

A Discussion on the Necessity of Learning Chinese Political Economy for Contemporary University Students

Haiyu Yan (corresponding author), Zhiming Ma

Hebei University of Engineering, School of Management Engineering and Business, Handan, Hebei, 056000, China

Abstract: [Purpose] To understand the importance of learning political economy for contemporary university students. [Method] This paper adopts literature analysis and interview methods to explore the level of understanding of political economy among contemporary university students, and based on this, summarizes the problems and proposes corrective measures. [Results] This paper finds that: First, Chinese political economy has a low level of popularization in universities. Second, the popularization of political economy among contemporary university students is necessary, and we should enhance the political economy awareness of contemporary university students.

Keywords: Chinese political economy; University students; Enlightenment

1. Introduction

Politics is the matter of governing the people, and politics tends to manage the personnel and the groups or organizations composed of people^[1]. For a country, it means managing the various activities of the people within the country. Economics, for a country, means improving the lives of the people by managing the materials (production, use, disposal, distribution, etc.), and for individuals, it means improving their own lives by managing their own resources. Political economy is the combination of politics and economics. From a national perspective, it is the study of social economy that examines social production, distribution, exchange, and consumption from the perspective of national political ideology. From an individual perspective, it is the study of economics that concerns oneself. Political economy has a series of characteristics. First, it has nationality, that is, political economy has obvious boundaries among countries. Different countries are influenced by factors such as history, cultural environment, etc., and thus produce their own political economy. For example, China has a completely different development environment from the Western capitalism led by the United States that has experienced a complete industrial revolution. Therefore, it is impossible to completely copy the Western economics to govern China. This is not only inconsistent with the interests of the vast majority of proletarians in China, but also inconsistent with China's basic politics and basic national conditions. Second, it has class nature. Similar to nationality, China led by the proletariat has obvious differences from the Western capitalist society led by the bourgeoisie. Different classes correspond to their own political economy. Third, it has subjectivity. The researchers of political economy are both the subjects of cognition and their own small economic subjects. Finally, it has timeliness. Political economy is generated according to the national and class interests in the background of the times. It represents the interests of this era and this group with distinct characteristics of the times.

2. The Problems of Political Economy Education for Contemporary University Students

2.1 Modern university people worship money and capitalists more

If we take values and personal interests as the criteria of self-subject consciousness, we can see that whether or not they have been exposed to political economy is weakly correlated with their self-subject consciousness. That is to say, people's subject consciousness has not been fully established to guide their value orientation. This makes more and more people become exquisite egoists, who simply do things for the sake of obtaining more material benefits and react to external things.

2.2 Modern university people lack a clear definition of the “four main” aspects of self: “subject”, “ism”, “theme” and “claim”^[2]

Subject is the unity of class subject and research subject, which is the basis of political economy. The subject of Chinese political economy is the modern Chinese workers. Ism is the concentrated summary of the interests and consciousness of the subject. The ism of Chinese political economy is socialism or labor socialism. Theme is the expansion and concretization of ism, which is determined by the unity of research object and purpose from ism. The theme of Chinese political economy is the system of realistic economic contradictions in China. Claim is the requirement derived from the study of theme based on ism, which aims to safeguard and realize the interests of theme, and proposes the attitude, way and idea of dealing with economic contradictions. Only labor socialist political economy can clarify its own ism and subject, while capitalist political economy claims to be the representative of the “universal value” or “objective economic law” of all mankind. It defines everyone as a rational “economic man”, who is the owner of capital (for this reason, labor force and skills are also called capital), and who pursues the maximization of interests. Therefore, its subject is all “economic men”, and its ism is also a summary of everyone’s economic interests and consciousness.

For individual individuals, subject is self itself, and ism is personal interest. Of course, this interest here is not only money, material interest, but also spiritual and cultural interest. After clarifying one’s own personal interests, one should know one’s own theme, which manifests itself as the main contradiction on one’s own ism. We will encounter contradictions in every period of time. Contradictions can be divided into primary contradictions and secondary contradictions. The same contradiction can also be divided into primary and secondary aspects. Therefore, our theme is to find out the systematic problems and solutions of contradictions. The individual’s claim is to solve his realistic contradiction according to his personal ism. Only by integrating these four aspects can one achieve a preliminary understanding of one’s own political economy at the personal level. However, people only have a vague sense and concept of theme. They vaguely know that they are proletarian workers who exchange their labor for remuneration. They do not enjoy ownership of the means of production in private enterprises and other enterprises. But they are not aware that their surplus value is being exploited all the time. They often stand on the position of bourgeoisie in terms of their own ism. They think that these assets are what capitalists deserve, because they have created enterprises and deserve so much remuneration. They completely forget about the so-called “surplus value”. The actual impact caused by this kind of “westernized” thought is far more than we know. Therefore, theme has been completely abandoned and ignored by most individuals. All contradictions are placed between insufficient efforts and high income and high living standards. Of course, this contradiction is not wrong, but it is not the root cause of the main contradiction. Solving this contradiction cannot solve the most fundamental problem. Naturally, in terms of claim, they are just talking about it superficially, such as asking Jack Ma and his Alibaba Group, Ant Group to increase their social responsibility sense, talk less and do more things on the surface, without touching on their essence.

2.3 Modern university people lack the awareness and ability to distinguish between Western and Chinese political economy

In the contemporary era that pays more attention to Western economics, Chinese political economy has a tendency to be marginalized, which makes many people think that Western economics is the same as Chinese political economy. However, in reality, there are very obvious differences between the two. Western economics, also known as Western political economy, is a market-oriented theoretical system that is a product of the capitalist era and conforms to the interests of capitalists and bourgeois governments. Although it uses mathematics to prove how good and superior the market economy is, it always has a part of content called market failure that emphasizes government intervention. Political economy has a national nature, and the political economy of different countries cannot be exactly the same. Western capitalism tries to weaken the political concept and let economics replace Chinese political economy to make China lean towards Western development. This is a dangerous signal. Political economy has obvious boundaries among countries. Different countries are influenced by factors such as history, cultural environment, etc., and thus produce their own political economy. For example, China has a completely different development environment from Western capitalism led by the United States that has experienced a complete industrial revolution. Therefore, it is impossible to completely copy Western economics to govern China. This is not only inconsistent with the interests of the vast majority of proletarians in China, but also inconsistent with China’s basic politics and basic national conditions. Our country is a socialist country with people’s democratic dictatorship led by the working class and based on the alliance of workers and peasants. Its core elements are to adhere to public ownership as the main theme and common development of various forms of ownership and to adhere to people’s democracy. As a socialist country, public ownership is our natural advantage. Although some systems are not very sound, the nature of the country makes us have ownership of the means of production of state-owned assets, which is also different from private enterprises and bourgeoisie. But unfortunately, only a very few

people understand the difference between them, and this difference is the root of China's development. Therefore, the popularization of Chinese political economy is important and necessary. Only by establishing one's own subject consciousness and status in the country can one truly understand the underlying causes of such events and think about problems as a worker from the standpoint of workers and proletarians. Fortunately, this kind of thought is gradually awakening. With the deepening of market economy, we will find that capitalists have more and more clear appearance, and people also gradually understand the harm of their actions. What we need to do is to bring political economy back to public view and make the country continue to shine with the glorious appearance of socialism with Chinese characteristics.

3. Conclusion and Strategies

(1) It is suggested that compulsory courses on Chinese political economy should be added to university curricula, or that the basic ideas of Chinese political economy should be incorporated into Western economics courses. Firstly, universities can offer one or more compulsory courses on Chinese political economy to help students better understand China's economic system and political system. These courses can cover the history, policies and practices of China's economic development, as well as the theory and practice of socialism with Chinese characteristics. Secondly, universities can integrate the basic ideas of Chinese political economy into Western economics courses, so as to discuss economic theory and practice more comprehensively. For example, they can discuss the economic theory and practice of socialism with Chinese characteristics, as well as the similarities and differences with Western economics. Thirdly, universities can encourage teachers and students to participate in relevant research, so as to gain a deeper understanding of Chinese political economy. They can set up research centers or organize academic conferences, inviting experts and scholars from home and abroad to explore the development and practice of Chinese political economy. Lastly, universities can promote the relevant works of Chinese political economy, including the writings of economists and policy documents. They can use these works as reference books or course reading materials, so that students can have a deeper understanding of the theory and practice of Chinese political economy.

(2) One possible way to enhance the ideological education of political economy for university students is to adopt the "four main" concept, which consists of four aspects: main body, main ideology, main contradiction and main proposition. This concept can help students to approach political economy from a dialectical and historical materialist perspective, and to establish a correct understanding of Chinese political economy in the new era. Firstly, university students should recognize their own existence as a subject, and realize that they are workers who create social wealth and value through their labor. They should also be aware of their rights and responsibilities as workers, and their role in social development and transformation. Secondly, they should establish a correct understanding of ideology, and identify their interests in relation to their subjectivity. They should also learn to distinguish between different ideologies and values in the world, and adhere to the socialist core values. Thirdly, they should recognize the most important contradiction theme that they face as university students, and the current contradiction theme, and understand the opportunities and challenges that suit them. Finally, they should clarify their standpoint and perspective for the sake of their own workers' interests, that is, they should stand on the position of their own working people and put forward propositions that are in line with the interests of the broadest working people.

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Corresponding author : Haiyu Yan