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论文

严复自由观之悖论

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摘要:

严复自由思想的复杂性在于他既肯定自由之于人道的内在价值,又视其为国家富强的工具,而他对自由的历史性、工具性和价值中性的认识更显示了其自由思想的复杂性和丰富性。严复自由观之悖论与其说是群己(国家与个人)问题,毋宁说是共殊(普遍性与特殊性)问题。他发现了西方因自由而富强的秘密,但中国却难以复制英伦式的自由之路。为了拯救内忧外患的祖国,严复不得不搁置个人自由的目标,转而追求国群自由。“永恒的真理都是悖论性的”,严复的自由观也许正因其悖论而具有独特的思想魅力。

关键词: 严复 自由 富强 悖论

The Paradox of Yan Fu's View on Freedom

Gao Like

Abstract:

Yan Fu's concept of Western civilization, which took the freedom as fundamentality, reveals the core value of Western modernity and goes beyond the culture views of the reformists and the advocates of the westernization movement. He interpreted liberty into "the boundary between single person and group's rights," which grasped the essence of Muller's freedom theory and uncovered the profound differences between Chinese and western view of freedom. He distinguished the natural liberty, which was "free of the constraint of nonego," and "the freedom under the law," namely civil liberties. And he explored the profound paradox between these two: Freedom and management are opposite, freedom is the highest happiness, but to make the majority of people enjoy the greatest happiness in a society, freedom and management must implement each other. The focus of Yan Fu was the balance of freedom and order. Yan Fu's view of freedom reflected the complexity of his political thoughts. When he was thinking about the freedom problem with respect to the evolution of human and British civilization, he usually recognized the universal value of individualism like a liberalist. However, when it came back to the freedom problem in Chinese context, he sometimes expressed the tendencies that group's rights were higher than single person's, or both could be conciliated. These tendencies showed the profound influence of the Confucian tradition and nationalism. From the geographical perspective, Yan Fu ascribed the freedom of American and Britain to the island geographical character, and the despotism tradition of France and Germany to the mainland. His historical perspective of freedom was deeply affected by Montesquieu and Muller, both of who had emphasized the relativity of geographical environment and freedom, and regarded the national security as the premise condition for freedom. Yan Fu took the state security and national level as the two primary prerequisites for freedom, and this was the basic logic of his thinking on Chinese freedom. Yan Fu realized the difference of Anglo-American's laissez-faire model and Prussia's interference pattern. Anglo-American had become rich and then strong, so they attached much more importance to laissez-faire and freedom. But Germany had been on the other way round, which thought much of interference and was lack of freedom. Therefore, freedom should be at the right place and right time. The intricacy of Yan Fu's thought lies in the fact that he admitted the freedom is both intrinsic value of the humanity and the instrument for the prosperity of country. Nonetheless, his view on the historical specialty of freedom and its instrumentality and value specially demonstrates the complexity and richness of his thought. His paradox of liberty would rather be a problem of universality and particularity than that of states and individuals. He found out how the western wealth and power had benefited from liberation, which China could not replicate. Under the context of his time, in order to rescue China from domestic troubles and foreign invasions, Yan Fu had to pursue the freedom of state instead of individual one. Eternal truth was always paradoxical. It is maybe the paradox that makes Yan Fu's view on freedom especially attractive.

Keywords: Yan Fu; liberty; wealth and power; paradox

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