

# *The Enlightenment of Philosophical Hermeneutics to Humanities and Social Sciences*

Anqi Qian\*

*School of Marxism, Southeast University, Nanjing, Jiangsu, 210096, China*

*\*Corresponding author: 351016219@qq.com*

**Keywords:** Philosophical hermeneutics, humanities and social sciences, enlightenment

**Abstract:** The main contribution of philosophical hermeneutics is to reveal that the purpose of understanding is the pursuit of practical wisdom; the way of understanding is a "problem" oriented "dialogue" process in the "I-Thou" relationship; the prerequisites and influencing factors of understanding are: pre-understanding, language and historical spacing; the effect of understanding should be creative understanding, integration of perspectives and history of effects. . The inspiration of philosophical hermeneutics for humanities and social sciences includes: clarifying the research objects, research methods and research purposes of humanities and social sciences; emancipating the mind, criticizing solipsism, dogmatism and authority fetishism, advocating tolerance and dialogue; paying attention to the "pre-understanding" of the receiving subject; encouraging the "creative understanding" of the receiving subject, etc.

## **1. Clarifying the research objects, research methods and research purposes of humanities and social sciences**

Philosophical hermeneutics reveals that practical rationality is more fundamental than scientific rationality, and believes that only practical rationality can determine the meaning, value and dignity of human existence and the truth of human life. This provides theoretical support to enhance the self-confidence of humanities and social sciences and clarify the research objects, research methods and research purposes of humanities and social sciences.

As we all know, the strong development of modern natural science and epistemology has continuously marginalized the humanities and even imitated the research methods of natural science, namely, subject-object dichotomy, quantitative analysis, and the pursuit of objective and definite evaluation criteria. Even Marx was influenced by it, and he once believed that a science could reach perfection only if it successfully used mathematical means. However, this approach ignores the special nature of the object of humanities research, which is a living human being with its own social, historical, realistic, dynamic and irrational nature. As the German philosopher Leibniz said: "There are no identical leaves in the world", there are no identical people in the world. From the objective point of view, "the essence of human being is the sum of all social relations", each person is in different social relations, which determines that each person's world view, life view and values are different. From the subjective conditions, each person's knowledge, experience, emotions and free will are different, which determines that each person's personality is very different. The

differences of human personality precisely reflect the freedom of human beings. However, modern humanities and social sciences have been imitating the reductionist and abstract methods of natural sciences, leaving aside the concrete and rich historical, social and individual differences of human beings, reducing noble human beings to low animals, and trying to explain the starting point of all human thoughts and behaviors by the biological properties of human beings.

Philosophy by clarifying the reader's "former understanding," philosophical hermeneutics reclaims the status of the abstracted and objectified human being. It allows humanities and social sciences to focus again on concrete, real people, their joys and sorrows, their rich and colorful experiences of life, and thus to affirm the "status" of the reader.

It is difficult to objectify and directly observe and analyze the subjective spiritual world of human beings, and this special nature of the research objects of humanities and social sciences requires us to explore and innovate in terms of methodology and methods, instead of following the natural sciences. Mr. Fei Xiaotong once pointed out that the Chinese culture's "heart" is more than "mind", "heart understanding", "heart to heart", "put yourself in the shoes of others", "to put oneself in the place of others", "to put oneself in the place of others", and "to bring knowledge to the material world", "contains a completely It has a special methodological meaning that is completely different from Western positivism and scientism. It is the direct acquisition of certain knowledge through the deep perception and awareness of the human mind. This way of cognition was practiced by our ancestors for thousands of years, but it cannot be articulated with the way people think today and is almost lost.

It is almost lost." It can be said that Mr. Fei Xiaotong's views are quite similar to those of Heidegger and Gadamer, the founders of philosophical hermeneutics. Today, "tolerance," "dialogue," and "intersubjectivity" have become important methods and principles of problem solving in the humanities and social sciences.

In addition, the positivist approach has neglected the specificity of the purpose of humanities research and lost concern for meaning and human self-understanding, leading to the spiritual disorientation of human beings. The expansion of the scope of human practice and the refinement of the division of labor in modern times have brought about the need for social organization and management, and in order to enhance their effectiveness, the humanities and social sciences have ignored the need for the development of human personality, treating human beings only as objects of transformation and processing, and using their compulsory "sameness" to erase the "particularity" of human beings. The humanities and social sciences ignore the needs of human personality development, treat human beings only as objects of transformation and processing, and use their compulsory "sameness" to erase human "particularity" and integrate them into a homogenized system and logic. Instrumental rationality dominates humanities and social sciences, and humanities and social sciences lose their criticality and value rationality. For example, scholar Deng Youchao points out that instrumental rationality manifests itself in the field of education by the proliferation of examination rationality. Institutionalized education takes examinations as the purpose of education, ignores students' individual development, implements standardized training programs, and makes students memorize by rote, turning the relationship of value perception and discussion between subjects into the relationship of subject and object of knowledge indoctrination and passive acceptance. Students treat the learning of liberal arts knowledge as a subject-object conquest relationship, i.e., with exams as the purpose and textbooks and standard answers as the only criteria, and the learning of liberal arts has lost its proper role of dialogue and construction of the spiritual world. In addition to the field of education, other fields of social activity, such as law, administration, and management of enterprises and social organizations, are also characterized by the proliferation of instrumental rationality.

The criticism of the recent proliferation of instrumental reason in capitalist social life and its

suppression of human freedom can be considered comprehensive and profound. In fact, the purpose of humanities and social sciences research is to provide a reference for "man as man" and to provide guidance for "good choices. Horkheimer, a representative of the Frankfurt School, once suggested that the function of philosophy is to critique existing society: "The real social function of philosophy lies in its critique of what is popular. The main purpose of this critique is to prevent mankind from being lost in the views and behavior slowly instilled in its members by the existing social organization." Philosophy is the mother of the humanities and the social sciences, and the task of philosophy is also the task of the humanities and the social sciences. In short, the ontological revelation of the meaning of "understanding" by philosophical hermeneutics and the emphasis on practical wisdom have prompted the humanities and social sciences to reflect on their research purposes, to reveal the humanistic spirit and value rationality that humanities and social sciences should have, and to construct a meaningful world and spiritual home for human beings together.

## **2. Emancipation, criticism of solipsism, dogmatism and authority fetishism, advocating tolerance and dialogue**

Philosophical hermeneutics reveals the important influence of the reader's "pre-understanding" in understanding. That is, our understanding of a text is actually our own subjective understanding based on our own "pre-understanding". Therefore, in the study of humanities, especially in the interpretation of classical texts, we should be aware that there is definitely a problem of "subjective interpretation" in anyone's understanding of an object, and it is unavoidable for him to misinterpret, misunderstand, over-interpret or under-interpret the object of his understanding. Thus, his understanding of the object is not identical with the object being understood. Therefore, no one should assume that his understanding is the only correct one and present himself as the sole possessor of the truth. At the same time, we have to break the rigidity brought by solipsism, not to blindly believe in authoritative understanding and interpretation, and to be wary of dogma.

At the same time, we need to break the rigidity brought by solipsism, not to blindly believe in authoritative explanations and interpretations, and to guard against dogmatism. In humanities research, we often need to quote scriptures, and we should know that there is both the phenomenon of "I note the six scriptures" and the phenomenon of "the six scriptures note me". Philosophical hermeneutics opposes both the "text-centeredness" of "I note the six sutras" and the "reader-centeredness" of "the six sutras note me". "The emphasis is on the "integration of vision" between the reader and the text. Reading the classics is not to pursue the author's original intention, but to explore the meaning of existence together with the author from their own state of existence. A few years ago, Yu Dan interpreted Confucian culture and Taoist culture, turning the classics into a feast for the common people, causing a sensation. But some people were very dissatisfied, saying that "Yu Dan is here, Confucius is very anxious, Zhuangzi is very angry", and screaming for the antidote to "poison" Yu Dan. The author believes that the "Yu Dan phenomenon" is a common problem in humanities and social science research, and if the philosophical hermeneutic point of view is used to judge, then first of all, Yu Dan's interpretation of traditional cultural classics is only an understanding based on her own "former understanding". The effect of the interpretation can only be the fusion of her field of vision with the ancient classical field of vision, a reflection of the "history of effects", and there is no right or wrong. As Dilthey famously said, "I may disagree with you, but I defend to the death your right to speak", we should allow different understandings of different subjects and allow a hundred schools of thought to contend. Secondly, at a time when China's society is developing and its economy is taking off, and people have an inherent cultural need, Yu Dan uses modern language and combines it with modern life, using his life to perceive the classics and activate the thoughts of the sages, so that the ancient culture that has been dormant for

thousands of years can enter people's hearts again, creating the meaning of "chicken soup for the heart" for modern people. This is a successful understanding and interpretation in the ontological sense, which satisfies the application requirement of understanding.

In fact, Marx was also distressed by the misunderstanding of his ideas, as he once said: "I only know that I am not a Marxist. 1844 Mr. Yu Wujin pointed out that some very popular slogans, such as "back to Marx", "back to Hegel", and "back to Kant", are actually wrong. This is actually wrong. This is because they set up the understander as a pure subject of understanding, completely free from the contamination of its "former understanding", which obviously does not exist. "It is impossible to go back to Marx, to Hegel, or to Kant. We can only say "approach Marx", but not "enter Marx". We can never go back to the pure Marx, Hegel and Kant, but only to the Marx, Hegel and Kant we understand.

Moreover, since there is a problem of "subjective interpretation" in understanding, it is better to read the original text directly than to rely too much on other people's interpretations and second-hand sources in order to understand the author better. One scholar has said that reading second-hand material is like talking to the master through his servant, who is sure to lose or misinterpret the meaning in the process of conveying the master's meaning.

### 3. Pay attention to the "former understanding" of the receiving subject

Workers engaged in humanities research and communication should have "historical awareness of effects," i.e., they should know that their understanding of texts is governed by their own "foresight," and they should constantly criticize and reflect on their "former understanding. "The method is through repeated reading and understanding. The method is to deepen one's understanding of the world and life through repeated reading and understanding, in the "hermeneutic cycle" of the whole and the parts. The "hermeneutic circle" is a principle of effective textual understanding, which means that the whole can only be understood through the understanding of its parts, and the understanding of the parts can only be understood through the understanding of the whole. The whole and the parts here can refer to the contextual connection between individual texts themselves, the connection between the various subdisciplines of the humanities and the humanities as a whole, and the relationship between texts and their socio-historical contexts. This requires humanities scholars not to limit their own horizons by sticking to their own rules, but to expand their theoretical and practical horizons as much as possible to reach a deeper understanding of things.

In judicial adjudication activities, the method of hermeneutic cycle is commonly used. For example, a judge may have formed a preliminary view of the case decision in the litigation, and with the in-depth understanding and grasp of the factual and legal issues, he will continue to revise his original view. This process of repeatedly connecting and revising from the local to the whole, and then from the whole to the local, is the cycle in the hermeneutical sense.

In the process of spreading human civilization, humanities scientists should not only pay attention to their own "former understanding", but also pay attention to the "former understanding" of the recipient. The recipient is not a blank sheet of paper or an empty container, but has his own "pre-understanding", which greatly restricts and influences the development of his receptive activities and their effectiveness. Therefore, cultural communication and education work must first critique the preconditions of acceptance of the target audience, and then be able to target them. For example, in the process of popularization of Marxism, there are false "former understandings" of socialism, capitalism and Marxism formed by cultural traditions, ideologies and perceptions of reality, and they are very persistent. These false "former understandings" will hinder their understanding and knowledge of Marxism, socialism, and capitalism. Mr. Deng Xiaomang once

made a profound comparison between Chinese and Western cultures, pointing out that the "politics", "morality", "democracy" and "freedom" of traditional Chinese culture are different from those of Western culture. Freedom" in Chinese traditional culture and "politics", "morality", "democracy" and "freedom" in Western cultural context are not the same at all. "freedom" in the Western cultural context are not the same thing at all. Western "politics," "democracy," "morality," and "freedom" are all associated with free will and rights. and rights. Chinese culture lacks a sense of free will and rights. For example, the understanding of "freedom" in Western culture is the freedom of personality, the freedom to fully develop one's own talent, the right to realize one's own will, in the words of Marx, the freedom to realize one's essential power. However, the Chinese understand "freedom" mainly as the freedom to do whatever one wants, or the freedom to feed and clothe oneself at the material level.

In addition to economic interests, which are the fundamental determinant of conflicts among nations and peoples in the world today, the obstacles to people's interaction are mainly caused by the "former understanding". We should insist on mutual respect, tolerance and equal dialogue and exchange, and through the integration of vision, we can eliminate differences and reach consensus.

#### 4. Encourage the "creative understanding" of the receiving subject

The ontological turn of philosophical hermeneutics has realized the transformation from "author-centered" to "reader-centered", fully affirming the subjective understanding of readers based on their own life practice needs. The classical texts only provide us with general or universal principles, but the real life practice is historical, specific and rich, which requires us to combine the universal and the particular from our own practice.

Philosophical hermeneutics encourages the creative understanding of each reader. In this sense, Mao Zedong Thought and Deng Xiaoping Theory, both of which are creative understandings of Marxism, have been very successful. In the process of Marxism's Chineseization, the social elite enriched and developed Marxism through their own creative understanding. However, we should not ignore the creative understanding of the general public in the process of accepting Marxism. We often say that the people are the creators of spiritual wealth. In the process of accepting Marxism, they certainly have their own understanding of the effect. As this understanding is based on the practice of their lives. Generally speaking, their practice is more authentic, and their understanding is more relevant. In the information age, the Internet provides a stage for the people's creative understanding to be displayed. We often see the people's interpretation, criticism and flirtation with various policies and social phenomena on the Internet, full of wisdom. It is an inherent requirement of the materialistic view of history to affirm and value the creative understanding of the people. While summarizing the creative understanding of Marxism by national leaders, the academy should also summarize and conclude the creative understanding of Marxism, socialism and other categories by the people to enrich and develop Chinese Marxism.

In conclusion, many concepts proposed by hermeneutics, such as: practical wisdom, pre-understanding, problem consciousness, dialogue, creative understanding, fusion of horizons, and history of effects, are inspiring for the study of humanities and social sciences.

#### References

- [1] *Collected Works of Marx and Engels: Volume 1 [M]*. Beijing: People's Publishing House, 2009.
- [2] *Fei Xiaotong. The Life and Death of Culture [M]*. Shanghai People's Publishing House 2009.
- [3] *Deng Youchao. Educational hermeneutics [M]*. Beijing: Education Science Press, 2009.
- [4] *Horkheimer. Critical Theory [M]*. Chongqing Publishing House, 1989.
- [5] *The Complete Works of Marx and Engels: Volume 37 [M]*. Beijing: People's Publishing House, 1971.
- [6] *Ye Jiyuan. Exploring the evaluation system of humanities and social sciences [J]*. *Journal of Nanjing University*:

*Philosophy. Humanities. Social Sciences, 2010, 47(1): 14.*

[7] Zhang Qiqun. *Hermeneutics and humanities and social sciences: the ontology of meaning: philosophical hermeneutics [M]. Shanghai Translation Press, 2002.*