness and rights of its members with its systems and even mandatory regulatory disciplines. This was fully proven in the social movement organization of Chinese society (such as cooperatives and people’s communes) in the 1950s and 1960s. The essence of group or organization is the system, and the individual members are the real existence. Combination before division means that the system of restricting individual behaviors is established and this system must be the behavioral rules that inhibit differentiation in essence. It is difficult for the members of such group or organization to achieve the so-called differentiation of individual consciousness and individual status.

Liang Shuming has realized that the group system or organizational discipline has a restrictive effect on individuals. Therefore, he put forward the idea that “Respect the sages and teachers” should be adopted in the group life on what principles are used to establish a group or organization. He called it the “most politics of the rule by man” in order to weaken the legal system and mandatory discipline in limiting the individuals. Liang Shuming believed that “Respect the sages and teachers” is determined by two trends in the development of human social life. One trend is that human society is gradually being transferred from obedience to social administrative orders to social groups. The group is imposing more and more interventions or management on individual life; The other trend is that the group’s involvement and management of individual life are becoming broader and deeper, which requires the organization and management of the group be more scientific, technical, and professional. “These two trends are associated, producing such terms as scholar legislation,

⁹⁵Liang Shuming. *The Theory of Rural Construction*. *Liang Shuming Collection*, p. 272.

expert legislation, technical administration, and expert politics.”⁹⁶ “Because of this change in politics—respecting scholars and experts does not depend on the majority. In fact, it is the Westerners who cannot but admire the wise (that is, those who are particularly knowledgeable). This is very close to us and deserves our attention. This trend gives us a hint that it is to admire the sages.”⁹⁷

Another reason for respecting the sages and teachers is that “the majority may not be right,” and the rule by a few wise men and the autonomy of the majority can be effectively reconciled. Liang Shuming believed that the principle of the minority obeying the majority advocated in democratic politics is actually only a principle of saving trouble, but cannot guarantee the effective implementation of rational pursuit of truth, justice, ethics, etc. Since the sages can think deeply about complicated things, they can grasp the truth, justice, and ethics more accurately than ordinary people, and get the approval and faith of the majority. Therefore, “the leader of a few wise men and the initiative of the majority can be reconciled and will not conflict with each other. If they can be used better, they can be combined with no conflict at all. ‘The leadership by a few people means the majority obey’, and this conclusion is not necessary.”⁹⁸

These statements by Liang Shuming are essentially discussing how to address the relationship between the individual and the society. Regardless of the position of sociologists and the academic traditions of discussing social issues in life, the relationship between man and society is an unavoidable core topic, which is also true for Liang Shuming. On this issue, Liang Shuming neither approved the individual-centered position of the Western nor agreed to the society-centered position of Soviet socialism. He advocated: “Symmetry (even) of the group and the molecules must be the universal requirement of mankind. It is not right to disregard the society from the individual and hinder the society; it’s not right to sacrifice individuals for society and to ignore individuals.”⁹⁹

Liang Shuming advocated the realization of the symmetry between groups and individuals. In fact, he advocated a principle of relativity: “From the perspective of group, the individual should be respected; from the individual, the group should be respected.”¹⁰⁰ This principle of relativity emphasizes the relationship between the two in the connection between the group and the individual, and cannot pay attention to one side but ignore the other side; on the other hand, this principle of relativity is a principle with emphasis, that is, it is not to treat groups and individuals equally, but to “respect” from the angle. “There must be respect if it is true; No respect means nothing or no attitude. If respect is shown, it should depend on whom. The group originally serves an individual, and therefore should be individual-centered and respect the individual; however, individuals should also respect their group, and

⁹⁶Liang Shuming. *The Theory of Rural Construction*. *Liang Shuming Collection*, p. 276.

⁹⁷Liang Shuming. *The Theory of Rural Construction*. *Liang Shuming Collection*, p. 277.

⁹⁸Liang Shuming. *The Theory of Rural Construction*. *Liang Shuming Collection*, p. 279.

⁹⁹Liang Shuming. *The Theory of Rural Construction*. *Liang Shuming Collection*, pp. 288–289.

¹⁰⁰Liang Shuming. *The Theory of Rural Construction*. *Liang Shuming Collection*, p. 289.

it does not make sense if individuals do not respect their groups! In China, the so-called respect for others seems to be like this: I respect you and you respect me as to get the balance.”¹⁰¹

This principle of respecting each other in the relationship between the group and the individual has been called “relativistic ethics” by Liang Shuming. It is called ethicism, because this principle focuses on dealing with the relationship between individuals and their group, and strives to make the two satisfied, not only to establish a group or organization, but also to protect individual rights; The theory of relativity shows that this principle emphasizes that both the group and the individual should respect each other, not just respect their own needs, so that the ethical spirit can be truly realized. “As a result of our ethical thinking, individuals must respect their group and fulfill their obligations; the group must respect the individuals and make them feel free and equal.”¹⁰²

Liang Shuming had great hopes for this kind of group or organization construction plan that he designed. He believed that it is rooted in the reality of Chinese society, integrates the strengths of Chinese and Western cultures, and takes into consideration various feasible social construction programs. According to this plan, a social organization that truly conforms to the spirit of reason can be established in Chinese society. He said, “This social organization is based on ethical friendship and aims at life upward, and can be named as an emotional organization or an educational organization; because its relationship is based on ethical friendship, its role is that teaching benefits teachers as well as students. This is purely a rational organization, which gives full play to human spirit (rationality) and fully accommodates the strengths of Westerners.”¹⁰³

Liang Shuming believed that this rational (reasonable) organization is particularly suitable for establishing and promoting in rural China. The reasons are first of all: The village is a suitable scope for the implementation of this rational organization. Although the fundamental purpose of rural construction is to save and build China, the state is too large to start from building it. The size of a village is between the state and the family, and it can be directly linked to the state and the family. Therefore, starting from the village is not only easy to operate, but also has direct significance to the family and the state.

Secondly, starting from the village is particularly suitable for playing a rational role. In Liang Shuming’s view, businessmen are concentrated in cities. They are competing with each other for economic interests. They cannot realize the rational spirit of paying attention to friendship, and their utilitarian pursuit and calculation principle itself are conflicting with the rational spirit paying attention to friendship. The peasants in villages are different from the businessmen in cities. Facing the vast nature and living plants and animals, they can easily engage in agricultural production on a family basis and treat their villages (hometowns) and villagers (fellow villagers)

¹⁰¹ Liang Shuming. *The Theory of Rural Construction*. *Liang Shuming Collection*, p. 289.

¹⁰² Liang Shuming. *The Theory of Rural Construction*. *Liang Shuming Collection*, p. 290.

¹⁰³ Liang Shuming. *The Theory of Rural Construction*. *Liang Shuming Collection*, p. 291.

according to family relations or family ties. These characteristics of villages are particularly suitable for the spirit of rationality.

Finally, the more important reasons are: The family-based, ethics-based social atmosphere has been severely devastated in cities, where it has been difficult to establish new habits and new rituals with rational spirit, while as the most extensive region in China—village, the ethics-based atmosphere remains. Most of the behaviors and ways of understanding of the villagers remain at the perceptual level. The utilitarian principles of the Western-style profit-seeking diagram are far from them. They are often willing to accept the cultivation and influence of the rational spirit, and it is easier to cultivate new habits and form new customs.

In short, Liang Shuming believed that starting from villages to carry out rural construction can establish a normal and healthy human civilization, which is, as he called, the normal human civilization. Liang Shuming said, “We are looking for a normal human civilization. Then, starting from the village and seeking organization by reason is in line with the meaning of human civilization that creates a normal form. Because the village is the first stage and the city is the final stage, the village is the home of mankind, while the city is designed by human being for some purpose.”¹⁰⁴ For the so-called normal civilization, Liang Shuming believed that there are five provisions: Farmers before workers, village as the first stage and city as the final stage, human subject, ethic as standard, unity of politics, economy, and education.

Liang Shuming also designed the specific form of rural organization construction. He believed that the village convenance that was formulated for the brothers including Lu Dajun in the Northern Song Dynasty and promoted by Zhu Xi, Wang Yangming, etc., provides an effective reference for rural construction. The village convenance covers four points: Do good deeds and make corrections, admonish mistakes, respect rituals and customs and help others out of trouble even at the cost of life; Liang Shuming advocated changing the village convenance from these four aspects: Change negative mutual care to positively helping the promising; Boost ambition, reconstruct society and create new culture; expand to the contact and communication of the whole society with the village and township as a unit; village autonomy.

After change, the village convenance became the basic form of rural construction: Village school and town school, and thus, the new organizational structure of Chinese society has emerged. “The so-called village school is a natural organ in the ‘village convenance’ after addition and change. This organ is mainly to seek progress; also, the village and town schools are used to express the ‘village convenance’ and our organization.”¹⁰⁵ As for the staffing and organization of the village and town schools, Liang Shuming also made careful thoughts, stipulated the management institutions of the village and town schools, and had discussions on the school owner, the school-master, the faculty, and the students of the village and town schools to transform the theory of rural construction into a concrete operational development strategy.

¹⁰⁴Liang Shuming. *The Theory of Rural Construction*. Liang Shuming Collection, p. 296.

¹⁰⁵Liang Shuming. *The Theory of Rural Construction*. Zheng Dahua. *A Critical Biography of Liang Shuming's Academic Thoughts*, p. 222.

Carrying out village construction through village and town schools is a typical strategy of saving the state through culture or saving the state through education, whose ideal is to establish a learning society in rural China. When Chinese nation is deeply devastated and the people are difficult to make a living, Liang Shuming tried to change the old habits and build new villages by learning culture and changing customs, thus achieving the purpose of fundamentally saving the Chinese nation. It has a strong sense of advancement, but it is also unrealistic and too romantic. Therefore, Liang Shuming was criticized in many ways. Marxists such as Sha Qianli believed that Liang Shuming concealed the class contradictions of Chinese society, white-washed the disaster brought by the imperialist forces and feudal forces to the people, and adopted an unrealistic Confucian rationality and moral ethics to save China, and all were in vain; Chen Xujing and other liberalists criticized Liang Shuming for overestimating the status of the rural issue with a backward vision. The key to solving the Chinese problem lies in the city rather than in the countryside. The city should be developed to relieve the rural areas, and the rural issue cannot be solved by adhering to the cultural conservatism and relying on Confucian ethics and morality.

The rural construction movement did indeed fail to fulfill Liang Shuming's wishes, as its critics pointed out. Although Liang Shuming and his supporters made every effort, the village construction that lasted for 10 years did not receive good fruit. Liang Shuming called it "the village remains unchanged," the village built by Liang Shuming, etc., did not change in cultural learning and customs and the institutions such as village school and town school that they have worked hard on did not play their intended roles. However, although the rural construction movement did not achieve the intended purpose, this does not prove that Liang Shuming's series of ideological views and practical ideas for promoting the rural construction movement are meaningless. From the perspective of the Chinese nation seeking long-term and stable development, starting from the culture, changing the customs, developing new habits, cultivating new rituals, building a learning village and even a learning society and other strategic ideas have fundamental significance.

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Chapter 7

Expanding the New Realm of Chinese Sociology



In the more than 100 years of history from Kang Youwei's writing of the *Pandect of Practical Reasoning and Public Law*, Chinese sociology has experienced the beginning in the early 1920s, differentiation and development during the Republic of China in the 1920–1940s, the confinement in the 1950–1970s, and reconstruction in the late 1980s to early 1990s, and at the beginning of the twenty-first century, entered a stage of reflection and expansion. At present, Chinese sociology sums up more than a century of tortuous history and brilliant achievements. With a profound sense of national mission and broad academic mind, in response to major changes in contemporary international sociology, it has carried out profound theoretical reflections and explored the traditional boundaries of spiritual expansion of sociology in a positive manner, and is embarking on a new theoretical realm for oneself.

7.1 Promotion of Humanistic Care of Sociology

After the founding of new China, Chinese sociologists tried to make more active efforts to promote the development of Chinese society. Fei Xiaotong, et al. carefully planned and tried every means to promote the discipline of sociology. However, before China's sociology has cured the wounds of war, it had encountered new disasters. In the anti-rightist movement launched in 1956, a group of socialists was put on the right-wing hat, and sociology was also seen as an anti-Marxist bourgeois academic and left aside. Chinese sociology entered the period of confinement for more than 20 years.

In 1978, Deng Xiaoping proposed to restore Chinese sociology, and Chinese sociology began to rebuild, opening a new development process. Since the beginning of the 1980s, China's reform and opening up has been deepened, the market economy has developed rapidly, and Chinese society has entered an unprecedented period of profound transformation. Resource reconfiguration, class differentiation and restructuring, changes in interest patterns, changes in power relations, conflicts of values, and other social issues are constantly being refurbished and more complex, and these

social changes or social problems have raised urgently needed questions for Chinese sociology. With rare development opportunities, Chinese sociology has thus entered an era of unprecedented prosperity.

Looking back at the re-development of Chinese sociology for more than 20 years since the 1980s, it is no exaggeration to say that the results are remarkable. Not only have more than 100 departments of sociology been established in colleges and universities, but also many sociological research institutions have been established from the central level to the local level. The scientific research and teaching team of sociology has grown at an unprecedented rate, and social structure changes, social stratification, family population, organizations, social systems and deviant behaviors, globalization and China's modernization, a lot of empirical investigations, and theoretical summaries have been carried out. The academic research ability and research level of Chinese sociology have been greatly improved.

With the simultaneous rapid development of Chinese sociology and reform and opening up, although the sociological thinking is very active, there is still much confusion that lingers in the hearts of scholars. After more than 20 years of "progressive" confinement, some scholars have learned more negative lessons. One of the more prominent performances is that some scholars strongly emphasize that sociology is a non-ideological empirical science, reject the role of value evaluation and meaning interpretation in sociological research, and only recognize field investigations, factual evidence, and data analysis as the normative forms of sociological studies in order to ensure the purity of the scientific spirit of sociology. If Chinese sociology experienced a period of experience, technology, and scientificization in the 1920s, then many scholars' emphasis on and pursuit of chemicalization and scientification are no less intense than that in the 1920s for a long time after the reconstruction of Chinese sociology in the 1980s.

However, no matter from the origin and evolution of Chinese sociology, or from the essential characteristics of Chinese society and the social problems faced by contemporary Chinese sociology, Chinese sociology only insists on the one-dimensional scientific position and objective principles, which cannot complete its historical mission or exploit any opportunities to further develop itself. From the history of the beginning and evolution of Chinese sociology, it can be seen that the beginning of Chinese sociology began with a strong humanistic spirit and a clear principle of value to express its theoretical views. Although Kang Youwei, Liang Qichao, and Yan Fu all were highly supportive of scientific spirit and positivism principles, they have not given up the value ideal of saving the nation and revitalizing China. It is also the integration of the scientific spirit and the positivism principles with the strong value ideals. Their doctrines have aroused strong repercussions in all walks of life in China. Sociology could only become a manifestation at that time. In the empirical and quantitative social survey conducted in the 1920s, although some empirical materials were left for later research, positivistic sociology has thus begun to move toward marginalization. As for the sociological writings left during the Republic of China, what the people are also interested in are the ideals that contain deep concern for the future of the Chinese nation, rather than the simple description of life based on the principle of objectivity.

The centuries-old history of Chinese sociology shows that Chinese sociology is based on the spirit of science and is inspired by the spirit of humanism. Only the combination of scientific spirit and humanistic spirit can it stand at the center of the forest of disciplines and make theoretical and strategic contributions to the development and progress of Chinese society. The reason why Chinese sociology must maintain this academic style and ideological quality is ultimately the nature of Chinese society. Fei Xiaotong's theory of differential pattern and Liang Shuming's ethical society both reveal an irrefutable fact: China is a society with family relations as a link, and is familiar with society. Confucian morality and ethics have been accumulated at the bottom of people's psychology from generation to generation. What Chinese people follow in social life is not the "physics" without human feelings, but the interpersonal emotions or the "reason" of the supremacy of interpersonal relationships. "Physics" is the scientific rationale, while "reason" is the humanistic reason. It is difficult to interpret the "physics" only using humanities and it is impossible to understand "reason" only using scientific principles. In the face of Chinese society with the "reason" supremacy, especially to answer all Chinese social problems that are plagued by interpersonal relationships and reasonable disputes, it is a must to provide humanistic spirit or humanistic care. Otherwise, scientific principles can only be used to give a superficial description of a large number of real issues.

The reform and opening up and the development of the market economy since the 1980s have made the problems of contemporary Chinese society more complicated. Although the scientific spirit and rational principles have had a strong impact on the traditional concepts and rational principles of the Chinese in the process of studying Western modernization experience and market economic system, the cultural traditions and living habits accumulated over 2,000 years are not easy to be washed away in more than ten years. Formal institutions and rules of conduct within the institution and within the organization can be changed under coercive influences, while informal institutions and norms of conduct in daily life and social interactions are difficult to change. Moreover, even the policies formulated by the expert system or government agencies include various major economic and social reforms promoted by the central government, which are also difficult to get rid of the entanglement and restraint of reason and circle; various unspoken rules and extra-institutional behaviors always make things difficult to distinguish. Therefore, even today when the modernization process is very fast, it is difficult to interpret the social life of the Western people only by using the scientific rationality of the Westerners. As for trying to solve the social problems in the reform and opening up and the development of the market economy by using only rational systems and legal system construction, it is even more stretched and hard to work.

It is precisely because of such a social situation or historical conditions that Chinese sociology has entered a new era of rethinking its own history and opening up more room for development. Of course, this is not to say that the researchers of Chinese sociology have begun to reflect on and expand on Chinese sociology. It should be said that the mainstream of Chinese sociology today is still the positivistic sociology worshiping the scientific spirit and adhering to the principle of objectivity. They are not necessarily in favor of summing up the humanistic

spirit and the scientific spirit and carrying them forward in the study of Chinese sociology. Faced with major changes in China's economic and social development, Mr. Fei Xiaotong should be the first to make pioneering thinking from the historical mission of Chinese sociology. He proposed a strategic choice that transcends the boundaries of traditional disciplines and expands the new academic space in order to seek a broader future for Chinese sociology with his profound sociology and vision. In 2002, Fei Xiaotong, 92 years old, delivered a long report on the twentieth anniversary celebration of the Department of Sociology of Peking University. This report was later published in the Issue 3 Journal of Peking University with the title *On the Enlargement of Traditional Boundary of Sociology* in 2003, which was also published in the 1999–2002 *Chinese Sociology Yearbook*. Although this article has rich content, involving sociology research objects, research methods, academic traditions, and value pursuits, the core is very clear, so are the clues.

The core issue raised by Fei Xiaotong is: Sociology should be a discipline with equal emphasis on scientific spirit and humanistic spirit. The history and practice of Chinese society contain profound humanistic spirit and cultural traditions different from those of the West. The scientific method of positivism alone is not sufficient to conduct deep and specific studies on the history and reality of Chinese society and should break through the limitations of the positivist methodological principles and conduct more effective research on Chinese society with the principles of humanistic spirit, so as to expand the traditional boundaries of sociology and seek new developments in Chinese sociology. He pointed out, "The direction of sociological research should take into account this humanistic need. The humanity of sociology determines that sociology should spend some efforts on studying some basic questions about 'people', 'group', 'society', 'culture', 'history', etc., and lay a sound foundation for understanding the discipline development of sociology. China's rich cultural traditions and a lot of social and historical practices, including profound social and humanistic spiritual concepts, have great potential to promote the development of sociology, and are a cultural treasure that has not been seriously explored. From the practice of research and teaching in the past two decades, it is a very promising development direction of Chinese academics to deeply explore the historical and cultural traditions of Chinese society and explore the basic concepts and basic theories of sociology in practice. It is also one of the important ways for Chinese scholars to contribute to international sociology."¹

While Fei Xiaotong issued a call to the Chinese sociology community to extend the humanistic spirit and expand the traditional boundaries of sociology, Chinese sociology has demonstrated a new atmosphere that breaks through the simple positivism principles and values the pursuit of humanity. In recent years, Chinese sociology has studied the polarization of society, paid attention to the hardships of the underlying society, discussed the social injustice and the principle of justice, explored social conflicts and social coordination, analyzed social imbalances and social structural breaks, studied the vulnerable groups and social security issues, etc., all of which

¹Fei Xiaotong. *On the Enlargement of Traditional Boundary of Sociology*. *China Sociology Yearbook* (1999–2002), p. 5.

are saturated with strong humanistic spirit or humanistic care, that is, a group of sociologists who are at the forefront of Chinese sociology academics, although not like Fei Xiaotong, clearly propose the humanistic spirit of sociology and the strategic call to transcend the traditional boundaries of empirical sociology. However, it has also begun to vigorously carry forward the humanistic spirit and has made rich value evaluation and humanistic care for the social problems in the development of Chinese society.

The humanistic spirit of Chinese sociology is directly related to the humanistic trend of thought in the contemporary Western sociology. Since the 1970s, Western sociology has undergone a series of extensive and profound changes. On the one hand, positivist sociology with American sociology as the mainstream has formed many new branches with strong vitality. The new economic sociology, social capital theory, social network theory, social choice theory, institutional sociology, organizational sociology, and other emerging branch disciplines are developing rapidly. They not only carry out refreshing academic thoughts and theoretical viewpoints, but also extend beyond the traditional boundaries of classical sociology. They have developed a wide range of dialogues and exchanges in the theoretical fields with economics, political science, and history, absorbing very rich theoretical nutrition for sociology, and empirical sociology has become broad and rich in content based thereon. It is particularly important that these emerging disciplines no longer adhere to strict objectivist principles as traditional positivism. They begin to pay attention to the subjectivity of social behavior or social life and the selectivity and creativity of actors, and to ideology, value evaluation, interpersonal relationships, customs, and meanings of life that have been given enthusiastic attention only in the humanistic literature. In order to delve into these factors or problems that were not sufficiently valued in positivist sociology, these emerging sub-disciplines began to pay attention to the ideological theory of humanism from Bourdieu, Giddens, and Habermas, and the objectivist barriers against empirical sociology have become weakened.

On the other hand, it is also an aspect that has a greater impact on Chinese sociology, that is, European sociology has created a magnificent new wave of humanism. Birthplace of positivism—France—took the lead in provoking the war against traditional positivism. As a representative from structuralism to post-structuralism, Foucault issued a merciless critique of scientific rationality, the spiritual core of positivism. In the investigation of the history of psychiatric treatment in Europe, he came to a shocking conclusion that it is not the patient going crazy, but that the reason goes irrational. It has been diagnosed as a mentally ill person from generation to generation since the Renaissance. The essence is the result of suppression of reason on humanity and mad reason persecution of normal people. Therefore, it is not important to treat mental patients, but to diagnose and treat them rationally. He also examined the changes in the types of knowledge of Europeans. He believed that from the Renaissance to the present, human beings have experienced four types of changes in knowledge, whose essence is that humanity shifts from integrity to division, and the chief culprit of human division is still rationality and scientific rationality. Therefore, scientific rationality must wake up to and avoid danger at the last moment and stop the sin of splitting life.

As a professor of sociology at the French Academy and president of the French Society of Social Sciences, Bourdieu also criticized the positivist tradition originating in France like Foucault. Although his words are milder than those of Foucault, the critique of objective principles and rationality is not weak. Bourdieu opposed both positivism, which emphasizes objectivity purely, and constructivism, which emphasizes subjectivity only, and advocated practicalism that combines subjectivity and objectivity from a practical standpoint. It is in practice that Bourdieu paid attention not only to the study of people's social activities, location resources, and existence fields, but also to people's emotional will, cultural traditions, habitual actions, and meaning interpretation. He has repeatedly claimed that sociology must abandon pure scientific rationality, but should reach a marriage with literature, historiography, and philosophy, not only to face the objective existence of social life, but also to pursue the meaning of life and the value of life. It is necessary to reflect on the function of sociology, pay attention to the violence of sociological discourse, seek dialogue between sociological language and daily life, and realize the dual interpretation of social life. These claims all reflect a strong humanistic spirit.

Giddens also explicitly opposed the position of scientism or positivism. He believed that the objective principle of positivism was one-sided. The positivism interprets social life as an external objective structure according to objective principles, which is not in line with the facts. In his view, the structure of social life is constructed in two dimensions. The social structure is constructed by people who control their own behaviors according to the knowledge structure and value principles in the mind; The essence of social structure is the relative stability of behavioral structure, and the externalization of psychological structure relies on behavior; The psychological structure of dominating behavior is the internalization of social structure, which is the memory trace left by the social structure in the mind. Therefore, the social structure and the individual's psychological structure have a two-way construction. According to this basic point of view, Giddens believed that the sociological study of social structure should not only pay attention to the externality of the society as a whole and does not ask personal psychological activities, but should incorporate human psychological issues into the sociological vision, and should, in the research on people's practical consciousness, psychological experience, value pursuit, etc., reveal the crisis of trust of contemporary people, seek the ontological support of life, and construct a stable foundation and coordinated order for the risky society with life virtualization and disassociation of time and space. Giddens also expressed his views on a series of issues that can only be raised under the banner of humanism, such as arms race, state violence, authoritarian rule, and human repression. It can be seen that in Giddens' writings, the spirit of humanism has been widely and profoundly carried forward.

In addition, Garfunkel's ethnomethodology, Habermas' theory of communicative action, Elias' historical sociology, Jameson's late capitalist cultural theory, Busia's theory of consumer society, etc., are all new sociological schools with strong humanistic spirit. These widely popular sociological theories form such a broad new wave

of humanism, which not only have a huge impact on scientism or positivist barriers, but also directly reflect the profound changes caused by the transformation of contemporary Western society from industrial society to post-industrial society.

As Daniel Bell argued, the main task of industrial society and pre-industrial society is to resolve the contradiction between man and nature, or that the subject (human) conquers the object (nature) to acquire material wealth. Therefore, in the industrial society and the pre-industrial society, the human's mode of thinking must be compatible with the task of realizing this subject's conquest of the object, and must be developed into the oppositional thinking framework of subject and object. The positivism is the principle of objectivity based on the scientific spirit, that is, the thinking mode of the binary opposition between the subject and the object has a long-term historical basis and a realistic basis. However, after the advent of post-industrial society, the main task of human society is to shift from conquering nature and obtaining materials for living to serving people and coordinating interpersonal relationships, because industrial society and pre-industrial society are both eras with shortage of living materials, and the post-industrial society is an era in which living materials are relatively surplus. The material production where people obtain wealth from nature is thus declining from the front-line to the background. The oppositional thinking mode of subject and object is also getting more and more challenged by the changes in its actual foundation. The challenge, the spirit of science, and the scientific spirit and the principle of objectivity have gradually narrowed in the application.

If the scientific spirit and the principle of objectivity are based on material production, especially on industrial production, it must be respected and pursued in the industrial society. However, the main industry of the industrial society is the tertiary industry, which is an industry that serves people. The basic contradiction is that between people or between the subjects, to which the solution is not the pure scientific spirit and the principle of objectivity. What is more needed is humanistic care, which is the value evaluation, pursuit of significance, communication and dialogue, emotional exchange, etc., advocated by humanists repeatedly. It is also the post-modernism trend holding the banner of humanism, the post-modern sociology, or the post-modern social theory adapting to this unprecedented and profound historical change that has sprung up.

In short, the humanistic spirit of contemporary Chinese sociology is not isolated. It not only has its own historical roots of thought and the realistic basis of profound changes in social life, but also has a broad and profound international sociological background and the realistic foundation of Western post-industrial society.

7.2 Launching a New Vision of Sociological Theory

Breaking through the shackles of the simple principle of objectivity of the positivism will inevitably lead to changes in the theoretical horizon of sociology. In the positivist vision with one-sided emphasis on the principle of objectivity, although there are also studies on the subjective social phenomena such as value orientation,

customs, morality, and religious culture, the phenomenon is, as Durkheim clearly stated, viewed as an objective thing in the perspective of positivism. Durkheim said, "What is a thing on earth? Just as things that are known from the outside are opposite to things that are known from the inside, all things and ideas are also opposite. Any cognitive object that intelligence cannot understand naturally; Everything that we cannot form a precise concept with a simple psychoanalytic approach; It is a thing that can only be finally understood on condition that the spirit is freed from the self and through observation and experimentation, and gradually shifts from the most superficial and easiest sign to the indescribable and deepest sign. Therefore, to examine certain kind of facts as objects is not to classify them into this or that real category, but to observe them with a certain mentality."²

It is very clear that what Durkheim said is from a perspective for observing social phenomena. It is the perspective of observing the externality of thing as an objective object. This means that whether it is a real objective phenomenon or a subjective spiritual phenomenon, as long as they are included in the objective observational perspective, it is a thing. After all, Durkheim advocated a principle of materialized social phenomena. This is a principle of observing human social life from the standpoint of physics. It is a thorough scientific rationalism principle and an expression of the most rigorous positivist position. This principle or position completely rejects the pursuit of humanism, and it is also the principle or position that is resolutely opposed by the ideologists from Vico through Helder, Goethe, and Schiller to the contemporary Nietzsche, Dilthey, Heidegger, Hans-Georg Gadamer, Foucault, etc.

If our social life is treated from the scientific spirit and the humanistic spirit but from the objective position adhered to by Durkheim, et al., the social phenomenon that sociology faces is not just turning them into objective things so that they can be understood. In fact, Durkheim was very clear about this disagreement. If positivism treats it as an objective object from the externality of social phenomena, the humanist precisely understands it as a subjective human from the internal perspective. If the scientific spirit and the humanistic spirit are combined as advocated by Fei Xiaotong, the social phenomenon in the perspective of sociology should be both internal and external, subjective and objective.

It is in this sense that Fei Xiaotong proposed how sociological research treats human biological and social issues. The biologicalness of human beings is the naturalness of human beings. The natural attributes and social attributes of human beings are inseparable units. Only in the unity of human natural attributes and social attributes can correct understanding of human beings be formed. Positivistic sociology has repeatedly stated that sociology should study human social phenomena, but Comte, Durkheim, et al. emphasized that the social life should be studied from the perspective of physics, whose essence is to materialize, objectify, and naturalize social phenomena. "Society and nature are not two concepts of 'duality' and not 'opposite' against each other, but different aspects and levels of one thing. The best way to express this idea is the concept of 'Heaven' in ancient China. 'Heaven' is not something that exists beyond the human beings like the 'God' of the West. 'Heaven' and

²[FR] Durkheim. *The Rules of Sociological Method*, p. 7.

‘Man’ are identical and closely related.”³ Fei Xiaotong believed that the idea of the unity of Heaven and Man in ancient China should be fully affirmed. It is much more effective to use this concept to understand human social life than the pure objectivism of positivism.

Indeed, as Fei Xiaotong said, in the Neo-Confucianism in the Song and Ming Dynasties and the new text Confucianism in the Late Qing Dynasty, the concept of Heaven is unified with the essence and existence of human beings, which inherits the mode of thinking that the Chinese sociology can establish a binary opposition between the subject and the object based on the concept of unity of Heaven and Man. However, it is regrettable that in modern times, in order to salvage China from subjugation, Chinese scholars have forgotten the ideological principles of the unity of Heaven and Man in the Chinese nation in the process of actively studying Western science and culture, simply emulating or transplanting Western scientism principles and objective evidence. For “this rush, passive learning process, there are also many rough and uncoordinated things, especially for the relationship between man and nature; when we accept the modern science of the West, we basically accept directly the dichotomy and opposition of ‘man’ and ‘nature’ in Western culture, and to a large extent, easily give up the traditional Chinese value of unity of Heaven and Man.”⁴

If we look at human society from the concept of unity of Heaven and Man, we should not regard man and society as an objective natural existence like positivism, but should see the spiritual world of man and society. “The spiritual world of man can be said in general terms as ‘a kind of consciousness of man’, but in reality, this is a problem that is far from clear. Sociology itself cannot complete this kind of exploration, but this kind of exploration is of great significance to the development of sociology. The ‘spiritual world’ as a human-specific thing plays a decisive role in complex social phenomena; By ignoring the important factor of the spiritual world, we cannot truly understand the life of human beings, the thoughts of human beings, and the feelings of human beings, nor can we understand the existence and operation of society.”⁵ Therefore, sociology should pay attention to the study of the spiritual world.

Fei Xiaotong opposed the reductionist research method concerning the spiritual world. In his view, the spiritual world has its own characteristics and mechanisms of operation. It should not use some factors outside the spiritual world to explain the development and changes of the spiritual world, but should explore how to conduct a more in-depth study of the spiritual world from the perspective of sociology. “To study the spiritual world of human beings from a sociological perspective, we must also avoid some simple ‘reductionism’ tendencies, that is, to try to use all non-spiritual phenomena and problems in the ‘non-spiritual’ economy, politics, culture,

³Fei Xiaotong. *On the Enlargement of Traditional Boundary of Sociology*. *China Sociology Yearbook (1999–2002)*, p. 6.

⁴Fei Xiaotong. *On the Enlargement of Traditional Boundary of Sociology*. *China Sociology Yearbook (1999–2002)*, p. 6.

⁵Fei Xiaotong. *On the Enlargement of Traditional Boundary of Sociology*. *China Sociology Yearbook (1999–2002)*, p. 6.

psychology, and other mechanisms to explain.”⁶ This reductionism criticized by Fei Xiaotong is not only a common situation in traditional sociology, but also a common practice in philosophy, economics, political science, history, psychology, and other disciplines. “The reductionist interpretation seems to be a perfect ‘interpretation’. In fact, it often ignores the characteristics of the spiritual world itself, ignoring the irreplaceability of ‘spiritual world’—the special existence that distinguishes people from other creatures.”⁷

Based on the particularity and irreplaceability of the spiritual world and the ineffectiveness of reductionist interpretation, Dilthey, etc., have explicitly proposed establishing a spiritual science. Dilthey advocated that the establishment of spiritual science is directly targeted at the naturalistic and positivist that were popular at the time. In his view, human life and historical processes cannot be viewed in a naturalistic way like positivists, because human life and historical process are essentially spirit, not the external thing like the physical phenomenon. The two have essential differences in the form, composition, and development process. Therefore, the physical approach of studying natural phenomena cannot be used to study human social life and historical process. It is necessary to establish a spiritual science that is completely different from the natural science in principle, in order to understand human life activities and historical processes.

In his established theory of spiritual science, Dilthey resisted the positivist naturalistic methodology with the spirit of humanism or historicism, and it is also the role of humanism and historicalism that Dilthey also attached great importance to the research on culture. The British philosopher H.P. Rickman pointed out, “As long as we grasp the concept of ‘spirit’ emphasized by the Germans, the translated word ‘humanities’ will also capture the meaning of Dilthey’s spiritual science. In Dilthey’s view, the human world is not exactly the same as the spiritual world, but it is the real human world only when the human world is filled with spirit. The difference between humans and other creatures is: He is always involved in the ‘cultural association’⁸ he created. Even the direction in which human instinct is taken and the way the people establish relationships with others are often subject to cultural constraints.”⁹

Dilthey emphasized the cultural association of human social life, whose essence is to emphasize the spiritual essence of human social life. That is to say, if the recognition of the spirit is the essential feature of human social life, and the spirit expresses the inner existence of human society with the cultural association, recognizing the spiritual world is bound to carry out research in the cultural world. However, although Dilthey emphasized the way human beings are connected, that

⁶Fei Xiaotong. *On the Enlargement of Traditional Boundary of Sociology*. *China Sociology Yearbook (1999–2002)*, p. 8.

⁷Fei Xiaotong. *On the Enlargement of Traditional Boundary of Sociology*. *China Sociology Yearbook (1999–2002)*, p. 8.

⁸The author has changed the translation. In the original text, the cultural context translated into ‘文化上下文 (in Chinese)’. In fact, the meaning in English refers to cultural association. If it is translated into ‘文化上下文 (in Chinese)’, it is different from the meaning in Chinese. [UK] H.P. Rickman (1989). *Wilhelm Dilthey*, p. 121. Beijing: China Social Sciences Press.

⁹[UK] H.P. Rickman. *Wilhelm Dilthey*, p. 121.

is, he emphasized social relations, it does not mean that Dilthey explicitly raised the issue of the spiritual world from the perspective of sociology. He said that spiritual science includes the disciplines concerning human beings and their activities, such as literature, history, philosophy, psychology, anthropology, sociology, and political science and economics. It can be seen that Dilthey proposed that the establishment of spiritual science emphasizes a way of humanities and social science research different from natural science, which is of universal significance.

Fei Xiaotong clearly proposed from the perspective of sociology to carry out research on spiritual phenomena different from natural sciences, and proposed the basic tasks of sociological research in the spiritual world: "Sociology's understanding of the spiritual world should be to combine it with the social operating mechanism, but not substitute it in a simple manner, nor simply explain the spiritual activities with the general social factors. Of course, the most ideal is to open up a field to study the spiritual world in sociological research, to conduct in-depth exploration from the methodological level, and to explore how to conduct research on the human spiritual world based on the academic traditions and perspectives of sociology."¹⁰ Here, Fei Xiaotong proposed the establishment of a branch of sociology that studies spiritual phenomena. Can it be called spiritual sociology?

The spiritual world of man is cultural existence in its real form, and the study of the spiritual world must face cultural concepts and cultural traditions. The operation and inheritance of culture are reflected in the sociality and continuity of group life. Sociology's understanding of culture should be carried out in the relationship between individuals and groups, so that the unity of individual and society can be grasped through cultural studies. "The transmission of culture is inevitably a historical process. All cultures must be accumulated. If there is no such accumulation transcending the life and death, time and space, culture cannot exist."¹¹ However, although culture has its group and time-space beyond the individual's life and death, culture must be continued from a specific historical tradition. Culture as a tradition must contain the unique modes of thinking, value principles, customs, and behavioral patterns of each nation. Only in the continuity of history can the essence and function of culture be truly understood.

Here, Fei Xiaotong raised the issue of the special status of cultural studies in sociology. Although many sociologists have made relatively rich research on culture and it can even be said that no sociologist can avoid cultural issues, how to understand the essential relationship between cultural studies and sociological research is rarely thought deeply. In Fei Xiaotong's view, because culture is inherited and cumulative, it is inseparable from group and society, and only through cultural studies can we achieve a deep and universal understanding of group, society, and history. "Understanding the culture from the perspective of 'individual and group', 'culture' is a thing that accumulates the experience of many individual and limited lives in history

¹⁰Fei Xiaotong. *On the Enlargement of Traditional Boundary of Sociology*. *China Sociology Yearbook (1999–2002)*, p. 8.

¹¹Fei Xiaotong. *On the Enlargement of Traditional Boundary of Sociology*. *China Sociology Yearbook (1999–2002)*, p. 9.

in the form of a group into a socially shared spirit, thought, and wealth of knowledge and is preserved in various ways in the life, thoughts, attitudes, and behaviors of individuals living today, and transcends individuals.”¹² That is to say, although culture has the generality of group and society, it is not only the accumulation of individual experience, but also a general thing that can exist in individuals. Thus, culture includes the relationship between the individual and the group and society.

Since culture can reflect the generality of the group and society, and can express the particularity of individuals, culture must not be abstract. Some studies on culture often stay in the abstract discourse of traditional culture and modern culture, cultural concepts and cultural facilities, cultural changes and cultural transformation, etc., while Fei Xiaotong embodied cultural studies from the relationship between individuals and groups. In his writings, it can be discovered that his research on culture is inseparable from specific social phenomena such as customs, ritual systems, behavior patterns, and modes of communication. He said, “The way to know the problem, the mode of thinking, the attitude of life, etc. are also passed down with the culture. Furthermore, the inheritance of culture also includes the ‘inheritance of society’, e.g. the operating mechanism of society is also inherited with culture; the social structure is also accompanied by culture. The basic structure of a society, the structures of husband and wife, parents, and social districts are all part of culture.”¹³

7.3 Seeking New Breakthroughs in Sociology

An unavoidable question concerning the study of spiritual world or cultural life from the sociological perspective is: How do people develop spiritual world or cultural activities in social life? Or more specifically, does humanity use rational thinking to dominate one’s spiritual activities and cultural interactions, or is it an ordinary person’s consciousness like the ordinary people’s methodological theory? or, as Bourdieu said, habit or practice consciousness, pre-logical thinking of practice? This involves the fundamental problem of how the spiritual science proposed by Dilthey studied its objects. This is also the focus of positivists, scientists, and humanists, as well as contemporary academic thoughts such as hermeneutics, phenomenology, and existentialism, that is, the special nature of objects determines the particularity of research methods. Positivism or scientism believes that objective scientific methods are applicable to all phenomena including human social life, and various academic schools holding the banner of humanism emphasize the particularity of human social life, and mainly emphasize the heterogeneity of spiritual activities and material activities.

¹²Fei Xiaotong. *On the Enlargement of Traditional Boundary of Sociology*. *China Sociology Yearbook* (1999–2002), p. 9.

¹³Fei Xiaotong. *On the Enlargement of Traditional Boundary of Sociology*. *China Sociology Yearbook* (1999–2002), p. 10.

In the spiritual world or cultural activities, logical thinking and rational concepts undoubtedly take an important position. However, it is not possible to explain the spiritual world or cultural life from the rational logic just like some positivists. In fact, in people's daily life, a large number of interaction activities are not carried out through rational thinking, but often through mutual understanding and meaning consensus on the perceptual level. However, many sociologists have overestimated the role of rational thinking in the relationship of communication, and one-sidedly used rational principles to explain the interaction activities mainly at the level of perceptual communication. Simmel's social interaction form, Homans' exchange behavior theory, Coleman's rational choice theory, and Habermas's theory of communicative action, etc., all use rational principles to raise and answer questions in communicative behavior. Fei Xiaotong believed that: In the study of the most basic "social relationship" in sociology, there are actually many blank areas for us to explore. In particular, the "communication" parts of "interpersonal relationship" have always contained some areas where sociology has not made clear. For example, the realm of "self-evidentism" and "implied meaning" in the process of communication between people is a very important part of interpersonal relationship.¹⁴ Fei Xiaotong called the realm of "self-evidentism" and "implied meaning" to be "intention".

"Intention" is a communication on the non-logical level. It uses a perceptual form such as feeling, perception, and representation to reach a consensus, or achieve a common understanding of a certain meaning through experience and intuition. In the traditional epistemology constructed by Bacon, Descartes, Locke, Spinoza, etc., this widespread "intention" did not receive the attention it deserved. Although Bacon, Locke, et al. also affirmed that perceptual knowledge is the basis of rational knowledge; however, due to limitation to pursuit of scientific cognition or use of scientific understanding as a model to study people's cognitive activities, this most basic "intention" in daily interaction activities will inevitably be ignored. "Many ideas between people can't be clearly stated in logic and language. They always appear as an 'implied meaning'. These areas of 'intention' are a very subtle and crucial part of the relationship between people. The typical performance is between the intimate friends, the acquaintances, and the same subculture group. Many things need not be said, and they naturally comprehend. It is even clearer than the words."¹⁵

Fei Xiaotong's views are consistent with his earlier assertions that China's social structure has a differential pattern. In *From the Soil* and other works, Fei Xiaotong said that Chinese rural society is a local civilized society living on land. The prominent feature of this society is that it is a blood relationship or a kinship relationship. Everyone relies on this kind of bond to form its own circle society and acquaintance society. In this society, people are not only used to familiarity, fear of strangeness, obedience to the rules, lazy to seek new things, but also do not want to use the rational rules and legal provisions to control their own lives, but to live by following

¹⁴Fei Xiaotong. *On the Enlargement of Traditional Boundary of Sociology*. *China Sociology Yearbook (1999–2002)*, p. 10.

¹⁵Fei Xiaotong. *On the Enlargement of Traditional Boundary of Sociology*. *China Sociology Yearbook (1999–2002)*, p. 10.

the customs and imitation. In this acquaintance society and circle society, people's consciousness activities or modes of thinking are not rational thinking that rises to the level of abstract logic, but rather the perceptual consciousness that stays at the level of intuitive feelings. The intention is the expression or form of communication of this perceptual consciousness, which occupies a particularly important position in Chinese social life. Therefore, Fei Xiaotong pointed out, "In this field of interpersonal interactions of 'intention', Chinese culture has certain preferences and advantages. The development of Chinese sociology may make epoch-making achievements in this regard."¹⁶

If the intention is a kind of interpersonal communication that is intrinsically linked to the essence of Chinese social structure, it must have deep roots and universality, and it must also be developed into a universal lifestyle. Because society is formed only through people's communication behaviors, what kind of communication behavior or social interaction pattern will form what kind of survival mode or social structure. This seems to be a cyclical relationship. In fact, this is the structuring that Giddens said. That is, people's consciousness structure dominates people to form a specific mode of action, while the mode of action also includes communication mode, but it is a practical form of consciousness structure. The development of social life has formed a social life pattern, that is, a social structure. Of course, this social structure can in turn influence and change people's consciousness structure. This is the two-way construction of social structure.

Compared with the native China that Fei Xiaotong discussed in the 1940s, contemporary Chinese society has undergone profound changes. However, the differential pattern of acquaintance society and circle society formed not only by kinship has not been fundamentally changed. That is to say, China's social structure has not changed in essence, and the way of communication is still widespread in social life. This shows that the Chinese society has actively promoted the modernization process through reform, opening up, and development of the market economy, and the modern consciousness and modern behaviors and lifestyles have been developed on a large scale; however, because acquaintance society, circle society, and communication mode of intention will not simply quit as a deep tradition, lifestyles that are inconsistent with or even hindering the modernization process still exist in a wide range of fields.

Based on his many years of unremitting field investigations, Fei Xiaotong pointed out that over the past 20 years of reform and opening up, the Pearl River Delta, the Yangtze River Delta, and other regions have achieved rapid economic and social development, whose level of development has reached the level of modernization. Some regions still stay at the level before the reform and opening up. For this difference, it is difficult to identify any obvious difference in terms of the institutions, laws, regulations, and official ideologies involved in rationality, as laws and regulations are all formulated by the local government. "In many underdeveloped areas, there are no differences from the developed regions in terms of visible and tangible aspects,

¹⁶Fei Xiaotong. *On the Enlargement of Traditional Boundary of Sociology*. *China Sociology Yearbook (1999–2002)*, p. 11.

such as the institutions, laws, regulations, and official ideology, because there are many exactly the same superficial things under the basic system of China. However, in these areas under the same policy and institutional conditions, the effect of development is very different. Through the deep study of ‘participant observation’, it is found that the daily subtle interpersonal relationships, communication methods, communication mentality, and related customs and values are quite different from those in developed regions. The part of ‘the difference’ is mostly the one that ‘can only be understood by insight and cannot be said’.¹⁷

Those “parts that can be understood by insight but cannot be said” are often vague, because anything that can be said means that people are already using words to grasp such things, and when certain things are expressed in words, it indicates that this kind of thing must have reached a certain degree of conceptualization in people’s consciousness. The understanding at the conceptual level is clear, and the understanding without reaching this level is relatively vague. However, although the intention at the perceptual level is ambiguous compared to the rational thinking that is conceptualized and can be expressed in words, this does not mean that it is not important, but rather that it is very important. “This part of things actually constitutes the real cause of the difference in social and economic development. Therefore, we must truly and effectively promote the development of backward areas, such as the development of the Western region and the transformation of state-owned enterprises in the Northeast. We must solve this problem in the field of ‘Intention’. Otherwise, making a fuss about only those publicly stated, superficial ‘institutions’, ‘laws’ and ‘regulations’ cannot solve the substantive problems. The part of everyday life that can be ‘understood by insight’ is the most routine, most common, and most mundane part of culture, but this is the most basic, consistent, profound, and core part of this local culture. It has been so deeply integrated into every detail of life that people no longer need to explain and interpret each other.”¹⁸

In recent years, the author has published several articles on perceptual choice,¹⁹ where the basic ideas are in essence consistent with Fei Xiaotong’s discourse on the intention. Intention is to talk about the form of perceptual communication in interpersonal relationships, and the perceptual choice that the author discusses is that dominated by perceptual consciousness. Although intention is to directly discuss the perceptual form or perceptual characteristics of communication consciousness, it must be inseparably linked with people’s interaction behavior since it is perceptual awareness activity in people’s communication behavior, and people’s communication behavior must be a choice behavior; because no intentional communication will

¹⁷Fei Xiaotong. *On the Enlargement of Traditional Boundary of Sociology*. *China Sociology Yearbook (1999–2002)*, p. 11.

¹⁸Fei Xiaotong. *On the Enlargement of Traditional Boundary of Sociology*. *China Sociology Yearbook (1999–2002)*, p. 11.

¹⁹Since 2002, the author has published 7 articles about perpetual choice in *Jiangsu Social Sciences* 2002 (2), *Tianjin Social Sciences* 2003 (3), *Jilin University Journal Social Sciences Edition*, 2003 (3), *Study & Exploration* 2004 (6), etc. Perceptual choice is my initial concept, where many issues need to be further explored from the perspectives of sociology, economics, psychology, philosophy, etc.

happen, while intentional behavior is also a choice behavior, the communication behavior that the intention dominates can also be regarded as a perceptual choice behavior.

It is not the scientific epistemology of positivism that directly addresses the concept of perceptual choice, but the rational choice theory of economics. Although the vision of economics is very broad, its core is the principle and method of rational choice, that is, the individual in economic behavior is regarded as the middleman who pursues the maximum economic benefits. The essence of economic behavior is that the middleman pursues maximum benefits with low cost. Many scholars have sharply criticized the ideals of economic rational choice theory and method as Simon, and Ludwig Von Mises directly referred to economics as an abstract speculation based on logical inference. He said, "The human action science that strives to derive universally correct knowledge is a theoretical system, and the most carefully constructed branch to date is economics. In all its branches, this science is *a priori*, not empirical. Just like logic and mathematics, it is not derived from experience, but prior to experience. It is now, like the past, the logic of action and fact."²⁰

Since the rational choice theory is a kind of logical inference and abstraction of thinking, the opposite point of view of perceptual choice points to the concrete reality of life. In order to clearly illustrate the authenticity and universality of perceptual choice, the author has defined the characteristics of perceptual choice from five aspects:

- a. Visualization of choice awareness. Here is a concept that uses aesthetics to describe the characteristics of aesthetic consciousness—representation, meaning the specific figurativeness of consciousness activity. Friedrich Von Schiller, et al. have pointed out: In the aesthetic consciousness activity, people do not think about things as external objects, that is, they do not think about problems by use of the subjective and objective dualistic thinking, nor do they use concepts to reveal the abstract nature of things, but directly facing the whole of things, use perceptual image thinking to grasp the specific existence of things. In the perceptual choice behavior, people do not use abstract thinking to grasp the essential presupposition of things, but carry out their own choice consciousness activities in the direct observation of specific problems of specific things. Moreover, even if there is a ready-made rational choice scheme, people who are accustomed to perceptual choices do not associate it with visible things, and will not carry out the choice behavior according to this scheme. Of course, we are not here to say that people's consciousness activities in perceptual choice have reached the realm of aesthetic consciousness that transcends factual knowledge and evaluative understanding. Here, it is only pointed out that perceptual choice consciousness activities have the characteristics of figurativeness and specificity.
- b. Choice target integration. Related to the visualization of choice consciousness activity, the goal determined by the perceptual choice is generally the result of integration. On the one hand, the goal that people establish in perceptual choice must be the specific things in the experience of life, and the specific things in the

²⁰[AT] Mises (2001). *Epistemological Issues in Economics*, p. 12. Beijing: Economic Science Press.

experience must be undifferentiated and non-specialized. In Husserl's words, it is unthemed; On the other hand, people meet the professional or thematic goals in perceptual choices, and they must be integrated before they can become the targets of perceptual choices. For example, pure economic or pure political targets cannot become the targets of perceptual choice; in the process of perceptual choice, people must combine these specialized and thematic targets with other factors of daily life (such as morality, emotion, interpersonal relationship, etc.) to become the realistic target of choice.

- c. Choice path ethicization. After determining the target of perceptual choice, it is not like the rational choice that develops through the professional approach and the behavioral model directly linking the target, but regardless of the type of target, what the individual cannot operate alone often resort to the interpersonal relationships such as relatives, acquaintances, and fellowships, which are collectively referred to as ethical relationships. This ethical relationship, as Liang Shuming said, is a private relationship that is separate from organizations and social units, and an abstract ethical relationship that lacks complete social consciousness and personal consciousness. As Fei Xiaotong said, this kind of circle-type ethical relationship is linked by family ties, which is still interpersonal relationship at the perceptual level.
- d. Experience-based choice basis. Like rational choice, perceptual choice must be based on a certain basis. However, depending on the basis of the two, the basis of perceptual choice is not the careful analysis of information, the precise measurement of benefits, the strict observance of economic laws and scientific principles, but the empirical facts that the selectors experience or can experience personally. Perceptual choice does not negate the role of information, benefits, and principles, but the roles of these factors must be linked to empirical facts in order to function; as for whether or not these factors contradict empirical facts, the ultimate determinant must be empirical facts.
- e. Choice order traditionalization. Choice order is the rules to be followed, the procedures to be implemented, etc., during the selection. In the general theory of choice, people value the order of rational choice and have formed many theoretical views on the rational choice order. In fact, perceptual choice is also orderly, whose order is a tradition at the level of experience, and is a perceptual pattern of behaviors such as customs, habits, etiquette, and practices. Perceptual choice order has the characteristics of continuity, repetitiveness, particularity, and practicality. Specifically, it is the continuation of tradition, the repetition of experience, the affirmation of individuality, and is the order in people's daily life practice.²¹

The purpose of retelling these views here is not to discuss more about the perceptual choice itself, but to respond to Fei Xiaotong's views on the broader level. The author's exposition on perceptual choice, especially the discussion of perceptual choice based on the characteristics of Chinese social structure and Chinese lifestyle, was deeply inspired by Fei Xiaotong. The author pointed out in the same article:

²¹Liu Shaojie (2002 (2)). *Perceptual Choice in the Transformation of China's Social Structure*. *Jiangsu Social Sciences*.

Fei Xiaotong's exposition on the Chinese people's "rite-based order" reveals the essential characteristics of Chinese behavior or choice: Perceptualization! Fei Xiaotong pointed out, "The maintenance of the local social order is not the same as the maintenance of modern social order in many aspects. But the difference is not that the local society is 'lawless', or 'no rules'" (Fei Xiaotong 1947), "local society is the society of 'rule by rites'", "rite is a socially recognized norm...It is tradition that maintains this norm." "Tradition is the experience accumulated by society." "If we do not infer the relationship between behavior and purpose and we only do it according to the prescribed methods, and if there is an unfortunate belief that the prescribed method does not do so, this set of behavior becomes our ordinary so-called 'ceremony'. Rite means doing according to the rites." (Fei Xiaotong 1947).

Fei Xiaotong's exposition on the order of rites is actually a discussion about the Chinese mode of choice. In Fei Xiaotong's view, rite is a Chinese behavioral norm. It is a traditional experience that does not use logical inferences or require calculations to predict the relationship between behavior and purpose. It is a rite that demonstrates and stipulates people's behaviors. Without logical inference, just following suits as an empirical mode, etc., is the basic characteristic of perceptual activities. Together with the discussion about the Chinese people's dependence on family relationships, familiarity, blood relationship, etc., Fei Xiaotong convincingly discussed the perceptual characteristics of Chinese social choice behavior.

The Chinese and Chinese society today have indeed changed tremendously compared with those discussed by Fei Xiaotong in *From the Soil*, but the traditions in Chinese social life have not changed, and the perceptual choice behavior is still expressed in many forms in the world around us. "Follow your heart", "Cross the river by feeling the stones", other familiar words, etc., truly and affectionately characterize our usual social activities. Even the existence of social phenomena such as "irregularization", "game without rules", and "love is greater than law" also expresses the characteristics of perceptual choice of contemporary Chinese from a very broad level. Therefore, we now propose the concept of perceptual choice, not only to discuss the old traditions of the Chinese, but also to discuss the real reality.²²

It can be seen from Fei Xiaotong's exposition on the intention that his judgment on the characteristics of Chinese behavior and mode of thinking had not significantly changed in the view of *From the Soil*; moreover, until the beginning of the twenty-first century when he placed this consciousness activity or communication mode on the perceptual level in a more important position, arguing that in-depth research on it can make breakthroughs in Chinese sociology. He said, "The study of this kind of 'intention' is actually pushing the study of the most basic and general concept of sociology—'social relations' to a deeper level." "The current accumulation of social life practices and academic research in China has already provided quite a few conditions for this aspect of exploration. If social scholars can make full use of

²²Liu Shaojie (2002 (2)). *Perceptual Choice in the Transformation of China's Social Structure*. Jiangsu Social Sciences.

existing conditions and strengthen research in this area, it is possible to get some real breakthrough progress in theory and application.”²³

Intention will occur in the communication relationship. The deep thinking on the issue of intention can promote the deepening of the study of social relations. One of the results of the deepening must be the understanding of the self. Because the social relationship formed by the communication behavior is the connection between the subjects, and the subject is the self. It is in this sense that Fei Xiaotong pointed out, “If you want to continue to deepen the study of ‘social relations’, you can start from different angles. In addition to the ‘intention’, there is also an angle, that is, from the perspective of the ‘two ends’ of the social relationship—people to explore. It is certain that we do not have to repeat the existing results of sociology, nor do we have to explore the concept of ‘man’ from the perspective of a bystander, but we should understand ‘man’ from the perspective of the ‘subjective’ first person, that is, to study the concept of ‘self’.”²⁴

Fei Xiaotong’s arguments are distinctly specific. Although positivistic sociology also recognizes that society is formed by human interactions, as Durkheim repeatedly argued, social relations formed by human interactions are treated as things; therefore, the two ends of social relations are then materialized, that is, the first person who is not considered subjective—I, but the person who is regarded as the third person with objectivity—he. As George Herbert Mead argued, man has multiple forms because of their different relationships. I is the subjective I, while he (him) is the objective I. The subjective I is the I self-selected with the subjective will, while the objective I is the I that is passive, referred to, regulated, and acted upon. In this regard, positivism has made the social life objective, and man in their field of vision can only be passively in the objective I, as a third person. That is to say, after the objectification of the positivist vision, man is also one-sided, or what positivists see is a one-sided person and one aspect of man. Fei Xiaotong proposed studying the two ends of social relations from “I”, just the opposite against positivism, that is, to put forward the subjectivity of the objectified and materialized man, and to conduct more in-depth research from the perspective of sociology.

Although the subjective I is one aspect of I, even this subjective I is an I to be analyzed further. Fei Xiaotong pointed out, “From the perspective of ‘I’, a very interesting question is that this ‘I’ for everyone is actually divided into several ‘Is’, including biological ‘I’, social ‘I’, cultural ‘I’, superficial ‘I’, hidden ‘I’, and unknown ‘I’.”²⁵ It is easy for people to associate Freud’s psychoanalytic theory from Fei Xiaotong’s these discussions. Freud divided human consciousness activities into “self”, “superego”, and “inner self”. Self refers to consciousness activities that I can perceive, superego refers to the ethics of society, politics and laws, and other

²³Fei Xiaotong. *On the Enlargement of Traditional Boundary of Sociology*. *China Sociology Yearbook (1999–2002)*, p. 11.

²⁴Fei Xiaotong. *On the Enlargement of Traditional Boundary of Sociology*. *China Sociology Yearbook (1999–2002)*, p. 12.

²⁵Fei Xiaotong. *On the Enlargement of Traditional Boundary of Sociology*. *China Sociology Yearbook (1999–2002)*, p. 12.

ideologies, and inner self, as a consciousness activity, cannot be perceived. Both self and superego are identified 'I', while inner self is unidentified 'I'. From this point of view, Fei Xiaotong's 'unidentified I' is equivalent to Freud's inner self. However, Fei Xiaotong clearly pointed out, "This is not a different level of 'I' in the sense of psychoanalysis from Freud, et al., but a multifaceted 'I' in a sociological sense."²⁶

In Fei Xiaotong's view, "I" has both identified and unidentified sides, and it is limited in terms of identification, but most is unidentified. In the unidentified part, part of it is "biological 'I'", which is the innate instinct of human beings, Freud called it inner self, and this part is obviously not the "I" that Fei Xiaotong said; Another part of the "I" that is unidentified is puzzling, and Fei Xiaotong said, "This part of the 'unidentified 'I' is often unknown. The daily life, work, behaviors, social interaction, etc., are subject to this 'I' that does not know itself. This involves various 'intentions' in the interpersonal relationship mentioned above, and this kind of 'intention' theme is sometimes this 'unidentified 'I'. For example, when we read ancient poetry, we feel the wonderful artistic conception, as if we have crossed the history of thousands of years to share the leisurely feelings with the ancients. This kind of feeling is often 'unspeakable', but for a person with such poetry culture, it is 'self-evident'."²⁷

In the existing sociological conceptual framework, it is difficult to find a ready-made concept to clearly explain the concept of "I" proposed by Fei Xiaotong. As far as Fei Xiaotong's argument is concerned, this unidentified "I" is a non-logical state of perceptual consciousness. Fei Xiaotong said that this is a kind of "fantastic artistic conception" that can be formed by reading ancient poetry. It is a "leisurely feeling" and is often "unspeakable". This is obviously a feeling and an experience that cannot be perceived from a kind of logical inference, or a reaction to feelings and stimuli in the biological sense, but an experience or a mood that is saturated with cultural influences; although this kind of artistic conception is unspeakable, it can be understood, intuitive, and comprehensible. This is equivalent to the kind of pre-logical, figurative, and ambiguous comprehensive consciousness of the person in the daily life. Known as practical consciousness, Bourdieu called it a sense of practice, which is unidentified in logical thinking, but can be understood through emotional experience and intuitive consciousness.

The positivistic sociology, which is keen to pursue the rationalization of social life, has not paid enough attention to this realm under the level of rational logic, thus leaving a lot of room for the future study of sociology, and, as Fei Xiaotong said, if this unidentified conception is to dominate the consciousness activities or mental state of people's social interaction, then research on it will reveal the basis for people's social actions and communication behaviors in a broader field. "The study of 'unidentified' 'I', is the study of the 'intention' part of the interpersonal interaction from the perspective of the subject as well as another challenge facing

²⁶Fei Xiaotong. *On the Enlargement of Traditional Boundary of Sociology*. *China Sociology Yearbook (1999–2002)*, p. 12.

²⁷Fei Xiaotong. *On the Enlargement of Traditional Boundary of Sociology*. *China Sociology Yearbook (1999–2002)*, pp. 12–13.

sociology... From the perspective of instrumentality application or humanities education, sociology should achieve some breakthrough in this aspect. This will be an important milestone in the overall development of sociology, and will be a new step for exploration of human knowledge.”²⁸

7.4 Exploring the Sociology in Ancient Civilizations

Sociology is the product of modern civilization, or as clearly defined by Giddens, studies the science of modern society in the principle of modernity. This judgment is not only a consensus of the sociological community, but also a general view of sociology in other disciplines. As mentioned above, regardless of philosophy, historiography or literature, or economics, political science, and law, their disciplinization was completed in modern times. That is to say, the humanities and social sciences that exist as disciplines were formed in modern times. However, when writing their own history, various disciplines of humanities and social sciences trace their origins to the distant ancient times and find their own sources of thought from the undifferentiated academic concepts. From this, we can see various versions of the history of ancient philosophy, the history of ancient literature, the history of ancient economics, the history of ancient political science, the history of ancient law, etc. Regrettably, we cannot see the history of ancient sociology. The reason is obviously not to find the source of sociological thought from the ancient academic concepts, because the source of humanities and social sciences lies in human social life. When ancient scholars face theoretical thinking in social life, it is impossible to put social relations, social communication behaviors, and infinitely complex problems outside the horizon, and thinking about social phenomena cannot happen.

As Collingwood said, history is only to understand the thoughts and behaviors of predecessors, and the history of various disciplines in the humanities and social sciences is even more so. How broad the definition of a discipline determines how far the history is written thereby. Empirical sociology defines the concept of sociology too narrowly, so the history written in accordance with the principles of empirical sociology can only begin with Comte, and the result of this not only limits the historical starting point of Western sociology to the nineteenth century, but also excludes the sociological thoughts of various ethnic groups that have not yet entered the modernization process from the history of sociology. A more rigorous approach is to exclude from the sociology the doctrine that does not study social issues in accordance with the positivism principles.

One of the traditional sociological boundaries that Fei Xiaotong wanted to break through is the historical boundary defined by positivism for sociology. The basis of positivism for the demarcation of sociological history is its scientism and objectivism. Therefore, breaking through the historical boundaries of positivism is also

²⁸Fei Xiaotong. *On the Enlargement of Traditional Boundary of Sociology*. *China Sociology Yearbook (1999–2002)*, p. 13.

the inevitable result of criticizing the spirit of pure scientism and denying the principle of single positivism. Fei Xiaotong used the humanistic spirit and the principle of affirming subjective consciousness to observe social life and saw more content and forms compared with the positivist vision. One of the important problems is that people's social interactions are not dominated by cognitive forms or modes of thinking that are not only summarized by Western scholars, especially for Chinese people's consciousness activities in social life, which are difficult to clearly explain only using subjective and objective concepts. He said,

The traditional Chinese people's cognitive framework of "man", "society", and "history" is neither a "subjective" and "objective" dichotomy system in the West, nor is it completely like the "longitudinal" feature in Japanese culture summarized by Mr. NAKANE Chie; China's worldview is more like a world picture built on the dimensions of "inside" and "outside": Everything is reflected in the "differential pattern" of increasing or decreasing "from the inside to the outside" or "from the surface to the center". Therefore, in the exploration of traditional Chinese thoughts, the concern over "I" naturally continues to go deeper into the "inside", which leads to the concept of "mind" that is closer to "inside" than "I"...²⁹

The mind is the concept that the Chinese represent ideology, moral cultivation, and inner experience, which is equivalent to the synthesis of Westerners' multiple consciousnesses such as cognition, evaluation, and aesthetics. Chinese people are used to saying that they are heart-to-heart, which essentially contain the consciousness communication, and emotional communication from the unity of the three realities of truth, goodness, and beauty. It is different from the objective recognition activities that Westerners observe and recognize others as their objective objects. Although this kind of heart-to-heart is a kind of consciousness activity with unclear differentiation, it is precisely this kind of comprehensive consciousness activity that directly reflects the essential characteristics of Chinese social structure—a differential pattern formed by kinship or blood relationship. Because the differential pattern is not a dichotomous relationship, it is a water ripple-like circle relationship. It is this kind of water ripple that determines the heart-to-heart mode of thinking. It is also this inward and outward heart-to-heart way of communication, evaluation, and aesthetics that make the Chinese people have such a way of behavior depending on family affection and trusting love, thus forming a differential pattern in the Chinese circle society. Fei Xiaotong further pointed out:

The subjectivity of "mind" and its morality include the spurs and constraints of the "man" as the cognitive subject. This concept is different from the concepts of "value neutrality" and "objectivity" that are emphasized by many academic studies today, which are super-existing, avoiding disputes, but frankly admitting the inevitability of "value judgment"; It does not attempt to evade or cover up a value preference and moral responsibility, but in turn, directly "ethicalizes" the relationship between "I" and the world, and rationally interprets the exploration of the world itself as a "self-cultivation" in order to achieve the process of "governing and benefiting the

²⁹Fei Xiaotong. *On the Enlargement of Traditional Boundary of Sociology*. *China Sociology Yearbook (1999–2002)*, p. 14.

people” (rather than the “observation” in a “purely objective” and “neutral” manner like the observer). In this order from the “mind” through the “cultivation, harmony, governance, peace”, it is promoted from the inside to the outside to construct a picture of the world in everyone’s mind.³⁰

If the Chinese people’s mode of thinking, value evaluation, and emotional experience are the same as the social structure they face, which are both from the inside to the outside, the sociological research with it as the research object should not simply follow the research method of Western empirical sociology, but should have a corresponding research method. “Today’s sociology should explore the ‘mind’ that the ancients have been talking about for thousands of years. What is it on earth? It cannot be simply translated into any concepts and categories of modern ideology such as ‘thought’ and ‘intelligence’.... Chinese sociology has not yet specifically mentioned this ‘mind’, but it is certainly not acceptable to study the society in the context of Chinese culture, without mentioning this ‘mind’.”³¹ To talk about this ‘mind’, it means that Chinese sociology faces research objects different from Western sociology, and therefore, it is inevitable to introduce new research methods. In Fei Xiaotong’s view, although the scientific research method established by empirical sociology has developed sufficiently, it can be used as a basic research method for sociological research. “But on the other hand, when we are exploring some new topics and fields, we also need to re-explore methodologies and methods. When using sociology to study concepts such as ‘I’ and ‘mind’, can the original research method with positivistic, hypothetical-testing model work? How does it work? This requires some experimentation and exploration, and it may also need to learn some new modes of thinking and research. In the process of introducing new research methods, we should face the wisdom in all kinds of civilizations, such as Indian civilization, Islamic civilization, Hebrew civilization, Orthodox civilization, Native American civilization, African civilization, and so on, with an open mind. All contain the high wisdom accumulated by human beings for a long time, which deserves our in-depth study, reference, and absorption.”³²

These civilizations mentioned by Fei Xiaotong are not modern civilizations, but pre-modern or ancient civilizations. Fei Xiaotong believed that the problems in these pre-modern civilizations are different from those in modern civilization, and the difference lies not only in the degree of social development, but also in the traditions of these civilizations that have been learned through a long history. These include different customs and rituals, moral ethics, and different social structures, psychological structures, behavioral patterns, and modes of thinking. These social phenomena cannot be studied solely by positivistic sociological methods based on modern Western society, but by the special research methods formed by such phenomena such

³⁰Fei Xiaotong. *On the Enlargement of Traditional Boundary of Sociology*. *China Sociology Yearbook (1999–2002)*, p. 15.

³¹Fei Xiaotong. *On the Enlargement of Traditional Boundary of Sociology*. *China Sociology Yearbook (1999–2002)*, p. 14.

³²Fei Xiaotong (2003 (3)). *On the Enlargement of Traditional Boundary of Sociology*. *Journal of Peking University, philosophy and Social Sciences*).

as “mind”, “God”, “nature”, “I”, etc., or understanding and interpretation methods such as “intention”, “feeling”, “understanding”, and “heart-to-heart”.³³ These are the intrinsic psychological methods that were explicitly excluded by Durkheim. Durkheim believed that the normative sociological research method should be a physical approach to externality.

Some methodological principles of the study and interpretation of the “mind”, “God”, “Nature”, “I”, and other phenomena elaborated by the Neo-Confucianism of the Song and Ming Dynasties were highly valued by Fei Xiaotong. He believed that, “Neo-Confucianism can be called the collection of quintessence and epitome of Chinese culture. It is actually an indispensable key to explore the spirit, psychology and behavior of Chinese people. ‘The content of Neo-Confucianism, to put it bluntly, is to talk directly about how to interact with ‘man’, how to treat ‘man’, how to govern ‘man’, and how to shape ‘man’, which actually directly determine the so-called ‘mechanism’ and ‘structure’ in sociology today, namely social operating mechanism and social structure. If we can re-examine the achievements of these predecessors at a new level, it will provide us with many new inspirations in today’s exploration and will be very helpful in opening up the exploration field of Chinese sociology.’”³⁴

These profound and magnificent arguments made by Fei Xiaotong are really thought-provoking. Fei Xiaotong broke through the boundaries of positivistic sociology that have long been regarded as insurmountable by the sociological community, not only extending the vision of sociology to a broader future, but also turning the eyes of sociology back to the distant history that was forgotten by modern sociology. It is particularly important that Fei Xiaotong emphasized the treatment of social phenomena in pre-modern civilizations, and should use some methodological principles contained in pre-modern civilizations to carry out more effective research. Here is a question: Should we admit that there is pre-modern sociology?

According to Fei Xiaotong’s point of view, some pre-modern academic thoughts such as Neo-Confucianism in the Song and Ming Dynasties contain methodological principles for effectively studying the operating mechanism and social structure of ancient society, and the methodological principles were actually used in the Neo-Confucianism to conduct fruitful research on the pre-modern society or ancient society, leaving a precious academic legacy. According to this, why can’t it be clear that some studies like the Neo-Confucianism of Song and Ming Dynasties are also a sociological study? Or further, can we propose the concept of “pre-modern sociology”? If the concept of modern sociology is adhered to, or only the positivistic sociology based on modernity, but other form of sociology, is recognized, the concept of “pre-modern sociology” must be unacceptable or even absurd; If you dare to break through the traditional boundaries of sociology and dare to recognize the diversity of sociological forms, then not only the concept of post-modern sociology can be accepted, but also the concept of pre-modern sociology can be recognized.

³³Fei Xiaotong (2003 (3)). *On the Enlargement of Traditional Boundary of Sociology*. *Journal of Peking University* (Philosophy and Social Sciences).

³⁴Fei Xiaotong (2003 (3)). *On the Enlargement of Traditional Boundary of Sociology*. *Journal of Peking University* (Philosophy and Social Sciences).

The concept is the knot of thought, and the clarity of a new sociological concept means that many new sociological issues and sociological ideas will be assembled. Post-modern sociology has opened up a colorful picture of modernity for us. Pre-modern sociology will lead us back to the profound historical realm before modernity. For the time being, we will not talk about the ancient civilizations of other nations. As far as the ancient civilizations of the Chinese nation are concerned, not only the Neo-Confucianism of the Song and Ming Dynasties have rich research on the unique ways of Chinese society, but also the scholars of the late Qing Dynasty, the Gongyang studies of the Han Dynasty, and the Confucianism of the pre-Qin Dynasty, Mohism, etc., have rich ideological theories and methodological principles for in-depth study of Chinese society. Philosophy, literature and historiography, economics, political science, and law all trace their own history back to ancient times. Why can the history of sociology only talk about from modern times?

History is the source of thought. If a discipline has no history or a short history, it means that the discipline is ideologically poor. Breaking through the limitations of modernity in sociology and expanding the broader sociological vision in the future and the past dimensions, sociology will stand in the forest of disciplines with richer ideas and more vigorous vitality. This is especially true for Chinese sociology. Only by examining Chinese sociology in the cultural traditions of thousands of years can we discover the richness of Chinese sociology and clarify its particularity.

Postscript

In 2002, the author applied for the "10th Five-Year Plan" project of Humanities and Social Sciences Research of the Ministry of Education—the introduction and reconstruction of Western sociology by Chinese sociology. The original intention to declare this project is: To reveal the actual influence of Western sociology on the formation and development of Chinese sociology, and summarize the ideological logic of the formation and evolution of Chinese sociology. While engaging in the teaching and research of Western sociological theory, the author also examined some of the works of Chinese sociologists such as Yan Fu, Kang Youwei, Liang Qichao, Pan Guangdan, Sun Wen, Wu Jingchao and Liang Shu. Through the comparative study of Chinese and Western sociological thoughts and theories, the author deeply feels that the formation and development of Chinese sociology is not only the introduction and dissemination of Western sociology in China, but more importantly, the Chinese sociologists' inheritance of Chinese academic tradition and creative thinking on Chinese issues. The ideological theory in the history of Chinese sociology that allows future generations to benefit from it is not a transplant of Western scholarship, but an academic creation based on the reality of the country, inheriting the academic traditions of the Chinese nation, and absorbing the essence of Western scholarship.

The duality of Chinese sociology initiated by Yan Fu and Kang Youwei is the key part of this book. In the author's view, it is of great significance to recognize that Chinese sociology has the dual origin of introducing Western sociology and inheriting the academic traditions of the Chinese nation. Because from this basic judgment, we can not only clearly understand the rich influence of various Western sociological schools or sociological traditions on Chinese sociology, but also affirm the basic position of Chinese academic tradition in the formation and development of Chinese sociology, especially that it is of great significance to acknowledge the new text Confucianism of the late Qing dynasty as the direct source of thought in the beginning of Chinese sociology. Moreover, to clarify the dual origin of Chinese sociology is not only the historical study of Chinese sociology, but more importantly, is to use history as a guide to further guide the healthy development of contemporary Chinese sociology.

Expanding the new realm of Chinese sociology is an interpretation of the author's extension of the traditional sociological boundaries advocated by Mr. Fei Xiaotong in his later years. In my opinion, Mr. Fei Xiaotong should not only carry out objective scientific observations on sociology, but also conduct subjective evaluation of values and study spiritual world, subjective psychology, cultural heritage, communication, Neo-Confucianism of the Song and Ming Dynasties and other expositions, which are his far-sighted and profound theoretical ideas based on the experience of more than 70 years of sociological research. These views will guide Chinese sociology to seek more brilliant development in the 21st century. These claims put forward by Mr. Fei Xiaotong are also those neglected by Western positivistic sociology for a long term. Therefore, if Chinese sociology inherits Mr. Fei Xiaotong's will, it will definitely add a new chapter to the world sociology.

In order to clearly reveal the dual origin of Chinese sociology and its further development in the evolution of Chinese sociology, and to clarify the ideological basis of expanding the traditional boundaries of sociology in the history of Chinese sociology, this book also reviews the main academic views of Yan Fu, Kang Youwei, Liang Qichao, Liang Shuming, etc. The author also planned to make some comments on the sociological thoughts of Pan Guangdan, Sun Benwen, Wu Jingchao, Chen Xujing, Li Dazhao, Qu Qiubai, etc., trying to make a more specific explanation of the plural richness of the formation and evolution of Chinese sociology; however, limited to time and space, this plan cannot be achieved in this book, but left to the future.

This book is a work based on literature research. It not only faces many difficulties in accessing these documents, but also has much review and verification work to be done after the formation of the manuscript. Ms. Pan Yu from China Renmin University Press has done a lot of work for publishing this book. She even worked continuously during the festival. In correcting the mistakes, standardizing the texts, etc., Ms. Pan Yu is meticulous and realistic, and her meticulous work style has really moved the author. Here, thanks are given to her. Despite all the efforts we have made, not all things are covered in this book. We really appreciate your advice.

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May 16, 2007

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