

Logical Connotation and Realistic Care of the Critical Spirit of Chinese Intellectuals in the New Era

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Abstract

This article explores the should-be meaning and reshaping paths of the critical spirit of Chinese intellectuals. It argues that the critical spirit includes two connotations: the revolution and the reform. In the new era, The spirit is reflected in promoting national reform, specifically a spirit of criticizing the factors that restrict the development of the country. However, I find that the critical spirit of Chinese intellectuals faces the possibility of alienation. The misleading phenomenon of a very few public Chinese intellectuals' irrational criticism, false criticism, and self-righteous criticism should be under intensive focus. Finally, the paper puts forward that infiltration of mainstream values, expansion of speech space, and the supply of multiple development platforms are the necessary elements to shape the critical spirit of intellectuals.

Keywords

A New Era of Socialism with Chinese Characteristics; Chinese Intellectuals; Critical Spirit; Connotation; Cultivation.

1. Introduction

The traditional nature of Chinese intellectuals is to care about society from a critical standpoint. The national prophets of the historical turning point, China's advanced intellectuals, are the source of innovation and spiritual power for the nation. They carry the historical mission of national rejuvenation and prosperity. The critical spirit of Chinese intellectuals is reflected in spontaneous knowledge maintenance and conscious advice and suggestions, which promotes national development, social progress, and self-growth by spreading ideas, enlightening people's wisdom, and achieving milestones. It is the mission of intellectuals in the new era to maintain a moral conscience in the context of social stability and development, to maintain a clear head in the context of expanding democracy and freedom, and to ensure justice in the face of unprecedented changes in the world. However, in real life, very few "public intellectuals" regard local issues and personal interests as overall problems and national interests and deal with "defective" problems in the country and society one-sidedly. Such an approach violates the original intention of maintaining national stability and reflects the critical spirit of Chinese intellectuals in the new era. This leads to three main questions discussed in this paper: In the new era, what should be the desired aspects of the critical spirit of Chinese intellectuals? Why does this spirit tend to be alienated? And how to reshape the upward and good critical spirit of intellectuals to meet the needs of the times and the respectable responsibility of intellectuals. Some scholars believe that compared with Western intellectuals, Chinese intellectuals lack critical spirit. In fact, they understood the critical spirit in a narrow sense as the complete negation and rupture of the old things. Of course, this is related to the long-term behavior role outside the government and protest status of Western intellectuals. Such a tradition is very different from the characteristics of traditional Chinese intellectuals. Chinese traditional intellectuals aim to realize their political ideal by cooperating with the political power, cutting off the disadvantages of the system and improving the social system. If the moral foundation of

the regime completely collapses, they will become the leaders of the protest army, overthrow the decadent regime and make the new regime conform to the heaven and the will of the people. Therefore, This article overcomes the shortcomings of previous research, and obtains the due meaning of critical spirit through combing and analyzing historical materials. The theoretical premise of this article is that the critical spirit of Chinese intellectuals is an indispensable quality to show their life realm and social ideal, which is based on the maintenance of social "healthy stability". This spirit has both revolutionary and reform aspects. The side of revolution is reflected in destroying old things and establishing new things, while the side of reform is reflected in improving, correcting and innovating unreasonable parts.

This article argues that intellectuals are born with the spiritual temperament of criticism, innovation, and transformation of reality. They can reflect and analyze the fate of mankind and the nation from a political perspective. When the state power goes against the historical trend, the critical spirit of the Chinese intellectuals is embodied as the revolutionary spirit of overthrowing the old and establishing a new regime. When the state power follows the historical trend, the critical spirit of the intellectuals is embodied as the reform spirit of promoting the normal operation of the country. In this new era, the critical spirit of intellectuals is that of reform, specifically that of criticizing the factors that impede the country's development. The critical spirit of Chinese intellectuals is based on the premise of identifying with the Communist Party of China, the country, and the socialist system.

To further explore the critical spirit of Chinese intellectuals, this article is divided into four sections. Section I explains the core meaning of the critical spirit of Chinese intellectuals in the new era, which lays a standard for the further research. Section II objectively looks into that there is a danger of alienation in the critical spirit of very few intellectuals based on the reflection and analysis of the actual situation. Section III deeply illustrates the various reasons for the alienation of intellectuals' critical spirit. Section IV gives some suggestions to guide intellectuals to criticize with conscience.

2. The Connotation of the Critical Spirit of Chinese Intellectuals

2.1. Set Virtue: Lead a Manner of Social Morality

The sense of responsibility and mission of Chinese intellectuals has shaped their positive attitude towards "devoting themselves to society and making contributions," and in some historical stages, it has also been highlighted as a political responsibility to "save the country and the people." In the new era, the critical spirit of intellectuals must be implemented to spread advanced ideas in the hierarchy, convey the will of the Party, lead social fashion, and build a positive and demonstrative force that integrates knowledge and virtue for social development. Advanced intellectuals lead the developmental direction of the country and society and consolidate ideological leadership. Relying on professional knowledge, the intellectuals actively grasp the pulse of the development of the times, take lead in accepting advanced ideas that are in line with the corresponding development, and undertake the task of propaganda and education, enlightening people's wisdom and effectuating changes. As an indispensable moral example and value model for social development, intellectuals shoulder the responsibility of rectifying their deeds and rectifying the behavior of others and the development direction of the country (Cao, 2018). The ancient Chinese sages, represented by Confucius, wrote books, traveled across several countries, spread their ideas, and awakened the goodness and virtue in people's hearts. After the May 4th movement, advanced intellectuals took on the important task of propagating Marxism and made scientific socialism a strong ideological trend in China through newspaper propaganda, translation and introduction of works, and the establishment of organizations. As the main body of ideological and cultural dissemination, intellectuals from all walks of life serve as enlighteners, educators, and pioneers, study and reveal various social

phenomena and development laws, stand at the forefront of science, inspire the public, remove ignorance, and drive the political changes and social transformation of modern China. The new era is defined as the time when scientific theories are gradually maturing, and the public vision is broadening. When society continues to divide, the media evolves, and the public has access to a large number of channels for receiving information. The critical spirit of intellectuals, especially on the propaganda and education fronts, is reflected in the scientific interpretation of leaders' thoughts, the promotion of scientific theories, the defense of facts and truths, the dialogue with the public in the public domain from a professional perspective, and the building of bridges between the ruling party and the people. Moreover, by propagating ideas that meet the needs of the rulers, clearly expressing the political intentions of the ruling class, and supporting the beliefs of the people with scientific theories, intellectuals ensure the stability of the ideological leadership of the rulers. The Communist Party of China represents the interests of the vast majority of the people, which means that it represents the interests of the intellectuals. Importantly, the criticism of intellectuals is not for the sake of criticism but for safeguarding the leadership of the Communist Party of China and promoting the development of society with an attitude of responsibility; thus, their speeches are valuable to social progress and stability, providing a valuable orientation to the citizens. On one hand, the main contradiction in our society has changed, the uncoordinated, unbalanced, and insufficient development of society still exists. The healthy and orderly development of society requires insightful intellectuals to understand the national conditions in a rational and critical way and examine social reality to clarify the current situation and guide the public direction. In addition, it is the inevitable duty of the intellectuals to face the problems existing in the people's values and to guide their return to the mainstream ideology in a timely manner instead of catering to their intuition. On the other hand, the new era requires a group of intellectuals with courage, stance, and attitude to fight against unhealthy public opinion worldwide. This requires intellectuals to base themselves on China's reality and the conditions of the current era and convey a voice that is in line with the nation's interests. Opportunities and challenges coexist in China under "the overall strategic situation of realizing the great rejuvenation of the nation and the great changes that have not occurred in the world in a century." Thus, China needs intellectuals to oppose the simple indoctrination of Western values in Chinese society in the international public opinion field, expose the lies of Western politicians and the media, and help the population to establish a Chinese value judgment system.

2.2. Make Speeches: Act as a Social Referee

Chinese intellectuals are individuals acting as watchers of the interests of the people at the bottom of society, expressing their will deeply. The critical spirit of intellectuals should be the moral cognition of seeking truth and goodness, speaking for the masses, especially the people at the bottom of the social hierarchy, and the moral practice of daring to speak the truth to the unjust power. In the new era, people's demands for democracy, rule of law, fairness, and justice are growing day-by-day, requiring the intellectuals to have a critical spirit, be sensitive to social injustice, and dare to speak out.

Intellectuals, known as "natural opposition," played a potentially revolutionary role as soon as they appeared on the social stage. They are deeply concerned about all issues related to public interest, have the obligation to answer all questions, and are convinced that the unreasonable social status quo should be changed (Yu, 1997) The conscience role of intellectuals is the continuation and deepening of the role of enlightenment. During social transformation or the occurrence of major events, intellectuals always consciously act as observers, debunkers, and counselors of the times and serve society's interests, fairness, and justice and the aspirations of the people. In modern times, advanced intellectuals have the courage to criticize the orthodox social system and superstitious social atmosphere, advocate democracy, and oppose autocracy.

They truly reflect the real-life issues of the general public, actively care for the people at the bottom of society, expose social phenomena, and sound a wake-up call for self-rescue and national salvation. Among them, the intellectuals represented by Lu Xun attacked the dark side of society with rafters, awakened the numb souls of the Chinese people, and demonstrated the intellectuals' deep responsibility and concern for society. Chinese intellectuals have inherited and continued the sense of urgency of "worrying before the people and enjoying after the people," and the responsibility to care for the fate of society is still the quality required in the new era. Xi Jinping pointed out that intellectuals should seek truth from facts, be objective and fair, focus on facts, look at the essence, establish truth, and contribute to the cause of the Communist Party of China and the people ("Xi Jinping.Speech at the Forum of Intellectuals, Model Workers, and Youth Representatives ", 2016). In this new era, China is still in the primary stage of socialism and is a developing nation in transition. Currently, there is unbalanced and insufficient development in all aspects of society. At the time of comprehensively deepening reforms, the cause of the Communist Party of China is moving in the right direction, which requires builders and advocates who "set up the tide of the times, communicate the changes of the past and the present, and are the forerunner of the thoughts" ("Xi Jinping.Speech at the Symposium on Philosophy and Social Sciences," 2016). Typically, all intellectuals with ideals, feelings, and responsibilities should speak, narrate, and argue for the Communist Party of China and the people. In a socialist society, coordinating the relationship between human development and social development reflects the value goal of socialism, which requires that intellectuals should not be confined to a small circle of personal interests, but rather build a community dedicated to national rejuvenation and people's happiness. Intellectuals are deeply concerned with all issues related to public interests and have an obligation to criticize the unreasonable social status quo, defend the disadvantaged groups, and express a just stand and attitude. In the new era, the Communist Party of China requires intellectuals to take a stand for people, express their opinions on public issues, criticize unhealthy social phenomena, and promote healthy functioning of the public society through "sublation." On the other hand, constructive criticism of the development of the socialist cause should be put forward on the premise of upholding the leadership of the Communist Party of China and the existing system. The Communist Party represents the interests of the masses. The essence of correcting the work style and improving the architecture is to safeguard the interests of the Party and the people. In the new era, when the country is developing and gaining stability, grassroots opinions and suggestions are precious. Intellectual criticism can always remind to eliminate wrong ideas and concepts and strengthen the cultivation of the spirit of the Communist Party of China. Intellectuals should act as the mouthpieces of the people, mirrors of the Party members, and cadres from an objective perspective, daring to wage their swords in the face of right and wrong and bridging a link between the Party and the people. If the country wants to develop and stabilize, the Communist Party of China needs to maintain a healthy body without comprehensively deepening reform and self-revolution. The insightful remarks of intellectuals would help the Party and the country to face the problem, continuously debug, purify, and improve to ensure the advanced nature and purity of the Party.

2.3. Perform Meritorious Deeds: Strive to be a Social Pioneer

The critical spirit of Chinese intellectuals is also reflected in breaking the old and establishing the new, innovating and creating, and making contributions. The change and development of a country require outstanding intellectuals to constantly explore new ideas and promote changes and development such that the "new building" can rise from the "old foundation." In the process of transformation of the society from traditional to modernization, intellectuals criticize and sublimate the culture that suppresses human nature and unreasonable social existence, i.e., creation and innovation. In the new era, aspiring intellectuals should actively strive to be the

drivers of innovation and development, always stand at the forefront, lead innovation, and constantly enrich their spiritual life.

The critical spirit of intellectuals contains the connotation of truth-seeking and innovation. While promoting the transformation of society from traditional to modern, intellectuals devote themselves to research, diligently seek, and continuously promote theoretical, institutional, scientific, and technological innovation to achieve their ideal aspirations. Criticism is the source of the development of human civilization. Without the critical spirit of Marx and Engels, there would be no sublation and transcendence of Hegel's and Feuerbach's philosophies, and there would be no appearance of scientific socialism; without the critical spirit of the Communists, there would be no courage to set things right and the self-revolution in the ruling Party, there would be no exciting national independence, magnificent reform, and opening up. On the road of growth, intellectuals criticized and inherited the research results of their predecessors, benefited the society and the people with innovative achievements, and established a meritorious history. In the new era of coexistence of challenges and opportunities, intellectuals should not be content to be just "knowledge men" but should also think about the correlation between personal development and that of the new era, constantly reflect on the solutions to major problems in human society, and consciously associate professional and social development. The intellectuals adhere to integrity and innovation and actively respond to the call of the times. Since development has entered a new era, it is even more necessary for intellectuals to continuously consolidate, revise, and improve the development path of socialism with Chinese characteristics. This new era harbors many new historical characteristics. Thus, intellectuals, as leaders at the forefront of the times, must constantly maintain a mental state of "taking the test", arm themselves with advanced knowledge and technology, and contribute based on their posts. They must show their wisdom and talents according to the needs of the country and the bottleneck of social development. In the face of prominent problems of deep-seated contradictions, such as population, resources, and environment, intellectuals must break through traditional institutional barriers and innovate balanced, coordinated, and sustainable solutions. In addition, they also need to constantly strengthen innovation awareness, improve innovation ability, and climb the peak of innovation. At present, China is still in a "follow-up" position in many fields, and some key core technologies face the risk of "stuck neck." This requires intellectuals to actively participate in the innovation and development, seize the commanding heights of a new round of innovation, strive to be the leading talents at the forefront of the times and the forerunners of innovation-driven development, master the initiative of core technologies, and fundamentally safeguard national security. The intellectuals should turn their critical spirit into concrete operations, transform from thinkers in the study to actors in the field, be responsible for scientific and technological innovation, theoretical creation, and academic prosperity in the new era, and realize the unity of knowledge and action. In the struggle of the new era, intellectuals must have "the courage to dare to be the first, the will to open up roads in the mountains and build bridges when encountering rivers, and the attitude of exploring knowledge and seeking truth and pragmatism" (China, 2013), with a critical spirit persistent in learning, lifelong learning, taking the untraveled path, and creating personal attributes that benefit the society and the people.

3. The Decline of the Critical Spirit of Intellectuals in the New Era

From ancient to the present times, the critical spirit of intellectuals has always been a good medicine to promote continuous self-examination of society that has awakened the numb crowd, created a clear political atmosphere, and promoted the continuous progress of the country. In the new era, the reform of China's political system is steadily advancing, the economic development has become normal, and the culture has continued to prosper and

innovate. Intellectuals are indispensable as they maintain a rational conscience and a critical attitude in various fields, thereby retaining national stability, advocating social fairness and justice, and making efforts to resolve social conflicts and crises. Typically, while society is undergoing profound changes, the hazard of alienation due to the critical spirit of a few intellectuals cannot be ignored, which renders the possibility of hindering the healthy functioning of the country and society.

3.1. Indifferent Faith Leads to Irrational Voice

The professional knowledge and ideas of intellectuals support their right to speak, enabling them to maintain independent thinking and free spirit; thus, they often call themselves “opinion leaders” and social “gadflies”. However, the characteristic in intellectual production has two directions. It can either be inclined to the official discourse system that conveys the government’s proposition and the will of the country or it may lead to the discourse system that is not conducive to the interests of the Party and the people and is free from morality and the rule of law. The indifference in intellectuals’ morality and belief in the rule of law is ultimately a lack of political belief.

The main mission of the existence of intellectuals is to spread advanced ideas and support social development. Intellectuals, especially “public intellectuals,” comprise an active group in public issues. They have professional authority and influence and can guide the direction of public opinion through discourse, thereby influencing public thinking and indirectly participating in social processes. Notably, the criticality of intellectuals has two sides. It not only criticizes and corrects the concerns of reality but also may damage the interests of the Party and the country by advocating freedom and democracy or defending the autonomy of knowledge. For example, when people increasingly call on intellectuals to lead the socialism core values, a few “public intellectuals” question the Communist Party of China and the government based on the rights conferred by the Constitution. However, this line of questioning is not to help the Party and the government improve the socialist system but to criticize from the perspective of negating socialism, which violates the original intention of the social function of intellectuals. The irrational “public intellectuals” mislead the public’s cognition and opinion with extreme remarks, so that their connotation is changed into a synonym for “voice for attention,” splitting the fish-water relationship between the Party and the people in the name of criticizing and supervising the Party and the government. In the comparative evaluation between China and the West, intellectuals who have lost their public morality use the developed Western countries as a reference to advocate Western ideas, praise the West, and turn against China. Such intellectuals critically move towards harming the interests of the Party and the state by advocating freedom and democracy or defending intellectual autonomy, overemphasizing individual thought and autonomous will, and ignoring the order of morality and the rule of law.

3.2. Weakened Conscience Leads to Selective Voice

Since the reform and opening up, the Communist Party of China and the government have continuously emphasized the role of intellectuals. While raising expectations for intellectuals, they have also been given opportunities to offer advice and suggestions. The majority of intellectuals have gradually recovered their personality. However, some have suffered from the “anti-rightist” struggle and the flushing of the market economy, which has weakened their personalities, integrity, and courage. Their lack of critical spirit has distanced them from appealing for the people and speaking the truth to the power; they have begun to “speak with a pick” and say “half-truths” or lie under the influence of public opinion and interests.

The production, circulation, and distribution of knowledge are easily affected by power and money, and hence, intellectuals may be driven by unjust power in this process that interferes with the authenticity and fairness of criticism. Some intellectuals are able to uphold their responsibilities to society and have the courage to speak up, while others are willing to be

shrinking turtles away from the life of the masses. Influenced by restrictions on speech and political scrutiny, telling the truth to power is a luxurious ideal even in most modern democracies (Zhao, 2018). In the new era, considering the risks of speech and propaganda, intellectuals' critical discourse in the public field is also permeated with the characteristics of sharp thinking but prudent protection, foresight but insufficient action, and enthusiastic attitude but easy compromise. The current situation constrains the space for intellectuals to observe and express, and it is easy to deepen the public's suspicion of intellectuals' critical words. Intellectuals face the academies, turn their backs on the public and are farther away from public life, gradually forming an individualized, isolated, self-appreciating class. In addition, some intellectuals are separated from the rural society and cannot connect with the people, rendering it difficult to penetrate the masses. These intellectuals lack a real observation of the life of people at the bottom of the village, making it impossible to connect the ideas conveyed by the general public with China's reality, speak out for the people, resolve their difficulties, and exercise power for their benefit. Under this conflict, some intellectuals surrender to unjust power or live in the gap between academics and politics. Such intellectuals who easily give up the truth do not dare to express their true opinions to outdated stereotypes and unjust authorities. They lack conscience and courage and unknowingly break away from the simple and vivid life experience of what they have seen and heard about social issues, thereby unable to reflect on the hot issues of people's livelihood and speak on their behalf. Furthermore, the intellectuals affected by established rules lose the initiative to criticize: the subject of expression is imposed, the environment in which they speak is imposed, and the time of speech is also limited. Over time, they lose the ability and willingness to criticize and question social reality.

3.3. Confused Ideals Cause Difficulty in Making New Voices

The Chinese society in the transition period has brought about an increasingly obvious differentiation of intellectuals. Some intellectuals "cross-border" become television (TV) or media intellectuals, while others embark on the path of academic research. Ideals and beliefs are the foundation for intellectuals. If they detract from the true character of scholars in order to please the public, regard exploration as a dreadful way, and take the burden of moving forward as a disadvantage, it would be difficult to exert the spirit of criticism and innovation to realize social and personal values.

The individual struggle of intellectuals is inseparable from the support of the state, and the realization of the rejuvenation of the nation also depends on the creativity of intellectuals. If intellectuals do not adhere to the ideals of struggling for socialism with Chinese characteristics and do not combine the personal dream with the Chinese dream, they will suffer from mental "rickets." In the new era, with the rapid development of various websites, media, and official accounts, the phenomenon of intellectuality becoming famous has gradually become a social trend, including guest TV programs, online live broadcasts, and marketing of official accounts. It is undeniable that some intellectuals have developed innovative, high-quality, and nutritious programs and courses using various platforms. However, some intellectuals, who gave up their painstaking attainment of the profession and the adherence to truth in order to gain attention, turned into "stars" who entertain the audience, create superficial issues, express curious opinions, blindly pursue entertaining complaints, and make a grandstanding. Going with the flow and driven by fame and fortune, these intellectuals are keen to produce cultural commodities that have commercial value and can be quickly converted into economic capital rather than producing products that achieve social harmony and people's happiness. When the personal values of intellectuals do not match or disconnect from social values, personal ideals cannot gain long-term benefits. The other subgroup of the intellectuals in the academy actively creates a new situation for the prosperity and development of philosophy, social sciences, and

natural sciences and gradually expands the frontier achievements in the academic field. When the academic field is expanded, the research topic is deepened, and the research quality is significantly improved, we should assess whether some intellectuals are used to settling down in the "study." In the current group, few intellectuals leave the academy because it is impossible for them to gain public recognition without the support of their academic background. However, under the constraints of the unique training and promotion mechanism of the academia, unified standards and norms have been formed within the academies, which to a certain extent constrains the independent and innovative ideas and concepts of intellectuals. Thus, it is difficult for intellectuals in the bureaucratic management model and in college life to output high-pattern innovative ideas from a realistic perspective; highly specialized results can only be produced under discipline and professional standards. Notably, intellectuals who are far away from public life lack the care for the times, the national destiny, and the ultimate value of mankind, reducing their attention and interest in the public sphere. As a result, intellectuals devote significant time and attention to the creation of scientific research projects, which could be a unique academic activity. Subsequently, the native land-related emotions began to turn into academic passion, and public recognition is transformed into recognition within the academic circle, making it difficult for intellectuals to break through the limitations of the existing thinking framework to grasp the rapidly changing practice.

4. Reasons for the Decline of Intellectuals' Critical Spirit

For a long period, the healthy development of intellectuals' critical spirit has been influenced by domestic and foreign economic, political, and cultural aspects. In the new era, intellectuals are faced with the overall strategy of the great rejuvenation of China and significant changes in the world unseen in a century. In the broader and far-reaching changes, intellectuals would inevitably appear spontaneous and blind in their words and deeds, thereby weakening the core of the intellectuals' critical spirit. The spiritual core contains family and country responsibility, benevolence, morality, and innovation power.

4.1. Deep Changes in Domestic and Foreign Situations Challenge the Value Orientation of Intellectuals

Since the Third Plenary Session of the Eleventh Central Committee, the Communist Party of China and the government have carried out in-depth reflection and adjustment on the issues, improved the social status, and encouraged the intellectuals to actively participate in the tide of social change. Marketization has not only led to the emancipation of the mind but also brought new challenges to the construction of morality and the rule of law. Under the great changes in the new era, intellectuals are still faced with the value challenges of multiple ideological trends, ideas, and interests.

From the perspective of the external environment, the political, economic, cultural, social, ecological, and other aspects of contemporary China have been a part of globalization. From the perspective of the domestic environment, the in-depth development of reform, opening up, and the injection of the market economy has made significant changes in society. Under the interaction of the tension, the two perspectives, socialist ideology and non-mainstream ideology, conflict and coexist, causing violent shocks to the values of intellectuals. The development of intellectuals' critical spirit is driven or restricted by the whole social and historical background. In the era of one value, intellectuals' interpretation and transformation of the world tend to be consistent and are easily regulated by collectivism, whereas in an open and pluralistic era, the intellectual background and the interference faced by the intellectuals inevitably create a conflict between their and mainstream values. These conflicts can be communicated through dialog or they may evolve as detrimental to national interests, disrupting the uncertainties in the social order. Facilitated by the invisible "hand" of the market,

it is challenging for intellectuals to maintain an objective, fair, and rational criticism. In the new era, a major aspect of the competition for great powers is to compete for various ideological infiltrations and impact of social thoughts or to incite, plan, and use intellectuals to interfere in the internal affairs of other countries. As Xi Jinping pointed out, “all kinds of hostile forces at home and abroad always try to make our Party change its flag and name, and the key is to try to make us lose our belief in Marxism, socialism, and communism.” (“Xi Jinping. Speech at the National Party School Work Conference,” 2016) Western countries led by the United States have weakened the intellectuals’ theoretical confidence in China by constructing discourse hegemony and interfering with intellectuals’ institutional confidence by exporting the Western capitalist liberal democratic system. These phenomena have been effectuated by advocating “blue civilization” and “constitutional democracy” “Universal values” and “American model” deny and undervalue the status and role of China’s excellent traditional culture and socialist core values and disintegrate the intellectuals’ cultural self-confidence. They also erode the confidence of intellectuals in socialism by inciting wrong social trends such as “historical nihilism.” The gap between socialist countries and developed capitalist countries makes some intellectuals suspicious of the socialist road. Under the temptation of Western ideology, some intellectuals have lost their social responsibilities of public morality, creating a phenomenon of indiscriminate voices. Under the influence of Western forces, a small number of intellectuals fell into the trap of Western “democratization” and turned to advocate “universal values” and the core values of the bourgeoisie, such as human rights, freedom, and democracy. However, under these circumstances, there is still room for the development of the rule of virtue and law, although intellectuals have to face the bottleneck problem of being involved in the market and lose themselves in critical thinking and constantly struggle with their pure and good nature. On the other hand, the relevant provisions regulating the expression of intellectuals’ opinions are still lacking, and some “public intellectuals” have not yet established their own legal beliefs. The rapid development of the Internet and other emerging media has broadened the channels for intellectuals to express their opinions. The virtuality and anonymity of the Internet have allowed intellectuals to express their opinions actively and without thinking. Before the legal system was perfected, some intellectuals escaped social and legal responsibilities by exploiting the loopholes and were not responsible for the negative impact of their words and deeds on society. In China’s political practice, the Constitution has not yet established its due authority in citizens’ daily life. Due to historical reasons, people’s understanding of the Constitution is often limited to its political level. Intellectuals who have studied abroad or are indifferent to the Constitution, cannot feel constitutional power and role in society. Then, patriotism and following the Party’s leadership are out of the question.

4.2. Specific Historical Encounters Dilute the Public Concern of Intellectuals

Chinese intellectuals have been close to power since ancient times. Under the influence and discipline of the political environment, it is difficult for intellectuals to use free will as a starting point to break through the professional field and express public concern. As a result, intellectuals avoid a critical discourse or blindly turn to political slogans, losing their conscience and responsibility in the theme and content of criticism.

In the traditional economic theory, knowledge is not an independent factor of production and needs to exist depending on labor, capital, resources, and tools. Therefore, intellectuals are a class without independent economic status and rely on the political and economic ruling class. Thus, it is common for their speech on political positions to fluctuate, which highlights their weakness and dependence. Xu Jilin believed that: “independent personality is extremely lacking in traditional intellectuals (scholars), but shows another image, i.e., dependent personality.” (Xu, 1999) Based on the dual characteristics of intellectuals, the Communist Party of China and the government have transformed, educated, trained, and used intellectuals on every rung, forcing

the public speech of Chinese intellectuals to be in a dilemma for a long time. In a specific historical period, the critical function of intellectuals was considered a factor that caused instability and was denied or weakened. The enthusiasm of intellectuals for speaking began to decline after the victory of the counter-Japanese war and was lost after the founding of the People's Republic of China. Only a few intellectuals dared to question and criticize the various decisions made by the new regime that was inconsistent with reality and human nature. Under the special political background, intellectuals suffered from the triple dilemma of survival, spirit, and literary career. The mentality of worry, contradiction, and compromise experienced by intellectuals continued into the era of institutionalization. Under the bureaucratic management model, intellectuals gave up criticizing tradition for fear of suppression. In the face of officialdom rules, intellectuals are either involuntarily chasing power or filled with depression and helplessness. Hence, in the face of social phenomena of mixed good and bad and the temptation of power and money, it is easy for the intellectuals to lose their moral stance.

4.3. The Solidified Institutional Mechanism Restricts the Independent Innovation of Intellectuals

The loss of the ideal of intellectuals comes from the confusion of "spiritual home." Its essence is that individuals are deterred from seeking the meaning of life and lose the valuable foundation of their existence. Under the influence of solidified systems and mechanisms, intellectuals pursue professional competitiveness and profit and gradually shift emphasis from criticality to technology, following which their sense of innovation in social development is weakened. It also limits their comprehensive and accurate understanding and grasping of the correlation between personal and social developments. The bleakness of intellectuals' subject spirit has created materialistic "refined egoists" or "skilled barbarians," which separate the individual and social values.

Idealism is based on the humans' rational spirit. The ideal of intellectuals is the conscious construction of one's life and meaningful activities in an autonomous state, which should be the fusion of personal and national ideals. The professional quality and innovative thinking of the intellectuals involved in the public media are affected by their cultural taste, discourse space, and agenda-setting. In the environment of market competition, program planning often dilutes the academic taste, excludes the depth of thought, and limits the critical awareness and skepticism of intellectuals. Also, the views of the intellectuals have been fragmented and reduced to resources and tools for TV media integration. The language output of the intellectuals "polished" by agenda-setting begins to break away from their independent thinking to cater to the entertainment needs of listeners, viewers, and readers. As an outcome of the intervention of business model and capital operation, expert opinion reports and public affair speeches have to change their discourse methods to meet the commercial logic based on the ratings. Thus, over time, the intellectuals' thoughts and discourse has gradually plateaued and are one-sided. The modern bureaucratic society uses logical division of knowledge to establish a strict ruling order and management method. Consequently, the intellectuals either enter scientific research institutes and universities or become contract writers in enterprises and become people under the management of the system. They gradually change from "traditional" to "organic," and began to attach themselves to "skins." The transformation from a moral system to a knowledge system changes the intellectuals' influence from moral conduct to knowledge mastery, and their inherent independence, rationality, and critical spirit of change gradually fade away. While the system brings many conveniences to intellectuals, it also has potential destructive power. The inherent impersonal and non-individualized power of the system overrides the dignity and value of intellectuals and becomes a shackle that hinders their transformation and innovation. Currently, the academic environment has become a sanctuary for modern intellectuals. The publicity of intellectuals is gradually replaced by professionalism,

criticism and innovation are replaced by academic research institutes, and passion is replaced by calmness(Z. Chen, 2006). The differentiation of the so-called “ideas” and “knowledge,” “vocation” and “professional” has blocked the transformation of the intellectuals to some extent. Under the fate of the bureaucratic institutional framework, the institutionalized operation of instrumental rationality intervenes in the world of intellectuals, forcing them to gradually distance themselves from critical independence and creativity. The discourse form of many professional and technical intellectuals pursues norms, standards, and operability(S. Chen, 2016) and is shaped as a conservative characteristic that weakens the keen and brave pioneering spirit. The ideals of the intellectuals are narrowed to only being proficient in their own research subjects, replacing the world view of critical values with a scientific and logical viewpoint, burying themselves in the study of book knowledge, and diluting the exploration of practical social problems. If intellectuals lose their independent thinking spirit and innovative consciousness and become only interpreters and demonstrators of the existing systems and measures, research will lose the forward-looking theoretical guidance. Consequently, the intellectuals are satisfied with the system’s demand for productivity or production efficiency while abandoning individual needs, interests, and sense of mission. As a result, some intellectuals befall prey to academic corruption and join some leading Party and government cadres to participate in or influence the development of politics. Many intellectuals who should have been ambitious, creative, and enterprising advance in the opposite direction.

5. The Feasible Way to Cultivate the Critical Spirit of Intellectuals

In the new era, the critical spirit of intellectuals returns to the path of goodness and truth. Thus, it is necessary for the Communist Party of China and the state to achieve the organic unity of people’s hearts and consensus, develop the intellectuals’ conscience with respect to national responsibility, social, and individual innovation, to carry the kind-hearted critical spirit upward.

5.1. Infiltrating the Critical Conscience of Intellectuals with Mainstream Values

In the face of the diverse demands and possible misconduct of intellectuals, the Party must intensify the integration of ideology and culture and strengthen the command of mainstream values over people’s hearts while laying the foundation for intellectuals’ self-discipline and heteronomy through the socialist rule of law. This would make the intellectuals consciously love the Party and the country, actively spread the Party’s voice, and firmly safeguard national interests.

Xi Jinping pointed out that intellectuals should be models for practicing the core values of socialism, adhere to the supremacy of the state, the nation, and the people, and always have the big picture in mind and heart (“When Xi Jinping visited the members of the Jiu San Society of the Democratic Progressive Agricultural Workers Party who participated in the CPPCC meeting, he emphasized that the majority of intellectuals in our country should take the initiative to take the initiative and make more contributions to the prosperity of the country and the revitalization of the people’s happiness,” 2017). Taking the leadership of the Party as the value foundation and infiltrating the critical conscience of intellectuals with mainstream values are critical requirements for the Party to manage talents in the new era and provide direction and guidance for intellectuals to serve the Party and the country for national rejuvenation. The Party must lead the intellectuals to establish a common socialist ideal and clarify their choice of interests and identity. In the new era, leading social thoughts with socialist core values and adhering to the guiding position of Marxism in the ideological field are the fundamental requirements for improving the intellectual realm and moral level of intellectuals and resisting the negative impact of non-Marxist thoughts. Whether intellectuals have the spirit of patriotism is closely related to the expression of “responsibility-duty”. The Party must lead the intellectuals to care about the interests of the country, dare to speak, be able to speak, and be

good at speaking for the interests of the country and overcome their own refined egoism, individualism, and foreign sympathy tendency. Simultaneously, the intellectuals are encouraged to transform their career achievements, professional skills, and talents into the “outside brains” of the Party and the government and integrate the values of daily life into the practical actions of scientific interpretation and publicity of the Party’s principles and policies, and inherit them in exchange of ideas. Consolidating the political consensus in speech and behavior into practice would awaken and sublimate the intellectuals’ spiritual characteristics in the new era and unite their hearts. On the other hand, for the critical spirit of intellectuals to return to the track of goodness, the rule of virtue and the rule of law need to define the value standards and evaluation criteria for intellectuals’ behavior and solve the problem of how they should “speak responsibly.” Through the constraints of morality and law, the intellectuals’ critical discourse needs to be purified to clear the fog of thinking and behavior and prevent the “public intellectuals” from evolving into “chaotic intellectuals.” This would encourage a conscious practice of positive critical spirit from the inside and transform the Party and the state’s requirements and expectations from the intellectuals into the moral law of their hearts. Presently, the moral supervision mechanism required for the dissemination of critical intellectual discourse from offline to online is still under construction and improvement. The emergence of large data as the moral resource of the stranger society has created a new model for the guidance and supervision of intellectuals. The massive resources of big data, morality, and the individual life of intellectuals are integrated such that the power of morality, referred to as public criticism, produces pressure and norms on the words and deeds of the intellectuals. Owing to the tendency of the intellectuals to make speeches, even as guest speakers, and be manipulated and transformed by the media across industries, it is necessary to standardize the professional ethics of the media industry, develop thoughtful and in-depth TV programs, and encourage programs to provide a platform for scholars to discuss knowledge and exchange ideas. It is also necessary to guide the intellectuals, entering public media towards knowledge dissemination and moral guidance and avoid flattery, kitsch, and hype for profit. Through the state’s value orientation and public opinion supervision, intellectuals can be guided to make thoughtful, in-depth, and enlightening remarks when participating in public program production and ultimately realize the complementary value advantages of TV programs. In the new era, the Party’s value guidance for intellectuals should gradually shift from policy guidance and administrative promotion to the track of the rule of law. The regulation of critical discourse by public intellectuals that incites people’s emotions, harms national security, and endangers social interests should be limited. Also, detailed laws should be promulgated to regulate the “degree of freedom”, so that the intellectuals can safeguard the interests of the Party and the state within the scope of the law.

5.2. Stimulate the Critical Enthusiasm of Intellectuals with a Good “Speaking Climate”

Providing the intellectuals with opportunities and space for independent expression will help restore the organic connection between the intellectuals’ critical spirit and public life, stimulate their critical enthusiasm, and enhance the qualifications and effectiveness of the speech. In the new era, we must create a good atmosphere for speech, allow the intellectuals to have diverse channels of expression, and encourage them to move from the corner of their knowledge to the public space to speak for the people.

The speaking environment of Chinese intellectuals has been restricted since ancient times. For the longest duration, the intellectuals were under the strong control of the rulers and the government, which reduced the space for activities and discourse. Also, the government has expected the intellectuals to speak out for the maintenance of the legitimacy and authority of the state’s policies, allowing them to put forward countermeasures and suggestions for the

construction of the state in all aspects and serve a positive promoter. Although this is necessary and appropriate, the value of intellectuals' critical spirit has another critical level: correct mistakes and reflect on and reform the existing social problems. Thus, an optimal "opinion climate" is an essential and positive expressed external condition for the intellectuals' critical spirit. The ideological enlightenment and cultural prosperity that have occurred in history are closely related to the loose public opinion environment in the society at that time. The free discussion, fierce debate, and suggestions of intellectuals are the external reasons for promoting the prosperity of science, technology, and literature in an era. To revive the critical spirit of intellectuals, the Party's institutional guarantee and support are imperative. In addition, institutionalized and standardized means provide various support systems for intellectuals to offer advice and suggestions, such as full trust in politics, creating conditions for work, and caring and taking care of them in life. The Party and the government must grasp the balance between releasing and controlling and explore a model that enables both parties to develop an ideal and benign interaction in a flexible direction. For this, it is necessary to avoid treating the intellectuals as mere commentators and propagandists of social policy, ignoring their political ambitions and spirit of independence. In order to promote the intellectuals to be good at speaking, actively speaking and daring to speak is essential. This would establish and improve the mechanisms of obtaining information, communication, and feedback and support the intellectuals to put forward criticism and suggestions in daily supervision, inspection, professional consultation, special investigation, and other activities. Moreover, the new channels, such as the Chinese People's Political Consultative Conference Forum, member mailbox, and online political discussion, can supervise the intellectuals efficiently and quickly through the network. The intellectuals should also be given several opportunities to elucidate the reality, the grassroots, and the masses, conduct comprehensive investigations and research on hot, prominent, and difficult issues that the Party committee, government, and the people care about, and put forward accurate, real, practical, and actionable suggestions to promote the transformation of the research results into the decision-making of the Party committee and the government. Together, these measures would facilitate people's participation in politics.

5.3. Enhancing Intellectuals' Critical Motivation with the Recipe of Gathering Talents

To cultivate the constructive critical spirit of intellectuals, it is necessary to highlight their subjectivity, provide multiple platforms, employment opportunities, and policy support to realize social and personal values, lead them to comprehensively and scientifically understand and grasp the positive and negative sides of the Chinese society and actively participate in the innovation and creation at all levels of society.

In the new era, China's economic and social structure has undergone profound changes. The intellectual class has been differentiated; new groups of intellectuals have emerged with complex and diverse ideological concepts, interests, and behaviors. The Party must seek a balance of interests of all parties in the overall consideration, incorporate the ideas, interests, and behaviors of intellectuals from all walks of life, and provide support for the reform and innovation of intellectuals. Hence, it is necessary to use the talent without sticking to one pattern ("Xi Jinping emphasized in his discussion with foreign experts: China should always be a great learning country ", 2014) and encourage the intellectuals to innovate their ideas and create wisdom. Also, classifying and implementing policies for various fields and types of intellectuals to achieve differentiated and individualized development is essential. Conversely, finding the "most common divider" of opinions for non-Party intellectuals is possible through meticulous work ("Xi Jinping emphasized at the Central United Front Work Conference: Consolidate and develop the most extensive patriotic united front to provide extensive support for the realization of the Chinese Dream ", 2015). Next, a platform for people outside the Party

to communicate and interact, a system, and mechanism conducive to intellectuals' work, study, and entrepreneurship will be built. In terms of returning intellectuals from overseas studies, their real skills and innovative thinking will be explored to the fullest potential. Furthermore, network opinion individuals, network writers, contract writers, freelance writers, and other groups need to be guided to break the self-enclosed world and create excellent works worthy of the times. In the new era, it is necessary to cultivate a group of high-level intellectuals with strategic vision and professional status and establish high-end leading groups. Also, intellectuals who meet the requirements of innovation and development in the new era through the implementation of major talent projects, such as the Entrepreneur Quality Improvement Project, the Young Talents Program, the High-skilled Talent Revitalization Project, and the Changjiang Scholars Award Program, are cultivated and stimulated to carry out technological and knowledge innovation and play the leading role of intellectuals. On the other hand, favorable conditions for intellectuals' creative work are created by establishing an industry-university-research system, improving the incubation conditions for scientific and technological achievements, and improving intellectual property laws and regulations that would protect the research results of intellectuals. Also, building platforms and creating opportunities would strive for promising jobs for intellectuals. It is necessary to promote the formation of a fine style of study that advocates high-quality products, rigorous scholarship, focuses on integrity, emphasizes responsibility, and creates an academic ecology of uprightness, mutual learning, and positive progress(2016). Moreover, active implementation of the distribution policy guided by the increased value of knowledge, i.e., increased share proportion of income from achievement transformation of scientific researchers and implementation of equity, options, dividends, and other incentive measures for innovative talents would enhance the endogenous motivation and subjective initiative of intellectuals to realize their ideals and provide them with more possibilities to realize their value.

6. Conclusion

In ancient China, intellectuals were positioned at the top of four kinds of people (scholars, peasants, craftsmen, and merchants). Their role was to provide the direction of spiritual development for the society, provide an attainable height in value, and ensure the quality of the society in spirit and value. They don't produce food, they don't control the army, they don't control the political power, but they can become the spiritual model of the society and really affect the society. At the moment when "public intellectuals" have gradually become derogatory words, the role of intellectuals has gradually deviated from their should-be role. Some intellectuals exercised their right to protest, incited public opinion and made the society worse. This is not to say that intellectuals cannot criticize when there are problems in society and drawbacks in the system, but whether they can get rid of the color of self-interest and individualism and shape public opinion with justice and conscience when exercising their critical rights. We do not need a "silent society" caused by highlighting stability, nor do we want a "turbulent society" full of protest, which requires that intellectuals with just, good and moral critical spirit cannot be absent.

Under the specific national conditions, the Communist Party of China has long attached importance to the function of intellectuals to produce and disseminate knowledge while weakening their function to criticize. Nonetheless, criticism is also a mode of knowledge transmission, a spiritual output, and value guidance. In the new era, the critical spirit of intellectuals is based on the unity of love for the Party, country, and socialism, with emphasis on reinforcement and innovation, helping the Party and the country to obtain timely feedback or reduce mistakes during policy implementation. Thus, the critical spirit of the intellectuals is the eyes of the times. To shine and illuminate these eyes forward, we need the care, recognition,

cultivation, and protection of intellectuals by the Party and the state. Giving rational play to the critical function of intellectuals is also the symbol of social-democratic political progress. The criticality of intellectuals emphasizes the autonomy of individual thoughts and wills, and their thoughts, speeches, and academic achievements follow their inner beliefs, i.e., "I." However, only if the "I" conforms to the laws of social development can it be recognized by society and fulfill its mission.

Disclosure Statement

The authors report there are no competing interests to declare.

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