

The Development, Evolution and Characteristics of Evolutionism in China in the Early 20th Century

Qinghai Fu¹, Fu Yao²

¹School of Marxism, Shanghai Business School, Shanghai 200128, China

²School of Humanities, Donghua University, Shanghai 200051, China

Abstract: *Since modern times, the feudal autocratic Qing government and the advanced western capitalist countries have been defeated many times in the battle, and the reflection on the defeat provides the background for the spread of evolution. Under the birth of the theory of evolution, the Chinese national bourgeoisie actively explored the road of China's independence and prosperity. Kang Youwei, Liang Qichao and Yan Fu spread the theory of evolution to provide public opinion support for the Reform. After the failure of the Hundred Days' Reform, more reformers were forced to join the camp of bourgeois revolutionaries. A group of bourgeois revolutionaries, such as Sun Yat-sen and Zhang Taiyan, vigorously propagated the revolutionary evolution theory, and the emergence of modern nationalism, especially in the debate on evolution between revolutionaries and reformists, highlighted the characteristics of revolutionary evolution. The development of evolutionism in China at the end of Qing Dynasty and the beginning of Republic was not only influenced by western science and culture, but also restricted by Chinese traditional culture. The spread and development of the theory of evolution not only promoted the development of China's Enlightenment movement, but also led to the vigorous revolution of 1911 in the early 20th century.*

Keywords: 20th Century; Thoughts of Evolution; The Bourgeoisie; Revolutionaries; Evolution.

1. INTRODUCTION

In the 1840s, China, once impregnable, was vulnerable to British and French ships and guns. Struggling in humiliation and suffering, advanced modern intellectuals struggled to find a way to become a powerful country, and various thoughts of thought surged forward and backward, stirring and emerging endlessly. In these spray-splashing currents of thought, all are closely related to evolution. "Philosophy, ethics, education, social organization, religious spirit, and political facilities are not unaffected by it"[1], evolution, as a social trend of thought introduced from the West, has been warmly welcomed in China. From the Hundred Days' Reform to the May Fourth Movement, it became the mainstream trend of thought in China at that time. As the famous scholar Chen Xulu once pointed out, "In the decades before the May Fourth Movement, there were two theories that had the greatest impact on Chinese thought. One is the theory of evolution, the other is the theory of civil contract. The former adapted the theory of survival competition to the need of saving the nation and opposing imperialism, while the latter adapted the concept of innate human rights to the need of equality and opposing feudal despotism[2]." It also influenced and gave birth to the Revolution of 1911 in China. This paper tries to briefly analyze the evolution, characteristics and influence of evolution on China in the early 20th century.

2. THE HISTORICAL BACKGROUND OF THE EVOLUTION OF CHINA'S EVOLUTIONARY THOUGHTS IN THE EARLY 20TH CENTURY

During the drastic transformation of modern China, the dominant Confucian classics were also severely impacted, especially after the defeat of the Sino-Japanese War. The impact and fusion of western learning and middle school provided an environment for the spread of modern evolution. The spread of the theory of evolution prompted advanced modern intellectuals to seriously consider the traditional Chinese value standards and the redefinition of the nation, in order to provide a theoretical basis for the modern revolution. The anti-Manchu consciousness of modern Chinese national revolution has been widely spread under the catalysis of evolution.

2.1 Background of Evolution in the Early 20th Century.

The collision and impact of the two value standards, the theory of evolution has become the sword of modern intellectuals seeking for a powerful country. Looking back on China from the 1840s to the end of the 20th century,

the history is written like this: In the 1840s and 1850s, the Qing government of China was threatened by the ships and guns of Britain and France in the West, and there were peasant rebels with swords and spears, and the regime was on the verge of collapse; From the 1860s to the 1880s, with the defeat of the Taiping Heavenly Kingdom and the rise of the Westernization Movement, the Qing government of China seemed to show the hope of rebuilding the former prosperity. "Tongzhi rejuvenation" became a buzzword at that time, and people looked forward to hope with confidence. However, the failure of the Sino-Japanese War in the mid-1890s showed that people's hope of "Tongzhi rejuvenation" was only an illusion. Disillusionment has become a new awakening, history has denied the revival of old things, which means that history has denied the rationality of the existence of old things. At the same time, with the deepening of the colonial degree of the Qing government, the crisis was everywhere, and the humiliating diplomacy not only failed to make the boss China survive, but was divided into pieces. In particular, the defeat of the Sino-Japanese War made the Chinese people more and more frightened, and how could Japan, a small land, defeat China, advanced intellectuals agonized over the road of China's gradual decline.

After the opening of new routes, Western European countries quickly extended their influence to all parts of the world. Western capitalist countries, based on the "strong and weak interests", taught people to be strong and the country to be strong. In order to dump goods, Western countries opened China's door by force, and China's traditional thinking mode was strongly impacted. The world of the nineteenth century was a world of the strong. There was no way to defend China's defeat, and the torment of pain and helplessness prompted some advanced Chinese people to think and seek the road to a strong country. From Lin Zexu and Wei Yuan to see the world with their eyes open, to the Westernization movement, they learned some techniques, But this can only strengthen one part of the body, not the whole body. At the end of the 19th century, the national bourgeoisie gradually stepped on the stage of history, and the two wings of the bourgeoisie learned from the western political experience from different angles and sought the real skills of strength. With the failure of the reformers' top-down reform, the progressive evolutionary theory of reform is out of date. The revolutionaries broke away from the vision of the reformists and put forward the revolutionary evolutionary theory centered on "anti-Manchu" and "sudden driving".

The revolution of 1911 was aimed at overthrowing the Qing government and had a strong anti-Manchu color. Anti-Manchu is the most important ideological weapon for bourgeois revolutionaries to propagate and mobilize the masses, But the propaganda of "anti-Manchu" is groundless at that time, because the Qing government was founded at the beginning of the seventeenth century, and more than two hundred years have passed by this time. The harsh racial repression imposed by the Manchurian aristocracy in the early years of the Qing government has been largely forgotten after several generations of quiet life. Most Han Chinese are no longer committed to distant, long-gone family feuds, and have grown accustomed to the Qing government rule. Moreover, with China's vast territory and most peasants living in remote rural areas, the task of changing the dynasty and the controversy over who should be the monarch were meaningless to the peasants who were struggling to feed themselves and die, and were later called "Ah Dou" by politicians. From this level of understanding, for most Chinese people, anti-Manchu has no consciousness or reason. Secondly, the Qing government's eight flags system stipulated that Manchu and Han were separated, the flag holders had their own independent living space, and those who were outside officials had to return to the flag after their old age, and many Han people might never see any Manchu people in their lives. The Qing government did not allow flag bearers to engage in business and other activities, and generally the flag per capita depended on the government's supply. In the late Qing Dynasty, with the increase in the number of flag bearers, and the government's financial austerity, a large number of flag bearers lived in poverty. The Manchurians, who also struggled to meet the subsistence line, were at the bottom of society, as were the Han peasants. Third, open the history of the Qing Dynasty, it is not difficult to see that under the hardships of internal troubles and foreign attacks, the Qing rulers also endured Confucian constraints and prudently handled everything. In contrast to the Han rulers of the Ming Dynasty, the Qing rulers are not necessarily indifferent to the government, indulgent people, they are not lack of better than the Han monarch.

2.2 Evolution and Anti-Manchu Consciousness Interwoven Development.

Why did the groundless anti-Manchu consciousness spread so quickly in the early 20th century? The first major reason was the change of anti-Manchu essence, the second was the emergence of modern nationalism under the catalysis of evolution. The political situation and tasks in China in the 20th century provided the ground for the development of evolution, and the spread of evolution promoted the growing anti-Manchu consciousness.

The change of essence of anti-Manchu. As a national movement, the anti-Manchu also has different class attributes and struggle contents in different historical periods. From the entry of the Qing army to the end of the 18th century to the beginning of the 19th century, the anti-Manchu struggle was caused by the hatred of the Han nationality and

other ethnic groups against the national oppression and discrimination of the Manchu Qing regime. The anti-Manchu struggle was intertwined with the landlord class contradictions of the Manchu and Han nationality, and was subordinate to the internal struggles of the landlord class, manifested as the contradiction between the Manchu and Han nationality and other several ethnic groups. From the beginning of the 19th century to the beginning of the 20th century, the contradiction between the peasants and the landlord class intensified, the peasant revolution one after another, the Manchu and Han landlord class united to suppress the peasant uprising, and anti-Manchu became the banner of the peasant movement, at that time, the Manchu and Han landlord class both united and struggled. For example, in the Taiping Heavenly Kingdom Movement, the anti-Manchu color has faded, the flood raised the issue, and the object of attack did not have the boundary of Manchu and Han. "In turn, the overwhelming majority of those who resisted and destroyed the Taiping Heavenly Kingdom were Han Chinese, which shows that the racial view was very weak at that time[3]." The anti-Manchu in this period intermingled with the class contradiction between the peasants and the landlord class of Manchu and Han, and also had the national contradiction between Manchu and Han, so the anti-Manchu in the revolution of 1911 had a dual nature.

2.3 The Impact of Evolution on Twentieth-Century China

China after the mid-18th century, the urgent national crisis is bound to arouse the consciousness of national consciousness and trigger the exaltation of national emotions. The evolution theory has sounded the horn of modern nationalism.

First, evolution makes revolutionary nationalism wash away the conservatism of traditional nationalism. Traditional nationalism has always linked the preservation of ancestral law with the opposition to the transformation of the summer, while revolutionary nationalism emphasizes that the only way to national salvation is revolution. According to the principle of survival of the fittest, the nation can survive only if it actively conforms to the objective process of evolution and consciously rises up to revolution, "there is no other revolutionary disease and malpractice, that is, the so-called revolution. Revolution is the removal of evolutionists, and therefore revolution is only the pursuit of progress[4]." It is from this that we affirm that revolution is the essence of the transitional era of struggle for survival and struggle for death. It can be said that without evolution, the view that nationalism with revolution as its means of realization is the only way for the Chinese nation to become strong cannot be deeply rooted in the hearts of the people.

Second, evolution makes revolutionary nationalism abandon the feudalism of traditional nationalism. In the debate of Yixia, "resist Yi" and "respect the king" are mentioned simultaneously, so traditional nationalism has the feudal color of loyalty to the nation and loyalty to the monarch. The change of revolutionary nationalism used to revitalize the nation is to abolish the feudal monarchy in politics, and one of the reasons they attacked the feudal monarchy. It is because it is the root cause of the weakness of the Chinese nation. Because the monarch of the Qing Dynasty was Manchu, revolutionary nationalism came up with the slogan "anti-Manchu". Before and after the Revolution of 1911, Chinese modern nationalism juxtated nationalism with civil rights, claiming that if China had not gone through nationalism, it would be absolutely impossible for it to stand in the world of competition between good and bad, and that nationalism was incompatible with autocratic government. What guides revolutionary nationalism to establish this belief is the law of historical evolution elucidated by evolutionary theory, and human society is bound to evolve from feudal autocracy to bourgeois democracy.

3. THE DEVELOPMENT AND CONTENT OF CHINESE REVOLUTIONARY EVOLUTIONISM IN THE EARLY 20TH CENTURY

After the failure of the Hundred Days' Reform, the reformists were divided, and more people realized that peaceful and gradual reform could not save the situation in China, and then joined the camp of bourgeois revolutionaries. The bourgeois revolutionary theory of evolution, that is, the revolutionary sudden change to promote social development, became the second upsurge of the development of modern Chinese theory of evolution, which was represented by Sun Yat-sen and Zhang Taiyan. The evolution thought of the revolutionary school has developed more than that of the reformist school, which is mainly manifested in the view of social history.

3.1 Sun Yat-Sen's Revolutionary Evolutionary Theory

Sun Yat-sen was the forerunner of the great democratic revolution in China, he was the representative of the revolutionary theory of evolution. In order to overthrow the autocratic monarchy of Qing Dynasty and establish the bourgeois democratic and republican regime, Dr. Sun Yat-sen sought the truth of saving the country and the people

from the West. He combined the mechanical materialism and evolution of the West with the naive materialism of ancient China and put forward his own theory of evolution, which mainly has three aspects, the evolutionary view of the universe, the evolutionary view of knowledge and action, and the evolutionary view of history.

3.1.1 Evolutionary Cosmology

Sun Yat-sen believed that the formation and development of the whole universe is the process of material evolution, and the universe, the earth, and human beings are formed in the process of continuous movement and evolution of a material Taichi or Yitai. "At the beginning of the Yuan dynasty, electrons were born from TaiChi movement, and electrons condensed into elements and elements combined into matter, and matter condensed into the earth, the first period of the evolution of this world. After the formation of the earth, from the beginning of life to the formation of man, is the second phase of evolution. Species have evolved from the subtle, from the simple to the complex, from the principle of natural selection, to several victories and defeats, survival and elimination, metabolism, millions of years, and human beings have become. When man was born, he was no more than a beast, and after many thousands of years of evolution, he began to develop into human nature, and the evolution of man, therefore, has its origin, and the principle of evolution of this period is different from that of species, which is based on competition, and of human beings on mutual assistance[5]."

3.1.2 Evolutionary View of Knowing and Doing

In epistemology, Sun Yat-sen put forward the view of knowing and doing that knowing is difficult and doing is easy. He believed that action comes before knowledge, facts come before speech, and simply expressed the materialist view of cognition. Holding that objective existence was constantly evolving, knowledge should also be constantly changing, he said the evolution of the group of ladies, measured by time, was divided into three periods, the period when we do not know, the period when we do and then know, and the period when we know and then act. Sun Yat-sen believed in the process of continuous evolution of human knowledge. Action is the basis of knowledge, because people continue to act, knowledge continues to evolve, thus promoting the evolutionary development of history.

3.1.3 Historical View of Evolution

Sun Yat-sen refuted the reformists' peaceful gradualism against revolution with the historical view of revolutionary evolution. He believed that the universe was from "the period of material evolution" to "the period of species evolution" and then to "the period of human evolution". And human evolution is divided into four periods: "the prehistoric age", "the theocratic age", "the monarchical age". He also believes that China in the 20th century has reached the "civil rights era", "in terms of historical evolution, civil rights are not born, but are created by the trend of The Times." The trend of this world trend is bound to come, independent of the will of any individual.

Sun Yat-sen believed that the evolution of history was not "gradual" as the reformers said, but a leap forward. He opposed the fallacy advocated by the reformists that they could only reform but not revolution. He believed that the speed of development of history is getting faster and faster, the future of mankind is getting brighter and brighter, and the evolution of civilization is always developing from low to high. Therefore, we must oppose crawling behind others. Thus effectively refuted the act of restoring the monarchy. He believed that the Qing Dynasty was no longer in line with the trend of world development, and that if China wanted to advance, it must "conform to the trend of the world and meet the needs of the people", overthrow the feudal rule of the Qing Dynasty, carry out a "republican revolution" and establish a bourgeois republic.

3.2 Zhang Taiyan's Theory of Evolution

Zhang Taiyan was a revolutionist and thinker of modern bourgeois democracy in China. After the Sino-Japanese War, he began to study the philosophy and sociology of the Japanese and Western bourgeoisie. Later, he participated in the reform movement initiated by Kang Youwei and Liang Qichao. The signing of the Xinju Treaty and the modern national crisis prompted him to embark on the revolutionary road against the Qing Dynasty. Zhang Taiyan's theory of evolution, deeply influenced by the western bourgeoisie, is mainly reflected in his book *Kui Shu*.

Zhang Taiyan's view of nature is based on evolution and variation of species, mechanical materialism and development and change. He tried to use the theory of evolution to explain the development process of the world

from the inorganic to the organic, from the simplest living matter to man, from barbarism to civilized society. Zhang Taiyan believed that when species evolved into humans, they needed to continue to evolve. And use it or lose it. It was believed that because organisms used certain organs frequently, these organs were constantly improved, and others were gradually degraded. And concluded that human intelligence should also be used regularly, otherwise it will also deteriorate. Intelligence can only evolve if people use it regularly. And to awaken the people, pay attention to the national crisis at that time[6].

The thought of revolutionary evolution played an important role in opposing the peaceful gradualism of the reformists and laid the ideological foundation for the victory of the Xinhai Revolution. But the revolutionary theory of evolution also has obvious limitations. Although he advocated violent struggle, he did not have the concept of class struggle. They emphasized that people can exert their subjective initiative and choose the truth of revolution, but they also over-exaggerated the subjective initiative of people, ignored the objective law of social and historical development, and believed that the evolution of human society was transferred by human will, and people could skip a certain stage of development at will. This view of evolutionary history is fundamentally idealistic, but the revolutionaries include the concept of revolutionary mutation in social historical evolution, which is a major development of modern Chinese evolutionary thought.

4. CHARACTERISTICS OF CHINESE REVOLUTIONARY EVOLUTIONARY THOUGHT IN THE EARLY 20TH CENTURY

Reformists and revolutionaries are the two wings of the Chinese bourgeoisie, and their propaganda of evolution serves their political propositions. The bourgeois reformists led by Kang Youwei and Liang Qichao advocated top-down reform and emphasized gradual and orderly progress. The bourgeois revolutionaries led by Sun Yat-sen and Zhang Taiyan advocated bottom-up revolution. Therefore, the sharp contrast between the two shows the characteristics of revolutionary evolution:

4.1 Unification of Evolution and Revolution

The Chinese bourgeois revolutionaries advocate that "revolutionaries are the axioms of heaven" [7] and believe that human society constantly moves forward is the basic viewpoint of evolution in modern China. There is no difference between reformists and revolutionaries. Reformists, however, believe that evolution in China must evolve gradually from absolute monarchy to constitutional monarchy to democratic republic. The revolutionaries emphasized that the evolution of Chinese society could transcend the constitutional monarchy and directly achieve a democratic republic.

Revolutionaries pointed out that revolution was an important means of social evolution. In response to the reformist view that revolution would bring destruction and cause social degradation, the revolutionaries believed that the revolution did not abolish the old, but was new, "revolutionaries do not carry the old goals to go, and will carry the new goals[8]." In response to the reformists' view that the wisdom of the people cannot be opened suddenly, the revolutionaries pointed out that the revolution would promote the wisdom and quality of people, the main body of social evolution, to obtain unprecedented improvement. As far as the concrete situation of modern China was concerned, it emphasized that only revolution was the way for China to realize "sudden driving" from behind. Since China has lagged behind the Western capitalist countries, Chinese society cannot be gradual and must accelerate in order to get rid of the backward status, and revolution is the driving force for accelerating progress, and revolution itself is evolutionary.

Reformist evolution led people to believe that society must move forward, while revolutionary evolution led people to believe that society cannot move forward without revolution. The theory of evolution in the early 20th century affirmed the role of revolution in promoting social progress and established the value of revolution. The evolutionism of the revolutionaries not only made ideological preparations for the revolution of 1911, but also made the concept of revolution deeply rooted in people's hearts. However, the revolutionary evolution theory emphasizes the revolution of the social system, but it does not carry out the concept of revolution to all aspects of the ideological field, while the reformist Liang Qichao and other people use the theory of evolution to advocate the revolution in the ideological field, Such as historical revolution, novel revolution, moral revolution and so on. In a sense, this was a complement to the revolutionary theory of evolution. The evolution of both shows the identity of different characters.

4.2 The Ideal of Great Harmony was Linked to the Immediate Realization of Society

Reformists and revolutionaries often used "great harmony" to describe the degree to which human evolution should be achieved. But the reformist theory of evolution assumed that socialism would not be easy to implement immediately in China, Liang Qichao believes that "progress has levels and cannot be achieved overnight", and the urgent task is to "reward capitalists as the first justice", Kang Youwei also said that "the rule of thinking of great harmony is not possible today." Revolutionaries, on the other hand, emphasized the "leap" from capitalism to socialism through a "social revolution."

There are also significant theoretical differences between the two. Both reformist and revolutionary evolutionism believe that competition for survival is appropriate for human society, and that socialism will eventually replace capitalism and cure its two major ills: inequality and selfishness. However, the reformed theory of evolution attributed the two major drawbacks of capitalism to the competition for survival, and thought that human society was following the principle of survival competition and "day by day", "back to happiness", and eventually reached the world of harmony[9].

The revolutionaries pointed out that "unrestrained competition is necessarily related to the separation of the rich and the poor," because "the result of competition is countless poor people, and one party is richer than the competitor, and it is increasingly indiscriminate[10]." Therefore, the implementation of the principle of survival competition in human society is bound to be farther and farther away from the harmonious society. Revolutionaries demanded a leap over capitalism and the immediate adoption of socialism.

4.3 Revolutionary Evolutionary Theory Linked the Abolition of Confucian Classics with the Preservation of the Quintessence of China

The evolutionism of reformists and revolutionaries both had a transformative and integrated relationship with traditional Chinese thought and culture, but the evolutionism of reformists retained the authority of Confucian classics. Kang Youwei's evolutionism appeared in the cloak of Confucian classics, while Yan Fu's "Evolution of Heaven" did not wear the cloak of Confucian classics, but never dared to challenge the authority of Confucian classics. On the contrary, the revolutionaries' theory of evolution first accused Confucianism of stifling school competition and hindering academic evolution, and it was natural to break free from the shackles of Confucian classics. The revolutionary theory of evolution pointed out that although Confucian classics had a certain historical role, they were no longer suitable for the present age. "In a word, although Confucius is good, he cannot match the present time[11]." Therefore, according to the principle of survival of the fittest, the elimination of Confucian classics was inevitable. In the eyes of revolutionaries, it was evolutionist to abolish Confucian classics, and it was evolutionist to preserve the quintessence of China. The revolutionary evolutionism, which linked the breaking of Confucian classics with the preservation of the quintessence of China, has double value for the enlightenment of modern Chinese thought, with both insights and lessons.

The three characteristics of revolutionary evolution not only showed the unique views different from the reformist evolution, but also showed the trajectory of turning to Marxism. There were some similarities and similarities between evolution and later Chinese Marxism. The revolutionary theory of evolution were both the development of the trend of evolution and the prediction that this trend was coming to an end.

5. CONCLUSION

The theory of evolution was one of the most widely influential ideological weapons in modern China. In 1898, Yan Fu translated Huxley's *Evolution and Ethics*. He published his book "Evolution of Heaven", "natural selection, survival of the fittest", which soon became a popular phrase for the eastward spread of Western learning. When the moderate top-down bourgeois reform movement failed in the storm, more reformers realized that the violent overthrow of the old regime and the elimination of the old is the way out for China. Actively involved in the camp of revolutionaries, the modern revolutionary evolutionary thought was widely spread, and provided public opinion preparation for the outbreak of the revolution of 1911.

The rapid acceptance of evolution in modern China has its profound historical causes. When evolution was introduced into China in the second half of the 19th century, the old system, which was undergoing a thousand-year change, needed a new social theory to explain its current situation and give a satisfactory answer. The theory of evolution "natural selection, survival of the fittest" makes people believe that human society is a development from low to high. The theoretical vision of evolution just meets the new needs of China's change map.

In the face of the Western ships, science and technology change rapidly, it was urgent to introduce an idea to shake the "heaven unchanged, moral unchanged" feudal code order, in order to change China's backward status. Especially after the Sino-Japanese War, the great country of China was defeated by the small country of Japan, and China faced the crisis of subjugation and extinction. The Sino-Japanese War became a turning point in modern Chinese culture. The first thing to save the country and preserve the species was to end the corrupt and hopeless current regime. The subversive power of evolution just met the theoretical hunger of the Chinese people.

The thought of evolution was the crystallization of the Chinese advanced intellectuals seeking the truth of national salvation and the collision of Chinese and Western cultures in the 20th century. The bourgeois revolutionaries used the theory of evolution to gather revolutionary forces, establish revolutionary beliefs and provide revolutionary impetus for the revolution of 1911. The wide spread of this trend of thought provided public opinion preparation for the outbreak of the Revolution of 1911. The theory of evolution promoted the development of modern Chinese society, and the social significance of theories such as natural selection, genetic inheritance and variation was accepted by Chinese people with noble aspirations, and later became the theoretical basis for promoting cultural reform and social revolution. At the same time, these social thoughts and social movements aiming at innovation created conditions for the further spread of evolution in China. Among them, the New culture movement was the fruit of "evolution" thought in China. It was anti-traditional at home, Westernized abroad, replacing the old with the new, in order to transform the "national character". At the same time, the theory of evolution promoted by bourgeois revolutionaries also has some limitations. The theory of evolution they promote highlights the revolution of the social system, and regards the revolution as a simple concrete action, but ignores the revolution in the field of thought. They emphasized the leap forward of social evolution, but ignored the preparation of necessary links, and finally led to the premature birth of the Xinhai revolution due to inadequate preparation.

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