

Theoretical connotation and practical significance of Marx's moral-critical thought

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Abstract: From the height of human emancipation, Marx pursued the restoration of human nature and the construction of the "free association of man" as his values, and pursued and judged the root causes of such inhuman realities and values as religion, feudal morality and capitalist morality. His moral criticism ideas are embedded in many texts, with rich theoretical connotations, presenting clear evolutionary logic, core concepts and judgment scales, and have important practical value and significance.

1. Introduction

In the social reality that the backward Prussian state and philosophy were in the forefront of the times, Marx, in the process of liquidating the moral thoughts of the theoretical community and in the process of moral condemnation and criticism of reality, stood on the height of human emancipation, followed the values of pursuing the restoration of human nature and building the "free association of man", and made moral judgment and criticism of the social reality. Marx's moral criticism of the social reality is based on the pursuit of human nature and the construction of the "free human union". Marx took the moral criticism of religion as the basis and premise, and shook the feudal moral ideology by exposing and criticizing the religious moral ideology, which was the necessary link and prelude to the deep and thorough moral criticism of capitalism, and realized the philosophical purpose of truly transforming society, and built a revolutionary moral philosophy. Along with the development and maturity of his own philosophical thought, Marx's moral criticism thought went deeper step by step. Although he failed to form a complete moral theory system, his moral thought is embedded in many texts, with rich theoretical connotations, presenting clear evolutionary logic, core concepts and judgment scales, and having important practical value and significance.

2. The evolutionary logic of Marx's moral-critical thought

Influenced by the German reality, inspired by the French Enlightenment, the philosophical thought of Hegel and the thought of the Young Hegel, through the liquidation and renunciation of their moral thought and that of the self, Marx's moral-critical thought gradually formed and displayed the following lineage.

In his high school days, Marx was full of romantic passion and set up the noble moral ideal and value goal of pursuing "human happiness and personal perfection", which started his journey of

exploration for the cause of human happiness and was the ideological foundation and value guide for his subsequent social transformation. He gradually developed the idea of "the combination of the principles of criticality and realism" [1] and the discussion of the "principle of the dynamism of self-consciousness", emphasizing the subjectivity of human beings and the prerequisites for the transformation of the world. The important manifestation of his thought is the dominant principle of "self-consciousness", which is influenced by Hegel's thought and contains the shadow of Hegel's philosophical thought. In the Rhineland period, Marx turned his attention to people's material interests, and the relationship between morality and interests became the core issue in his moral field. During this period, the concern for human rights, property rights, freedom of publication and other realities was the core of his thought. Then, inspired by Feuerbach's idea of sensual intuition, the idea of concern for the real activities of real people was put forward. The return to the real life of real people is the key to his examination of the nature of morality. Morality is rooted in the real life of human beings, who are both sensual objects and subjects of sensual activities. Therefore, the investigation of the real life of real human beings becomes the foothold of Marx's moral critical thought. The practical activities of human beings are fundamental to the realization of their social nature, and the free nature of human beings is truly embodied in the practice of human labor and social interaction activities. Thus, Marx examined morality from a practical point of view and regarded morality as a product of the actual life and interaction needs of real people, so morality is not an isolated consciousness, but a manifestation of people's survival needs and interest requirements, which usually shows the relationship between people and people, people and society, and is a yardstick for examining people's behavior. Based on this, Marx overcame the drawbacks of Feuerbach's anthropological thought and examined morality in the context of the real needs of real people, achieving a transcendence of traditional moral thought. The process of commodity production in capitalist society formed the idea of commodity morality under the relationship of exploitation and money. Through the revelation of the secrets of commodities, Marx revealed the falsity and class domination of capitalist morality, which is essentially a manifestation of distorted human nature. In his critique of these ideas, Marx took morality as a realistic need of human beings in labor practice, and then outlined the moral ideal of communism, the construction of the "free association of human beings," and explored the practical path to realize this ideal through the proletarian revolution.

This demonstrates the evolutionary process of Marx's moral-critical thought: the establishment of lofty moral ideals - the dynamism of self-consciousness - morality under the conditions of material interests - the moral requirements of realistic human needs - the morality of commodity production - the imagination of new social forms. Marx's entire philosophical thought was a process of gradual development and refinement, and at the same time, his understanding of morality was gradually deepened. Influenced by his living environment and traditional theories, Marx's moral thought went through the process of development of "theological morality - atheistic morality - humanitarian morality - morality of the mode of production - ideological morality - communal morality" [2]. His moral thought expresses and appeals to the basis of the reality of social existence, discusses interpersonal relations and the relationship between human beings and society, examines the social system and interrogates its theoretical foundations.

3. The core concept of Marx's moral-critical thought

Marx's moral thought is a broad moral category, i.e., the sum of the various bases of social reality that concern human welfare. The fundamental intention of Marx's moral critique is to create a fair and just social system based on the needs of human nature and the full development of human beings, and to realize the "community of free men. This social system is the ground for the existence of a new morality. He criticized the "ideological and anachronistic morality of legal power" and promoted

the "morality of liberation." [3] Compared with traditional moral thought, Marx's moral thought was profoundly revolutionary. He realized his revolutionary moral thought by abandoning the French Enlightenment thought of the 18th century, Hegel's legal philosophy thought, and the moral thought of the Young Hegelians. His revolutionary nature is mainly manifested in: first, the unity of rationality and scientificity. That is, the link is established by respecting the rationality of thinking in the subjective world and the regularity of development in the objective world. Second is the moral thought rooted in the basis of material interests, examining the goodness or badness of people's behavior in real life and labor practice, and he is concerned with the morality or otherwise of social existence, not just the obligatory requirements of individual behavior. Thirdly, it is the examination of morality based on the framework of materialistic historical view. Marx's examination of morality is carried out under certain socio-historical conditions. The development and changes of social history determine the dynamic nature of moral laws. Thus Marx proposed to oppose eternal moral truths and the normative moral requirements that are universally applicable.

The profundity of the scientific connotation of Marx's moral-critical thought lies in the fact that Marx recognized that morality, like religion, as an ideology, becomes a confinement of people's minds and an obstacle to the forward development of mankind. For, in terms of its social function, morality is an instrument for maintaining the social order of the time; for the rulers, morality is a principle requirement of their class interests, and for the people at large, "morality represents a blind submission to deeply rooted customs" [4], and they follow secular ideas and traditional customs, and the old They follow secular ideas and traditional customs, and maintain the old ways of production. If anyone breaks the custom, he or she is charged with immorality, which stifles to a certain extent the thinking and creativity of people beyond reality. For this reason, Marx believed that morality, like religion, was a fetter to people's spirit, a maintenance of the old system, and obviously a stumbling block to the progress of human thought. Moreover, Marx inherited Hegel's moral thought and considered morality to be in a conservative position in the revolution, and it is essentially an obstacle and shackle to the development of human society. Marx's moral-critical thought thus has far-reaching historical significance in the perfection of human good and the liberation of human nature.

Marx's moral-critical thought takes "man is the highest essence of man" [5] as the theoretical cornerstone, emphasizes that man is the purpose, and demands that social development and progress take human development as the fundamental. Human development is the release of freedom and rationality, which is the endogenous driving force of human progress and should be the fundamental basis and measure of all other developments. The release of freedom and rationality requires the formation of the concept of freedom. Marx's concept of freedom is the freedom of self-discipline, the freedom under the premise of respecting others, the freedom from the state of being enslaved by things. This freedom, a freedom from material premises, emphasizes the legitimacy of individual interests. But it presupposes that others are also seen as ends and not merely as means.

Marx's critique of morality revolves around two dimensions under the analytical paradigm of the materialist historical view. One is the relentless revelation and tracing of the root of the disease of the exploitation, suppression and enslavement of human nature from reality, that is, the criticism of the immorality of the real social system or the immoral destruction and trampling of human nature in the guise of morality; the other is the contradictory opposition between the traditional philosophical thought and the existing moral concept and the reality. This critical thought is not a single judgment, but a historical study of multiple levels in different realms. The different moral demands made in different historical periods make Marx's moral critique present different moral attitudes. It is a dialectical development of moral philosophical thought. Marx took "man is the end" as his fundamental principle, emphasized the dignity of human beings, and called for the return of the free nature of human nature. The reason why he criticized and condemned different forms of moral expressions such as religious morality, feudal morality and capitalist morality is that they are all

contrary to the requirements of human nature. Religious moral thought uses illusory happiness as a pretext to obliterate people's correct understanding of real material happiness, a form of materialism that is contrary to Marx's idea that matter determines consciousness. Compared with feudal society, the stifling of human nature in capitalist society is not better, but more insidious, especially under the guidance of the market economy, people's value pursuit is distorted. The relationship between people is reduced to "money relationship" or "exploitation relationship". Such a state of social existence makes it difficult for human progress, human dignity and social development to advance. Based on the moral scale that the value of human existence is higher than the value of material existence, Marx's moral judgment of different moral judgments falls on the pursuit of values: the realization of the humanitarian spirit, the realization of the goal of free and comprehensive development of human beings, and the harmonious unity of humanitarianism and naturalism.

4. The fundamental scale of Marx's moral critique

Marx united the logic of production and the logic of value with the fundamental requirement of conformity to human nature, in order to explore the theoretical demand for the improvement of human virtuous thought. This is his value goal of liberating all human beings and realizing the return of humanity, and it is also the fundamental measure of his moral criticism.

One is the criterion of conformity to human nature. The core of Marx's moral thought is the revelation of the essential freedom of human nature and the exposition of the concept of human goodness. The moral standard of conformity to human nature is the pursuit of human freedom of thought. In Marx's view, human nature is a fundamental factor in determining human goodness and well-being, but not the only factor. Human nature as he understood it "is not fixed and static, but historical" [6]. In fact, this is the embodiment of Marx's materialist thought. It is not only the criterion for judging his moral thought, but also the theoretical basis of Marxism. He carried out theoretical and practical exploration with the search for human liberation and the restoration of human nature as the fundamental, and used revolutionary means to make this problem solved. The search for a state of social existence that meets the criteria of humanity is the unfolding process of his revolutionary practice. Marx regarded "freedom" and sociality as the two fundamental attributes of human beings. Therefore, he took the restoration of human nature as the theoretical starting point and regarded the realization of freedom as "the positive power of people to express their true individuality". [5] He examined whether the existing conditions of social productivity and relations of production are in accordance with the criteria of human nature, so as to remove the obstacles to the restoration of human freedom.

The second is the criterion of unity between the logic of production and the logic of value. Marx's moral criticism, especially the moral criticism of capitalism, adheres to the criterion of the unity of the logic of production and the logic of value. He fully affirms the development of productive forces in capitalist society, while pointing out its drawback of lacking a value scale. Marx focused on the determinant role of matter, on the historical development of human self-expression in labor and labor power, and in the process, explored the fundamental meaning of the human good. He took the criterion of productivity as an important measure of consideration for human goodness, and regarded the development of productivity as the material basis for the realization of human well-being, but also as the fundamental driving force for social progress and human progress. If the state of social existence and the state of relations of production can promote the development of productive forces, it is human good, otherwise it is not. However, Marx not only focused on the logic of production, but also on the logic of value, respecting the existence of human values and emphasizing the unity of values and interests. He takes real human beings as the starting point and the unity of the two as the criterion of moral judgment. In his criticism and transcendence of Kant's abstract human being, he realizes the

starting point of real human beings and takes the needs of real human beings as the basis of moral judgment, demonstrating his full affirmation of the productive forces in the elaboration of his thought.

Marx's moral criticism follows the unity of the logic of production and the logic of value, emphasizing the development of material things, but also the realization of human values and human dignity, emphasizing that "man is the end". Based on the theoretical requirement that "man is the highest essence of man", Marx pointed out that "all relations that make man something humiliated, enslaved, abandoned and despised must be overthrown" [5]. He stressed the need to unify social development and the realization of human self-worth, to realize the harmonious unity of individual self-interest and the general interest of society, and that the development of society should never be at the expense of the reasonable interests of individuals. Such a value concept is bound to break the value concept of profit-making as the only measure under the market logic.

5. The practical significance of Marx's moral-critical thought

Marx's moral criticism, with the free nature and social nature of human beings as the theoretical cornerstone and the requirement of human nature as the fundamental value pursuit, has an important theoretical guiding role for the true liberation of human beings and their self-development and transcendence. This determines its important practical value, which enlightens people to correctly understand the relationship between self and society, correctly deal with the relationship between the value of survival and the choice of interests, and correctly treat the relationship between free will and moral constraints. This theoretical basis in people's labor practice and social interaction activities has important contemporary value and practical significance.

One is to enlighten people to correctly understand the self, society and the relationship between the two. The so-called self is every individual person. It reflects the self-cognition and development of human beings, and is concerned with their material problems, spiritual problems and development and perfection. The material problem is mainly reflected in the need for survival, which is expressed in social practice in social activities such as production, distribution, exchange and consumption. Spiritual problems are manifested in the pursuit of values and free will in social practice. Material issues are the basis of moral issues, while spiritual issues are the core concept and paradigm embodiment of moral issues. This requires people to correctly understand the relationship between the practical needs of the self and the pursuit of values in their labor practices and social interaction activities. Place the choice of personal behavior in the correct value pursuit, and treat the relationship between self-needs and social needs reasonably. Marx pointed out that the essence of man lies in "free conscious activity", that is, the freedom of man. The fundamental difference between man and animals is that man has free will, and freedom has become the fundamental attribute of man. In terms of practical expression, the essence of human being is "the sum of all social relations", that is, the social nature of human being. The unity of human freedom and sociality requires that individuals must treat the relationship between the two correctly, so that the progress of society and the development and perfection of individuals can advance simultaneously. The current epidemic is testing whether people follow the harmonious and unified relationship between self and society in the field of morality. And young students should take Marx's "Considerations of Youth in Choosing a Profession" in their career choice as a practical follow, and take the relationship between self and society seriously.

Secondly, it enlightens people to correctly treat the relationship between the value of survival and the choice of interests. Marx respected the value of human production while respecting the rationality of private interests. In his moral criticism, Marx's correct understanding of both is reflected. Based on the development and transcendence of Kant's idea of "man as an end", Marx analyzed and criticized the root causes of religious morality, feudal morality and capitalist morality, which

disregard human dignity and the basis of production, and made the choice of interests based on respect for human survival needs and the pursuit of values. Based on this, he opposes utilitarian moral thinking and proposes moral demands that are in line with the actual needs of human nature. Nowadays, the alienation of people's consumption concept and the formation of animal-like consumption requirements will undoubtedly devalue human existence and form the degradation of people's moral level, and people tend to deviate from the right track in the pursuit of interests. People should pursue reasonable interests under the guidance of correct value pursuit, and personal interests should be pursued with the fundamental need to promote the survival value of human beings. And the moral requirements of sociality should respect the legitimate interest demands of individuals as the criterion to regulate and lead people's behavioral choices. Marx's moral-critical thought provides a reference and guidance for the reconciliation between the two.

Third, to enlighten people to properly deal with the relationship between free will and moral restraint. Marx's moral thought is centered on the free will of man and emphasizes the free nature of man, but Marx was never a "liberal" moral thought, he emphasized the free nature of man, the freedom of man's will, the ability to own the means of labor for free labor and creation, independent human dignity and autonomy. This freedom is not an arbitrary freedom, not an unrestrained freedom, but a freedom from oppression, exploitation and slavery on the premise that it does not interfere with the legitimate interests of others. It enlightens people that in the process of productive labor and actual interaction, the actual needs of people (human needs for survival, production, and development) should be the root, and the real needs of real people's real life should be grasped, not the needs of capital and profit under the logic of capital. The production of the real needs of real people is the material prerequisite for the realization of human free will. And the restraining role of morality, Marx never from proposing normative social moral requirements, because he stood on the height of human emancipation, the moral trial of unreasonable social system afraid, and he took the philosophical position of the materialistic historical concept, opposed to eternal moral standards. Based on this, he did not regulate individuals with the restraining role of morality, but demanded reasonable social existence to provide guarantees for human development. However, in the process of people's labor practice and interaction, since the ideal state of human society as envisaged by Marx has not yet arrived, due to the limitations of historical conditions and economic base, people's behavior still needs certain internal constraints and external restrictions, thus the exercise of people's free will and the restraining role of existing morality are not contradictory, and the two should complement each other to promote people's own development.

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