

The Genetics of the Thoughts of Freedom of Expression in Modern Britain

[Abstract]

The thoughts of freedom of expression was originated in western world and systemized in modern Britain. It has been discussed and criticized in various theoretical frames for hundreds of years, which has not only made up the points at issue but also constituted the heart of the matter for domestic studies in the related fields. To a certain extent, the modernization process of China's reformation and opening could also be considered as the process of rethinking and re-evaluation of the western social constitution and social practice since modern times. It may inevitably touch upon a more deep-going analysis and evaluation on democracy that closely concerns the thoughts of freedom of expression. This research suggests that only if with the sufficient understanding of the genetics and the essence of thoughts of freedom of expression, a scientific application that effectively prevents the research from context misplacement for the theory of freedom of expression may be possible. However, there are many deficient in the current researches.

Drawing on the methodology of genetic studies and cutting in from communication studies, this dissertation carded and analyzed the constructive procedures that the thoughts of freedom of expression in modern Britain been constructed, meanwhile further analyzed capital agents stimulated it.

This dissertation paid close attention to two facets of the matter: the first one is about the evolution of the thoughts of freedom of expression in modern Britain; the second one is about the inner motions that stimulated it. Centered on these facets, the dissertation is composed of 7 parts. Part 1 took a historical inspect on the fundamental conceptions of freedom of expression; part 2 to part 7 were the interpretations respectively on the historical terms and texts in the three phases in modern Britain from 17th century to the beginning of 19th century. The agents such as finance and Legality, politics and revolutions were analyzed and emphasized.

The innovative points laid in: ① Some ignored documents were brought into study, thus to complement the forming and evolutionary process both for the key conceptions and the system of thoughts; ② By integrating the historical and textual

analysis, a number of revision was made on certain significant works, and the connotations of freedom of expression in that history were re-evaluated; ③ Along the path of historical philosophy, the procedure was divided into three phased in modern Britain, some key motivation factors were draw from the numerous and complicated historical environment, thus to provide a logic explanation evolving the external and internal factors for the formation of the thoughts. ④ Use the methodology of genetic studies for reference, the dissertation analyzed the deeper motivations for the thoughts of freedom of expression, by which further explained some fractures.

Based on the historical investigation, this dissertation regards the formation of the thoughts of freedom of expression as a complicated process bearing sophisticated matters of ideals and realities or facts and values, rather than a simple course carrying on from minds to minds or thinkers to thinkers.

The study suggests that the process that the thoughts of freedom of expression formed in modern Britain is also a process of struggle and compromise between the printing control and concrete practice; is a contextual game between “the old” and “the new” , the reformation and the conservatism. The struggles and compromises both are attributed to the beneficial divergence of the certain social transformation. The fundamental principles for the freedom of expression were established on the classical philosophical morals, the impact of which on the thoughts of freedom of expression since modern times was highlighted as follows: the tradition of freedom and freedom of speech was retrospect and questioned from time to time; the sacred power of the king and the natural rights empowered to individuals mutual influenced by each other, as a result, the freedom of expression was initiated and led to the direction of a more normalized institutions for assurance.

It is concluded that the production and distribution of the knowledge greatly promoted the inner transmutation from convention to modern for the British social structure in modern times; the institutional arrangements including censorships constructed the coalition between “the power” and “the knowledge” . By the application of “the reason” and “the rights” , the British press institute in modern times opened a possible way leading to the modernity; meanwhile, it has established a free, autonomous community of knowledge for the modern British ancestry. The intense relations between the facts and the values that triggered the evolution of the thoughts of freedom of express indicate the demand for the maintenance of the ideals

and social norms. By analyzing the motivations for the thoughts of freedom of expression, this dissertation suggested that the religious tolerance, the copyright law, the opening of the parliament, the book trade, and the struggles against tyranny, as well as the overseas expansion, have provided modern Britain a comparatively ample condition than other European nations in the freedom of expression.

What has been done by this dissertation could be regarded as spot priming, which introduced an optional way to the understanding of freedom of expression, the theme that has been concerned a lot and been filled with argumentations since modern times. As a possible extension of the retrospection and rethinking of the freedom of expression issues, evocations resting in the construction of modernity of the nations, order of the market and the identification of individuals may offer a certain degree of reference for China in transformation.

[Key Words] thoughts of communications; modern Britain; freedom of expression