

Paper Title: Religion and Modern Metropolitan City

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Abstract:

In China, it is a custom to mention religion and superstition in the same breath. The fixed expression “religion and superstition” in everyday talk is a case in point. It is quite common for people to associate religion with superstition. Is it true that religion is the same as superstition? If the answer is “yes”, then religion will gradually lose its market in such a metropolitan city as Shanghai with the development of education, the popularization of science and knowledge and the opening of the information superhighway. And there will be less and less followers of any religion. However, this is not the case according to available statistics. Then, why does religion still exist in such a metropolitan city as Shanghai, and why is it still expanding? The underlying reasons are not easy to explain and thus require careful study. The text tells some reasons. 1) human being’s pursuit of Metaphysics as the most profound reason for the existence of religion: firstly, the fact that people of different races and nationalities have the isomorphic organic system can lead to the fact that there exists the same human nature; secondly, the substantially integrative relationship between human beings and space has made the relationship between human beings and heaven a question commonly raised by people of different races; furthermore, fragile, limited life and inevitable death both result in human being’s pursuing the world metaphysically. 2) the problem of sociology: the first feature is the quick pace of the city life; the second feature is the insulation of the city life; the third feature is the great variety of the city life. So the characteristics of general city life are enlarged because of the specialty at that time. The number of the adherents in mainland has expanded. In China, the research on religion from the perspective of the anthropology and sociology has already started. The positive influences of religion in the social activities of our city may be further revealed.

Biography:

Huizhu Gao is a female, ethnic Han, native of Shanghai, and professor of the College of Law and Politics at Shanghai Normal University, P.R.China. As a research supervisor she is head in charge of the Subject of Master's Degree on Marxist Philosophy in Shanghai Normal University, Standing Director of National Research Society of History Materialism, P.R China, Standing director of Philosophy Society of Shanghai, and dean commissary in charge of Epistemological Theory of Shanghai. She received great achievements and honors in philosophy and social science research with publications of more than ten books, such as *Politics Ethics in a New Era*, 2004; *Economy Ethics*, 2002; *Scientist Revolutionary and Social Development in the 20th*

Century, 1999 and others, as well as fifty papers, including "On System Equity", 2003; "Spirit Connotation of Sea School's Culture", 2003; "Spirit Connotation of Sea School's Culture in Miscellany of Well-off Society and City Cultural Construction", 2004 as well, various of national core periodicals since 1987. She specializes in Marxist philosophy, politics philosophy and ethics. She is the chair of the LSI, Workshop of Religion and Science at Shanghai Normal University.

Paper Text:

In China, it is a custom to mention religion and superstition in the same breath. A case in point is that in every day's talk. It is a regular phrase to connect religion with superstition. Is it true that religion is the same as superstition? If the answer is "yes", then religion will gradually lose its market in such a metropolitan city as Shanghai, with the development of people's education, the popularization of science and knowledge as well as the opening of information superhighway. And there will be less and less followers of religion. However, this is not supported by available statistics. Then, why does religion still exist in such a metropolitan city as Shanghai, and why is it still expanding? The reason lying behind this is not easy to explain and thus it needs careful study.

□, The Pursuit of Metaphysics by Human Beings Is the most Profound Reason to the Existence of Religion.

While talking about religious belief, Engels pointed out "Religion's source features the eternal human nature even though it is the most ridiculous superstition." It indicates that there exists some eternal human nature. It is one of the human natures to pursue metaphysics. However, it is not some kind of born nature, and it gradually formed during the process of evolution with the elevation of human being's intellect as well as the development of feelings.

Firstly, the fact that people of different races and nationalities have the isomorphic organic system can lead to the fact that there exists in the same human nature. Human being is the result of evolution of space during more than 20 billion years. According to Engels, the founder of Marxism, a thinking spirit is the most beautiful flower in the world. Modern science shows that there are three stages of mind development such as new cortex, mind flange and mind of crawling animals. New cortex is the product during the evolution from ape to the intellected man. It controls intellectual, imagination, the ability to abstract and the ability to calculate. It is tantamount to human beings' conscious. The mind flange which is the stage next to the new cortex is the inheritance of mammals. It controls human beings' feelings. The mind of crawling animals in the mind flange stems from crawling animals. It originates all the primitive impulses of human beings, making the unconscious part of human beings' minds. The isomorphic human mind in biology is the most profound basis of human nature. Just as Mencius in ancient times once said: "Every one has the sympathy which used properly leads to a sympathetic politics."

Secondly, the substantially integrative relationship between human beings and space

has made the relationship between human beings and heaven a question commonly concerned by people of different races. It has also become the most stable pursuit for metaphysics. Modern science has told us that space is the place where human beings are born. There is an inseparable relationship between human beings and space. The body tissue of human beings is the highly organized product of space, and it's also a result of conformation. It will only function well under the proper earth's temperature, humidity, air pressure, magnetic field, gravity, radiation from the sun as well as the physical and chemical conditions of the atmosphere. Any breakdown of the relationships such as the relationship between breath, blood pressure and the atmosphere, the relationship between human beings' marrow and the earth's gravity or the relationship between our skin and the sun's radiation will bring disaster to our life and make life hard to sustain. Meanwhile, space has also provided us with water, food and air which are necessary to sustain our life. All in all human beings' life is a link to the ecological chain of the earth and the space. Substantially, human beings and space are integrated. What is also noticeable is that with the emerge of human being's conscious, on one hand, human being has become the most highly developed form of life on the earth. On the other hand , there appears the phenomenon of the division between subject and object. Because of the independence of conscious from material, human being, will on one hand feels proud of himself and on the other hand feels isolated. While facing the things outside himself, such as sky, land, grass and rivers, standing on the point of subject-object division, we will inevitably ask:“ What is the relationship between their existence and our existence? Does the meaning of our existence rely on them? Who am I? Where do I come from? Where will I go? ”While asking and considering these questions, we form a desire to return to the space. It is an eternal desire of the integration between human beings and the space. This is testified by examples from almost all of the religions in the world that they regard heaven or paradise as the final ideal. This is just the nature of being imprinted in human being's heart--- the nature of the belief. The desire to return to the space which is demonstrated in the asking of metaphysical questions appears in different forms in different beliefs. We can even find its traits in the experiments of space-crafts.

Therefore, in the research of Chinese Marxism, there is a view that the compatible relationship between science and religion is impossible, as discussed in the field of epistemology. Since in this field, both of them are inconsistent that Science is rational and Religion belongs to the idolatrous superstition. Nevertheless, in the field of ontology and subsistence theory, the common view between them is obvious. To begin with, both science and religion are derived from observation and interpretation towards the nature, and the distinction between them is that science

searches the answers within the world, whereas religion explores the answer beyond the scope of the world. Secondly, applying imagination and abstract to the probing existence is the common the same approaches. The question lies in the nature of science and in respecting facts. The science makes the fact known by confirmation and un-confirmation. However, religion explains the fact with supernatural power. In the history of science and religion, it happens to have the same view and proposition. For instance, in ancient Greece, Pythagoras insisted on the viewpoint of soul's eternity and metempsychosis, saying that his soul had existed for 207 years, which is the dust of the sunlight. What he said implied the structure of substance. Finally, the common purpose of them is to correspond to the socially personal relationships, including the relationships between human beings, nature and society. Religion makes it harmonious by the ethical thoughts of reverence of life. For instance, Chinese Buddhism, whose believers abstain from eating meal in Chinese folk-custom, is not biocidal; on the other hand, Chinese Taoism argues that Tao must emulate the nature and human being is consistent of nature. Nevertheless, the cooperation and confliction of interest groups makes the attitudes different, which deviates from their original intention and the concrete annotation. Of course, the commonness can be found from it.

Furthermore, limited life, frangibility and inevitable death, which result in human being has pursued the world metaphysically. A word is said from *History of Science*, written by Danwall, “ people is the product of causes, which have not predicted the relevant result: his wish and fear, love and belief, which can be attributed to atom's accidental cooperation; about passion, bravery, thought and constancy cannot maintain the lives and avoid the death; all the achievement of time, good faith, inspiration and genius brilliance are doomed to be extinct when the fire dies in solar system: the development of human beings will be inevitably buried in the relic of broken universe— although all of these is not absolutely incontestable, to some assured extent, it makes other philosophy untenable.—in vast universe, the human being is an atomy, and it comes into being by chance, but it is faced with death consequentially, also reported by biological science. However, faced with it, the difference between human being and other animals is that it has self-awareness, not only be conscious to living, but also to unavoidable death. With the rigorous reality, people have to ponder: why do we live and die? Do the life mean a kind of existence towards the death? This “metaphysical” investigation is the eternal topic of human beings. Chinese traditional proverb said: “A life is just like a year of plant”, Wen Tianxiang, Chinese national hero, once said: “Someone does not have it very much from ancient times in life, my loyalty may leave a page in the annals”, which is concerned with this topic.

In western country, from Aristotle to Hegel, the finite and the infinite, life and death are the important topics in philosophy. Whether China or foreign countries, whether ancient or modern, and whether the super man or the ordinary person, all of them care and pursue for it, which proves the essence of “metaphysical” pursuing and

the nature of belief. Dread to death and longing for survival, and exceeding it and to be eternal spirit, which becomes the common desire of ordinary people. Therefore, as the third cause, it makes the existence of religion. In different historical era, these causes are represented as different saying system, but essentially, it doesn't fundamentally change.

□. (topic)

Some characteristics of the modern city life, like the catalyst of the chemical reaction, accelerate the process to respond besides the reason of person's oneself that has been mentioned above. Totally religion over the past 20 years has developed greatly through reform and opening-up. Currently, there're hundreds of millions of followers of religion, over 300,000 religious staff, more than 3000 religious associations, about another 100,000 places for religious activities. All religious associations owns 74 religious colleges that cultivate religious staff. In Shanghai, the followers of Taoism, Islam, Catholic Church and Christianity (Protestantism) of the five main religions have showed different degree of trend of growth. Why in the modern metropolis, the number of people who believe in religion increases but not reduces? In addition to the reason mentioned in the first part, the characteristics of the life in Shanghai also is the reason in the increasingly flourishing big city of science technique that impulse the growth of the number of religious staff. If the problem that the first part of the text involves anthropology, then the problem to be mentioned in the second part will involves the problem of sociology. These features are as following:

Firstly, the quick rhythm of the city life. Everyday people can get perceptual knowledge understanding from the crowded persons in the street or the subway of Shanghai. The quick rhythm of the city life in Shanghai shows in every aspect of Shanghai people's daily life. It also shows in the speed of construction, degree of the change of the neighborhood blocks, the rise and fall in the stock market, flying of the price of the real estates and changing of the vogue of consummation .But this still is a surface layer of problem, these changes, like the neon lights on the Nanking road, will produce a kind of enlarging effect in the mind of the people who are used to living under the planned economy system and traditional rhythm. Ages in the planned economy, In the age of planned economics, Chinese depends on the unit on every aspect, which contains auditorium, bathhouse, nursery. The unit still assigns the housing, and send in various festival up various officers and workers' gift that belongs to the welfare treatment of the cash form or the real object form, which people's minds are filled with the dependence and the ownership sense to the unit. But, the welfare treatment that species are of a great variety which is used to be in the unit was generally taken out, and make people produce the feeling of dependence be pushed to the society. The person in unit soon becomes man of society. This rapid change will create the feeling of the feet which does not wear the unstable feeling and at a loss

what to do of the ground, this kind of sense of insecurity spreads out the calling for the sense of security and the sense of dependence, usually will get the solace in the religious rites and activities of religious groups, thus causing a change in mind that from believing religion to not believe.

Secondly, the insulation of the city life. In the city lives of the rhythm is not only much more quickly, space is much smaller, but also people faces each other independently. It is so-called" They can hear from each other, but they aren't willing to communicate." When the alleys in Shanghai have been dismantled, people move to the new houses, each separate unit lived one family ,people who are used to living together with many people suddenly felt insulated and lonely. This change drives people the feeling of" losing heavy". This feeling isn't only to general citizens, but also in young generation. Because of the improvement of teaching and the appearing of various companies, batches of white collars are cultivated. They work in the office, transacting their businesses, and devoting themselves to computers and telephones everyday. As time goes, people meet each other every day but they form together stranger person and create a distance between each other .The alienation can be said deriving from the virtual space and realistic space that is surrounded by the grace, exquisite insulated plank. A kind of feeling of the same kind insulation and alienation and will make person walk up God or other spirits insensibly. This is also a special social mental effect in the city society or the city cultures. The person is an animal living together in the society. Living together makes them produce the feeling of safety and the stability. After people estranged each other, the modern dwelling place and working environments are the lately safe feeling and the stable feeling that are found by human being's nature of socialization by other means. Walking into the religion is one of the passages. In modern Shanghai, many persons walk into the church, who are not familiar with the doctrines or rites incompletely, but just want to seek a mental environment that can make him produce the safe feeling and the stability feeling. Hence, they walk into the church and become the faithful adherents.

Thirdly, the variety of the city life is tensed .The quick rhythm of the city life usually made the depiction just from the quantity of aspect to city the life . Seeing from the aspect of the quality, its strong variety is also one of the characteristics. In the process of the big background that China's reform and opening to the outside world," the co-existence of the opportunities and challenges, the co-existence of risk and success ", being the topic that the people usually mention in daily communication, at the turning track of planned economy toward market economy , because of being lacking in experience of management and the existence of the disadvantage of legal system , make many brave sudden wealth, also the one who make many sudden wealth fall down. In addition to the time of reform and opening up to the outside world-- the influence of that Cultural Revolution in the emergence of the beginning of the sixty's to the end of the seventy's in last century, some persons fluctuate on politics, fall big greatly again, other person fluctuate on economy, and then fall big greatly. It lets the ordinary people feel" destiny" constantly changing. Destiny of

impermanent expressed the uncertainty and no confidence of living. This is the reality that the people do not wish to face but have to face again. Hoping to have the understanding and control to the destiny is people's heart wishes and the most deep and mental source that result in people's faith. In China, some persons convert to the Buddhism and live for it. The life philosophy that Buddhism actually can be treated as philosophy concerning "bitterness", is a theory that explores the life reason of the painful phenomenon and gets rid of the method of these pain and sufferings. It is said the forefather of Buddhism "princes Xidadu", once traveled round the world, leaving the house to practice moral teachings, the empress was again to cross legs to sit in silence, contemplating the meditation under the bodhi tree, passing 7 days and 7 nights, finally awakening arrive at the conclusion of "Blindness" that the source of the life pain and sufferings lies in the oneself. Knowing creations of world are all constantly changing, the life is all "bitterness", everyone will be ill and dead, joy and sorrow? The person who wants to set free out from the distress, should walk the personal proper way for practice moral teachings, reaching in the ideal world of the nirvana. Thus, they chase the person to the constantly changing grudge, expecting to change direction the oneself, change direction the heart, and change the direction of the people of this world thoroughly. The Buddhism understand and sympathize to the bitterness of the life with care and love living things of great, generous and merciful heart, and lead the person to leave the material life, see through the emptiness of the world, cool life, used for personal all idea, manager, energy, time personal way of doing that sets free so-called to practice moral teachings, match the ordinary people very much because of requesting to remove to living strong variety bring of the mental state of the worry anxiously try to, this is one of the reasons that some persons converts to the Buddhism. What's need to be mentioned here is, during the transformation period in social economic system in China, characteristic of general city life is exaggerated because of the specialty at that time. This is also the reason that over the last 20 years, the number of the adherents in mainland increased.

□.(topic)

In China, research on the anthropology, sociology on the religion has already started. The chief editor, professor Sung Huichang from the Central School of the Communist Party wrote similar to realistic problem research; a series of books (The People's Publishing Society in Shandong, 2005 version), have already treated "the religion theory" with "democracy theory", "the rule of law theory", "human rights theory" in equal position of contemporary and important theories, be the object of the special subject theories research." Making effort to understand and master the regulation of the religion itself", has already become concerned topic to the theorists. I believe that from the hard work of this research group, this topic will certainly have pierced. Religion, will show the positive effect that is in the city social activities in a further way.