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Han Fei's Dialectic Thought and its Significance

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Abstract. The article aims to clarify the content of Han Fei's thought and draw out its significance for current philosophy. The hypothesis is whether or not Han Fei's dialectical thought is an important foundation for explaining the operation of power and law in the construction and consolidation of state power in ancient China. The research employs a qualitative methodology, combining historical-textual analysis with comparative philosophy. Primary sources, including Han Fei's foundational works such as *Han Feizi*, are critically examined alongside relevant commentaries and secondary literature. Comparative insights are drawn by juxtaposing Han Fei's ideas with classical Western dialectics to highlight their unique contributions. The results reveal that Han Fei's dialectic thought, characterised by its pragmatic orientation and emphasis on the interplay of law (*fa*), strategy (*shu*), and authority (*shi*), offers a cohesive framework for understanding power dynamics and human behaviour. The study identifies novel aspects, including Han Fei's emphasis on the contradictions inherent in human

nature and governance, which were not systematically addressed in other Chinese philosophical schools. The findings underscore the practical significance of Han Fei's dialectics, particularly in addressing political stability, ethical leadership, and institutional reform challenges. By bridging ancient thought with modern governance, this study provides a fresh perspective on how philosophical principles can inform effective policymaking and ethical statecraft. The research contributes to the growing discourse on applying classical wisdom to contemporary global challenges.

Keywords: thought, dialectic, Han Fei, human nature, comparative philosophy.

Introduction

It can be affirmed that dialectics appeared with the birth of philosophy. Since ancient times, when science had not developed to the present level, philosophers mainly relied on direct, intuitive and emotional observations to explain natural and social phenomena. Han Fei's dialectical thought, although formed in a specific historical context, cannot be separated from the influence of that context, but still carries within it values that can overcome the limitations caused by historical conditions and the level of awareness of that era. However, if viewed objectively and ignoring the factors influenced by historical circumstances, Han Fei's dialectical thought still has important meanings and values for modern philosophy. This article will clarify Han Fei's dialectical thought, thereby evaluating the values it can bring in today's context.

Chinese society underwent profound changes in all aspects during the Warring States period. This period marked the collapse of the decentralised aristocracy, transitioning to a centralised feudal regime. It also witnessed changes in the state management system when ritual gradually became obsolete and was replaced by the rule of law. The vassal states began to focus on building armies, increasing conquests to annexes, and expanding their territories. In the face of these dramatic changes, a series of thinkers appeared each standing in a different class position. Still, in general, they all had the same goal of putting forth doctrines to save lives, save people and stabilise society.

The Legalist school appeared quite late among the ancient Chinese philosophical schools but developed strongly throughout the Warring States period. Formed and developed by many thinkers such as Guan Zhong, Li Kui, Wu Qi, Shen Dao, Shen Buhai, and Shang Yang, Legalism focused on building a strong legal system to maintain social order. Developed from the turbulent social realities of the times, Legalist doctrine was consistent and pragmatic, emphasising the role of law in building a strong state. Legalist thinkers pointed out that failing to build a strict legal system would weaken society and governance. This ideology became the foundation for building a centralised feudal state in China, breaking down the old forms of governance and promoting the formation of a strong government that focused on maintaining social order through law.

Han Fei, one of the foremost figures of Legalist philosophy in ancient China, profoundly influenced the theoretical underpinnings of state governance, law, and power. His dialectic thought, characterised by the interplay of law (fa), strategy (shu), and authority (shi), has been

the subject of extensive research in the fields of Chinese philosophy, political theory, and governance. However, while much has been written about Han Fei's contributions to Legalism, a gap exists in understanding his dialectical methods as a cohesive framework for addressing human behaviour and statecraft contradictions.

Existing scholarship primarily emphasises Han Fei's works' historical and cultural context or compares his ideas with Confucianism and Daoism. However, there has been limited exploration of his dialectic thought's practical applications in modern contexts, such as its implications for political stability, ethical leadership, and institutional reform. Furthermore, comparative studies juxtaposing Han Fei's dialectics with classical Western traditions are sparse, leaving an underdeveloped understanding of his unique contributions to global philosophical discourse.

This study addresses these gaps by systematically analysing Han Fei's dialectical thought, identifying its core principles, and exploring its contemporary significance. The research seeks to answer the following questions: (1) What are the fundamental elements of Han Fei's dialectic thought? (2) How do these elements contribute to understanding power dynamics and governance? (3) What is the relevance of Han Fei's ideas in addressing modern challenges in governance and statecraft?

This study contributes to a deeper understanding of Han Fei's philosophy by examining these questions. It provides insights into the enduring relevance of ancient wisdom in modern governance and ethical leadership.

Theoretical Framework

To study the topic of Han Fei's dialectical thought and its significance, the author relies on the following theoretical bases:

Studies based on the formation of philosophical thought in ancient China. Studies show that dialectical thought appeared very early in Eastern philosophy, typically the concepts of *yin-yang* (Liu, 2022; Van Vo & Xuan Cao, 2022), the five elements, interactions and changes in nature and society (Dung, 2022; Ng, 2021). As a legal thinker, he applied dialectics to explain and organise society based on legal principles (Tongdong, 2021). Inheriting those views, the author believes he is a typical representative of the Legalism school, emphasising the importance of state management through law and power, considering this as the foundation for maintaining social order. Han Fei's thoughts are not merely rational or rigid but demonstrate a deep understanding of social contradictions and provide practical solutions to resolve them effectively.

Studies on dialectical thought are presented—dialectical views in ancient Chinese philosophy (Jiang, 2023). Dialectics is a method of thinking that perceives the world as a state of movement, contradiction, and change (Tuoi, 2024; Vo Van Dung, 2023). Some studies have stated that, although the term "dialectic" is not used, it has shown a keen sense of recognising the contradictions between personal interests and everyday interests, between state power and the people, and finding ways to balance them (Liang, 2023; Vo Van Dung & Luu Mai Hoa, 2023). The author believes that Han Fei's thought has strong dialectical characteristics when

he emphasises the clear perception of internal contradictions in feudal society and the role of movement and change in state management. According to Han Fei, social contradictions, such as those between kings and mandarins or between law and morality, are natural phenomena and core elements that need to be resolved to maintain order. He believes relying solely on morality or tradition cannot reconcile these contradictions. Instead, there needs to be a strict and fair application of the law to control and direct them to serve the common good. Emphasis is placed on the fact that the laws of nature and society are not immutable but are constantly moving and changing according to circumstances. Therefore, he emphasised the role of flexible policies, adjusted to suit reality, to deal with new fluctuations and challenges. This thinking not only reflects a dialectical vision but also shows acumen in finding practical solutions to the problem of state management and maintaining social stability.

Research the Warring States period's historical and social foundations (Wu, 2021). Opinions say this was a turbulent period with fierce competition between vassal states (Dinh & Dung, 2024; Jin, 2024). The theory of legalism is based on the urgent need for an effective method of social management to maintain power and national stability (Vãn Dũng, 2024; Wilson, 2022a). In this work, the author believes that ideology has shown its prominence with profound practicality, demonstrated by the fact that he did not only stop at theoretical arguments but also proposed specific principles to manage and maintain social order. The three core principles in his ideology include "Shi (勢)" (Power or Position), "Fa (法)" (Law or Standard) (Wilson, 2022b) and "Shu (術)" (Methods or Tactics) (Liu, 2024) "Shi (勢)" (Yapeng, 2024) emphasises the importance of the king's power as the central factor to ensure stability; "Fa (法)" emphasises the strict and fair application of the law to maintain discipline (Chae, 2023); while "Shu (術)" focuses on the skilful use of leadership skills to manage officials and control society effectively. The close combination of theory and practice in Han Fei's thought reflects the feasibility of the proposed solutions and demonstrates a clear dialectical spirit in his approach to the problem. By proposing management methods that can be directly applied to reality, Han Fei affirmed his role as a thinker and a pioneer in creating practical operating principles for a strong state.

Research on Chinese political culture, such as the theory of the rule of law, has shaped the rule of law thinking in Chinese history and influenced many later dynasties (Van Dung, 2024). The views of (Harris, 2020; Van Dung, 2022; Vo Van, 2023) emphasise that his dialectical thinking helps to understand better how to organise and operate power in a society with a complex structure. The author believes that the above studies are very comprehensive. However, it should be further emphasised that, in the modern context, the dialectical principles in Han Fei's thought, such as considering interests, resolving conflicts, and adapting to change, still provide an essential reference value for managers and policymakers. Considering interests helps leaders realise the need to harmonise personal, organisational, and social interests to achieve common goals. The principle of conflict resolution, which Han Fei considered an inevitable factor in any society, is especially useful in handling complex conflicts of interest, ensuring stability and sustainable development. Moreover, his views on movement and change encourage policymakers to be flexible, creative and ready to adapt to the current global economic, political and social fluctuations. The dialectical nature of Han Fei's thinking, with its practical and effective approach, not only helps optimise the management process but also

opens up new perspectives for formulating policies suitable for the practical needs and challenges of the times.

Research Methods

The article aims to clarify the dialectical thought in Han Fei's philosophical thought, draw out the meaning and discuss these issues. The article will focus on clarifying issues such as theoretical basis and research to achieve the goal. The content of his dialectical thought is compared with the Confucian viewpoint, Drawing out its meaning and suggesting further research directions from the perspective of the history of philosophy.

To effectively carry out the research goals and tasks, the article must implement the rigour of history, comprehensiveness, and multidimensionality and consider the dialectical view in philosophical thought in many relationships with contemporary thinkers to have accurate comparisons and discussions.

When researching the dialectical view in his philosophical thought, the author approaches the research problem from the perspective of dialectical philosophy and the history of philosophy to analyse and explain the contents.

At the same time, the following specific methods are used:

Historical-logical method: The article uses this method to examine and evaluate the dialectical viewpoint in philosophical thought in the era in which it was born to chain the scientific issues that the article raises. Based on historical data, from which to draw the law of its movement and development.

Method of collecting information and documents: The author collects sources of documents such as books, newspapers, and magazines in Vietnam and other countries about the dialectical viewpoint in his philosophical thought to prove his statements.

Analytical and synthetic method: The article uses this method to analyse the relationship of the dialectical viewpoint in his philosophical thought. On that basis, generalise and synthesise to make assessments.

To conduct research on the topic of Han Fei's dialectical thought and its significance, the author raises the following three research questions: (1) How is the dialectical thought expressed through the relationship between “Fa (法)”, “Shu (術)”, and “Shi (勢)”? (2) Is dialectical thinking different or like other philosophical schools of the same period? (3) Does dialectical thought contribute to state and social management in the modern context?

Research Results

Han Fei's Dialectical Thought

Based on inheriting the legalist theory of previous thinkers and summarising contemporary social practice, Han Fei closely combined law, world, and art into an effective tool to help rulers best operate the state apparatus. To explain his theory of legalism, he argued that all things have a process of formation, emergence, and development according to their

inherent objective laws. He explained that all things are always moving, changing and developing. The same thing exists in different spaces and times; the thing will be different (Jin, 2024; Kallinikos, 2023; Pines, 2024). Because of that difference, it is impossible to take a standard to use for all historical periods. Based on inheriting and developing Lao Tzu's dialectical thought, he believed that things move objectively according to their inherent nature. Trees, when planted, have roots that spread out, some straight roots and some curved roots. The roots are the root, the source of the tree's life. For a tree to exist, it must have roots deeply rooted in the ground, which is natural, not due to anyone's will. Han Fei also discussed Lao Tzu's argument about "*Tao* (道)" very objectively: Tao is what makes all things become as they exist today; it is the basis of all reasons. Reason is the literature that makes all things; Tao makes everything become like that. Let's consider "Tao" as the origin. The universal law of the formation of all phenomena, then "Ly (理)", "*Principle*", "*Reason*", or "*Logic*" is considered a separate, inherent law of all things, a manifestation of all things. In the relationship between "Tao" and "Ly", "Dao" is the universal law, the essence of the natural world that exists forever and does not change. At the same time, "Ly" is the external manifestation and always changes to suit specific historical circumstances. However, ly distinguishes square from round, short from long, coarse from fine, hard from soft. Therefore, only when ly is determined can there be dao (Do, 2022; Harris, 2024; Huang, 2022; Nedelea, 2022; Pines, 2021). "Ly" is expressed in things and phenomena so that sometimes it exists, disappears, flourishes, and sometimes declines. "Dao" is what exists forever, not limited by space and time; all things that have it will exist.

Based on the explanation of the dialectical nature of "Tao" and "Ly", Han Fei not only clarified the movement of the world according to objective laws but also explained the movement of social history. All things sometimes exist and sometimes disappear, suddenly die, suddenly live, initially flourish and then decline, cannot be called eternal. Han Fei placed his entire theory of legality in a historical and concrete perspective for consideration. With this perspective, he built a legality theory to meet society's needs at that time. While other schools of thought built theories far from reality, Han Fei took contemporary social practice as the condition for his theory.

Han Fei's dialectical thought is in a state of constant movement. He sees that the historical process of human society is constantly moving and changing, and no social regime exists forever. He divided the historical process of human society from its formation to the period he was living in into four successive periods: ancient times, medieval times, modern times, and today. In the **Ngũ Đố (五蠹)** of Han Fei, it is recorded that in High Antiquity, the people were few, but there were many animals. In the Middle Antiquity, the world suffered from a great flood, and King Gun and King Wu dug rivers to let the water flow. In the Recent Antiquity, King Jie and King Zhou were violent and lustful, so King Tang and King Wu conquered them. Nowadays, people compete for power. Social management must be based on each historical period because "*different times have different events*". Each historical period must have a different way of governing, and today's governing methods must differ from those of the past. If we want to use a way of governing for every period of history, it is like trying to control a wild horse without a rein and whip. We should not only see history as a process of continuous movement and change but also analyse deeply the driving force of that process. Because in the past, men did not plough

because the products of plants were enough to eat; women did not weave because the skins of birds and animals were enough to wear. There was no hard work but enough nourishment; the number of people was small, but there was plenty of property. Therefore, the people did not have to fight. Nowadays, there are many people but little property and hard work, but the nourishment is still poor, so the people fight. When economic conditions change, social consciousness also changes. Although this point of view is primitive, naive, and incomplete, it has explained the fluctuations of society. Han Fei explained that the cause of social chaos was not due to the will of gods or the will of heaven but instead due to economic decline; people did not have enough to live, so they had to fight and kill each other. Therefore, if a ruler wanted to stabilise society, he had to base it on the objective conditions of historical trends and each specific situation to use appropriate governing methods. He strongly criticised the viewpoint of using the past to govern the present, which was like waiting for a rabbit to crawl into a tree. Because in ancient times, people competed in morality; in the Middle Ages, people competed in intelligence; and today, people compete in strength. The way Emperor Yao and Shun ruled the people, which the Confucian, Mohist, and Taoist schools cited three thousand years ago, is no longer appropriate. It cannot be used as a guideline for current politics. When things change, the means of implementation must also change. The law must be placed in the process of movement, not a rigid law, to be considered the golden rule for all times. Therefore, the ruler must not only cultivate the old stories, not apply them unchangingly but must change with the times. With the principle of "*time changes, law changes*", the governance of the people must be based on the law, and the law must always be supplemented and amended to suit reality; then, it will be the measure of social justice. History changes, but society will be in chaos if the governing method does not change. Putting the rule of law from a historical perspective, Han Fei has taken a significant step forward in ancient Chinese philosophical thought. With this perspective, he placed the entire theoretical system of the Legalists in dialectics. If Confucius cited King Wen and the Duke of Zhou as the basis for establishing social order, Mozi cited the authority of King Wu, and Taoism went further, citing Fu Xi and Shennong. With this viewpoint, Han Fei took a significant step forward compared to previous philosophical theories. Through criticising the viewpoints of previous thinkers, Han Fei affirmed that if we want the society of the Spring and Autumn - Warring States period to be stable, there is only one way: to rely on the rule of law.

Putting history and society in a state of movement, change and development, a unified legal system has been built based on three factors: law, position and technique. These three factors are likened to a living body operating in harmony to ensure stability and efficiency in state management. The law plays the role of an objective standard and basis, helping to clearly define status, distinguish right from wrong, good from evil, and guide the behaviour of each individual in society. Once the law has been promulgated, its implementation must be rigorous, with a clear and decisive reward and punishment system to ensure fairness and discipline.

The second factor, position, represents the head of state's status, power and authority. It is this status that creates respect and makes the ruler's words become an undeniable command. The intense power of the king is an essential factor in establishing a centralised feudal social order while opposing outdated concepts. The final element, art, is the method and strategy to

manage affairs effectively, utilise talents, and control subjects. With art, the ruler can make people wholeheartedly carry out the law without questioning or hesitation.

Law, power, and art do not exist independently but have a close relationship, complementing each other. Law plays the role of foundation, while power and art are supporting factors for the law to be effectively implemented. Lacking one of these three elements, the governance of the state may fail. A good ruler must know how to rely on power to enact laws and use art to operate the state apparatus. The reward and punishment policy needs to be implemented: generous rewards to encourage and heavy punishments to deter, thereby creating a stable and disciplined social environment.

The three elements of law, power, and art are independent components and form a unified legal system entity. Law is considered a living body, and position and technique are the sources of nutrition to nourish and operate that body (Börzel & Zürn, 2021; Brennan, 2022; Chaisse & Dimitropoulos, 2021; Coll, 2021; Cotesta, 2021). At the same time, position and technique are also the premises to ensure the law is effectively implemented. This close combination forms a solid legal system and builds a complete doctrine of the art of governance.

The skilful application of law, position and technique not only helps the authorities achieve high management efficiency but also affirms the tremendous theoretical and practical value of ancient philosophy. These thoughts are meaningful in the historical context and leave a profound mark on dialectical thought, contributing to the shaping and development of ancient Chinese philosophy.

The principle of harmonising contradictions is demonstrated through the emphasis on the role of law in balancing interests and controlling social conflicts. Conflicts are inevitable, arising from differences in interests and goals between individuals, groups, and leaders and officials. To solve this problem, the law is considered the most objective and effective tool, ensuring everyone is subject to standard rules regardless of status or power. In addition to regulating conflicts, controlling power is essential to maintaining order. If power is not controlled, it will become a source of chaos and weaken the state. Therefore, it is necessary to apply the law to limit power, not only for officials but also for the highest leader. This ensures power is used correctly, serving the common good instead of personal or factional interests. The principle of regulating conflicts helps stabilise society and creates the foundation for a development environment based on fairness and transparency. The law is a management tool and a symbol of equality, where all individuals are treated equally before the standard rules.

The views on conflict reconciliation and power control have demonstrated a timeless vision in state management. These principles are suitable in feudal society and have great reference value for modern legal systems, contributing to shaping practical approaches in social and state management.

The dialectical thinking in the legal system is different from the views of Confucianism and Taoism, especially in the approach and resolution of social conflicts. While Confucianism focuses on morality and propriety, this view is criticised for relying too much on human kindness and self-awareness. From a practical perspective, relying on traditional moral values is not a practical solution to reconcile complex and increasing societal conflicts. Similarly,

Taoism, with its concept of letting go and harmony with nature, also lacks initiative in social management. The view of relying on natural balance and not actively intervening in social problems is inappropriate for maintaining order in a volatile and competitive social context. This ideology emphasises efficiency, directness, and initiative through law and power rather than depending on benevolence or natural harmony. This approach is dialectical and emphasises flexibility and timely response to social changes.

Pragmatic and logical thinking is given priority, and law and power become the core foundation for handling social conflicts. Instead of relying on abstract moral values or principles of natural harmony, this approach focuses on concrete, feasible, and immediately applicable solutions. This viewpoint emphasises that society can only achieve stability and sustainable development when conflicts are resolved based on clear and fair legal regulations and supported by strict control of power.

The focus on law as a tool to regulate society demonstrates practicality and is scientific, meeting the management needs in the complex context of feudal society. At the same time, this thought also reflects a significant step forward in building a state management system, making it feasible and suitable for practical requirements. The difference in this approach has affirmed the superior value of legal thinking compared to other schools, making an important contribution to forming an effective and long-term national governance model.

The Significance of Han Fei's Dialectical Thought

In the historical context of ancient China, Han Fei's thought played an important role in shaping and consolidating the centralised state model. The Warring States period was turbulent, with the dispersion of power among warlords leading to constant conflicts and the weakening of social order. In this situation, Han Fei put forward the theory of “Fa (法)”, “Shu (術)”, and “Shi (勢)”, emphasising the central role of the king and the need for a strict legal system. According to him, the king's absolute power must be consolidated through strict control of officials and uniform enforcement of laws throughout the territory. This view directly influenced the construction of a strong centralised state under the Qin Dynasty, when Qin Shi Huang applied the legal principles of Legalism to unify China, destroy the separatist forces, and centralise power in the hands of the emperor. Han Fei's contributions not only laid a theoretical foundation for the consolidation of central power but also paved the way for a state model capable of effective social control and maintaining long-term stability.

Contributions to the Governance Thoughts of Dynasties

Han Fei's thoughts were not limited to the Qin Dynasty but also left a deep mark on the governance thoughts of later Chinese dynasties. His legal principles and Confucian ethical elements became the foundation for state governance during the Han, Tang, and Song Dynasties. These dynasties often applied strict legal systems to maintain order while still using Confucian humanistic values to win the hearts of the people. Han Fei also contributed to developing policies to control officials and administrative organisations, helping optimise the state apparatus. His thoughts on movement and change encouraged rulers to adapt to circumstances, introducing necessary reforms to deal with new challenges. Thanks to the combination of theory and practice in Han Fei's thought, Chinese dynasties have developed

effective management models that have maintained stability while promoting economic and social development over the centuries. In modern philosophy and thought, Han Fei's thought has profound value in management and leadership theory, especially when facing complex challenges in today's society (Vo, 2024). Han Fei emphasised the role of “Fa (法)”, “Shu (術)”, and “Shi (勢)” in state management, creating a theoretical framework that is still relevant in the context of modern organisation and administration. “Shi (勢)” is the ability to shape and maintain the legitimate power of leaders in the organisation, ensuring they have sufficient authority to direct and control. “Fa (法)” emphasises the need for clear and fair rules and regulations, which serve as a guideline for management activities. Finally, “Shu (術)” emphasises leadership skills, including understanding people, using human resources appropriately, and making effective decisions. In the context of modern management, these principles are applied to build leadership models based on a combination of legitimate power, transparent legal systems, and flexible leadership. Modern organisations and businesses can learn from Han Fei to create a fair, effective, and sustainable working environment where leaders maintain order and promote development and innovation.

Significance in Resolving Conflicts and Building Modern Rule of Law

Han Fei's thoughts are also significant in resolving conflicts and building the rule of law in the modern world. He recognised that conflicts are inevitable in any society, and resolving them effectively requires a strict and fair legal system. Han Fei's view is that the law must be built on the principles of objectivity, impartiality, and the ability to apply equally to everyone. This thought has contributed to shaping the concept of the rule of law in modern times, where everyone is equal before the law, and the law becomes a tool to protect the common good instead of serving the interests of a minority group.

As countries face challenges of social conflict, corruption, and legal instability, Han Fei's thought encourages the development of transparent legal systems to maintain order and resolve conflicts fairly and sustainably. At the same time, he emphasises the importance of checks on power to prevent abuse and ensure that the law is enforced for the common good. These principles continue to play an important role in promoting good governance and the modern rule of law, which form the foundation for stable and equitable development in today's societies.

Discussion

Han Fei's dialectical thought marked an important step forward in ancient China's history of dialectical cognition. As a pioneer, Han Fei contributed significantly to enriching dialectical thought, although it was still primitive. He divided social history into four periods, pointing out that customs and governing measures need to change with each period. The view that “the customs of the past and present are different, the measures of the new period are different from the old period” reflected a profound awareness of the changeability of society, paving the way for the construction of a legal system suitable for the specific historical context. This system is not only a tool of governance but also a manifestation of the close relationship between the three elements of “Fa (法)”, “Shu (術)”, and “Shi (勢)” in state administration.

This section addresses the research questions by comparing the study's findings with existing literature, particularly recent works published after 2021. Additionally, it discusses the limitations of the study and their implications for the results' generalizability.

1. How is the dialectical thought expressed through the relationship between *Fa* (法), *Shu* (術), and *Shi* (勢)?

Han Fei's dialectical thought revolves around the interplay of *Fa* (law), *Shu* (strategy), and *Shi* (authority). The findings reveal that these elements are interdependent: *Fa* establishes the legal foundation of governance, *Shu* ensures the ruler's strategic manipulation to maintain control, and *Shi* embodies the positional power that legitimises authority. This triadic relationship forms a dynamic framework for addressing power dynamics and contradictions in governance.

Recent studies (Ling, 2023) support this analysis, highlighting Han Fei's pragmatic approach to consolidating state power. However, these works often overlook the dialectical interplay between the three elements, treating them as separate constructs. This study bridges this gap by emphasising their interconnectivity, providing a more holistic view of Han Fei's thought.

2. Is dialectical thinking different or similar to other philosophical schools of the same period?

The study finds that Han Fei's dialectical thought is distinct from contemporaneous schools, such as Confucianism and Daoism, due to its focus on pragmatic governance and the ruler's active role in shaping state dynamics. Unlike Confucianism, which prioritises moral virtue, and Daoism, which advocates non-interference, Han Fei underscores the practical mechanisms for maintaining power.

Comparative analysis aligns with recent works (e.g., Sun, 2022), which suggest that Legalism's emphasis on pragmatism and efficiency offers a counterpoint to the ethical and metaphysical orientations of Confucianism and Daoism. However, this study contributes new insights by demonstrating that Han Fei's dialectics not only contrast with but complement these schools in addressing the complexities of governance.

3. Does dialectical thought contribute to state and social management in the modern context?

The findings suggest that Han Fei's principles remain relevant in modern governance, particularly in addressing political stability, institutional reform, and ethical leadership challenges. His emphasis on legal frameworks, strategic governance, and authority as a cohesive system offers practical solutions for contemporary state management.

Recent studies (e.g., Harris, 2022) recognise Han Fei's relevance but often focus on isolated aspects, such as his legal theories. This study expands the discussion by integrating his dialectical thought into broader governance and social stability debates, demonstrating its potential to inform modern policy-making.

Limitations of the Study

Based on the dialectical thought of history, Han Fei affirmed the unity of the world, the continuous movement, and the change of nature, society, and thinking. Although this view was still simple and formal, it laid the foundation for the development of dialectical thought in China. He recognised that all things and phenomena exist in a universal relationship, constantly moving and changing. Although these thoughts did not reach the level of strict systematisation as modern dialectical theories, they opened up new perspectives, promoting the development of dialectical thought in later periods.

This research is limited by its reliance on historical and textual analysis, which may introduce interpretative biases. Additionally, while the study explores Han Fei's ideas in the modern context, it does not empirically test their applicability in specific governance scenarios. These limitations affect the generalizability of the results, as the practical implications of Han Fei's thought may vary across different cultural and political contexts.

Implications of the Limitations

Despite its important contributions, Han Fei's dialectical thought was still influenced by historical conditions and had certain limitations. His views were still primitive, naive and sometimes formalistic. Han Fei absolutised the rule of law, considering it the only way to govern the state, without seeing the importance of education in regulating behaviour and orienting social morality. However, despite these limitations, Han Fei's thoughts enriched the history of dialectical development in China, leaving valuable theoretical and practical values for future generations.

The interpretative nature of the study may lead to varying conclusions depending on the lens applied to Han Fei's works. Future research could mitigate this by employing interdisciplinary approaches, such as empirical studies and comparative case analyses, to test the applicability of Han Fei's dialectical thought in contemporary governance frameworks. Despite these limitations, the study provides a valuable foundation for further exploration of Han Fei's enduring significance.

Conclusion

Based on his views on natural history, society and thinking, Han Fei built a dialectical thinking foundation, albeit simple and rudimentary. He realised that movement and change are the core characteristics of all things and phenomena, from nature to human society. This is reflected in his analysis of the internal contradictions of society and how they promote development or create instability. Although not as fully developed as modern dialectical thought, Han Fei's approach demonstrated a keen sense of observing and explaining the laws of operation of the surrounding world.

Han Fei's thought is presented as a coherent system based on dialectical materialist views of history. He sees society not as a static entity but as a dynamic whole governed by objective laws. On this basis, he builds a system of political and social thought as a unified whole, emphasising the close relationship between power, law, and leadership skills in state management. He believes that social order can only be maintained when central power is

consolidated, the law is applied uniformly and strictly, and leaders know how to use appropriate means to control and operate.

Han Fei's thoughts were theoretical and closely linked to China's social reality during the Spring and Autumn - Warring States period. This was a turbulent period with conflicts between vassal states, deep class divisions, and an urgent need for an effective management system to solve social problems. His thoughts radically solved these challenges by promoting the rule of law and centralisation. Thanks to the clarity and feasibility of this ideological system, the Qin Dynasty thoroughly utilised Han Fei's principles to unify China, build a strong centralised state, and create an important milestone in Chinese political history. Thus, Han Fei's dialectical thought and socio-political system, although primitive, were far ahead of his time, playing an essential role in explaining and responding to the problems posed by Chinese society at that time while leaving profound reference values for later periods.

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