A Study on Deng Tuo's Education Thoughts from the Perspective of New-Humanism

Tae-Jun Lee¹⁾

Abstract

Yanshan Night Talk is a collection of essays written by Deng Tuo, Secretary of Beijing Municipal Party committee. From March 1961 to September 1962, he published 153 essays in *wusitu*, the supplement of Beijing Evening News, under the pen name of Ma Nan-Cun. After the Communist Party of China carried out the "Double Hundred" policy, Deng Tuo wrote essays based on his own subjectivity. Deng Tuo's aim is to promote reading, enrich knowledge, broaden vision, and inspire spirit. He argued that in order to overcome the dark reality of material shortage and economic collapse caused by industrial depression and agricultural failure, the media should take the lead and broaden the public's vision. He At that time, the purpose of Deng Tuo's prose writing was to promote reading, enrich knowledge, broaden vision and inspire spirit. He advocated that in order to overcome the dark realities such as the sluggish industry, the shortage of materials caused by the poor agricultural harvest and the economic collapse, the media should dominate to broaden the public's vision. He believed that people should have more contact with newspapers and books to improve their knowledge. Since Talks at the Yanan Forum on Literature and Art, literature and art has become a political tool in China. Later, most writers could only write works praising the proletariat. Especially in 1957, the frenzy of anti rightist struggle proved that the "Double Hundred" policy of the previous year was a deceptive strategy of the Communist Party of China. Since then, many writers were more afraid of the suppression of the Communist Party of China and did not dare to express their opinions freely. Deng Tuo's prose works are created in this dark reality. From the present point of view, his works seem to be very ordinary on the surface, but in fact, it took a lot of courage to create these "ordinary" works at that time. Because, the Communist Party of China might regard them as the poisonous weeds of capitalism. The reason why he did not care about his own safety was that, he believed that only by educating the youth and opening up the wisdom of the people could China's bright future be guaranteed. From this perspective, we can think of the Critical Review School in the early 1920s. The whole members of the Critical Review including Wu Mi criticized the radical behaviors of the New Culture movement and tried to establish a real "New Culture" through the development of learning and education. It can be said that the New Humanism of the Critical Review is consistent with Deng Tuo's educational thought.

Keywords: Deng Tuo, Yanshan Night Talk, New-Humanism, Double Hundred policy, Ma Nan-Cun

1. Introduction

Yanshan Night Talk is a collection of 153 essays published by Deng Tuo (1912-1966), Secretary

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1) (Professor) 13120 Dept. of Oriental Language and Literature, Gachon Univ., 1342 Seongnam-daero, Sujeong-gu, Seongnam-si, Gyeonggi-do, Korea
email: zongtongge@gachon.ac.kr

of the Beijing Municipal Committee, under the pseudonym Ma Nan Cun. From March 1961 to September 1962, he published these essays in the essay column of *Wusetu*, a supplement of *Beijing Evening News*. "Yanshan" is a mountain range in northern China. It is located in the south of Bashang Plateau, the north of Hebei Plain, the east of Baihe River Basin and the west of Shanhaiguan. "Night talk", as the name implies, is the story of people congregating at night to chat. This essay collection was published in the *Beijing Evening News*. Hence came its name.

Deng Tuo was admitted to the Department of Politics and Law of Shanghai Guanghua University in 1929 and the Department of Economics of Henan University in 1934. In 1937, he compiled the *History of China's Famine Relief*, and published the *Anti Enemy Newspaper* in 1938 during the Anti Japanese War. He was chief editor of *People's Daily* in 1949. In 1958, he served as secretary of the Secretariat of Beijing Municipal Party committee and as editor of *Frontline* magazine. The themes of *Yanshan Night Talk* include astronomy, geography, politics, philosophy, art, and education. It's as colorful as an encyclopedia. As a scholar, historian, journalist and politician, Deng Tuo had formed erudite knowledge in his life experience. To date, *Yanshan Night Talk* has been evaluated in this way. In the early 1960s, it created the second peak of essays since the May 4th movement, together with the essay column *The Essays of Three-family Village in the Front Line*, the *Journal of Beijing Municipal Party committee* and the essay column long and short record of the *People's Daily*.

The existing research papers on *Yanshan Night Talk* by Chinese scholars include Huang Yao's *On the theme features of Yanshan Night Talk and guiding significance*, and Peng Yaochun's *The characteristics of the materials used in Yanshan Night Talk*. These papers mainly analyzed the contents and themes of *Yanshan Night talk*, and discussed the political and social significance. However, most of these articles are short with simple, hence, cannot be taken as comprehensive investigations of *Yanshan Night Talk*.

Li Ling's *The valuable voice of correcting "left" in Yanshan Night Talk* mainly tells the theme and content of *Yanshan Night Talk*, and elaborates the political and historical background of its birth. In addition, this paper clearly emphasizes that *Yanshan Night Talk*, from the standpoint of seeking truth from facts, squarely opposed the extreme left storm of the Great Leap Forward Movement, which is obviously different from other literati who followed the left leaning political trend and flattered the authorities. Based on the existing research results, this paper examined the contents and themes of *Yanshan Night Talk*, and discusses the educational effect and characteristics of *Yanshan Night Talk* from the perspective of New Humanism.

Yanshan Night Talk, with its light and gorgeous expression, softens the reader's emotion and

conveys useful knowledge, both ancient and modern, Chinese and foreign, through short sentences. Deng Tuo's article focuses on the importance of traditional culture education, correct learning attitude and the future design of young people. His essays creation is not a simple interest activity, but a variety of learning and educational activities. He regards himself as a scholar and an educator in the period when the slogan of Chinese socialist revolution was rampant.

From this perspective, the researcher could compare Deng Tuo's literature with Irving Babbitt's New Humanism and Wu Mi, a Chinese scholar who worshipped Babbitt throughout his life. During the social transformation period dominated by the New Culture Movement in China in the 1920s, Wu Mi dreamed of reviving tradition and revitalizing scholarship. This paper examined the characteristics of Deng Tuo's essays with the aim of understanding the educational characteristics of new humanism in his literature.

2. Emphasis on Knowledge Enhancement and Respect for Traditional Culture

In 1956, Chinese President Mao Zedong announced the so-called "Double Hundred" policy. The purpose of this policy was to remove all restrictions on literary and artistic creation and academic research in the past, and to guarantee the freedom of speech and learning of writers and scholars. But in 1957, the Communist Party of China regarded writers and scholars as enemies of the people and began to suppress them. The misfortune of Chinese society also included the failure of the Great Leap Forward Movement since 1958, the mistakes of the extreme left line of the Lushan conference, various natural disasters and the rupture of Sino Soviet relations. These events combined to deal a serious blow to China's economy to lead to great suffering among the Chinese people. Deng Tuo did not flinch from this gloomy social atmosphere, and published a variety of essays according to his own subjectivity.

The purpose of Deng Tuo's Yanshan Night Talk is to "advocate reading, enrich knowledge, broaden horizons and revitalize the spirit"[1]. He argued that in order to overcome the bleak reality of material shortage caused by industrial depression and agricultural failure and the economic collapse suffered by the people, the media should play a leading role in expanding the public's vision. He believed that only when people read more newspapers and books and expand their knowledge can they maintain a healthy mental state and overcome difficulties. At that time, his rich knowledge and profound thoughts in Yanshan's Night Talk were sufficiently valuable to be welcomed by readers who were eager to overcome their problems of material and spiritual collapse. Readers who had read Yanshan Night Talk, including workers, teachers

and students, and even cadres of the Party Central Committee, wrote to him from all over the country asking him various questions about society and life. At that time, readers paid more attention to Deng Tuo and Yanshan Night Talk than could be imagined[2].

Most of the articles in Deng Tuo's Yanshan Night Talk quoted ancient Chinese literary works and ancient classics. On this point, we can see Deng Tuo's will to preserve and develop traditional culture. The contribution of the collector, an article in Yanshan Night Talk, tells about the destruction of many documents and classics by Emperor Qin Shihuang and Xiang Yu. Nevertheless, "Shang Shu(尚書), Li Ji(禮記) and other ancient books and records were excavated on the walls of Confucius' old residence[3]. In this article, he gives a detailed example of the positive influence of collectors on traditional culture and academic undertakings, emphasizing that the contribution of folk collectors should not be underestimated.

Li Shizhen's Compendium of Materia Medica(本草綱目), which is often quoted by Deng Tuo, inspires the reader's interest in health, provides simple self-treatment information, and awakens respect for traditional Chinese culture. In Sanqi, Shanqi and Tianqi(三七, 山漆和田漆) he showed a real love for traditional Chinese medicine. He said, "A lot of people like traditional Chinese medicine, and I also like Chinese medicine", "There is a lot of truth in traditional Chinese medicine, which needs further study by experts"[4].

Deng Tuo repeatedly emphasized the importance of reading and learning in many articles of Yanshan Night Talk. In A Little Key, he made the following remarks on the correct attitude towards academic research. "No matter what issues we study today, we must read about them in all relevant books and journals, ancient and modern, and take useful measures. In the next stage, we should make a detailed analysis and research on the selected materials through the combination of theory and practice. After that, we can put forward our own views on the basis of the achievements made by our predecessors"[5]. In addition, more than 20 articles such as One third of life and I don't want the secret of the secret elaborated the learning method and attitude. Through these articles, he instilled in young people a firm determination to study and improve their self-confidence.

Moreover, Deng Tuo kindly put forward suggestions for the future of the youth. In his article No matter in which field, the sage comes out, he tried to comfort those young people who are worried about their opaque future after graduation. He quoted Confucius. "I'm not as good as the old farmer. It's not easy to cultivate vegetable fields! The old vegetable farmers have rich technology and knowledge. For experienced vegetable farmers, we can respect them as saints"[6].

Deng Tuo firmly believed that anyone can achieve outstanding achievements in any field as

long as he has a clear sense of purpose and indomitable will, and combines the needs of the people with this. "No matter what occupation or field, there will be sages who are proficient in business functions and knowledge"[7]. he said explicitly.

3. Criticism of the Extreme Left Trend

The spring breeze of the "Double Hundred" era passed after a short time, and was followed by the Anti Rightist Struggle. Since then, most Chinese writers and politicians have avoided the dark reality caused by the extreme left trend, but Deng Tuo's Yanshan Night Talk decisively criticizes the political reality. He stated in the article Correct understanding of criticism, "whether it is ideological criticism or academic criticism, the purpose of criticism is not to attack the other party or to deny everything, but to abandon the bad things, strive for the good things, discard the lies and leave the real things. It aimed to enhance our inheritance of the heritage, develop culture and the socialist cause"[8]. Deng Tuo's views may be a circuitous criticism of the phenomenon that literature and art had become political tools after Mao Zedong's speech at the Yan'an Literature and Art Forum, which stated that literature and art could only extol the great heroic deeds and thoughts of workers, peasants and soldiers. If anyone criticized the resulting defects, they were immediately regarded as Rightists and suppressed. Deng Tuo was indignant at this phenomenon. In addition, he also pointed out that the socialism advocated by the Communist Party of China was not real socialism.

In his article Kingly politics and Hegemonic politics, he defined the Kingly politics as the principle of ruling the world based on rites, music, punishment and politics, and distinguished it from Hegemonic politics. He evaluated the Kingly politics as "based on the general human feelings and social moral standards of that era, and on the premise of not violating the political and legal system of that era." On the contrary, he accused Hegemonic politics as being "indifferent to everything, only wielding power, brutally treating and ordering others at will, and extorting property by cunning means and power." On the surface, Deng Tuo seems to objectively describe the historical facts about the ruling behavior of ancient society. But in fact, he accused the Communist Party of China of committing all kinds of evil crimes in mainland China after the establishment of the People's Republic of China. On the other hand, he quoted Liu Xiang's Xin Xu(新序) to praise the Kingly politics. "The Kingly politics, like the Dizhu-mountain in the Yellow River, is the root of human feelings and etiquette"[9]. These words reveal his ideological tendency and identity similar to the ancient Confucians.

4. Deng Tuo's literature from the perspective of New Humanism

New humanism has prevailed in the United States for a period of time since the beginning of the 20th century. It was led by Irving Babbitt (1865-1933), an American critic and professor of Harvard University. Some of Babbitt's works include *Literature and American College*, *Democracy and Leadership*, *Rousseau and Romanticism*, which contain introspections of various problems in modern capitalist industrial society and the countermeasures necessary to solve them.

Babbitt pointed out that Francis Bacon's Scientism led to the wrong desire of human beings to achieve infinite progress through scientific development. He also pointed out that Jean-Jacques Rousseau's Humanitarianism constantly expanded human's animal attributes, which led society into the abyss of intemperance, chaos and materialism. He believed that the horrible disasters in human history, such as the First World War, and the problems existing in human society, such as disease, poverty, various crimes and environmental damages, all originated from the moral degradation caused by Scientism and Humanitarianism[10]. Therefore, he believed that in order to save human beings from moral degeneration and lead the world in the ideal direction, it is necessary to cultivate perfect gentlemen through moral education and training. In other words, through the continuous application of moral laws and the training for restraining desire, we can overcome the "law of thing" that dominates the world and establish the "law of man".

In order to establish the "law of man", Babbitt believed that it is very important to study the thoughts of Socrates, Aristotle, Confucius, Mencius, Sakyamuni and other ancient sages in the East and the West, and practice their lives. Therefore, from Babbitt's point of view, the classics, which recorded the sufferings and understandings of the sages and their life deeds, are the treasures of mankind "containing thousands of years of experience and wisdom", as well as being great textbooks that are indispensable to the cultivation of gentlemen who can practice the golden mean. Therefore, Babbitt's new humanism certainly has a conservative color which attaches great importance to traditional culture and thought. On the other hand, Babbitt believed that learning the classics and practicing sages was a great and arduous undertaking, which was difficult for ordinary mediocre people to achieve. Thus, New Humanism has a strong aristocratic tendency.

As mentioned earlier, during the period of socialist revolution in which Deng Tuo lived, the Communist Party of China suppressed and eliminated the opposition, and the experiment of collective economic system failed again and again. Therefore, many people suffered from

extreme poverty, pain and terror. However, although the reality is very bleak, Deng Tuo also required readers to gain wisdom from inspecting the world and to form a healthy spirit through extensive reading to gain knowledge in such a reality.

New humanism rejects Rousseau's and Bacon's "Humanitarianism", which believes in human rationality and sympathizes with human beings endlessly. Furthermore, it opposes the collective madness of solving complex and multifaceted social problems through mass revolution. Just as Babbitt believed in the cultural power of a well-trained few elites, and advocated that only a gentleman who inherited the ideas of ancient sages could save the world, Deng Tuo also paid more attention to the knowledge and wisdom of the elite than the power of the masses.

Although, just like "ancient and modern books" and "the basis of the achievements of our predecessors", Deng Tuo's words in Yanshan Night Talk seem very ordinary, considering that the red flag of communism covered the whole country, the rude demagogues severed the people's relations with the past and destroyed the tradition with outrageous slogans at that time. This would never have been possible without unyielding faith and strong will.

As Babbitt's disciple, Wu Mi was attracted by his new humanism when he studied in the United States. After returning from the United States, Wu Mi began to promote New Humanism in China in the early 1920s. He agreed that the New Culture Movement would eliminate China's feudal system and become new China at that time. However, he opposed its emphasis on Western democracy and science, and its radical nature of populism. His ideal was to refine the ancient and modern Chinese and foreign cultural elites and to create a real "New Culture".

From 1921 to 1933, Wu Mi published *Critical Review* by his own efforts, and through it introduced the thoughts of ancient sages in the East and the West and the essence of modern culture and literature. Furthermore, he devoted himself to "training professional talents" in Tsinghua Institute of Sinology and Tsinghua University. His task was to let students "study advanced academia"[11], which is the educational practice loyal to the concept of New Humanism.

Compared with Wu Mi's *Critical Review* publishing and educational activities in Tsinghua University, which were based on the concept of New Humanism, Deng Tuo did not have a theoretical system brought by rigorous academic research. However, his essay creation was not a kind of leisure interest activity, but a lofty educational activity inspired by an urgent idea. He was eager to advance the emergence of talents who could play a pioneering role and bring a bright future to the bleak China. "No matter in which field, the sage comes out" was the goal and hope of his literary activities.

5. Conclusion

Deng Tuo's Yanshan Night Talk performed the function of an essay itself by using short articles to convey rich lessons. On the other hand, his articles, based on the comfortable and warm style and rich knowledge, also offer a counseling role by sharing the readers' distress, and act as a teacher who broadens their horizons and improves their ideas. Deng Tuo naturally attracts the respect of readers with his high cultural level evident as he cites the classics throughout the articles. On the other hand, he did not use admonition and preaching, but through appropriate metaphor and encouragement, he minimized the sense of distance from readers and attracted their attention. In particular, the articles on ancient Chinese culture and research knowledge have matured through long-term experiences, so they are full of confidence. The articles espousing the direction for the future of the youth are both ordinary and insightful.

If Lu Xun's essays are "spears and daggers" that incisively excavate the corruption and pathological phenomena of feudal society, then Deng Tuo's essays offer educational enthusiasm, which naturally guides the readers' sight and shows the various faces of the world. It is difficult to determine whether Deng Xiaoping, like Wu Mi, a disciple of Babbitt, the advocator of New Humanism, had insight into the advanced academic research trends and had rich research results. However, in terms of transforming the world, he believed that the more reasonable and stable way is to gradually improve people's level by enhancing knowledge by research, and respecting tradition. On this point, his thoughts are similar to Wu Mi's.

On the contrary, if the new humanism reform methodology is to guide the people through a few well-trained elites, then Deng Tuo's method is to approach the people with a kind expression and voice, breathe with the people and help them grow. There is no large gap between Deng Tuo's youth education method and the purpose of Critical Review, which is to study academia, seek truth, promote the quintessence of Chinese culture, and integrate new knowledge[12]. But he treated people at all levels equally. He pursued the enhancement of knowledge and quality, not only for a few elites, but also for all young people. He hoped that every ordinary person can become the so-called "elegant talent". From this point of view, his embrace is more leisurely and warmer than the strict and noble New Humanism.

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