

The Materialized Form of Alienation of Communication and Its Hidden Essence

Reading Marx's *The Digest of James Muller's "Principles of Political Economy"**

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Abstract—For a long time, *The Digest of James Muller's "Principles of Political Economy"* (hereinafter referred to as "Digest") is regarded as a "copy" of the 1844 Economics and Philosophy Manuscript (hereinafter referred to as "Manuscript"). In fact, the theoretical value of the Digest lies in its indelible point of thought: alienation of communication. As far as alienation of communication is concerned, the academic circles discuss more about the philosophical humanism presupposition, but few people have explored the "materialized representation" and its "hidden essence".

Keywords—alienation of communication; materialization; social confrontation

I. INTRODUCTION

The "Digest" is composed of the "notes" written by Marx during his stay in Paris from October 1843 to January 1845. At the beginning of the publication of the Digest, it did not attract too much attention. Later, in what circumstances did it appear and be discussed? What kind of Marx's thinking focus is the discussion of the Digest based on? What are the shortcomings in the study of the Digest? To clarify these issues has important value for us to understand the "unique" role of the Digest in the period of Marx's ideological transformation.

II. THE APPEARANCE OF THE "DIGEST": "COPY"

The "Digest" and "Manuscript" came out at the same time, followed by the heated research of "Manuscript", but there are not many people who study "Digest". Until the end of the 1960s, when some scholars in Europe and Japan focused on the literary textual research of the Manuscript, it was regarded as an important "supplement" of the Manuscript. Up to now, the number of scholars studying "Digest" at home and abroad is increasing. Except some scholars who give the "Digest" a high evaluation, most people regard it as a "copy" of the "manuscript" research, which is proving the important value of "Manuscript" in the

generation of Marx's thought through researching the writing order of it and the "three notes" of "manuscript". From the research results, there is mainly "antecedent theory", "cross theory" and "after theory".

"Antecedent theory" believed that "Digest" is written before the entire Manuscript. The first to put forward the "antecedent theory" is the editor of Volume 3, the part of the old MEGA, Adolatsky, who believes that the "Digest" is the preparation of Marx's "manuscript", so of course it is previous. Later, the volume 42, second Russian editions of Complete Works of Marx and Engels, and the first Chinese edition of the Complete Works of Marx and Engels with it as the "parent" accepted this statement. As the caption of "Complete Works" (Chinese version) said: "In contrast to many similar materials in Marx's manuscripts (notes and abstracts), in this document ("Digest", the author's note), Marx's personal arguments account for a large part, and the content of these arguments link up the 1844 Economic and Philosophical Manuscripts, which is antecedent to this manuscript." [1] In Japan, since the object of analysis of Marx's theory in the mature period is the capitalist economy, Shigeda Koichi says that the Manuscript directly corresponds to this topic, and the Digest is still in the study of the general commodity economy, thus drawing the conclusion that "Abstract" is "preceding". In China, Jin Delong, Xiong Ziyun, and Zhang Yibing advocated "antecedent theory".

"Cross theory" believes that the two are written "crosswise", and the "Digest" is written before the "Note 2" of "Manuscript" and after "Note 1". The "cross theory" is based on the query of "antecedent theory". The first ones to question the "antecedent theory" are the Japanese scholars Oshima Kiyoshi and Nakayama Hiroki. Oshima said that the understanding of "Digest" on social relations and self-alienation is more specific and substantial than "Note One", so the "Digest" should be after "Note One". [2]¹²⁰ Nakayama Hiroshi inferred that "Digest" was written after "Note One" because there is no Muller's name and citations of his work in "Note One", but they appeared in "Note 2" and "Note 3". [2]¹²⁰ Just as the Japanese academic circles were deadlocked by the "antecedent theory" and "cross theory", the Soviet scholar Rabin used the detailed information to carefully sort out the relationship between "manuscript" and "notes" and

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then obtain the writing order of "cross theory". [2]¹²¹⁻¹²² In addition to "Rabin", the scholar who made the ultimate research on the "manuscripts" and "notes" of Marx in Paris period also includes Yugen Royan. He also reached the conclusion of "cross theory". In China, most scholars have adopted the "cross theory", but the basis is not the same. From the perspective of communication and social relations, Han Lixin concluded that the "Digest", "Note 2" and "Note 3" far exceeded the conclusion of "cross theory" in "Note One" both in terms of vision and profoundness of thought. [3] Zhang Dun agrees with Han Lixin's "cross theory", with the supports of examining the inner relationship between Marx's "Digest" and Hegel's "recognition theory" from the perspective of the study of philosophy history [4].

"After theory" believes the "Digest" is written after the whole "Manuscript". The authoritative representative who insisted on the "after theory" of "Digest" is the director of the former East German Marxist Institute, Inge Taubert, who explains that the notebook with the excerpt from Ricardo and Muller's work is a supplement to the Manuscript from two approaches — the literature research and the ideological argument, and it is also a further development [5]. In China, the commentary 1 of the manuscript compiled from the Central Compilation Bureau — "Marx, worked with Engels to write the work of the Holy Family after interrupting the writing of note. It was at this time that he began to make digest of the French translations of David Ricardo's "Political Economics and Taxation Principles" and Jan Muller's "Principles of Political Economy."...Therefore, these two digest can be regarded as a supplement to the "Manuscript", which is a direct continuation of the study of note.[6]^{192 note} This separate edition uses the "after theory" claimed by Taubert. Yao Shunliang said that he "substantially agrees with Inge Taubert's 'after theory' that he only thinks that his inference is too absolute" [7]. Lu Kejian thinks that Taubert's "after theory" is more convincing through a comparative analysis of Taubert's "after theory" and Luo Yang's "cross theory". [5]

In short, centering on the theoretical contribution of "Paris Notes" to the study of "Manuscripts", it triggered a fierce debate on the writing sequence between "Digest" and "Manuscript". The status of the "Copy" of "Abstract" is obvious.

III. THE IDEOLOGICAL FOCUS OF THE "DIGEST": ALIENATION OF COMMUNICATION

With more scholars' attention to the Digest, people have begun to think more about their own "unique" ideological value. The study found that the ideological charm of Digest is that it uses the theory of "alienation of communication" with the context of capitalism. In order to explain this theory, we start from "communication."

As we all know, the "German Ideology" co-authored by Marx and Engels has frequently used the concept of "communication". It is said: "Commerce, Verkehr" [business, communication]. All these words mean both business relationships and personal characteristics and relationships. "[8] After that, in the letter to Annenkov, he said: "In order

not to lose the results that have been achieved, in order not to lose the fruits of civilization, people have to change all the social forms they have inherited when their commerce approach are no longer suitable for vested productivity. [9] It is not difficult to see that the "communication" that Marx said in the mature period refers to the social relationship under certain production conditions. Of course, this is only a theoretical "wish" for the young Marx in the "Digest" period, but the "signs" of the "communication" already exist in the "Digest".

In the Digest, when Marx "talks about this balance of monetary and metal values and depicts production costs as the only factor determining value" [6]¹⁶⁴, he criticizes Muller's error of ignoring "reality movements" but regard the abstract law as the criterion. However, the thread of discussion sharply turned. He highly "appreciated" Muller and said that "Muller called the currency an intermediary of exchange, which is very successful in expressing the essence of things with a concept. The essence of money, first of all, doesn't lie in the transfer of property through it, but in the intermediary activities or intermediary movement through which people and products complement each other. [6]¹⁶⁴. The two phrases here "intermediary of mutual complement" and "the nature of things" deserve our attention.

What is an "intermediary of mutual complement"? "Intermediary" itself is a kind of relationship and "mutual complement" refers to the "class" behavior in the text. According to Mochizuki Kiyoji, the complementary behavior of the class is "communication" [10]⁹¹. That is to say, "intermediary of mutual complement" is the social relationship between people — communication. So, why do people need the "intermediary of mutual complement", namely communication? Marx believes that this is the essential needs and manifestations of human beings.

In fact, as early as in the "Critique of Hegel's Philosophy of Right" (hereinafter referred to as "Introduction"), Marx has the expression of the essence of man, saying that "people are not abstract existence living outside the world." Man is the world of man, which is the state and society" [11]. However, the "Introduction" did not explain why people are the world, and what are "world", "state" and "society". Compared with the Introduction, the interpretation of the Digest is "deeper and more specific". Marx said: "no matter it is the exchange of people's activities in production itself, or the exchange of human products, it is equivalent to class activities and class spirits — their real, conscious, and real existence is social activity and the enjoyment of society. Because the essence of human beings is the true social connection of human beings, people create and produce human social connections and social essences in the process of actively realizing their own essence. However, social essence is not an abstract general force opposed to individuals, but is the essence of each individual person, his activity, his life, his enjoyment, and his wealth. Therefore, the true social connection mentioned above is not caused by reflection. It arises because of personal needs and egoism, which is the direct product of the individual's active realization of its existence." [6]¹⁷⁰⁻¹⁷¹ This paragraph answers: first, what is the nature of the person? It is the real social

connection of people; second, why do we need such an essence? Because social relations are people's "class life", "class spirit", and "class enjoyment", etc.; third, how do people have this essence? The acquisition of the essence of human social relations is based on the needs of individuals and is created and produced in the process of actively realizing their own essence.

In this way, we can regard "communication" as a social relationship that is produced in the process of people actively implementing their own essence, which is not artificially transferred. It is an intermediary relationship that complements each other according to and through people.

However, when communication is not consistent with its "natural state", "this kind of social connection will appear in the form of alienation" [6]¹⁷¹, forming "alienation of communication".

According to Han Lixin's investigation, the alienation in German *Entfremdung* is like the externalization *Entäußerung*, coming from the Latin *alienatio*, which means to become the other. Chinese translates *Entfremdung* into "alienation", and Japanese translates it into "疎外", all of which emphasizes the meaning that the subject becomes the other who is different and alienated from himself. As far as communication alienation is concerned, the alienation "subject" is "relationship", and the alienation consequence is the externalization and distortion of the social relationship between human. Of course, the occurrence of alienation of communication is conditional. It is the product of commodity exchange based on private ownership, which is a common phenomenon in "civil society." At this time, we cannot help asking: in the civil society, since the communication has been "alienated" and is no longer manifested as "human social relations," "what kind of relationship" is it manifested? Marx's answer is the "materialized" relationship.

"Materialization" is the key word referring to the "alienation of communication" in the Digest. It not only reveals the alienation of social relations between people in civil society, but also reveals a direct alienation form of "social relationship with people" — "the social relationship of things." Through a comprehensive critique of capitalist social monetary theory and credit theory, Marx reveals the "truth" of this relationship.

Marx does not discuss currency from the perspective of means of circulation like national economists, but from the perspective of alienation of communication. Therefore, Marx said, "the essence of money is not for the transfer of property, but ... The action of human beings and society is alienated and becomes the property of material things outside of human beings and becomes the property of money." [6]¹⁶⁴⁻¹⁶⁵ This means that the original attribute of human beings — "social relations of human beings" has become the attribute of the currency other than human beings — "social relations of things". So why can money be used as an intermediary to deprive people of their class nature? Marx believes that this should be attributed to the nature of money. "The intermediary, currency, is the essence of private property that is alienated and loses itself, which is an external private property that is external to itself. It plays the intermediary

role between the production of human beings and the externalization of production of human beings. It is the externalized class activities of human [6]¹⁶⁵. Among them, "externalized private property" indicates that the currency has been separated from the special existence of the property form and has become a "general equivalent". It is this characteristic of the currency that makes it "a true God" [6]¹⁶⁵. In order to further dissect the currency, Marx asked: Why does private property necessarily develop into money? Marx's answer logic is: first, communication will inevitably develop to exchange; second, under the conditions of private ownership, exchange will inevitably develop to value; third, abstract relationship between private properties is value; forth the value as value or the measure of value is currency. This process is actually a process of "alienation" of the relationship between people, because in this process, people who "like to communicate" exchange for "mutual complement". In the private ownership environment, "the people who make exchange activities do not treat each other as people" [6]¹⁶⁶, "what is related to each other between two private individuals ... is the material of their private property" [6]¹⁷². Then, "the social connection or social relationship between the two private individuals is manifested as the mutual externalization of private property." [6]¹⁷³, the relationship between people is also externalized and alienated as "social relations between private property and private property." That is, "the relationship between things and things."

After revealing the alienation of man in the currency world, Marx went on to discuss the advanced form of monetary development — the "materialized image" of — credit industry.

When it comes to the credit industry, Marx points to an illusion: "It seems that the power of the alien material strength has been broken, the relationship of self-alienation has been abandoned, and people are once again in the relationship between people." [6]¹⁶⁷ Actually, Marx believes that those monetarists who regard the precious metal as the essence of money are not essentially different from the national economics that grasp the essence of money in abstraction and universality. The differences between the two are only "rough form" and "exquisite form". Of course, credit is no exception. It not only does not return people's social connections to people, but it also incisively shows the alienation of communication. Marx said that in the credit industry, "the illusion of trust between human conceals extreme distrust and complete alienation" [6]¹⁶⁸, under the moral recognition, there is "immoral despicable behavior" [6]¹⁷⁰. Why is this so? Because "in credit, people themselves have replaced metal or banknotes and become an intermediary of exchange" [6]¹⁶⁹, "The currency is cancelled by human, but human becomes currency" [6]¹⁶⁹ The currency that seems to be "intermediary of exchange" does return to human from its material form, but it is simply because the human moves himself beyond himself and becomes an external material form. [6]¹⁶⁹. If in the currency relationship, the "materialization" of communication only means the devourment of the "personality" of the person by object (private property). In credit, it means the devourment

of the whole person by object swallows, and the thorough "materialization" of interpersonal communication. Therefore, Marx accused: "This alienated society is a caricature depicting his real social connection and his true life." [6]¹⁷¹

IV. THE ESSENCE OF ALIENATION OF COMMUNICATION IN THE DIGEST: SOCIAL ANTAGONISM

In "Digest", the purpose that Marx used a large amount of words to describe the "alienation of communication" and its "materialization" is to reveals its hidden essence — "social antagonism", thus revealing the social reality that cannot be seen by bourgeois national economist.

What is the "real" society in the eyes of the national economist? For example, Adam Smith said: "Society is a business society. Each of its members is a businessman." [6]¹⁷¹ It means that the social relations in the vision of the bourgeois national economists are only the relationship between the private owners, because "national economics explores the social connections between people or actively realize the essence of human beings in the form of exchange and trade, and explore their mutual complementation in the class life and in the real life of the people. [6]¹⁷¹. In this way, national economists interpret people as private owners and understand the interpersonal relationships as exchanges or material relationships.

It is hardly realized that what national economics determines is only the "alienation form" of the relationship between people. In Marx's words, "national economics regards the alienation form of social interaction as essential and the original form that adapt to the mission of human." [6]¹⁷². The pure economic positioning of the relationship between people in national economics results in the double obscuration of human relations, which means the obscuration of the "human essential relationship" under the condition of non-alienation and "real relationship of human beings" under the state of alienation. Correspondingly, Marx carried out a double "uncovering" in the "Digest".

Marx starts from the economic facts said by the national economics, which is the possessive relationship between individuals and things under the conditions of private ownership, saying, "assume that a person is a private proprietor... private property is his own, has his own characteristics, and thus is the existence of his essence" [6]¹⁷². Then, according to the view of national economics, private property is the existence of human beings, and thus individuals have all the unquestionable rights to their property.

So why do private proprietors want to exchange between each other? Marx still quotes national economics as "because of poverty and the need" [6]¹⁷², "This kind of thing is what I need, so I can't live without it or I don't want to lack it. In my opinion, it is necessary to complement my existence and realize my essence". [6]¹⁷². In this way, it seems that what the national economics thinks occurs: there is a kind of exchange relationship of things between the private proprietors to complement each other because of personal lack and mutual needs, and the exchange is carried out on a voluntary and equal basis. It is thus natural and fair.

Is this really the fact? Marx made a negative answer based on production labor: "My social relationship with you and the labor I have done for your needs is nothing but an illusion. Our mutual complementation is just an illusion based on mutual plunder." [6]¹⁸¹ the reason why it is an illusion is because the purpose of private production is not only utilitarian, but also self-interested. This kind of production orientation determines that production is not a true "social production", and exchange is not a true "exchange of mutual complement". "Everyone regards their products as their own objectified private interests and regards the product of another person as others alien objectified private interest that won't be changed by oneself" [6]¹⁸¹. Since my product is my "private interest", your need for my product can't give you the power to control my product. "On the contrary, your needs, your wishes, and your will are bonds that make you depend on me, because it makes you depend on my product" [6]¹⁸¹. The consequence is that your needs are "not a means of power for you to control my product at all, but a means by which I control your power" [6]¹⁸¹, and vice versa.

Therefore, the economic relationship of mutual exchange between the people based on the needs of things, carefully "compiled" by national economics according to the laws of the economy, in fact, hides a shocking secret, which is the confrontational relationship of domination and rule between people. The "object" (commodity) without value judgment in the eyes of national economics is precisely the "recognized power" in the confrontation between people [6]¹⁸². Furthermore, under the conditions of private ownership, whoever possesses "things", especially "general equivalents" (currency and capital), has the "power" and thus has the social power to dominate, rule, and even enslave others. In the capitalist society, a remarkable fact is the separation of labor and capital, and the inevitable class confrontation relationship of exploitation and enslavement between capitalists and workers.

V. CONCLUSION

In short, excavating the confrontation relationship between people hidden under the conditions of private ownership is a major theoretical highlight in the Digest. Regrettably, Marx did not here demonstrate how to "sublate" this confrontational relationship. He only said that "if we enslave each other by products in the early stages of development, it is actually manifested as the relationship between domination and slavery. It is just the rough and straightforward performance of our essential relationship" [6]¹⁸³.

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