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SIMILARITIES IN THE THOUGHTS ON EDUCATION OF PHAN CHAU TRINH AND FUKUZAWA YUKICHI

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Abstract:

Phan Chau Trinh (1872-1926) and Fukuzawa Yukichi (1834-1901) are prominent thinkers who advocated the reform in Vietnam and Japan, respectively, in the context of both the East and the West had lots of changes in terms of historical and social situation in the second half of 19th century and first half of 20th century. In their life, each left many valuable thoughts to the archive of arguments of their respective country. One of the prominent thoughts of theirs is the thought on education. This was expressed in a rich and unique way in many aspects, such as: the role of education, the subject of education, purposes of education, contents of education, methods of education, etc. It can be seen that, although they took different directions to approach and explain issues relating to education and the influence of education on social development of each respective country, their thoughts on education still had interesting similarities. From such, we can draw out historical meanings for the development of each nation today.

Keywords: thoughts on education, Phan Chau Trinh, Fukuzawa Yukichi

1. Introduction

The history of Vietnam and Japan in the second half of 19th century and the early 20th century was a period of great changes in all aspects. Such changes had raised many issues; of which, the most urgent was to explore and determine the way to liberate the nation and the people from oppression, exploitation and social injustice. Therefore, in this period, many thinkers of the two countries had come up with different plans to solve those urgent problems of the society. These plans, due to certain limitations of historical conditions and ideological perspectives, either succeeded to some extent or failed. However, they left a special imprint in the history of ideas of Japan and Vietnam in this period. It can be seen that such similarities in historical and social conditions of the two country in that period created premises and foundation for similar viewpoints of thinkers. In particular, Phan Chau Trinh (1872-1926) - born into a patriotic family in Tay Loc

Village, Ha Dong District, Quang Nam Province (now Tam Ky, Quang Nam, Vietnam) and Fukuzawa Yukichi (1834 - 1901) - born into a samurai family in Nakatsu, now Oita, Kyushu, Japan proved to be prominent thinkers with remarkable contributions to the development of their respective country. One of the important contents which left a distinctive imprint in their ideological systems is the thought on education.

On the other hand, similarities in the thoughts on education of Phan Chau Trinh and Fukuzawa Yukichi not only represented their concerns and search for an answer for the turbulent social and historical circumstances of Vietnam and Japan at the end of 19th century and early 20th century, but also stemmed from their theoretical premises, namely: the unique combination between Eastern cultural traditions of each nation with Eastern thoughts, especially Confucian thought, using Western civilization's thoughts and achievements as guideline. Similarities in the thoughts on education of the two thinkers are discussed in the following part.

2. Content

2.1. About the role of education

In the thoughts of Fukuzawa Yukichi and Phan Chau Trinh, education plays a huge role in the sustainable development of the country, the people and even each individual. In which:

First, for the nation and the country, according to Phan Chau Trinh, education is first and foremost a means to national liberation. In his view, the basic reason that Vietnam was invaded and oppressed by colonizers was that, in terms of knowledge, our people had been lagged behind other nations for centuries. While Vietnam was still doing agricultural economy, Western countries already advanced to industrial economy and were moving toward to knowledge economy. He said: "The people of the South are now as stupid as buffaloes and horses - others can tie them up and beat them freely. They have mouths but dare not complain, they are near death but dare not lament" i. In order to save the nation, there is no other way than catching up intellectually with other nations and bringing people to an equal level with them. Therefore, it's necessary to "make education universal and intensive, not for pursuing the materialistic purpose of helping An Nam people to gain positions and perks in the government, but for being a means to liberate the masses"ii.

As for Fukuzawa Yukichi, when considering the historical and social conditions of Japan at that time, he also stated that "[Japan] is an island country separated eastward from the Asian continent. From ancient times it has not had relations with foreign countries. It has relied on its own products and has been self-sufficient. But foreign trade began after the coming of the Americans in the 1850s [the Kaei era (1848-1854)], creating the situation which has continued up to the present. Even after the opening of the ports there have been various debates. Some factions made a great deal of noise about "national seclusion" and "expulsion of the foreigners". But their views were short-sighted. They were narrow-minded like the proverbial frog at the bottom of the

ⁱ. Phan Chau Trinh: The Complete Collection, vol. 2, Da Nang Publishing House, 2005, p.59.

ii. Phan Chau Trinh: The Complete Collection, vol. 3, Da Nang Publishing House, 2005, p.231.

well, and their arguments were not worth listening to"iii. Therefore, in order to bring the country out of stagnation to develop, integrate and cooperate with foreign countries, it is necessary to educate people so that they know and are aware of the idea that "if the nation is disgraced, every Japanese citizen, to the last man, should be willing to sacrifice his life to prevent the decline of her prestige and glory. National independence entails all of these things." iv

In addition, education also plays a role in making the country rich and strong. According to Fukuzawa Yukichi, Japan at his time could not compare in wealth and strength with the nations of the West; however, the outward circumstances of national wealth and power are not irrevocably fixed by nature's decree, but can be changed by the diligent efforts of men. He wrote: "Today's fools can become tomorrow's sages. The rich and mighty of the past can become the poor and weak today. There are not a few examples of this in both ancient and modern times. If we Japanese will begin to pursue learning with spirit and energy, so as to achieve independence and thereby enrich and strengthen the nation, why shall we fear the Powers of the West?" v In Phan Chau Trinh's point of view, he also said that education creates equality in relations with countries around the world. He wrote: "Alas! A country of 20 million people, among which the well-educated accounts to tens of thousands, is still lost and weak. Our people are unable to defend each other to survive, and blind to the fact that they are living in a world where the one with power holds the authority. Being able to fantasize in such a situation, the intellectual standard is so pitiful."vi. From that, he also asserted that: "In this world, people respect the strong and despise the weak; also, the ignorant and the stupid are not pitied "vii.

Second, regarding each individual. According to Phan Chau Trinh, education plays a great role in helping us to be human and masters of ourselves so that we can strengthen the nation and develop the country. Therefore, he also pointed out that education must be made "universal and intensive, not for pursuing the materialistic purpose of helping An Nam people to gain positions and perks in the government, but for being a means to liberate the masses. When the majority of An Nam people are educated to understand the "Why?" and the "How?" of things, that's when they are aware of themselves and of their rights." viii Fukuzawa Yukichi also affirmed the decisive role of education in shaping personality, wealth and poverty of each individual. He pointed out that: "It's only the person who has studied diligently so as to have acquired a deep knowledge of things who become rich and noble while his opposite become base and poor"ix, because "Heaven, it is said, does not create one person above or below another. This signifies that when we are born from Heaven we

iii . Fukuzawa Yukichi (Translated by Pham Huu Loi), An Encouragement of Learning - or lessons of the self-reliant spirit of Japan, World Publishing House, Hanoi, 2014, pp 28-29.

^{iv}. Fukuzawa Yukichi (Translated by Pham Huu Loi), *An Encouragement of Learning - or lessons of the self-reliant spirit of Japan*, World Publishing House, Hanoi, 2014, p.29.

v. Fukuzawa Yukichi (Translated by Pham Huu Loi), *An Encouragement of Learning - or lessons of the self-reliant spirit of Japan*, World Publishing House, Hanoi, 2014, pp 51-52.

vi . Phan Chau Trinh: The Complete Collection, vol. 2, Da Nang Publishing House, 2005, p.53.

vii . Phan Chau Trinh: The Complete Collection, vol. 2, Da Nang Publishing House, 2005, p.73.

viii. Phan Chau Trinh: The Complete Collection, vol. 3, Da Nang Publishing House, 2005, p.231.

ix . Fukuzawa Yukichi (Translated by Pham Huu Loi), An Encouragement of Learning - or lessons of the self-reliant spirit of Japan, World Publishing House, Hanoi, 2014, p.25.

are all equal and there is no innate differentiation between high and low. Therefore, the question of the difference between wise and stupid is traceable to the degree of learning"^x. In addition, he also pointed out that each individual is a member of a household and the country. If every individual is educated, the household and the country will prosper and be respected in society. He wrote: "If the personal independence is ensured, so is family independence and national independence."^{xi}

2.2. About the purposes and subject of education

Regarding purposes of education. Fukuzawa Yukichi and Phan Chau Trinh both believed that education is first to develop the country and empower the nation to solve social and historical issues posed. Besides, it also creates new, comprehensive people to build and develop the country. According to Fukuzawa Yukichi, the purpose of education is to help human function well in two ways. First, as an independent individual, human not only should fulfill the essential needs of himself and his family, such as eating food, wearing clothes of having an accommodation, etc. using his physical and mental labors, but also need to improve his education to contribute to the common good to be worthy of being "the highest of all creation."

He wrote: "If a man is content that his needs for food, clothing and accommodation are satisfied, does that mean a human is born into this world simply to die? The situation at the time of his death is not different from when he was born. It only revolves around how to have a place to live in, a stable life and wealth. It is just that. If his descendants also repeat exactly how he lived, then even after hundreds of years, the villages and towns where he lived in the past still not change. No one thinks of the common good - they only care about personal and family benefits"xii. Thus, each individual must be educated to complete and make themselves useful for their family and the society. Second, as a member of the society, the duty of each and every person is to help the society become better and better. He explained: "What we call learning, industry, politics, law — these are all aimed at promoting social intercourse among us... [The government] makes laws for the precise purpose of protecting the good people from the bad, thereby making human association possible. [Scholars] write books and educate others for the precise purpose of guiding the younger generation to be able to maintain human associations"xiii.

In this regard, Phan Chau Trinh also said that there is no means that is more effective than education in helping us liberate the nation. He believed that education is "not for pursuing materialistic purposes of helping An Nam people to gain positions and perks in the bureaucracy, but for being a means to liberate the masses" xiv. Education is not "a dream of people in the South over 40-50 years, who have now woken up to absorb European quintessence.

^{×.} Fukuzawa Yukichi (Translated by Pham Huu Loi), An Encouragement of Learning - or lessons of the self-reliant spirit of Japan, World Publishing House, Hanoi, 2014, pp 24.

xi . Fukuzawa Yukichi (Translated by Pham Huu Loi), An Encouragement of Learning - or lessons of the self-reliant spirit of Japan, World Publishing House, Hanoi, 2014, p.27.

xii. Fukuzawa Yukichi (Translated by Pham Huu Loi), *An Encouragement of Learning - or lessons of the self-reliant spirit of Japan*, World Publishing House, Hanoi, 2014, pp 136-137.

xiii . Fukuzawa Yukichi (Translated by Pham Huu Loi), *An Encouragement of Learning - or lessons of the self-reliant spirit of Japan*, World Publishing House, Hanoi, 2014, p.138.

xiv. Phan Chau Trinh: The Complete Collection, vol. 3, Da Nang Publishing House, 2005, p.231.

If people work genuinely to open up the mind of their fellows, renovate schools, create new livelihoods, with our intelligence and wholehearted education, then in this 20th century, our country will become a new version of France. This is not a difficult task."xv Therefore, in his opinion, "if anyone can teach us how to work today, we will willingly become his students; if anyone can feed us, we will voluntarily become his children. We can only depend on education and upbringing to wish for our race to survive on this earth. Anywhere we go, we need helps from others. So why is it an honor to ask for help from one, but humiliation to ask from another? Keep worrying days and nights, trying to figure out the plans, throwing away ten thousands of lives to buy the status of a slave for hundreds of years without changes - no one in the South would do that even if they are lunatic"xvi.

In addition, the purpose of education is also to create comprehensive people who can do good to themselves and the country. He wrote: "Today we listen to a lecture on electricity, tomorrow on trade. A little today, a little tomorrow, many drops of water will become a waterfall, much knowledge creates intelligent people. When we become intellectuals, we are useful first and foremost to ourselves, and then to others"xvii.

Regarding subject of education. From the role and purposes of education, both Fukuzawa Yukichi and Phan Chau Trinh affirmed that education aims at all people, whether they are rich or poor, coming from different social classes, or having different occupations. When a person is born, he needs to be educated. Fukuzawa Yukichi asserted that everyone must learn: "regardless of social class or the gap between the rich and the poor".xviii

2.3. About contents of education

Facing the situation that education in Vietnam and Japan at the end of 19th century and early 20th century was outdated and no longer met historical and social requirements, Fukuzawa Yukichi and Phan Chau Trinh both believed that education must be quickly renovated by combining achievements of Western civilization with values in the educational content of the nation, at the same time criticizing and filtering out obsolete contents which constrained the development of the two countries. In particular, from Phan Chau Trinh's viewpoint, it's necessary to "compare Western education to our traditional education to see what's good and what's not, to make judgments in order to find a way to develop later on" xix. As the country was deadlocked on the path of revolution, unlike other Confucian scholars who secluded themselves, Phan Chau Trinh was always anxious to find a revolutionary path for the nation. He was an advocate to the idea of opening people's minds, making them change their old ways of thinking in order to reach a higher level of awareness in line with contemporary development.

xv . Phan Chau Trinh: The Complete Collection, vol. 2, Da Nang Publishing House, 2005, p.69.

xvi . Phan Chau Trinh: The Complete Collection, vol. 2, Da Nang Publishing House, 2005, p.64.

xvii. Phan Chau Trinh: The Complete Collection, vol. 3, Da Nang Publishing House, 2005, p.199.

xviii. Fukuzawa Yukichi (Translated by Pham Huu Loi), An Encouragement of Learning - or lessons of the self-reliant spirit of Japan, World Publishing House, Hanoi, 2014, p.27.

xix. Phan Chau Trinh: The Complete Collection, vol. 3, Da Nang Publishing House, 2005, p.267.

He also criticized Confucian education with old and outdated knowledge, which was no longer relevant to the era and vulnerable to achievements of Western civilization. He wrote:

"Examinations were once organized, But now the Five Classics and the Four Books have turned into ashes." xx . That led to the fact that "teenagers of our country know everything and talk about everything. They can talk for 4-5 hours, or write an essay of dozens of pages. Yet, all is just nonsense, and only messes up with their pure minds." xxi .

When considering the current state of education in Japan at that time, Fukuzawa Yukichi also criticized ancient and Chinese educational contents, which were impractical and could not be applied to real life, because he believed that the ability to read ancient texts which are difficult to make out, or enjoy and write poetry did not benefit life enough to be "regarded highly". He cited: "Among the Confucian learning scholars, those who have been skilled in practical matters have been few indeed. Rare also has been townsfolk who, if he was well-versed in poetry, was also successful in business. Consequently, we still observe that thoughtful townsfolk and peasants, when they see their own children concentrating on books, fear as good parents that they will eventually bring the family fortune to ruin."xxiii

By criticizing Confucian educational contents, Phan Chau Trinh and Fukuzawa Yukichi both thought that it was necessary to select educational contents that are more materialistic.

In Phan Chau Trinh's opinion, in order to raise intellectual standard, education must aim to serve people's daily life instead of studying obscure literature. Phan Chau Trinh himself was also very eager to learn and had knowledge of many occupations. Wherever he went, he called for people to establish guilds for economic development. In terms of academic training, he believed that it's necessary to renovate educational contents to focus especially on science and technology. He wrote:

"Wish that the education provided is worthy
Instead of being just for show
Focusing on industry, trade, technology
And thoroughly analyze them to understand their nature"xxiii.

In addition, Phan Chau Trinh also said that educational content must focus on specialties that the society needs for national development and liberation, as well as to improve the living standard of people. When talking about medicine, he pointed out:

"Establishing professional medical schools

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xx. Phan Chau Trinh: The Complete Collection, vol. 1, Da Nang Publishing House, 2005, p.367.

xxi . Phan Chau Trinh: The Complete Collection, vol. 3, Da Nang Publishing House, 2005, p.208.

xxii. Fukuzawa Yukichi (Translated by Pham Huu Loi), An Encouragement of Learning - or lessons of the self-reliant spirit of Japan, World Publishing House, Hanoi, 2014, p.26.

xxiii. Phan Chau Trinh: The Complete Collection, vol. 1, Da Nang Publishing House, 2005, p.171.

Specializing in how to cure diseases

Providing knowledge adequately and thoroughly

From physical examination to surgery

Learners must have clear understanding of organs in the body

As well as the limbs and the bones

Welding needles for acupunture

Using microscope to observe and research

Sophisticated machinery

Must be used for consideration and treatment

Also, it is worth

Writing medical books about etiology

Pointing out the causes of diseases

And categorizing them for comprehensive study"xxiv.

In the opinion of Fukuzawa Yukichi, practical learning means learn what is useful and practical to everyday life and what can help us make a living, such as: "[A person should] learn the 47-letter Kana syllabary, methods of letter writing and of accounting, the practice of the abacus, the way to handle weights and measures, and the like. And there is much additional knowledge to be acquired. Geography is the guide to the climates not only of Japan, but of the many countries of the world. Physics is the science which investigates the properties and functions of the myriad things of the universe. History books chronicle in detail the conditions of the countries of the past and present. Economics explain the financial management of self, family, and the state. Ethics expounds the natural principles of personal moral cultivation and of social intercourse."xxv

In particular, regarding educational content, both Phan Chau Trinh and Fukuzawa Yukichi affirmed the role of foreign languages in absorbing achievements of world civilization, as well as in the cooperation with countries in all fields. That's why foreign languages must be included in the contents of education. In Phan Chau Trinh's opinion, in order to absorb progressive knowledge of the world, one of the important contents of education is teaching foreign languages, especially French to people. He compared it to "a key" for Vietnamese people to open their door to world civilization. He wrote: "You should not think of travelling to foreign countries [referring to the movement of Dong du - Travel to the east] without learning foreign languages first. When I was in Japan, I had to depend on Mr. Sao Nam to talk to others, or write Chinese characters to communicate with Japanese people who can read them. Otherwise, I am no different than a mute. If they insult of scold me while making tea right in front of me, I cannot know and might still take the cup with gratitude. The suffering of not knowing how to speak out our thoughts, I think you all can imagine"xxvi. Taking lessons from Japan, Phan Chau Trinh analyzed: "When English people come, we learn English. When Russian, French and German people come, we learn Russian, French and German. We also send teenagers to their countries to learn. Because only when we understand their language and are

xxiv. Phan Chau Trinh: The Complete Collection, vol. 1, Da Nang Publishing House, 2005, pp. 358-359.

xxv. Fukuzawa Yukichi (Translated by Pham Huu Loi) *An Encouragement of Learning - or lessons of the self-reliant spirit of Japan*, World Publishing House, Hanoi, 2014, pp 26-27.

xxvi. Phan Chau Trinh: The Complete Collection, vol. 2, Da Nang Publishing House, 2005, p.47.

able to read their books can we understand their circumstances and works, thus can imitate their achievements" xxvii. Also, in his opinion, Fukuzawa Yukichi also asserted that in order to study well, learners need to properly understand the nature of each problem. "For capable young people, I recommend reading the original versions in English, French and German" xxviii.

2.5. About methods of education

According to Phan Chau Trinh, for effective education, it is necessary to combine teacher's teaching method and student's learning activity.

A. For teachers

According to Fukuzawa Yukichi and Phan Chau Trinh, teachers need to both love their occupation and be capable to choose the right method for each learner, as well as to combine different methods of education to create good people who are useful for the society. Especially, teachers must be aware that the process of teaching is also the process of self-studying and self-training to improve their qualifications in order to meet historical and social requirements. Phan Chau Trinh wrote: "So I beg of you not to rush, not to focus on quantity, and not to boast of your knowledge"xxix; Fukuzawa Yukichi also pointed out that teachers must make examples of themselves and associate theory with practice and words with actions. He also criticized teachers who talked big but were unable to do things: "Their knowledge of economics has no influence on their family business. Their knowledge of moral theories has no bearing on their own moral cultivation. As talkers and doers, they seem to be two entirely different persons. I cannot find anyone with his own definitive views."xxx

B. For students

Fukuzawa Yukichi and Phan Chau Trinh both identified them as the center of educational activities, thus, student's method of learning greatly affects the process of education. According to them, learners not only need to be proactive and creative in this process but also "need to know how to make plan and anticipate things in life. That means being able to observe things, speculate their nature, thus present their own opinions and their own ways. Also, it's necessary to read and write books."xxxii In addition, "depending on your strength, take each step firmly to learn the profession well, so that after returning home, you can truly become a teacher, an example to promote others to do the same. That's patriotism"xxxii. In addition, the two thinkers also criticized the halfhearted way of learning which lacks deep understanding of the nature of problem. Fukuzawa Yukichi wrote: "It would be a great misunderstanding

xxvii. Phan Chau Trinh: The Complete Collection, vol. 1, Da Nang Publishing House, 2005, p. 47.

xxviii . Fukuzawa Yukichi (Translated by Pham Huu Loi), *An Encouragement of Learning - or lessons of the self-reliant spirit of Japan*, World Publishing House, Hanoi, 2014, p.27.

xxix. Phan Chau Trinh: The Complete Collection, vol. 3, Da Nang Publishing House, 2005, p. 72.

xxx . Fukuzawa Yukichi (Translated by Pham Huu Loi) *An Encouragement of Learning - or lessons of the self-reliant spirit of Japan ,* World Publishing House, Hanoi, 2014, p.176.

xxxi . Fukuzawa Yukichi (Translated by Pham Huu Loi) *An Encouragement of Learning - or lessons of the self-reliant spirit of Japan ,* World Publishing House, Hanoi, 2014, p.174.

xxxii. Phan Chau Trinh: The Complete Collection, vol. 3, Da Nang Publishing House, 2005, p.208.

of the nature of learning to think that it only consists in reading books"xxxiii. Phan Chau Trinh also said that: "Some of us, fortunate enough to learn French, are only able to write only a few sentences and speak a few words, but already think that they have mastered all the sciences of their teachers. No one can boast to have reached the peak and can become a guide for their people on the noble journey of progress when they just arrive at the threshold of the mysteries of science"xxxiv.

Also, Phan Chau Trinh and Fukuzawa Yukichi said that in addition to formal classes in the classroom, schools need to organize extracurricular sessions, so that people can share what they know in order to help each other improve. When it comes to form of speech, Phan Chau Trinh explained as follows: "Who knows about something can explain it verbally and clearly for others to understand. It does not require people to go to school or be able to hold a pen and write down on paper. They just need to spend a bit of time to listen to the speaker to find it as helpful as going to school. For example, if we've never studied electrification before, but there is someone who specializes in that field and explains it to us, we will kind of understand what electrification means, how it is used and how it benefits us."xxxv. Fukuzawa Yukichi also said that: "Converse with others, and present your opinions to the public. A person may be called a true scholar only when he has made use of all these means. Observing, reasoning and reading are the means through which knowledge is gathered; conservation the means of its exchange... Some of these a person can do by himself, but conversation and public speaking require a larger community. From this we can see how important public speaking is."xxxvi

3. Conclusion

The thought on education of Fukuzawa Yukichi and Phan Chau Trinh is quite rich and profound on many different aspects such as: the role, purpose, contents, methods, etc. of education. The thought of the two thinkers reflects historical meaning, including:

First, affirms the very important, even decisive, role of education in addressing historical-social requirements for the development of the country. Currently, in the Documents of the 11th National Congress, the Communist Party of Vietnam also affirms the very important role of education in the development process of our country today and considers it "the top national policy; investing in education and training is investing in development"xxxvii;

Second, regarding contents of education, the two thinkers also determined that only necessary social knowledge, especially of modern scientific achievements of the world, should be taught to meet the requirements of national liberation and development. In the current conditions of national development, the Communist Party of Vietnam has also indicated that: "Fundamentally and comprehensively renovate education

xxxiii . Fukuzawa Yukichi (Translated by Pham Huu Loi) *An Encouragement of Learning - or lessons of the self-reliant spirit of Japan ,* World Publishing House, Hanoi, 2014, p.174.

xxxiv. Phan Chau Trinh: The Complete Collection, vol. 2, Da Nang Publishing House, 2005, p. 72.

xxxv. Phan Chau Trinh: *The Complete Collection*, vol. 3, Da Nang Publishing House, 2005, pp. 198-199

xxxvi . Fukuzawa Yukichi (Translated by Pham Huu Loi) *An Encouragement of Learning - or lessons of the self-reliant spirit of Japan* , World Publishing House, Hanoi, 2014, pp 174.

xxxvii The Communist Party of Vietnam, *Documents of the 11th National Congress*, National Politics Publishing House, Hanoi, 2011, p.77

and training according to the needs of social development; improve quality according to the requirements of standardization, modernization, democratization and international integration, effectively serve the cause of national construction and defense"xxxviii;

Third, it is necessary to combine different methods, from the way of teaching and evaluation of teachers to the way of learning of students and organization of teaching, etc. However, all must be directed to learners, taking them as the center to serve the common goal of national liberation, human liberation and national development. Article from the research results of the project code C2018-18B-06.

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xxxviii. The Communist Party of Vietnam, *Documents of the 11th National Congress*, National Politics Publishing House, Hanoi, 2011, p.77.

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