

Study on the Essence of Marx's Political Philosophy in the View of Materialism

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Abstract

Marx believed that, all material can furnish the practical rule which is determined by the will of self-love of the humanity. All the course of self-love can be manifested as the development of human desire. In the field of materialism, Marx has distinguished the concepts of higher and lower desires. Marx used his method of dialectic materialism to explain the dynamic component of the universe phenomenon that the subjectivity of the world should belong to humanity and human should be considered as a creative subjectivity.

Key words: Marx; Self-love; Method; Dialectic materialism

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INTRODUCTION

What is the essence of Marx's philosophy? This question has been proposed and illustrated for hundreds of years; however, it is still a theory problem in the study of Marx or Marxism. In this thesis, I try to make a proposition that the essence of Marx's philosophy is his political philosophy. I try to divide my statement into three parts. The first part is to explain The Legacy of Political Theory in German Classical Philosophy, the second part is to illustrate the context and logic of Marx's political

philosophy, the third part is to analyze the methodology of Marx's political philosophy.

1. THE LEGACY OF POLITICAL THEORY IN GERMAN CLASSICAL PHILOSOPHY

A letter written by Marx to his father in 1873 says in the period of university, Marx had learned the law of Kant and Fichte, the philosophy of Schelling and Hegel, and some criminal law of Feuerbach, Marx read these books from cover to cover. There is no doubt that the German classical philosophy have a strong influence on Marx's theory, what I try to do is not to restate the relations, but to analyze what legacy Marx has inherited.

It can be concluded that the first legacy is "freedom". From Kant to Hegel, the most distinctive character of German classical philosophy theory is "freedom". Kant had done so many researches on the term "freedom" and explained that the quality of freedom is the basic character of human beings, beside this quality, nothing needs to create by enlightenment. Fichte touted himself to be the first one who created the system of freedom. Hegel brought freedom to his absolute spirit, and declared that the essence of his absolute spirit is freedom. Marx also gave freedom an important status in his theory, however, did not like the former philosopher, Marx brought a new carrier to the will of freedom, it was real, more precisely, human beings who live in the reality. Kant, Fichte, Hegel all of them attribute freedom to their own theory or spirit, contrarily, Marx had found a new perspective to analyze freedom, this is the regulations of society development. The second legacy inherited by Marx is "humanity". The problem of "humanity" attracted many German philosophers. According to Kant, the discover of humanity was in the process of enlightenment, during this process, human could cognize themselves and control themselves, and then Kant accomplished two basic philosophy work, one was to explain how it was possible for human to

make law to the nature, the second was to illustrate moral law made by human's reason. After these nature law and moral law, Fichte's ego-philosophy, Hegel's spiritual philosophy, Feuerbach's humanism philosophy was all think highly of humanity, however Marx found this was still not enough to enhance the status of human. In Marx's view, indeed the German philosophers had played more attention on the term of "humanity", however, the formation and essence of human being was not changed in their theory. Marx critically inherited the humanity philosophy of Feuerbach, and announced that the meaning of humanity should be identified in a new field, it could not be abstract any more, and it must be found in the real world and in the concrete practices. The third legacy I try to conclude is "civil society". Marx's political philosophy was formed by critically inheriting Hegel's theory of country and civil society. Before Marx, civil society theory has a long history of German classical philosophy. Under the influence of Enlightenment Movement, Kant proposed an ideal civil society image after he had analyzed the real world of British and France. The ideal image putted forward by Kant was a civil society which was controlled by common law, and in this civil society, all members' freedom can be guaranteed at a maximum level. However the consequences of French Revolution were unsatisfactory, the philosopher after Kant does not show their optimistic assessment of the term "civil society", and this could be seen in the theory of German romanticist. When Hegel began to do the research on civil society, he did not show his positive view or negative view on it, but objectively made a definition to this term. Hegel argued that the civil society was a living world in which individuals guide themselves by proper egoism. Marx had thought critically about Hegel's argument and harshly pointed out that the rational country representing the common interests of its nation was not exist, the term of country could not be understand by its conception only, or by Hegel's history of human spirit, country rooted in the civil society. The fourth legacy inherited by Marx from German classical philosophy I try to explain is "community". The term "community" played an important role in German classical philosophy. German philosophy generally believed country is a necessary condition as a guarantee of the effective operation of social system and only in the community can individuals achieve themselves. Fichte and Feuerbach had made a lot of explanations on this point, and this had been inherited by Marx. Marx discovered the regulations of the "class", and "country", he proposed the country as a set of class would vanish, but community still existed there, and Marx argued that only in the community, the human beings can achieve the tools and manners to development in an all-around way.

In the first part, there are still many works to be done, why and how Marx changed his view from spiritual freedom to human freedom, from abstract human to the

human existed in the reality and form country to civil society and community? What I want to do is not only illustrated the development of their philosophy theory, the most important thing to explain is why Marx can choose a different way of thinking on the same issue the German philosophers confronted with. I suppose one answer is Marx's standpoint, and another is Marx's logic and methodology. These are the important work I need to continue to study on.

2. THE CONTEXT AND LOGIC OF MARX'S POLITICAL PHILOSOPHY

The research object of this essay is to demonstrate that, Marx's political philosophy is "capital domination" and the carrier of the capital domination is the civil society. Marx had done a lot of research on the definition of "capital" and "civil society", but this was not I want to analyze in this research proposal, what I want to reveal is Marx's opinion about the process of the capital domination in the civil society and how could we get rid of capital domination. In the first part, I try to illustrate Marx's view on the capital domination. By studying political economy, Marx argued the capital had permeated and eroded all social fields. Firstly, "capital" occupies labor. In "Political Economics manuscripts of 1857-1858", Marx elucidated that the productivity created by workers had been used by capital and had been changed into a capital productivity and reproductively. Labor no longer belongs to the workers any more, and workers' nature had been changed, they had been substituted by capital. At this time, exploitation came into being; to "exploit labor equally" became the primary human rights of the capital. Secondly, nation becomes the tool for the "capital" to achieve itself. Capital grows into the economic rights of bourgeoisie and the power of the capital did not belong to individuals but the whole society. Marx proposed that political rights were the product of economical rights (Colletti, 1972, p185). He continues to argued the national state as a powerful organization in a class society, gradually became the rule tool of the capital. Thirdly, "capital" brings the materialization to the social relations. Marx revealed that after the workers' products and labor had been exploited, the workers themselves also became materialized, because there were no contexts for them anymore, the workers' body became into formalization, the labor they used just for the living not for the development of themselves. Workers had been materialized and so did the relation between workers, and the capital was left to be the terminal law to rule themselves.

In this part, to explain the object of Marx's political philosophy is not the single aim; the next work I try to do is to clarify Marx's view on the causation of the capital domination. I conclude the reason is the old style division of labor. Marx convinced us the division of labor not

only increased social wealth, but also mechanized the human life. Labor division had restricted human freedom, including all the capitalists, human had been placed into a certain area; their development would be limited by the capital. Marx realized that only if the capital domination could be overcome radically could we surpass the civil society and construct the freeman association society.

Now, the important thing is to analyze Marx's view about how to get rid of the capital domination. Marx had given us a solution, that was proletarian revolution, and the reason was the alienation from capital domination. The originator of this revolution is proletariat, because only the proletariat possesses the complete revolutionary. The concrete process of this revolution had been illustrated elaborately in Marx's work, what is important is to summarize the feature and structure of his revolution theory. It can be concluded as there are two purposes in his theory, the first is the liberation of the politics, and the second is the liberation of the humanity. Political liberation includes two divisions, one is the politics divided from religion, and another is the politics divided from the civil society (Marx, 1995, p.289). The first division implies the national state should be independent from the religion, the second division indicates the individuals should independent from the national state. It is convinced that the ultimate goal of the revolution is to divide the individuals from the religion, to give the individual free will to achieve themselves in the process of the complete development. However there do exist some limitations in the political revolution theory. Marx had pointed out that political liberation meant before human attained his liberation, the national state could finish its own revolution, sometimes the individuals did not achieve themselves by their own manners, because they need a media, this was the national state. For example, the transition of religion from the national state to the civil society was a process of political liberation, however after this liberation, the faith of religion still not be eliminated. So the political liberation was not thoroughly, liberation need come into being; this is what we called the humanity liberation.

As for the humanity liberation, it is hard to explain and still need more research. What we need to do is to analyze the research method used by Marx on his political philosophy. In Marx's work, he adopts a lot of research methods. In the view of philosophy, there are two general methods, one is totality analysis of historical materialism, and another is materialistic dialectics. Marx employed the totality method to emphasize the grasping integrality of the object. And on the issue of the "capital domination", this method was applied to investigate its generation in different perspectives and structures. As method materialistic dialectics, it was widely adopted in Marx's work. (Marx, 1995, p.56) Through this method, Marx convinced the human history constantly moved to the forward, capitalism as a stage of social form, was

not eternal. With the development of productivity, the productive relations of capitalism would produce the obstructive factor, and it would be replaced by a new productive relation which could adapt to the development of productive forces. The concrete step of materialistic dialectic method could be described as a "concrete—subject—concrete" process. However there are still many works to do to explain the application of the two general methodologies. Beside the two general methodologies, I try to conclude another two concrete methods which used frequently in Marx's work. The first method I named it as "fa-lue" method, which was the combination of the term "fact" and "value", which had been distinguished by Hume. Hume had made an opposition between "fact" and "value", and convinced that the cognitive inspection was different from the research on value, all the problems belonged to value could not be studied by scientific method and should be excluded. However Marx had chose to combine these two categories together to show his standpoint and his scientific theories. The standpoint of Marx was masses that had been exploited by others, and the scientific theories of Marx were the theory of surplus value and materialistic dialectics. While these two thoughts were combined together, we could conclude that what Marx wanted to emphasis was the revolution started by the masses. Marx not only endowed the masses with value, he also attributed the value to his political science or economical science, this was because only the value science can grasp by the masses and played a role in the development of human and society. The second concrete method used by Marx that must be stated is the class analysis. I suppose class analysis is the most important method in his political philosophy. The bourgeoisie and proletariat are the two representatives at that time. Marx believed in the productivity development, proletariat would replace the status of bourgeoisie and constructed a new community of freedom (Rousseau, 1962, p.108). With this belief, Marx engaged in struggling with the bourgeoisie theorist and cultivating the immature proletariat theorist. All Marx's political theory was to accelerate the perish of bourgeoisie so; the method of class analysis would be most frequently used. This method has two basic functions, one is to help us have a full picture of the development of classes, and another is to provide us a critical thinking of the society. Using this method Marx had explicitly explained the distinctions between the two classes and gave us a detailed discusses on the intense contradiction between them. Beside this, Marx had illustrated that the society was composed of human's activity, and in the class society, there was a contradiction between the different class activity, this meant one activity would deny another, almost all of the class documents would contain their class will with them. So the readers and researchers should have a critical way to understand them.

The concrete method we could conclude from Marx's work is not only these two. There are still many methods

like “combination of the theory and practice” and “scientific comparative method” and so on. If there is a chance, another important work need to do is to analyze the value of Marx’s political philosophy, such as the generation of his political value, the category system of his political value. However, there still many problems need to be solved:

a) The essence of Marx’s thought is his political philosophy.

b) “Freedom”, “humanity”, “civil society”, “community” are the legacy which have been inherited by Marx from German philosophy.

c) Marx’s standpoints are different from other German philosophers.

d) There are two general methods, one is totality analysis of historical materialism, and another is materialistic dialectics.

e) There are two general methods, one is totality analysis of historical materialism, another is materialistic dialectics and two concrete methods, one is “fa-lue” method, and another is class analysis method.

3. MARX’S POLITICAL PHILOSOPHY AND ITS MATERIALISM

Ludwig Feuerbach has inspired Marx to take more consideration on the problems of Materialism. By the early 1840s, the philosophy theory is all about Hegelian’s idealism, most of the theory discussion about the philosophy are from Hegel. Young Hegel School can be concluded as a radical association, which means all its members hold a traditional thought from Hegel. They have studied the basic knowledge of the relationship between idealism and materialism and concluded the spirit in the abstract world created and determined the course and the content of the social world. Under the influence of Hegel, Feuerbach’s materialism theory is more complicated in his early discussion, because his concept of materialism has always connected with Hegel’s spirit, and Feuerbach can’t clearly distinguish their different. Feuerbach has found there was a gap between, and decided to cover the gap with religion, however, this methodology cannot work efficiently, because, the relation between materialism and spirit is not only religion, but also the social relationship. In the later works of Feuerbach, he changes his mind and illustrates that the theory of materialism cannot create the universe, not even explain it. Feuerbach finds there exist some contradictions between them, that why the natural phenomenon cannot live without the human society, the ecological balance would be destroyed after the separation between the materialism and spirit. However, he still does not understand why religion can be the link between them. Feuerbach tries to find some new ways to illustrate this phenomenon, and finally, he focuses his attention on the theory of social relationships, especially the theories

of justice. He argues the essence of religion which can solve the problems between materialism and spirits can be concluded as the concept of social peace, social equality, and the complete freedom. Marx’s materialism theory has been affected greatly by what Feuerbach has illustrated, especially in the early works of Marx. The influences on Feuerbach just like the influence from the Enlightenment Movement, because the thought of religion becomes the essence of the relationship between human society and the nature universe (Rousseau, 1962, p.128). Though Marx eventually rejects Feuerbach’s simplistic assumption of the human world, Marx’s writings from 1842 to 1845 has expanded Feuerbach’s concept of religion. Marx uses this religious theory to solve the contradictions between ancient philosophies the modern philosophy, however, Marx finds out that the religious theory cannot explain the phenomenon of alienation. Reconsidering this problem, Marx believes there would be a positive trend for the development of the materialism theory because the phenomenon of alienation may not only be the negative thing. There is a close connection between them, alienation would improve the accuracy of the material theory and it is also one part of it. Most early writings of Marx’s have been condemned because the orthodox Materialists consider themselves to be the only researchers who can perceive materialism accurately and thoroughly. The incipient materialism theories of Marx are considered as the analysis of the spirits, especially the religion spirits. After 1843, Marx has paid more attention on the theories of social behavior; he discovers that human behavior is not determined by their mind only, but also by their living circumstances. As a social subject, human behavior can be derived from the environments they live in, and after the social relationship comes into being, human cannot choose their own life freely. The individual has been influenced by the others life and movements. And after that, Marx begins to analyze the social political thoughts and the social theory of ideology. In Marx’s Critique of Hegel’s Philosophy of Right, Marx criticized utopian socialism, particularly its belief in an irresistible idea that socialist movement alters from one condition to another condition. Marx doesn’t think this subject can develop in a historical process, because all the process of the social movement is unconscious. The necessity of the existence of material idea and historical materialism has nothing to do with socialism, and the revolutionary cognitive cannot be achieved in a normal way. There is no doubt that working class can represent the universal needs of human, proletariat is the most advanced class in the world which can guide other classes to attain new achievements. The terminal goal the proletariat wants to attain is a new society that can be named utopian. In this kind of new world, all the social members will have an independent thinking, they can develop themselves in any aspects they want, and there are enough time

for the social members to work, rest, and have fun, and all of these activities should be built on the basic consciousness of work or labor. Marx has spent a lot of effort in this kind of conceiving (Marx, 1995, p.245). He believes all the visions we can compose in utopian society are not illusions, they are real and well attained in the future movement. Marx emphasizes the essence of utopian society is the natural course of the universe, all the belongings in this society have the characters of materialism. In his 1844 Manuscripts, Marx has illustrated the essence of humanity and concluded that the nature of the humanity can be manifested more clearly in the society of Utopian, because only in this community, human can communicate with each other freely without any political or economic limits; and only in this community, social member can be created and educated as a full developed person, the natural of human would be evolved under the guide of Utopian Principles. The 1844 Manuscripts construed exploitation and alienation as necessary and positive historical occurrences, which means exploitation and alienation cannot be skipped or ignored in the development of human society, all of them are the symbol for the evolution and only after these process, and the pure communism can be obtained. Marx's compelling account of human reification obscures the more central goal of describing society at a certain capitalist stage of material development. Marx was less concerned with oppressed, debilitated individuals than with capitalism's oppressive, debilitating conditions, which would push us first to rebellion and then communism. As to the materialist, the issue is whether the Manuscripts are read as lurid journalism or as social science. Marx still chooses the latter and repeatedly emphasizes the importance of objective, impersonal matter within which human actors and other natural phenomena function. He stated bluntly, "a being which does not have its nature outside itself is not a natural being and does not share in the being of nature" (Rousseau, 1998, p.88) thereby people can achieve valid knowledge in an objective realm. Man is not only an active, sensuous creature, but it is also a creature of suffering, conditioned and limited.

The Holy Family can also signify Marx's developing materialism. Marx stated that,

the class of property owners in capitalism needs the labor of propertyless workers, for capitalism could not survive as a productive economic system if everyone were an owner. But it is also the nature of workers in capitalism to be alienated and oppressed by a system that exploits their skills and tears them from the collective products of their labors. (Marx, 1995, p.342)

And after this analysis, Marx concluded that, workers will eventually obtain self-consciousness through which they can be aware of their living condition and knowing the role they play in the production and finally, they will know how to change their fate in a material way. Marx stated that "The question is not what this or that proletariat is,

and what, consequent on that being; it will be compelled to do." (Marx, 1995, p.341) History generated the class society where the former tried to oppress the latter class by seizing their own products. Each mode of production could spawn oppress, and the former class could become the exploiter. Moreover, and existing class must build their developing ideas and their institution for controlling the whole society, each class want to find the most rational way to conceive their world, however, in most cases, there must be some contradictions between the dominant class and the ruled class. The revolution between the can be analyzed in a philosophy way which means the social organization is not existing only in its productive reason, but also in its reason of social ideology. Marx then illustrates this by historically tracing philosophical materialism. Predictably, he argues that materialism contains its own dynamic leading inexorably-like society itself-to communism. Since materialism presumes that men and women are products of matter, then human potential is realized only when matter is made human. And this is possible only in communism, which satisfies real needs rather than the selfish urge for profit. Hence, materialism is an authentic expression of working-class interests.

CONCLUSION

The Holy Family broaches an extremely important, and unresolved, methodological issue. Marx interprets post-Cartesian materialism as "one side."

Sensuousness lost its bloom and became the abstract sensuousness of the geometrician. Physical motion was sacrificed to the mechanical or mathematical, geometry was proclaimed the principal science. Materialism became hostile to humanity. In order to overcome science the anti-human incorporeal spirit in its own field, materialism itself was obliged to mortify its flesh and become an ascetic.

Marx one decried the ant humanism of mechanistic materialism, which is suitable only to the natural sciences, where predominance is not self-conscious. When materialism is used to explain human history, it can remain mechanistic only by distorting its subject matter. While capitalism treats subjects as impersonal means, mechanistic materialism similarly violates humanity's integrity and freedom-their "sensuous human activity, practice"-with uncontrollable, omnipotent mechanical laws. "The materialist doctrine concerning in the changing of circumstances and upbringing forget that circumstances are changed by man and the educator must himself be educated." This kind of problem is very difficult to solve because Marx never abandons materialism view, and he certainly criticizes idealism as a subjective thinking which can guide social member to an environment of contradiction. Marx tries to illustrate everything from the concrete matter and explain the universe objectively. He states that the

thinking methodology can be derived from the individual cognition which is created by social relationships. The thing way of materialism belongs to an epistemological matter and can be repeated without systematically analyzing relevant philosophical issues (Marx, 1995, p.269). Marx not only explained the materialism theory through the way how the working class did but also the way of moral philosophy. In Marx's theory, the material practical principles are completely one thing which can be described by the general principle of self-love and private happiness. Because the existence of a thing can determine the desire of this thing, which means the existence, is the basic ground of its desire, during the explanation of this desire, the concepts of this thing will easily connect with the other. In Marx's theory, the faculty of desire is the essence of the point, and this kind of desire can associate with human happiness, and the principle which makes the basic ground of will of self-love.

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