

The Theoretical Innovation Process of Sinicization and Modernization of Marxist Philosophy and Its Profound Enlightenment

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Abstract: The sinicization and modernization of Marxist philosophy is the process by which Chinese Marxists integrate the basic principles of Marxist philosophy with China's specific realities and Chinese excellent traditional culture, and at the same time, actively draw on and absorb the essence of foreign philosophy, and use the philosophical discourse system with Chinese characteristics and Chinese style to continuously construct a sinicized and modernized Marxist philosophy. The sinicized and modernized Marxist philosophy is the inheritance, enrichment and development of Marxist philosophy. It is an important responsibility for Chinese scholars and theorists to continuously promote sinicized and modernized Marxist philosophy. Looking back on the journey of the Communist Party of China (CPC) over the past hundred years, the sinicization and modernization of Marxist philosophy have gone through four developmental phases from the "May Fourth Movement" to the present day. Throughout its history, the CPC has consistently taken Marxist philosophy as the guiding ideology for its practice. Because of the different characteristics, environments and practical tasks of each historical period of China's revolution, construction and reform, Chinese Marxists had to master and apply Marxist philosophy flexibly in accordance with the specific reality, so that the sinicized and modernized Marxist philosophy presented a unique theoretical form, and because of this, the revolution, construction and reform under the leadership of the CPC were able to achieve victories. The history of great theoretical innovation deeply enlightens us that, to keep advancing theoretical innovation on the basis of practical experience, we must adhere to integrating the basic principles of Marxist philosophy with China's specific realities and Chinese excellent traditional culture, and adhere to a people-centered approach.

1. Introduction

The sinicization and modernization of Marxist philosophy is the process by which Chinese Marxists integrate the basic principles of Marxist philosophy with China's specific realities and Chinese excellent traditional culture, and at the same time, actively draw on and absorb the essence of foreign philosophy, and use the philosophical discourse system with Chinese characteristics and

Chinese style to continuously construct a sinicized and modernized Marxist philosophy. The sinicized and modernized Marxist philosophy is the inheritance, enrichment and development of Marxist philosophy. It is an important responsibility for Chinese scholars and theorists to continuously promote sinicized and modernized Marxist philosophy. Looking back on the journey of the Communist Party of China (CPC) over the past hundred years, the sinicization and modernization of Marxist philosophy have gone through four developmental phases from the "May Fourth Movement" to the present day. Throughout its history, the CPC has consistently taken Marxist philosophy as the guiding ideology for its practice. Because of the different characteristics, environments and practical tasks of each historical period of China's revolution, construction and reform, Chinese Marxists had to master and apply Marxist philosophy flexibly in accordance with the specific reality, so that the sinicized and modernized Marxist philosophy presented a unique theoretical form, and because of this, the revolution, construction and reform under the leadership of the CPC were able to achieve victories. The history of great theoretical innovation deeply enlightens us that, to keep advancing theoretical innovation on the basis of practical experience, we must adhere to integrating the basic principles of Marxist philosophy with China's specific realities and Chinese excellent traditional culture, and adhere to a people-centered approach. In-depth study of the theoretical innovation process of the sinicization and modernization of Marxist philosophy can enable us to grasp the inherent law of the theoretical innovation of the sinicization and modernization of Marxist philosophy in general, which is of great significance for promoting the sinicization and modernization of Marxist philosophy.

2. The theoretical innovation process of the sinicization and modernization of Marxist philosophy

2.1 The initial phase of the sinicization and modernization of Marxist philosophy occurred from the May Fourth Movement in 1919 to the establishment of the People's Republic of China in 1949

Since the mid-19th century, China has long been plagued by foreign invasions and frequent wars. To save the Chinese nation from peril, many patriotic intellectuals sought truth in the West to rescue the country and its people, but all ultimately failed. The triumph of the Russian October Revolution transformed socialism from a theoretical construct in Marxist literature into a tangible reality, charting a forward path for the Chinese people. This development led an increasing number of progressive Chinese intellectuals to recognize Marxist theory as the solution to China's problems. Following the May Fourth Movement, Marxism spread widely across China. Building on this foundation, the CPC was founded in 1921, initiating the conscious propagation of Marxism. However, in its early stages, the CPC was still exploring how to apply Marxist theory effectively to China's revolutionary context. In revolutionary struggles, it mechanically replicated the "Soviet model" and implemented "urban armed uprisings", leading to setbacks for the revolution. At a crucial stage in China's revolutionary history, Comrade Mao Zedong, based on profound summation of practical experience, creatively applied the worldview and methodology of dialectical materialism to analyze China's national conditions. In his important theoretical works such as "On Practice", "On Contradiction", "On Protracted War", and "On New Democracy", he put forward a series of far-reaching ideas that laid the ideological foundation for the new-democratic revolution under the leadership of the CPC. Subsequently, in important writings such as "Reform Our Study Methods" (1941), Mao Zedong further criticized subjectivism and dogmatism, emphasizing the necessity of starting from China's concrete realities and integrating theory with practice. He stressed: "the arrow of Marxism-Leninism must be used to shoot at the target of the Chinese revolution."^[1] Mao Zedong applied the fundamental principles of Marxist philosophy to the

concrete realities of the Chinese revolution. Based on the nature of Chinese society, the characteristics of the revolution, its fundamental laws, tasks, and targets, he formulated strategies for revolutionary struggle, established workers' and peasants' armed forces, and charted a revolutionary path of encircling the cities from the countryside before finally seizing them. Through prolonged, arduous, and heroic armed struggle, he ultimately seized national power, established New China, and founded Mao Zedong's philosophical thought. This marked the first significant achievement in the sinicization and modernization of Marxist philosophy. It formed the core of the initial stage of the sinicization and modernization of Marxism, known as Mao Zedong Thought.

2.2 The second stage of the sinicization and modernization of Marxist philosophy occurred from the founding of the People's Republic of China in 1949 to the Third Plenary Session of the 11th CPC Central Committee in 1978

After the founding of the People's Republic of China, as the country entered a new historical period transitioning from the completion of the New Democratic Revolution to the initiation of socialist construction, Mao Zedong emphasized the need to combine the basic principles of Marxist philosophy with China's specific realities in a second historic synthesis, laying the ideological foundation for exploring a path of socialist development suited to China's national conditions. By 1956, the socialist transformation under the general line of "one modernization and three socialist transformations" had been basically completed. The establishment of the basic socialist system throughout China laid a solid foundation for building a relatively complete national industrial system and economic system. Mao Zedong then proposed exploring a path of socialist construction suited to China's conditions. In his important works such as "On the Ten Major Relationships" (1956) and "On Correctly Handling Contradictions Among the People" (1957), he applied the worldview and methodology of dialectical materialism to systematically analyze key relationships of strategic significance in China's socialist construction. He put forward a series of philosophical ideas that contributed to the development of socialist theory in China, including "the principal contradiction in socialist society", "correctly handling contradictions among the people", "developing socialist commodity production and exchange", "the law of value is a great school", and "let the past serve the present, and foreign things serve China". These insights helped lay an important intellectual foundation for the evolution of socialism with Chinese characteristics.

2.3 The third stage of the sinicization and modernization of Marxist philosophy occurred from the Third Plenary Session of the 11th CPC Central Committee in 1978 to the 18th National Congress of the CPC in 2012

During this period, the CPC creatively integrated the fundamental principles of Marxist philosophy with China's concrete realities and the characteristics of the times. It scientifically addressed a series of basic questions concerning the construction of socialism with Chinese characteristics, achieving the second historic leap in the Sinicization and modernization of Marxist philosophy. This process gave rise to the second major theoretical achievement in this endeavor—the philosophical foundation of the theoretical system of socialism with Chinese characteristics, which originates in the philosophical ideas of Comrade Deng Xiaoping. After the Third Plenary Session of the 11th CPC Central Committee, Deng Xiaoping led the people in rectifying wrong practices, reaffirming the ideological line of seeking truth from facts through discussions on the criterion of practice, and shifting the focus of national work from class struggle to economic development. On this basis, he creatively applied the Marxist worldview and methodology, deeply summarized the experiences and lessons of China's socialist construction, and systematically addressed the fundamental issue of "what socialism is and how to build socialism," putting forward

a series of original theories that reflect the sinicization and modernization of Marxist philosophy. For example, ideas such as "emancipating the mind and seeking truth from facts," "taking economic development as the central task," "science and technology constitute the primary productive force," the "Three Favors," "poverty is not socialism," "reform is the second revolution," and "planning and the market are both means for economic development", etc. These ideas provide philosophical guidance for reform, opening up, and socialist modernization, creating Deng Xiaoping's philosophical thought, which is also the core of Deng Xiaoping Theory, a major theoretical achievement of the sinicization of Marxism.

Since the Fourth Plenary Session of the 13th CPC Central Committee, Chinese Communists, with Comrade Jiang Zemin as the chief representative, have led the people in advancing along the path of socialism with Chinese characteristics. By putting forward the important thought of the "Three Represents," they have promoted the sinicization and modernization of Marxist philosophy, representing a new stage in the evolution of Marxist philosophy in China. Since the 16th National Congress of the CPC, the Chinese Communists, with Comrade Hu Jintao as the principal representative, have adhered to the principles of emancipating the mind, seeking truth from facts, and keeping pace with the times. In response to new developmental requirements, they have conducted in-depth analyses of major questions concerning the nature and path of development under new conditions. On this basis, they put forward the Scientific Outlook on Development, which is people-oriented and emphasizes comprehensive, coordinated, and sustainable development. This important strategic thought has further enriched and developed the Marxist philosophy.

2.4 The fourth stage of the sinicization and modernization of Marxist philosophy occurred from the 18th National Congress of the CPC in 2012 to the present

Since the 18th CPC National Congress, the new Central Leadership Collective has definitively responded to the demands of the times, profoundly addressing the major questions of our time: What kind of socialism with Chinese characteristics should be upheld and developed in the new era, and how to uphold and develop it. It applies the worldview and methodology of dialectical and historical materialism to understand, analyze, and address the major theoretical and practical issues facing the persistence and development of socialism with Chinese characteristics in the new era. Upholding and advancing the fundamental principles of Marxist philosophy, it has enriched the understanding of practice, contradiction, and development, among other key categories, and has put forward a series of original ideas imbued with profound philosophical insights. For example, "The Five-Sphere Integrated Plan and the Four-Pronged Comprehensive Strategy", "uphold a people-centered philosophy of development", "implement the New Development Philosophy", "promote a community with a shared future for humanity", "coordinate development and security", "lucid waters and lush mountains are invaluable assets", and "the country is the people, and the people are the country", etc. These concepts have opened up new horizons for the sinicization and modernization of Marxist philosophy.

3. The profound enlightenment of the theoretical innovation of the sinicization and modernization of Marxist philosophy

3.1 To keep advancing theoretical innovation on the basis of practical experience, we must adhere to integrating the basic principles of Marxist philosophy with China's specific realities

Practicality is a defining feature of Marxist philosophy. It originates in practice and continuously develops through practice. It requires us to proceed from actual conditions, adhere to the principle of seeking truth from facts, and promote the development of truth through practical exploration.

Comrade Deng Xiaoping pointed out: "Marxism must be Marxism combined with China's practice, and socialism must be socialism with Chinese characteristics adapted to China's conditions."^[2] Severing theory from reality or mechanically copying abstract models regardless of local circumstances may hinder the advancement of socialism with Chinese characteristics. History and practice show that the theoretical innovations of the CPC have always been grounded in the specific conditions and tasks of each historical stage. By scientifically addressing the major questions posed by the times, these innovations have continuously advanced, evolving in form and content while preserving ideological coherence, thus guiding China's development through different eras. On the new journey ahead, we must firmly stand on the great practice of Socialism with Chinese Characteristics for a New Era, uphold and apply the worldview and methodology of dialectical and historical materialism, focus on the theme of advancing Chinese-style modernization, center on the practical endeavors of the people, listen to the voice of the times, actively respond to its demands, and continuously promote the Sinicization and modernization of Marxist philosophy, ensuring that Marxist philosophy continues to demonstrate strong vitality and dynamism throughout China in the new era.

3.2 To keep advancing theoretical innovation on the basis of practical experience, we must adhere to integrating the basic principles of Marxist philosophy with Chinese excellent traditional culture

From the struggles for national survival and rejuvenation in modern times, amid the clash and evolution of various ideologies and social currents, the reason why Marxist philosophy was able to spread widely in China, gain acceptance among the Chinese people, take root in Chinese soil, and demonstrate strong vitality fundamentally lies in its deep integration with China's fine traditional culture under the leadership of the CPC. "This integration has not only activated the genes of Chinese civilization with the light of truth, propelling its renewal and modern transformation, but also driven Marxism to achieve new leaps in its sinicization and modernization, revealing an increasingly distinctive Chinese character and style."^[3] Chinese excellent traditional culture is a precious spiritual asset that has sustained the Chinese nation across generations. With its profound philosophical wisdom, humanistic values, ethical norms, and educational principles — including the concepts of people-centered governance, social harmony, diligence and self-improvement, and the pursuit of a harmonious world — it shares deep compatibility with Marxist philosophy. Through the creative integration of Marxist philosophy with China's specific realities and its excellent traditional culture, this synthesis has provided strong ideological support for advancing the great rejuvenation of the Chinese nation. Chinese excellent traditional culture is an essential component of Chinese civilization and a vital source of national spirit. Deeply rooted in the hearts of the Chinese people, it profoundly shapes their values, thinking patterns, and behavioral norms, and provides rich cultural nourishment for the continued sinicization and modernization of Marxist philosophy. On the new journey ahead, we must strengthen our cultural and historical self-confidence, vigorously inherit and carry forward excellent traditional Chinese culture, and creatively transform and develop it. We should use Marxist philosophy to activate Chinese excellent traditional culture, inject Chinese excellent traditional culture into Marxist philosophy at a deeper level, further promote the integration of Marxist philosophy with Chinese excellent traditional culture, and constantly endow Marxist philosophy with distinct Chinese characteristics and new era connotations of Chinese culture.

3.3 To keep advancing theoretical innovation on the basis of practical experience, we must adhere to the people-centered approach

Marxist philosophy is a scientific worldview and methodology that upholds the people's position, clearly affirming the people as the creators of history and taking the realization of the fundamental interests of the people as its ultimate goal. Since its founding, the CPC has always taken Marxism as its guiding principle, stayed committed to the original aspiration of seeking happiness for the Chinese people and rejuvenation for the Chinese nation, and continuously struggled to realize this historic mission. For more than one hundred years, the CPC has always adhered to the guidance of Marxism, deeply rooted in the people's practice, regarded the people's creative practice as an inexhaustible source of theoretical innovation, respected the people's pioneering spirit, listened carefully to the voice of the people, and actively learned from the people's wisdom. We should scientifically summarize and improve the people's creative experience in practice, make it rise to theory, and then guide and promote the cause of socialism with Chinese characteristics. On the new journey ahead, we must adhere to the mass view of Marxist philosophy, adhere to the people first, adhere to everything for the people, all rely on the people, fully respect the dominant position and pioneering spirit of the people, fully reflect the fundamental interests and aspirations of the people, draw wisdom and strength from the creative practice of the people, continue to enhance the vitality, explanatory power, and innovation of the theory, and constantly open up a new realm of Marxist philosophy in China.

4. Conclusion

For over a century, the CPC has upheld the fundamental principles of Marxist philosophy, persisted in seeking truth from facts, and promoted theoretical innovation, and continuously advanced the Sinicization and modernization of Marxist philosophy. It has achieved a dynamic, two-way integration between Marxist philosophy, China's national realities, and China's fine traditional culture. Through the historical practice of striving for the people's happiness, the nation's rejuvenation, and global harmony, it has demonstrated the enduring vitality of Marxist philosophy. On the new journey ahead, we will continue to advance the Sinicization and modernization of Marxist philosophy, which is not only a vital instrument for the CPC to seize historical initiative and achieve great historic accomplishments, but also a theoretical and practical guide for comprehensively advancing Chinese-style modernization. We should further deepen research into and application of the innovative theories of Marxist philosophy in the new era, continuously enhance our understanding of the laws governing theoretical innovation, and earnestly study and apply the Marxist position, viewpoint, and methodology. In doing so, we will keep opening new chapters in building a modern socialist country and realizing the great rejuvenation of the Chinese nation through Chinese modernization.

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