

A Brief Analysis on the Reflection of Enlightenment Rationality and Modernity Process

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Abstract: Enlightenment rationality advocates against all authority and restraint, and this spiritual force promotes the development of natural science and positive science, gives birth to the development of modern society and individual power, and reshapes the value concept of human society and the whole society. But with the development of enlightenment rationality, it is gradually deformed, and its own paradox also leads to various crises of modernity, modern philosophy has been reflecting on enlightenment rationality for a long time.

1. Introduction

Enlightenment rationality, with its characteristics of opposing authority and advocating individual liberation, has had a profound impact on the whole human society and greatly promoted the process of modernity in human society. However, with the development of society, the crisis of modernity has been constant. On the one hand, enlightenment rationality promotes the modernity of human society in many fields such as economy and politics, on the other hand, it leads the development of these fields to the side of alienation. It can be said that enlightenment rationality is not only the starting point of modernity, but also the root of the predicament of human society modernity. Western scholars have reflected on this from different angles, but only by returning to civil society itself can we find a fundamental way out of the dilemma.

2. The Relationship between Enlightenment Rationality and Modernity

Enlightenment rationality contains multiple dimensions internally. From the perspective of ideological development, enlightenment rationality is a trend of thought that promotes the power of reason and breaks all authority. From the perspective of social development, enlightenment rationality is the inner power that drives the society to modernization and establishes the political system, economic structure, cultural form and individual spirit of modern society. But enlightenment rationality still breeds and gives birth to the root of modernity crisis.

2.1 Enlightenment rationality is the starting point of modernity

The enlightenment rationality is regarded as the starting point of modernity from the perspective of breaking through the shackles of theology and encouraging individual creation and discovery. It is

the proper meaning of enlightenment rationality to use one's own reason independently, to break away from superstition and authority, and to dare to explore the rules of the world. Under the guidance of this rational spirit, human society has made a great leap forward, natural science has made a major breakthrough, modern country has been established, and modern capitalist economy has developed rapidly. Therefore, it can be said that enlightenment rationality is the starting point of modernity.

2.2 Enlightenment rationality is the root of the predicament of modernity

To point the root of modernity crisis to enlightenment rationality is from the insurmountable contradiction in the course of enlightenment rationality's development. Enlightenment rationality was meant to oppose the rule of theology, to oppose all the charms of myth, but when it drove them all off the pedestal, enlightenment rationality itself went on the pedestal, destroyed the enlightenment rationality of myth by crushing the power and finally regress to become the next myth ruling on the high.

In the process of the development of modernity, enlightenment rationality gradually becomes the supreme authority governing all things. Under its domination, the true unity of the world is lost, and it turns into a homogenized object measured by rationality. When all things are reduced to objects of homogeneous measurement, the separation of subject and object arises; As the former subject, man is no longer special, and gradually becomes the object and tool to be measured by rationality. Under the lash of rational measurement, science and technology, which originally unveiled the mystery of nature, had to go into the depth of alienation and become a technical force ruling people, and human society entered the confusion and dilemma of modernity.

3. The Embodiment of Enlightenment Rationality in the Process of Modernity

As the starting point of the process of modernity and the root of the crisis of modernity, enlightenment rationality has left its imprint on all aspects of modernity. With the development of capitalism, enlightenment rationality and capital logic have interlocked with each other and exerted a profound impact on modern society. The specific manifestations are the social modernization process of economic and political differentiation, the cultural modernity process of disenchantment to the world and the critical tension, and the personality rationalization process of self-principle demonstrating the loss of objectivity of later generations.

3.1 Enlightenment rationality promotes the process of social modernization

In the process of social modernization, the role of enlightenment rationality is manifested in the separation of economy and politics. Enlightenment rationality measures the whole world in the same way, so that economy and politics must be differentiated and develop according to their own standards, so as to meet the measurement of rationality. However, they cannot be really separated and complement and check each other in terms of function.

3.1.1 The economic activities in the process of social modernization are centered on capital accounting

The birth and development of enlightenment rationality cannot be separated from the movement of capitalist mode of production. The internal logic of enlightenment rationality is manifested as the capitalist production centered on capital accounting and pursuing the maximization of interests in the process of social and economic modernization. In the development process of capital modernization, the powerful spiritual liberation force brought by enlightenment rationality makes the capitalist economy get rid of the shackles and realize rapid development.

The development of enlightenment rationality also led to the loss of the principle of social exchange of capital. Capital market exchange requires equal value, but this exchange only covers up the actual inequality with economic inequality. As the social union of capital becomes a unity, people must obey the division of labor and cooperation of economic society, otherwise, the products of individual labor cannot be recognized by society, cannot be transformed into value, and the realization of individual labor is completely blocked. This situation is a failure of "self" in modern capitalist society. The real owner of the means of production, by means of rational consideration, takes this exchange and submission as the only way for man to survive as a dignified man, turns the originally independent individual into an abstract man, and all the values and labor of man into a homogeneous thing for reason to measure. Therefore, under the influence of rationality, the measurement method centered on capital accounting has become the excuse and accomplice of economic oppression and labor alienation.

3.1.2 The political activities in the process of social modernization are centered on bureaucracy

Judging from the history of the Enlightenment movement, enlightenment rationality has made an indelible contribution to the process of breaking the old ruling order and moving towards a modern country. In medieval Europe, theocracy was above everything else, and the rule of religion over people was deeply rooted. From ideology to political organization, the existence of God was unshakable. In the process of "coming out of the Middle Ages" and getting rid of the theocratic mode of political domination and the theological culture dominating the field of thought, Enlightenment reason "fundamentally eliminated the supernatural form of Christian dualism and sought to establish an internal-rational interpretation of the world, making all the fields of life into an organic organization in itself." ^[1] On the basis of this transcendence, people were able to find a path to a modern political state that broke through theocracy and feudal rule.

Enlightenment rationality calls for thinking with one's own reason, and no longer satisfies the theological explanation of the laws of the world. Under the guidance of enlightenment rationality, natural science has made great progress, and the breakthrough of natural science once again proves that the other world and the real world are not endowed by God, and the real world needs people to use reason to create and rule. That is, enlightenment reason gives people individual freedom rights, and this freedom right is reason and natural human rights, people no longer need the power of God, and people no longer need the church to administer. Instead, there is a social contract. Based on the theory of social contract, Enlightenment rationality put forward the construction principle of modern state, broke the old social imprisonment and established a new social structure. On this basis, on the one hand, economic development has been achieved, and on the other hand, relative freedom has been achieved.

But the modern state established by enlightenment rationality will inevitably come to an end. Before enlightenment rationality, the individual was bound to religion, but also to the collective, this restriction is the burial of individual power, but also the maintenance of collective authority. After the birth of enlightenment rationality, people's personality and subjective power were highly respected and self-awareness was praised, and human society established new value concepts. After the establishment of a new modern state, individuals were still above the state, the relationship between individuals and the community was reversed, and it was still impossible to find a way to realize the free and comprehensive development of both individuals and the community.

3.2 Enlightenment rationality promotes the process of cultural modernity

Enlightenment rationality has a profound impact on cultural modernization. In the field of science, enlightenment rationality promotes the development of the spirit of practical exploration, and on this

basis science can "disenchantment" the world. However, with the further development of rationality, science gradually disintegrates into a tool to rule people. In the field of ideology, enlightenment rationality advocates people's self-consciousness, but after the alienation of enlightenment rationality, people's subject status is lost, and critical thought is gradually lost to no critical ideology.

3.2.1 The "disenchantment" of science to the world and the rule of instrumental reason

Science, especially natural science, benefits from the breaking of ideological bondage by enlightenment rationality, and its development has become an important manifestation of the power of enlightenment rationality. The development of modern natural science and the change of philosophy history fully confirm the interaction of enlightenment spirit, science, philosophy and other fields, and scientific spirit is extremely important. The result of the development of modern science is, in Feuerbach's view, "the relegation of the negative religious spirit from the throne of world domination, the imprisoning of it in that narrow sphere on the other side of the historical stream, and its becoming the principle and essence of the world, the principle of the new era."^[2] Enlightenment rationality has removed the ideological obstacles of scientific development and promoted the development of science in the process of human social and cultural modernity, which in turn helps enlightenment rationality achieve the purpose of overthrowing authority.

However, science, or the instrumental rationality evolved by enlightenment rationality in the age of science and technology, become the principle and essence of the world, become the principle of the new era.^[2] The scientific spirit itself contains two modern rationalist spirits, namely value rationality and instrumental rationality. These two characteristics were originally combined, but with the acceleration of the process of modernity, value rationality was gradually submerged by instrumental rationality, and scientific spirit evolved into complete instrumental rationality. There are two main reasons for this situation. On the one hand, since the beginning of modern philosophy, when Descartes divided the subject into the object, the object is only the object of the subject, without the need of the subject, the meaning of the object does not exist, so science is only a tool for the subject to use reason to operate. On the other hand, under the influence of the logic of capital, not only objects, but also people themselves are controlled as instruments of capital multiplication, and everything must be subject to the needs of capital.

When enlightenment rationality appears more as instrumental rationality, science and technology itself becomes a kind of alienation, a tool to enslave people, and people become a means of rationality. Value rationality is excluded from the measurement standard, and the value of all things, including people, is measured by instrumental rationality, and finally has to enter the predicament of modernity.

3.2.2 The power of ideological criticism and the loss of critical ideology

Enlightenment rationality, while advocating people's free use of rational thinking, endows people with the power of criticism, thus challenging and resisting religious theology and feudal authority. In the process of modernity, enlightenment rationality, as its core idea, also gave birth to many ideological elements of modern society. With the blessing of reason, science, art, morality and law have all gained the power of modernity and embarked on the road of modernity.

However, with the development of enlightenment rationality and the loss of human subjectivity, human thought has also become a victim, and ideology is no longer critical, but gradually becomes a critical ideology that maintains the existing state of society. This is exactly what Horkheimer and Adorno believe that alienation does not only exist in the economic and social production field proposed by Marx, but also spreads to people's thinking, affects the ideological field, and turns people's thoughts into tools, which they call "total" ideology. That is, using the fuzziness between thought and language, the theory originally intended as thought criticism becomes a tool for

controlling thought.

3.3 Enlightenment rationality promotes the development process of the subject

As mentioned above, enlightenment rationality advocates self-consciousness, makes the subject self-consciousness established, and gives full play to man's own power, which is of great significance to man's self-realization. However, enlightenment rationality based on the establishment of the subject's self-consciousness is intrinsically integrated with the real history of capitalist society, the principle of sacrifice and the principle of exchange.

Under the assessment of rational principles, the value of all things in the world is placed in the established evaluation system that conforms to rationality, and only when it conforms to rationality can it have the value of existence and the necessity of development. However, in this process, the subjective status of man as a subject is gradually lost, and people's behavior and activities, including the existence of man himself, must conform to the standard of rationality and accept the ultimate judgment of rationality.

In the road to modernity, reason itself has produced a certain degree of alienation, and the abuse of reason leads to a single judgment. Therefore, under this evaluation standard, if the subject wants to have the "self" recognized by the society, it must make certain sacrifices. After the degree of alienation deepens, the subject has to sacrifice himself to obtain the "self" under the rational standard. That is, the subject sacrifices himself to obtain the self-preservation under the judgment of reason, and human personality is crushed and limited by reason. The awakening of the subject's self-consciousness also means that the subject requires the self-confirmation and self-preservation of reality. In the face of the absolute force of nature, the closest way for the individual, as a finite natural being, to confirm and save himself is to transform his weak side into a deceptive force." [3] In the *Dialectics of Enlightenment*, Horkheimer and Adorno put it this way: "Irrationalism has its archetype in the hero, and the hero gets rid of sacrifice by sacrificing himself." [4]

4. Reflection on the Role of Enlightenment Rationality in the Process of Modernity

Enlightenment rationality is the starting point of modernity, but also the root of modernity into the dilemma. Modern Western scholars have put forward a lot of reflections on the various problems of enlightenment rationality in the process of modernity. Horkheimer and Adorno, on the basis of recognizing the positive significance of reason, identified the key of enlightenment self-salvation as rediscovering nature, finding the inner subject, and realizing the sublation of abstract self. But what is this natural discovery, and how can this criterion of sublation be met? Not really. David Griffin has argued that modernity should be abandoned altogether to prevent the destruction of most lives. He defines postmodernism as "the sentiment that human beings can and must transcend modernity." [5]

In fact, historical materialism has already given a way to analyze enlightenment rationality and its dilemmas in its early days. Marx believes that the way out of enlightenment rationality and modernity dilemma should not only be in the field of ideology, but should be based on economic criticism, because thought, as a "weapon of criticism", can not replace "weapon criticism". In his criticism of Powell et al.'s views on political emancipation and human emancipation, Marx distinguished political emancipation from human emancipation and pointed out that political emancipation could not realize the real emancipation of human beings due to various reasons. So how to correctly understand the liberation of people? Marx ascribes the essence of the "Jewish question" to the problem of modernity. After the establishment of the modern state, the real power of man still cannot be realized. From this point of view, the author carries out the criticism and reflection on the modernity of the political state.

In the field of economy and society, Marx defined the modernity problem spawned by enlightenment rationality as a critique of capitalist production relations, pointing out that it is

precisely because of the insuperable internal contradictions of capitalist production relations that enlightenment rationality has alienated so deeply in modern society, and thus launched a critique of commodity fetishism, capital logic and capitalist private ownership. The instrumental rationality, nihilism, ecological crisis and hegemonism of modernity are all produced under the operation of the logic of capital, and enlightenment rationality is only the manifestation of capitalism in the field of ideology.

5. Conclusions

Enlightenment rationality is not only the starting point of modernity, but also the root of modernity's predicament. In the process of human society's development into modernity, enlightenment rationality has left a profound imprint on social modernization, politics, economy and other aspects, and has played a huge role in promoting the progress of human society and the awakening of human self-consciousness. However, the logical development dilemma of enlightenment rationality itself also brings the modern society into a dilemma, which is followed by various problems faced by modern human society. The reflection on enlightenment rationality and its predicament is a major issue. From the attempts of early Western scholars to the thinking of Marx and Engels through historical materialism, the thinking on enlightenment rationality and its predicament has moved from pure theoretical speculation to civil society and from the field of ideology to the analysis of economic reality. In order to get out of the predicament of modernity, Rescuing people and human societies from alienation has found the answer.

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