

# The Reference of Nietzsche's Moral Philosophy to Remodel Chinese's Personality

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## Abstract

In China, the traditional moral is absolute holism which caused the traditional personality a blind altruism and be short of healthy individualism. And more seriously, servility in the personality of Chinese people is a severe weakness rooted in the traditional morals of China which was criticised by Chinese scholars fiercely, and this major defect of Chinese personality is the huge obstacle of the development of modern Chinese thought. To eliminate all the weakness of Chinese traditional morality and to renew the personality of Chinese, we could learn from the essence of Nietzsche's theories of "superman morality" which advocated the independent and self-esteem strongly, thus create an independent personality for Chinese which urges people to be free, self-esteem, creative, courageous and with healthy psychology.

**Keywords:** slave morality, superman morality, independent, self-esteem, freedom

## 1. Introduction

Servility in the personality of Chinese people is a severe weakness criticised by Chinese scholars, and this major defect of Chinese personality is the huge obstacle of the development of modern Chinese thought. In modern China, the liberation of philosophy makes it possible for Chinese to thoroughly reflect on traditional personality, to analyze, criticize, and remould a new modern personality. And we also could learn from the essence of western personality theory, with a clear subject consciousness, independent moral and vigorous strong will to transform and to critically reflect on Chinese's traditional theory of ideal personality. And on the basis of the development of modern society and people's need, we can construct a brand new ideal personality of Chinese of this age.

### 1.1 *The Servility in the Personality of Chinese*

In China, the traditional moral is a kind of absolute holism. In the long run, the whole is seen as a starting point, the core and the purpose, and the overall interests is everything. On the contrary, individuals do not have any position, just as a part of the whole, with no personality or independent personality, not to mention personal independence, autonomy, freedom or rights. Thus the showing personality is strong servility, and embodies independence, closeness, blind altruism and essentially egomania, etc. In general, Chinese servility personality reflects four major following characteristics:

First, Chinese traditional personality is deeply personal independent. Traditional Chinese personality exaggerates the importance of moral factors in personality, which is actually a kind of moral personality theory that enhancing the slave mentality of the social members, causing widespread depression in Chinese society. At the same time, people got used to give up individuality and repressed themselves to follow the power, which had become convenient means to get individual interests. And in people's minds, there is a deep-rooted attachment between self depression and the power, which also caused the serious dependent personality in Chinese.

Second, Chinese traditional personality is a kind of blind altruism. One of the most important characters of ideal personality mainly dominated by Confucianism, which praises highly principles such as "regards value justice

higher than material gains”, “the self-restraint and return to ritual”, and these kind of behavior standards and value principles were applied to real life and daily interpersonal relationships, which made repression of human nature to meet the requirement of “the ritual”—it not only asked people to be tame, soft, sympathy harbored and full of pity, but also made people become sick, cowardly, weak, and can hardly act creatively. And the development of personality became social orientated and blindly altruistic, which eventually strengthened the formation of servility personality.

Third, in the state of severe depression of human instinct, most Chinese lacked healthy individualism, that is so-called “healthy selfishness”. The traditional social moral system is imposed on others, not on the basis of human life and natural need, which caused people cannot get emotional identity and behavior consciously practice. In fact, under this moral system, people only attached great importance to their own small groups, and ignore the maintenance of the interests of the whole society fundamentally, which easily lead to extreme egoisms in personality.

Fourth, in the achievements and application of the ideal personality, Chinese traditional personality had particular emphasis on the shaping of individual personality and internalization. However, the traditional theory of personality was highlighting the principles of “conscious” and “voluntary”, but only rely on the means of “vigilance in solitude”, “introspection” and others to shape and perfect one’s personality. This way of self-cultivation from the inside limited the horizon of people, constrained their minds, and made life pursuit be confined to the inner world, which eventually made the conservative and introverted personality. And what is worse, it sometimes resulted severe mental atrophy, so that Chinese cannot live evokes a strong will and endeavour to conquering desire, not to mention striving for goals of will or national ideal target.

### *1.2 Why We Need a New Personality*

As time goes by, these defects in the traditional ideal personality grew prominent and didn’t adapt to the progress of society, and its survival and development in Chinese personality had become the biggest obstacle to the modernization of personality. We are calling for the birth of a brand new personality with both traditional personality virtue and modern creative personality characteristics. To this end, we found that there is a philosopher—Friedrich Wilhelm Nietzsche—in 19th century who had the same problem like us, whose criticisms of the traditional servility personality and his theories about ideal creative noble personality may be helpful to us.

As a moral philosopher, Nietzsche had criticised the “slave moral sense” attached with traditional Christian personality and proposed the ideal personality of “superman” which has important reference value to us. although in some ways too extreme in Nietzsche’s theory of personality, as a great thinker, the point of his theory may not be that it provides us with a kind of moral system but how his challenge of traditional moral system can give us any inspiration.

## **2. The Reference of Nietzsche's Critique of Christianity Servility Personality to the Chinese Personality**

By announcing the death of god (Gott ist tot), Nietzsche thoroughly reevaluated the value of Christian moral sense, and thus revealed the immorality and fraudulence of Christian moral value. He also denied the rationality of the Christian personality, criticized the alienation of personality and distortion of human beings fiercely. Shouting loudly “God is dead”, Nietzsche compelled westerners to take responsibility and to create a new way by themselves. He emphasized the morality of man as an independent, autonomic and creative individuals, and he required one surpass others, surpass oneself and pursue the perfect “superman” spirit and personality.

### *2.1 Criticism of the "Slave Morality"*

Nietzsche called Christian morality a kind of “slave morality”, and he asserted it teaches people to obey, to tolerate, to self-controlled and to self sacrificing, which made people follow traditions long and succumb to the morality of others. This unambitious “slave morality” is actually a kind of inhibition of human life and desire, in violation of the human nature, a destructive moral which destroy people’s self -creation and enterprising spirit. Imprisoned in the delusion of Millennium, people were weakened into a group of “sheep”, and deprived the passion and personality of life. People became so weak that they would rather take themselves as a function of “instinct of cattles” instead of independent individuals.

On this issue, the Chinese traditional ideal personality is highly consistent with the Christian morality, they both prisoned people in slavery society structure and generalized the absolute worship of authority: Chinese people for the worship of the absolute monarchy and the Christians’ obedience of theocracy. They all made people gradually lose their dignity, the strong vitality and the creation of life. People lived without the sublime of life, not to mention the independence and openness of personality. People were “like numbers, and just like a sack of

potatoes in one bag which are just separate with each other” (Marx, 1978, pp. 3-6), and they were all lack of independent personality, on the contrary, they respected the “slave morality”.

## 2.2 Criticism of Selflessness

At the same time, “slave morality” emphasized “selfless”, “love thy neighbor” (neighbor-love), which actually was a oppression of natural desire of personal life. For advocating the natural desire of human beings, Nietzsche proposed “healthy selfishness”, which went against the pathological, blinkered selfness and preaching against the cliché of “selflessness”. Nietzsche said: “ ‘your selfishness is the bane of your life’, this didactic literature lasted for thousand years, damaged to the selfishness, killed many of its spirit, a lot of happiness, many creativeness, many beauty, and it passivates, disfigures and poisons the selfish! ”(Nietzsche, 1974, p. 219) In fact, “healthy selfish” reflects the strong vitality of “the selfish one”, and it encourages the individual personality such as self-respect, creativeness and power. It advocates “self-love” which is opposite to the Christian moral value “love thy neighbor”, and it opposes to the so-called “selflessness” which actually raises self-escape, self-hated and self-denial. Nietzsche thought the “selflessness” is the symbol of failure of life, and it weakens the healthy personality of every human beings.

The principles like “deny self and return to propriety” and “hold on even to death in order to perfect one's virtue” in Chinese traditional ideal personality also advocates the so-called “selflessness”. It actually is to evade one's ego, and it is also a kind of self-hated and self-denial. This selflessness neglects the natural needs of human beings and the human instinct of the carnality, sensibility, desire, passion and so on. All these principles about “selflessness” killed the “healthy selfish”, and this unhealthy soil cultivated the morbid, narrow “selfish”—extreme egoism. This extreme egoism caused the Chinese people have always had the personality that never release the energy of life, not to mention letting people showing a strong will of creativity or making people the moral subject of themselves. People are always servile, lack of confidence and cannot dominate their own fate.

## 3. Construct a New Mode of Creative Personality Guided by the “Superman” Personality Spirit

Tit for tat with “slave personality”, Nietzsche put forward the “noble morality”. “Noble morality” is full of positive action, positive attitude for life and more positive view of the world. With the “noble morality”, the strong ones are strong, confident and with no servility. They will be able to control themselves, to determine their own fate, to create their own values, and thus to free their lives. Their personality will be independent with the basic feature of creation.

Nietzsche advocated “noble morality”: self-discipline, self legislation value, to be the master of his own fate. He undertook the spirit of the self stressed freedom: self-responsible, self-established, played the potential of people, carried forward man's subjectivity, shaped a strong, independent noble personality. He had a spirit of independent call: “don't follow me, to be yourself.” “Spirit is the lion, he wanted to conquer the free and the master of his own desert.... he wanted with the dragon naturally, dragon said, ‘you should’, but the lion spirit said ‘I want’.”

Because of the fall of the Millenium and “god is dead”, the true spirit of humanity is no longer be on the kingdom of god, also not be built by the ideal kingdom of human reason and common humanity, and it is to surpass the human—the independent and creative personality become particularly important for human beings. Nietzsche said: “The survival of people make people feel inexplicable fear, and still has no meaning... I want to tell them the meaning of life, and that is the superman (Der übermensch).” Nietzsche conceived the new image of superman: “superman is the meaning of the earth, let your will say: the superman shall be the meaning of the earth! (Der übermensch ist der Sinn der Erde. Euer Wille sage: der übermensch Sei der Sinn der Erde.)

In the opinion of Nietzsche, superman is certainly full of Dionysian spirit of life, enjoying the joy of life. The superman has a perfect instinct of life unique personality. He is also the creator of the value, and never be tied by the modern civilization. Nietzsche advocated that the superman is “the prince of future”.

After hundreds years of social instability, we are in great need of a brand new modern personality which is worth for Chinese to practice. The image of “superman” provides us a learning mode of creative personality. It reflects a high degree of subjectivity, strong sense of responsibility, strong dedication to work and transcendent awareness embodies highly independent consciousness and pioneering and creative spirit of the character.

People with creative personality should have the characters of Nietzsche's qualities about “the strong” and “superman”. He is the one who has “the will to power” (der Wille zur Macht), appraises values from himself, and never blindly follow authority. He is the master of himself and highly self-disciplined. He is also free in the spirit and carries forward human being's subjectivity.

To conquer the servility personality in Chinese and to cultivate a new type of modern personality, we try to put forward a model of creative personality and its basic features.

### *3.1 The Independence of Personality*

Independence is the premise of getting rid of the blindness and dependence. Nietzsche repeatedly declared: "Don't follow me, to be yourself." And he emphasized that people should get rid of the "slave morality" that caused weakness and destruction of vitality, and pursue the "noble morality" which brings strong and vigorous vitality for the independence of individual personality and self-esteem. Only has the independent personality, individuals can show ones' talents in many ways and develop ones' own diversified social relationships. And in some way, it sometimes shows as "not a slave to the division of labor, but be strong and intact personality".

### *3.2 Freedom and Self-esteem*

Freedom is the nature of "the will to power", and it's the need of life for independence, is the affirmation and transcendence of self. The self-esteem of personality is the performance of awake and independent oneself. It goes against theocracy, privilege, and it abandons the "slave morality" and promotes human rights. Self-esteem is a character to make people tend to be noble and respectable.

### *3.3 The Critical Consciousness and Creative Spirit*

"Who has to create good and evil, then has to damage, break value. So, the biggest part of the evil is also the biggest good: this is good for creativity." (Nietzsche, 2003, p. 138) People with creative personality must be critical, and can identify the beauty and ugliness correctly in social life. He or she should also have the characters of the burden ability of the camel, the negation spirit of lion, and the innocence and courage of child. He or she can continuously explore the wider development opportunities and spaces for human beings.

### *3.4 Positive Competition and Free Will to Go Beyond*

Competition carries human beings to rise, strong and prosperous, and it is a performance of vitality of life. The "superman" and "the supermen's world" that Nietzsche promoted can only come out from the real society, which is full of competitions of man against man. Only a minority of the brave, the creator, the one full of "the will to power" and the ultimate winner of the competition will climb through "the soft cable suspended between beast and superman—a soft cable hanging on the ravine" successfully, and became the "superman" eventually. In reality, the competition is necessary for modern society, and it is advantageous to the evolution and optimization of resources, to stimulate creativity and enthusiasm of the people. And it is a necessary way to accelerate the progress of human beings. The self-creation of human beings needs a goal which is higher than the people themselves, and that is the nature of human self-transcendence.

### *3.5 Pursue Righteousness and Benefit Simultaneously*

The needs and desires of people are human nature, must be met. In socialism, we must face our own economic interests and encourage people to pursue the material benefits legally. Legitimate interests and legal rights are the affirmation of life itself, and they all are affirmations to the autonomic morality based on life and physical nature. This "healthy selfish" asks "people give the desires freedom full of trust once again. Because desires love us as servants of righteousness, they voluntarily go to where we are most interested in" (Nietzsche, 1968, p. 384).

### *3.6 The Blend of Humanist Paradigm and Science Paradigm*

At the same time of calling for superman, Nietzsche exposed the decadence of capitalism and criticised the rise of scientist paradigm and crisis of humanist paradigm brought by the progress of technology. In Chinese, we must act prudently; pay as much attention to the cultivation of humanist paradigm as to the development of economy, so as to avoid getting into the same trouble of venality that obsessed the modern western society long.

### *3.7 The Healthy Psychology*

Nietzsche once described, that the strong (der Macht) basically is not strong external, but in the heart. The one with strong inner must have a strong heart, has the strong ability of setbacks, and keeps balanced state of mind. He has "the right to name things" and can be a real "legislator". In modern society, only the ones with "strong heart" can undergo failures successfully and get the triumph in the fierce competition eventually.

## **4. Conclusion**

To eliminate all the weakness of Chinese morality and renew the personality of Chinese, we could learn from the essence of Nietzsche's theories of "superman morality", which means we should cultivate a brand new personality that is creative, independent, self-esteem and courageous. This new personality will help we Chinese to pursue a new style of life which is free, self-esteem, creative, courageous and with healthy psychology.

To accomplish this hard target, we first should abandon the absolute holism in traditional morals which ignore individuals in the long run. And then, individuals should be taken seriously and personal independence, autonomy, civil-freedom and human rights and so on should be respected earnestly.

At last, we should realized that it will be a hard task to create a new, health personality of Chinese. The model and style of ideal personality of Chinese mentioned above is just a construction in theory which needs tests and justification in practice. By all means, Nietzsche's theory about noble morality and superman encourage us to find a new way to mould a proper personality of Chinese which fit with the modernization and progress of society of China.

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