

Original Article

The Relationship of Marxism and Confucianism In Ideological Education

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Abstract - This paper makes an investigation on the idea of Confucius Marxism of Some scholars abroad. Supported by the analysis of dialectics method and critical facts in the theory of Chinese Marxism, We can see their idea of Confucian Marxism and "Confucian social" was proposed to serve as an alternative or parallel form of the "Protestant Social" to leap the pronouncements on global justice. The arguments based on the idea were scant evidence indeed. Neither Confucianism nor Marxism has he made a thorough investigation. The concept of Confucian Marxism is absent of sufficient reasons to be valid.

Keywords — Marxism Confucianism cultivation ideology Confucian social

I. INTRODUCTION

Confucianism had been an official ideology of traditional China for nearly 2000 years, which advocated a state guided by highly ethical scholar-bureaucrats and a society ruled by morality and strongly emphasized hierarchical relationships. With the demise of the Qing Dynasty, Confucianism lost its status, , but nobody can deny the far-reaching influence of Confucianism on Chinese society. Confucian values still inform the Chinese's ways of life in modern times, just like Christianity in western society. Some scholars abroad think there is a trend of the revival of Confucianism in contemporary China. Confucian elements have been adopted into the core political ideas of the Chinese Communist Party, such as "harmonious society", "socialist advanced culture".Confucian classics are necessary for the curriculum of primary school and secondary school. Many social events and activities with regard to Confucianism have been organized or financially supported by the government. There has been an explosion of academic conferences and books on Confucianism in China etc. Someone regards Confucianism as an alternative ideological tool of the Chinese government to reveal the declining influence of Marxism.^[1] Someone proposed the idea of Confucius Marxism which represents a typical point of view about Confucianism and Marxism.^[2]It is necessary to investigate

the idea of Confucius's Marxism to clarify the relationship between Confucianism and Marxism.

II. The Main Points of Theory of Confucian Marxism

In some scholars' opinion, since Soviet Marxism was translated into China, a Confucian turn within Chinese Marxism took place in the late 1930s proposed by Mao Zedong and Liu Shaoqi. They identified the Communist party as the "community of virtuosos". The early form of Confucian Marxism was a continuation of the problem inherent in the Confucian tradition. Chen calls it a "religious shift".^[3] Mao Zedong emphasized that the bourgeoisie-democratic revolution in China is no longer of the general old type, but of the special new type that was developing and in all other colonial and semi-colonial countries; he called it the new-democratic revolution. As he said, "A new-democratic revolution is a revolution of the broad masses of the people led by the proletariat and directed against imperialism and feudalism; it is a revolution of the united front of several revolutionary classes."^[4] The revolutionary classes included peasants, petty bourgeoisie, and other intermediate groups. The national conditions of China determined that peasants were the majority of the revolutionary class. While in Chinese history, the peasant class has never been political subjects to strive for their interests. Thus the success of the new-democratic revolution depended on the attainment of a hegemonic unity organized by the leadership of the proletarian party. The question of how to secure the political and social autonomy of the laboring masses became a central concern in Mao's thoughts. He emphasized the necessity of ideological and political education in laboring masses to guide them to abandon old ideas and transform into a proletarian fighter who subordinated his interests to the interests of the nation and the people. As Mao said, "At no time and in no

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circumstances should a Communist place personal interests first, but should instead subordinate his interests to the interests of the nation and the masses of the people. Hence, such things as selfishness and self-interest. Inactiveness and negligence in work corruption, degeneration, and vainglory are merely contemptible: while the spirit of impartiality .of active and hard work of self-denial in the interests of the public and of complete absorption in arduous work. commands respect. ”^[5] As the initiator of Sinification of Marxism, Mao emphasized that a Communist must be a Marxist historicist or nationalist to strive to create Marxism within a Chinese national form. As he said, “Our national history goes back several thousand years and has its characteristics and innumerable treasures. From Confucius to Dr. Sun Yat-sen, We must sum it up critically, and we must constitute ourselves as the heirs of all that is precious in the past.”^[6] He developed a Marxist ideology in which proletarian consciousness was imbued with historic China's ethico-cultural legacy, including Confucian tradition.

In Chen's opinion, Liu Shaoqi's famous work *On the cultivation of a Good Communist* marked a systematic effort to reconstruct Marxism in a Neo-Confucian framework of subjectivity. Liu Shaoqi insisted that to avoid replicating the fate of peasant revolutions in Chinese history, Marxist revolutionaries must reappropriate the method and forms of cultivation of various religious traditions, particularly those of the Confucian tradition.^[7] In Liu's work, many quotations from Confucian classics are quoted, as he said in his book: “In ancient China, there were many cultivation methods. There was Zengzi who said: ‘I reflect on myself three times a day.’ *The Book of Odes* has it that one should cultivate oneself ‘as lapidary cuts and files. carves and polishes.’^[8] Others as Confucius' famous saying, “I had aspirations to learn at the age of fifteen, I was independent at thirty, I was intelligent at forty, I began to know the Tao of nature at fifty, I knew to be obedient at sixty, I could do everything to the will of the heart without violating the rules.” Mencius' dictum “Everyone can be Yao and Shun [Saints in the eyes of Confucianism].” etc. Chen asserted that the fundamental impact of the Confucian turn on the later developments of the Chinese revolution could hardly be exaggerated. It had the effect of transforming a political party into a community of virtuosos and played a central role in building up an organic relationship between the party and the mass. Indeed, this innovative reconstruction of the theory and practice of revolutionary hegemony that allowed Chinese Communist to accomplish the revolution.^[9]

III. Critics of the Idea of Confucian Marxism

Professor Chen's concept of Confucius's Marxism shows his attempt to establish a constructive encounter between Confucianism and Marxism, too rarely seated at the same table. Yet, some defects lead to the unreliability of his views. Firstly is the absence of evidence, as some scholars criticized, “While I respect this approach, the entire absence

of any evidence for the more controversial claims on which the central argument that comes very late in the book is built somewhat reduces the credibility of the rest.No recent data is presented to support his claim, which is built on brief references to research conducted in the 1960s and '70s alone.”^[10]The quotation of Liu Shaoqi's views was the main basis for the legitimacy of Confucian Marxism, yet some quotations were not accurate. For example, he quoted the following paragraph in the English edition of *On the cultivation of a Good Communist* to prove that Liu Shaoqi made a “religious shift” to propose Confucian Marxism, “The Chinese scholars of the Confucian school had a number of methods for the cultivation of their body and mind. Every religion has various methods and forms of cultivation of its own..... All this shows that in achieving one's progress, one must make serious and energetic efforts to carry on self-cultivation and study.”^[11]Yet, the main content of quotation is absent in this book's Chinese edition. And Chen quoted many Confucian dictums to show Liu Shaoqi's preference for Confucianism, but he didn't quote Liu's critics of Confucianism based on Historical Materialism. All these affected the objectivity of his exposition.

What's more, the main defect lies in the framework in which he combined his insights from Marxism and Confucianism. It is a framework of western political philosophy including many elements such as Hegel's theory of civil society, Weber's theory of protestant social and the spirit of capitalism, Lucac's theory of class consciousness, the theory about the hegemony of Gramsci, Laclau, and Mouffe, Foucault's theory of power, etc. Chen mainly relied on the theory of class consciousness and hegemony of Western Marxists to interpret the distinctive feature of the Chinese revolution and Chinese Marxism. He agreed with Laclau and Mouffe's interpretation of Gramsci that a class does not take State power; it *becomes* State. Thus two principles of the social order — the unicity of the unifying principle and its necessary class character — are not the contingent result of hegemonic struggle but the necessary structural framework within which every struggle occurs. As Laclau and Mouffe said: “Class hegemony is not a wholly practical result of struggle, but has an ultimate ontological foundation. The economic base may not assure the ultimate victory of the working class since this depends upon its capacity for hegemonic leadership. However, a failure in the hegemony of the working class can only be followed by the reconstitution of bourgeois hegemony so that, in the end, political struggle is still a zero-sum game among classes. This is the inner essentialist core that continues to be present in Gramsci's thought, limiting the deconstructive logic of hegemony.”^[12]

The framework of the theory of hegemony is in contrast to the basic principle of Historical Materialism that productive forces and economic foundation are decisive factors in the development of society which is persisted in Mao Zedong and Liu Shaoqi's theory, although they also admitted the reaction of the relations of production and superstructure as

Laclau and Mouffe said: "Antagonisms are not objective relations, but relations which reveal the limits of all objectivity. Society is constituted around these limits, and they are antagonistic limits. And the notion of antagonistic limit has to be conceived literally — that is to say, there is no 'cunning of reason' which would realize itself through antagonistic relations. Nor is there any super game that would submit antagonisms to its system of rules. This is why we conceive the political not as a superstructure but as having the status of an ontology of the social." [13] They reversed the relationship between economic base and politics. Chen's deficiency of comprehensive understanding of Marxism and Maoism led him to interpret Chinese Marxist views in the context of western political philosophy. In Chen's works, the idea of Confucian Marxism and "Confucian social" was proposed to serve as an alternative or parallel form of the "Protestant social" in his leap to pronouncements on global justice; his arguments based on very scant evidence indeed, neither Confucianism nor Marxism has he made a thorough investigation on.

The idea of Confucian Marxism also isn't in line with Chinese political reality. Confucianism never regained its dominance in the fields of ideology after the demise of the Qing Dynasty. In the 1920s, a famous debate in China called Ke Xuan Lunzhan--the debate between science and metaphysics. At that time, conservatives, liberalists, and Marxists showed their views on the traditional culture represented by Confucianism. How to treat traditional culture correctly has become a major issue of Chinese Marxism. The approach of "picking up the essence and discarding the dross" proposed by Mao Zedong was widely accepted and became one of the basic rules in constructing the ideology of Chinese Marxism. Now, Most of the discussions about Confucianism are within the framework of Chinese socialist culture. However, some viewpoints of political Confucianism like Jiang Qing, who advocated establishing Confucianism as the state religion and the foundation of state ideology. Its influence is mainly confined to some young intellectuals and lacks widespread social influence like other religions such as Buddhism. It is impossible to change the

nature of Chinese Marxism to make a so-called Confucian Marxism.

The concept of Confucian Marxism is absent of sufficient reasons to be valid. Although Chen asserted that the fundamental impact of Confucianism turns on the later developments of the Chinese revolution can hardly be exaggerated, he just exaggerated it.

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