



The State and the Individual in Times of Transition --A Re-Examination of Chen Duxiu's Patriotic Thought before and after May 4th

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Abstract. As an important ideological figure in the transformation era of the May Fourth New Culture Movement, Chen Duxiu had a new thinking about the relationship between the state and the individual based on the modern concept of "state" before and after this period, and based on which he explained the inner connection between "patriotic heart" and "conscious heart", as well as the ideological connotation of rational patriotism after the combination of the two. Based on this, he explained the intrinsic connection between a "patriotic heart" and "self-awareness", as well as the ideological connotation of rational patriotism after the combination of the two. The patriotism advocated by Chen Duxiu not only focuses on the cultivation of personal autonomy and independent personality, but also emphasizes the need for the state to safeguard the rights and well-being of the people, and at the same time regards the "new youth" as the hope for the salvation of the country. Against the background of the ever-changing realities of politics and the world, the patriotism in Chen Duxiu's mind not only provided a constant ideological impetus for the "Enlightenment" before and after the May Fourth Movement but also provided historical resources for the education of the socialist core values at present.

Keywords: Chen Duxiu; patriotism; self-awareness; rationality

1 Introduction

Chen Duxiu was one of the main founders and early leaders of the Communist Party of China (CPC), as well as a particularly important ideological figure in the transformative era of the May Fourth Movement. During this period, through a series of writings and social movements, Chen Duxiu exerted a wide and profound influence on intellectuals. Because of this, there is a wealth of research on Chen Duxiu's thoughts in the past. However, the author found that most of the researches still focus on the examination and interpretation of "democracy", "science" and "progress" in Chen Duxiu's thought, but not on "patriotism", which is also one of the core contents of May Fourth Spirit. "patriotism", which is also one of the core contents of the May Fourth spirit, lacks due attention. Although some commentators have touched upon

this topic, they lack the macro-vision of entering into the topic of "nation" and "individual", which are the common concerns of the society before and after May Fourth, because their main purpose is to present the core proposition of Chen Duxiu's patriotism and its contemporary value^[1]. As a result, it is not possible to explore the inner correlation and close interaction between patriotism and worldview in Chen Duxiu's thought.

Chen Duxiu's thinking on national and personal issues during the May Fourth Movement was fundamentally rooted in the context of "salvation" at that time, and therefore, to understand Chen Duxiu's patriotism, one should not ignore the concern of the people at that time for the fate of the country and the intrinsic connection between various kinds of speeches. Given this, this paper attempts to place Chen Duxiu's thoughts before and after the May Fourth Movement into the spectrum of thoughts about the country and personal cognition based on the existing research results of Chen Duxiu's thoughts, to find out the historical context of his thinking and interpretation of patriotism, and to take this as an important conceptual tool for understanding his words and deeds^[2]. On this basis, this paper will also try to ask what kind of deep connection the patriotic issues concerned by the intellectual circles before and after the May Fourth Incident had with the current situation. Against this background, how did Chen Duxiu continuously adjust the scale of his thinking about the state and the individual? An in-depth analysis of these questions may be useful for promoting the study of Chen Duxiu and the study of the May Fourth Movement, as well as enabling us to better understand the historical background of the emergence of the Communist Party of China (CPC). In addition, at a time when socialist core values are being vigorously promoted, this thesis is undoubtedly of practical significance.

2 The State for the Individual: the Connotation of "Patriotism" in the Concept of the Modern "State"

The dissemination of the modern concept of "state" was an important issue during the May Fourth New Culture Movement, and many intellectuals, including Chen Duxiu, were keen on translating the modern concept of "state" and its principles. Judging from the relevant articles published in *New Youth* and other magazines, the relationship between the state and the individual, the foundation of the state, democracy, and equality became the focus of their discussions, with the relationship between the state and the individual being the most discussed. When the country and the nation were facing a crisis, the intellectuals in modern China, under the influence of the evolutionary view of history, could not help thinking about the deep connection between the state and the individual and hoped to find a way of salvation or even a concrete guideline for action.

Chen Duxiu's thinking about the relationship between the state and the individual before and after the May Fourth Incident also tended to start from the background of the era of "salvation"^[3], and would reflect the same complex state of mind and value orientation as the intellectuals mentioned above. After the Xinhai Revolution, Chen Tu-hua unsuccessfully pushed for innovation and the "Second Revolution" in Anhui

Province^[4], and witnessed the outbreak of the First World War. Sensing the political situation and public opinion at home and abroad at that time, he stated categorically in a letter to a friend that the country at that time could even be described as "dead"^[5], in his opinion, the Beiyang government was unable to protect the country internally and unable to defend itself from insults externally, and therefore, "it is nothing more than a kind of deceitful idol!"^[6]. Subsequently, in his article "Patriotism and Self-Consciousness", Chen Duxiu constantly emphasized the founding basis and principles of the modern state, pointing out that land, people, and sovereignty were "the form of the state", and that the main function of the state was to safeguard the people's rights and well-being. If the state fails to fulfill this function, the people will naturally have "no patriotism to speak of"^[7]. Based on this new conception of the "state", Chen Duxiu criticized the feudal dynasties in history, even if there were occasional "saints and wise prime ministers", their purpose was not to safeguard the people's rights and interests but to prolong the "blessing of the throne", so in his view, the main function of the state was to safeguard the rights and welfare of the people. "Therefore, in his view, there was no need for the existence of such a "state" that did not take the well-being of the people as its fundamental goal of governance. Chen Duxiu's dialectical criticism of the ancient "saints and virtuous ministers" already distinguishes between the traditional and modern concepts of patriotism, and is intended to emphasize two aspects: first, the state must guarantee the rights and happiness of the people; and second, those who love their country should be "conscious" of themselves and understand what kind of country they are supposed to love. The second is that the patriot should be "conscious" of himself and should understand what kind of country he should love.

To prove his assertion, he also cited the history of invasion and counter-invasion of Korea, Turkey, Japan, and Mexico to show that blind patriotism without distinguishing between internal and external situations would often lead to the situation of "patriotism being misguided for the sake of the country". In addition, Chen Duxiu especially observed that some people lived in rented areas to escape from the civil strife, and this kind of living in the foreign occupied areas would be regarded as unpatriotic at that time, but he thought that it should be based on the actual living situation of the people, which was not that the people "had no patriotic heart", but because the state could not "protect the people". "protect the people". In this way, Chen Duxiu also pointed his criticism at the Beiyang government at that time, and his core idea was also self-evident, that is, it is reasonable to be patriotic, but only to love the "lovely country".

It can be seen that Chen Duxiu appealed to the people to love their country based on understanding the relationship between the state and the individual so that their patriotism would not be exploited or their rights and well-being would not be sacrificed under the advocacy of "patriotism" by the so-called speculative politicians. On this basis, he further pondered that the demise of the country was not "the wish of the people of the country", but if the country not only failed to protect the people, but instead "suited the people to be handicapped" and made "the people despair", then the country, that is, the Beiyang government, would not be able to protect the people, and would not be able to protect the people. But if the state not only fails to protect the

people but also "suits to brutalize the people" and makes "the people despair", then the state, that is, the Beiyang government, will "die for nothing". Thus, in Chen Duxiu's modern conception of the "state", the state is no longer an indispensable existence, and thus patriotism must be conditional. However, it is worth noting that Chen Duxiu was not advocating the "no state theory", so we have to distinguish it from anarchism. The reason why he made such radical remarks was largely because although the Republic of China had already been established, the state of mind of many people was still within the realm of old-time thinking.

Undoubtedly, events such as Yuan Shikai's claim to the throne and the conquests between warlords in the early years of the People's Republic of China not only seriously affected the newborn concept of democracy and republicanism, but also made Chen Duxiu worry about the future situation. However, as Kant pointed out, although a revolution can quickly bring about dynastic change, it can never be accompanied by a complete change in the minds of the people^[8]. In this regard, Chen Duxiu also had similar thoughts, and he realized that the Chinese people had been paying more attention to the concept of "the world" than the concept of "the country" since ancient times, and therefore, there was a general lack of "patriotism" in the national character of the Chinese people, and even at that time, there was an element of "patriotism" in the national character. Therefore, there was a general lack of "patriotism" in the national character of the Chinese people, and even some of the self-proclaimed "learned men" at that time tried their best to obstruct the patriotic behavior of the people^[9]. Based on criticizing this phenomenon, Chen Duxiu affirmed the importance of maintaining order and justice and strongly advocated the reasonableness of legitimate patriotism. In his view, the patriotism of the Chinese people, awakened by the thought of "salvation", was undoubtedly justified, and therefore the May Fourth Movement and similar patriotic movements should never be rejected. Therefore, the May Fourth Movement and similar patriotic movements should never be obstructed^[10]. Before Xinhai, Chen Duxiu paid more attention to the significance of the individual to the country and emphasized that the individual should do his best to serve the great cause of enriching the country and strengthening the army^[11]. From Chen Duxiu's remarks at this time, it can be seen that, although he was also trying his best to restrain his indignation, but was confined to the reality of the country and the social situation of the time, the patriotism he advocated had to be injected into the new connotation. In Chen Duxiu's ideological world, patriotism, which emphasizes "self-awareness," should be a sustained ideological impetus for "treating the root causes" rather than just "treating the symptoms," and for this reason, he always put the construction of a "new nation" in his mind. The "New Nation" is prioritized at .

3 The Individual as a Nation: Patriotism and the Essentials of Patriotism Based on "Self-Consciousness"

In addition to emphasizing the functions of the state, Chen Duxiu also paid much attention to the patriotism and sense of mission that individuals should have towards the state. In Chen Duxiu's view, the foundation of social progress does not lie in the

objective historical structure, but in the individuals under the state, and only the "progress of human wisdom" can fundamentally promote social progress. After clarifying the importance of the individual to the state and society, Chen Duxiu emphasized in his essay "The True Meaning of Life" that people should pay attention to the destiny and interests of the country to the best of their ability under the premise of guaranteeing their freedom, and that it was best for them to leave their contributions to the society and to "teach each other to infinity."

Chen Duxiu paid more attention to people's self-awareness and introspection and encouraged the public to become thoughtful individuals. In "The Last Awakening of Our People", Chen Duxiu explained in detail the meaning of "self-awareness", pointing out that the "self-awareness" of the people should mainly include political and ethical self-awareness, and regarded this spontaneous awareness as the demarcation point between the past and the future civilization. After pointing out the significance of the "conscious" individual to the state, Chen Duxiu emphasized in particular that when the rights of the individual conflict with the interests of the state, some of the rights and interests of the individual should be sacrificed as far as possible, "to safeguard the rights of the whole nation". In his view, this kind of trade-off between individual and national interests is not contrary to the quality of "self-awareness", but few people can do so. It was based on this realization that Chen Duxiu pointed out in "Should We Be Patriotic or Not?" in which Chen Duxiu pointed out that the "patriotism" prevalent in society at that time was largely based on sentimentality rather than rationality, and thus could hardly serve as a "motive for faith-based behavior". In another article, Chen Duxiu went on to explain that true patriotism lies in consciously safeguarding the security and honor of the country, not necessarily in the act of dying for the country. What Chen Duxiu constantly emphasized was that patriotism should be based on rationality as the foundation of emotion, and only such patriotism could become a continuous motivation for individuals to save the country.

Further, in Chen Duxiu's view, only patriotism based on the combination of a "patriotic heart" based on emotion and a "conscious heart" based on wisdom is true patriotism. Chen Duxiu explained that compared to the "patriotic heart", the "conscious heart" of the people was the "much-needed intellect", and thus he always focused on the "conscious heart". Therefore, it always focuses on the "conscious mind" rather than the "patriotic mind". Of course, the two present more of a complementary relationship, the individual's "patriotism" and "self-awareness" are indispensable, if "both are absent", then the "country will not be a country". If "both are absent", then "the country will not be a country". In short, according to Chen Duxiu, true patriotism should not only be manifested in concern for the country's safety and security and understanding of the world's situation but also in cultivating a "self-awareness" as the essence. In *My Patriotism*, Chen Duxiu also pointed out the path to the realization of true patriotism. He believed that a true patriot should possess at least six qualities: diligence, thrift, honesty, cleanliness, sincerity, and faith, and explained that manpower was the most central element in social production, so "a patriotic gentleman must be diligent".

Corresponding to "diligence", he also hoped that patriots could be "thrifty" and use the saved property as the capital for the country's "production and cultivation". In

addition, based on the reality that the society was already "full of greed", Chen Duxiu emphasized that a true patriot should never be greedy. However, while corruption was still a visible problem, it would be even more horrible if one was "unclean in heart"; therefore, "patriotic aspirants should be clean in body and mind". As for "sincerity" and "faith", in Chen Duxiu's view, there is both a difference and a connection between the two. The most prominent manifestation of not being "sincere" is that one's words and deeds are not the same as one's own, and not being "trustworthy" is not the same as one's own. "In Chen Duxiu's view, the two were both different and related. Therefore, Chen Duxiu believed that the consequences of lack of "trust" would be more serious. Based on his understanding of "sincerity" and "trust", he prayed that patriots would be able to realize "the sincerity of their conscience" and not let themselves fall into the situation of "living by theft". He prayed that patriots should be "sincere in their conscience" and should not let themselves fall into the situation of "living by theft". What Chen Duxiu was elaborating here was the question of how to cultivate the "conscious mind", and he already regarded the "conscious mind" as an autonomous mechanism within the individual, rather than just a vehicle for passively reflecting or accepting external views.

In addition to emphasizing "self-consciousness", Chen Duxiu also addressed the issue of "self-interest" to a greater or lesser extent in the context of patriotic practical considerations. He did not deny the fact that self-interest is widespread, but he still warned the world not to "expand the wind of self-interest to" the country and society, otherwise the ideological conflicts in the daily life of the people will be "endless". Both the thoughts on "self-consciousness" and "self-interest" show that Chen Duxiu fully believed that the significance of the individual could only be realized in the group and the state and that the individual with a sense of autonomy was not only the foundation of "social evolution" but also the basis of "social evolution". Individuals with a sense of autonomy are not only the basis of "social evolution" but also an important symbol of national progress.

4 Between the State and the Individual: the Personal Qualities of the "New Youth" and the Mission of National Salvation

Since the late Qing Dynasty, intellectuals have always sung the praises of youth and regarded them as the future hope of the country and the nation. Among them, the most famous is Liang Qichao published in the "Qingdao Newspaper" "Young China", which urges young people should take the country's wealth and strength as their responsibility, and emphasizes: "Today's responsibility, not in others, but all in my youth."^[12] It is worth noting that Liang Qichao in this article did not from the age of youth and young people to distinguish clearly, but more is a mix of these two concepts, and therefore its "young people" that we now say "youth".

When discussing patriotism, Chen Duxiu also involuntarily showed the tendency to emphasize adolescents, especially young people, and he earnestly hoped that some of them could break through the existing shackles, realize that "struggle is the duty of life", and strive to be the model of young people of the time, and take the initiative to

undertake the responsibility of rescuing the perilous situation and reshaping China. According to Chen Duxiu, the vigorous youth was the driving force of the country's "search for newness and change", and the youth were as full of vitality as the early spring and the morning sun, and they were like the "fresh and lively cells" of the human body to the country and the society. For this reason, Chen Duxiu hoped that "fresh and active youth" could seize this most important period of their lives and "struggle consciously" - .

After clarifying the importance of youth for the salvation of the country, Chen Duxiu further thought about how to cultivate the "new youth" with the above characteristics, and the specific path for the "new youth" born from them to transform -the country and society. In particular, he emphasized the importance of personal character cultivation, believing that everyone should start from himself, cultivate "a just and clean character", and then influence others through himself, and finally "create a just and clean society"^[13] . In his opinion, the young people who could save the country and the nation should have the following characteristics: independent personality, strong spirit, cosmopolitan state of mind, and pragmatic style. Chen Duxiu hoped that these "new youths" who carried the hopes of the country would hold patriotism, be clear about their values and destinations, and ultimately accomplish the mission of transforming the society and rescuing the critical situation .

To a certain extent, Chen Duxiu's demand for the self-transformation of the "new youth" is similar to the ethical philosophy of traditional Chinese society, which advocates that individuals should realize their political ideals based on moral cultivation and thus promote the progress of the country and society. However, it is worth noting that Chen Duxiu's demand for the "new youth" was based more on the individual's "patriotism" and "self-awareness", and its ultimate goal was not to "rule peace". Its ultimate goal was not to "rule peace" but to engage the youth in a national movement, which was fundamentally different from traditional political activities. Sensing the chaotic situation of the Beiyang warlords interfering with the government by force, Chen Duxiu paid more and more attention to the great significance of the social revolution to save the country from perishing. Therefore, in his view, the overthrow of the "evil government" by the youth was not a manifestation of unpatriotism, on the contrary, it was a sign of patriotism and self-consciousness. On the contrary, it was an example of "patriotism" and "self-consciousness". On the other hand, however, Chen Duxiu inevitably showed some worries, suspecting that some of the "new youths" would have difficulty in stimulating their own "self-awareness". In a letter to a friend, he pointed out unabashedly that many young students who had returned from their studies would even "despise Europeanization and boast of the national essence of Confucianism and Taoism" . Under such circumstances, it is still difficult for these students to develop a sense of "self-awareness", let alone cultivate a "patriotic heart" and assume the responsibility of national salvation.

In a word, Chen Duxiu believed that the goal of national salvation could be realized only if the "new youth" maintained their independent personality and eradicated the backward concepts belonging to the "old world" in their hearts, and only in this way could patriotism obtain a continuous spiritual power. Only in this way can patriotism gain a constant spiritual impetus. According to Li Zehou, the aim of Chen

Duxiu's "scientific" and "democratic" enlightenment was to destroy the old traditions and to carry out the "transformation of the national character"^[14]. Similarly, Chen Duxiu's patriotic enlightenment and cultivation of the "new youth" undoubtedly aimed at "saving the country from extinction" and changing the backwardness of the country and society. Therefore, although there is a "broken" side to it, it is essentially a patriotic behavior.

5 Conclusion

Marx and Engels pointed out that human concepts would change with the change of social order^[15]. Chen Duxiu's thinking on the topic of patriotism happened precisely in the special era of May Fourth, which is the era of social order change mentioned by Marx and Engels. From the point of view of his thought process, Chen Duxiu's patriotism was closely related to the era of transition, and because of this, in the process of thinking about and interpreting patriotism, his words were inevitably excessive, and even sometimes showed an "irrational" tendency, but in fact, rationality has always been the background color of his patriotism. Chen Duxiu's patriotism, which was inspired by "salvation", undoubtedly assumed the task of "enlightenment" in those days, but the actual effect of enlightenment was not as satisfactory as it should have been. By July 1921, even Chen Duxiu himself realized that it was "a fool's errand" to hope that the "public spirit" would be widely disseminated among the people within a short period. He gradually realized that some people had already been determinedly "unpatriotic", and therefore "need not enter into high arguments"^[16]. Mr. Jiang Yihua also discussed Chen Duxiu's loss of confidence in Enlightenment, arguing that New Culture activists often "encountered a bunch of insurmountable walls in front of their practice"^[17]. In the author's view, Chen Duxiu was most concerned about "In the author's opinion, Chen Duxiu's greatest concern, the "self-consciousness", was the most insurmountable wall in the process of his patriotic "enlightenment".

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