

# Research on the Scientificity of Marx's Dialectics Thought in "German-French Yearbook"

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## ABSTRACT

**The formation of Marx's scientific dialectics thought didn't happen overnight. The period of "German-French Yearbook" is an important node in the transformation of Marx's ideological connotation and mode of thinking. During this period, the starting point of Marx's dialectics appeared to be completed by the transformation of abstract self-consciousness in the period of "Doctoral Thesis" to the real world, and the content of thought went from phenomenon to law. During the process of using the "realistic content" instead of the "conceptual form" to criticize the young Hegel and using "human liberation" to go beyond the ideals of "political liberation", the brilliance of scientific dialectics is shining.**

**Keywords:** *"German-French Yearbook", Marx, dialectics, scientificity*

## I. INTRODUCTION

The spirit of relativism and skepticism of dialectics is easy to be used at will. They were developed sophistry in ancient Greece by the Sophists. In the late 20th century, under the influence of positivism and postmodernism, the "grand narrative" and "total" thinking were favored, while the "certainty" was lost to a certain extent. Dialectics declines to a simple method that "has neither historical aspects of human existence nor metaphysics". [1] Academia and even people's daily life pay attention to the relative content of dialectics, ignoring its certain dimension, arbitrarily speaking two-sided words with dialectic coats, and contributing to the social spiritual phenomenon and even the spiritual crisis of the vagueness of value and the loss of belief towards pragmatism and neo-cynicism.

As a scientific methodology, Marx's mature dialectics thought was not formed overnight, and it experienced a difficult process of logical exploration. Marx's dialectics — materialist dialectics is about the law of the internal essential changes of objective things. It takes objective things as the body and the laws of essential changes as the content, which has experienced the sublimation and transcendence of the speculative dialectics of the abstract subject's abstract movement. From the theoretical start of the "Doctoral Thesis" to the key transformation of the "German-French Yearbook", the scientific nature of Marx's thoughts, beliefs and argumentation logic has experienced intertwined growth. The investigation of the scientific nature of Marx's dialectical thought during the "German-French Yearbook" is conducive to understanding the development process of Marx's

scientific methodology and rationally understanding Marx's ideological status during the "German-French Yearbook" period.

## II. THE STARTING POINT OF DIALECTICS FROM "RATIONAL PERSPECTIVE" TO "WORLD ITSELF"

Hegel's conceptual dialectic system, which started from the absolute spirit and returned to the absolute spirit, once ruled Germany's spiritual world and the way of thinking. And Marx was also deeply affected, but eventually achieved transcendence. It has undergone a dialectical movement from the world of self-consciousness in the period of "Doctoral Thesis"; starting from the "essential characteristics of things" during the period of "Rhine Newspaper of Politics", it used concept deduction to reveal contradictions and engage in debates under the "rational" scale; in the "German-French Yearbook" period, it proceeded from the "principle of the world itself" and scientifically explained the new principle of "man's liberation". The logical starting point has shifted from an abstract spiritual perspective to the real human life and human history. The depth of research has gradually shifted from the level of phenomenon discussion and ideal elucidation to law revealing.

### A. *The "Doctoral Thesis": dialectical movement of "self-awareness"*

The "Doctoral Thesis" is the beginning of Marx's theory, and the academic community generally believes that Marx's atomic movement in ancient Greek philosophy is "under the structure of Hegel's dialectics". [2] The discourse content and logic of the "Doctoral

Thesis" have a strong German classical philosophical tone, especially Hegel's words and logic. The central clue words "quality", "real possibility", "abstract possibility", "inevitability", "contingency", "determination", "existence", etc. of the full text inherit the Hegelian system of discourse regulations. In Hegel's "Logic", "quality" is defined as "as existing regularity" — "reality". In "Doctoral Thesis", Marx discusses in the framework of Hegelian philosophy that the atom itself contains dual provisions of "qualitative" and "formal", which in turn reflects in the dual nature of "existence" and "essence", "material" and "concept", "primitive" and "element", and the dual characteristics of "reality" and "abstraction". Atoms that are "primitive" start from the link of linear motion to form an "essential world", deflect through the "mass of gravity" as an intermediary, and transform into atoms that are "elements", generating a rich and specific "phenomenal world". Every link of the process from occurrence to realization is a self-conscious movement. The field of the problem is the void constructed in a pre-determined way. The constructive logic of "conceptualization" is clearly similar to the speculation that Hegel set the "ideal world" to control all real movements, both of which are the existence of ideas.

Marx's understanding and interpretation of the dialectics in the atomic movement was deeply influenced by the Hegelian dialectics system, but Marx was never a complete Hegelian. In "Doctoral Thesis", Marx has found that speculation hinders the understanding of the history of Greek philosophy and the spirit of Greek philosophy, and has shown a critical position on the theology of philosophy. Unlike Hegel's speculation, which dominates everything with the absolute spirit of transcendental existence and detachment from human beings, Marx takes human self-consciousness as the highest divinity and highlights the dominant position of human beings. The movement process of self-consciousness in the metaphor of atomic movement is a one-way dynamic movement context from the "essential world" to the "phenomenal world" and from the "primitive" to the "element", which goes beyond the compromise of the end of Hegel's dialectics towards involution and reincarnation. Starting from the "abstract" world, the movement to the world of "existence" also pursues the spirit of "reality" beyond the mystery and fantasy of speculative movement.

*B. The "Rhine Newspaper of Politics" period: the dialectical deduction on the concept of "essential characteristics of things"*

In the "Rhine Newspaper of Politics" period, Marx used dialectics as a weapon to analyze and demonstrate from the concept of the other party's rhetoric and to reveal contradictory provisions therein. Regarding the

"Books and Newspapers Check Token of Prussia"<sup>1</sup>, Marx inspected the words "seriousness", "modesty", "frivolousness", "hostility" and "tendency". "Seriousness" is "a hypocritical gesture made by the body to cover up the defects of the soul" [3] rather than "a serious attitude that focuses on reality." "Modesty" stipulates that "during discussion, one must be afraid of drawing conclusions, it is a preventive against truth" [4]. It discusses "seriously" and "modestly" while publishing a declaration of permission to write, while controlling the form and style of writing and covering up and avoiding the truth. "Frivolousness" is "only attacks on special things themselves". [5] Opposing frivolous attacks, that is, against individual and specific religions. But it also stipulates that it is not allowed to attack general religions, so in essence it is not allowed to attack religions. The regulations themselves contain irreconcilable opposites. "Tendency" is a motive rather than a behavior-oriented judgment, and there is no objective standard of judgment in the law. It is not a fixed but relative concept with "seriousness", "modesty", "frivolousness", "hostility". Judgment and execution are all based on the personal abilities and tempers of the inspectors of the books and newspapers. Judgment standards are moved from the scope of objective content to the scope of subjective opinions or willfulness.[6] "Willfulness" replaced the law system. Starting from the lexical concept of the books and newspapers check token regulations, Marx made extensive use of the fallacy method, used negativity as the principle of logical advancement, revealed the absurdity of the books and newspapers check token regulations and the arguments of the hierarchical debaters in the logic and denied the rationality of their opinions, thus constructing and expressing its own opinions — inferring the essence of books and newspapers check token to stifle freedom of press and publication and exercise publication control. Marx's dialectical mode of thinking using logical deduction in the debate has a formal consistency with the dialectical system of Hegel's concept that is interconnected and transformed.

The mainstream view of China's academia believes that "Hegelian rationalism constitutes the main theoretical source of Marx's 'Rhine Newspaper of Politics'".[7] The basis is that Marx is based on the premise that the state, government and law are rational representatives, infringing on official freedom and

<sup>1</sup> "The inspection of books and newspapers must not prevent people from making serious and humble discussions of the truth, nor allow the authors to be unreasonably constrained". "Anyone who opposes general Christianity or a certain doctrine in a frivolous and hostile manner should not be tolerated". "As long as the wording is polite and tends to be kind, you can't refuse to publish it simply because they are not in line with the spirit of the government". — [Excerpt from Marx's "Review of Prussia's Recent Books and Newspapers Check Token"]

safeguarding private interests rather than irrational political and legal actions that safeguard universal freedom. It violates the spirit that the country, government and laws should have and criticizes it. In the debates on forest theft, real estate analysis, the debate on the situation of Moselle farmers, free trade and tariff protection, Marx also resorted to law and ethics as the rational scale to support the debate. The scientific nature of the argument is not very sufficient. However, Marx and Hegel's rationalism have always been essentially different. In view of the distortion of the personal will of books and newspapers inspectors and the starting point of abstract judgment, Marx advocates considering the influence of "the nature of the object" on the truth and changing the way of discussion with the object. The criticism of inquiry form stipulated by check token will make the discussion value the form and forget the things themselves. Marx put forward the rational connotation of "the universal freedom of thought to treat various things according to the essential characteristics of things" [8]. This aspect reveals the spiritual meaning of dialectics of "specific analysis of specific issues", on the other hand, it establishes the rational status of "things themselves and essential characteristics of things". A viewpoint in the academic world called Marx at this time "new rational criticism", that is, the principle of rationalism based on the rationality of realistic things. It didn't agree with the conservatism and the weakness of German mediocrities embodied in Hegel.[9] Compared with Hegel's process of understanding starting from the idea, it classified all concrete things as the limited links of the idea, ignoring the value of concrete things in reality. Marx established the rational position of concrete things in reality, and criticized and surpassed the mysteries and illusions of transcendental objective rationality in the spirit of reality.

*C. The Kroznach period: the state and civil society are the unity of opposites in the "reality relationship"*

Hegel set the state and civil society as independent ethical entities. The state is a universal unlimited object, and civil society is a realistic limited object. The two have different attributes and are binary opposites. In terms of the relationship between the two, Hegel believes that infinite things determine finite things, and the state determines civil society. The process of the relationship between the two is manifested in the real civil society life generated by the differentiation of infinite countries, and the real civil society abandons itself in the development and returns to the infinite spirit. The driving force for "differentiation" and "return" is unknown, relying on the inner imagination of the concept and falling into logical pantheism and mysticism.

Feuerbach recognizes that in Hegelian philosophy, thinking is the subject and existence is an object.

Thinking has even become the absolute subject of the non-object word or the unity of the subject and the object itself, and the existence is just the externalization of the thinking, and the thinking is referred to as the status of the "god". Hegelian philosophy is essentially theology, so "who does not abandon Hegelian philosophy, who will not abandon theology." [10] It reverses Hegel's subject-object relationship with "existence is the subject and thinking is the object"[11], believing that thinking comes from existence, not existence from thinking, and existence can only arise from existence. It directly reverses the philosophical system of Hegel's actual existence from ideas. Feuerbach's critique of Hegel's philosophy provides thought inspiration for Marx's reflection and criticism of Hegel's legal philosophy.

Marx criticized Hegel's mysticism in the contradictory relationship between the state and the civil society, and found the natural foundation of the state's reality — family and human-based — civil society, which brought the relationship between "state" and "civil society" back in the real world, established it as a "reality relationship" and put forward the materialist thesis that "family and civil society determine the country". Hegel's "state" is a non-real world — the infinity of the conceptual world, but nothing more than a presentative and illusory thing. Through Hegel's representational framework, Marx found the natural and human basis of his reality and established the reality of the country. In the era when Hegelian philosophy ruling the world view with its essence and phenomena reversed, Marx's criticism was shaking the foundation of the values of the times.

The research of "civil society" is the previous stage of the research of "commodities". The transformation of the ideological and research content from the universal rational field of "nation" to the logical value tendency of real-world things of "civil society" laid the foundation and established the starting point for Marx's "big" research from the analysis of commodities to the internal contradictions of the capitalist society, and the formation of the "big" logic that explored the essential laws of objective things. In the "German-French Yearbook", Marx made it clear that he "wanted to elucidate new principles for the world from the principles of the world itself". For Hegel's "state" in which the imaginary things in the altar of speculation became reality and their relationship with civil society, Marx continued to carry out in-depth research in "On Jewish Issues" and "Introduction to Criticism of Hegel's Law and Philosophy", which further embodied the scientific nature of his dialectics.

### **III. THE DIALECTIC OF REPLACING THE CONTENT AND FORM OF "CONCEPTUAL FORM" WITH "REAL CONTENT"**

In the early 1840s, the German government's press control strengthened the social dictatorship and repressed atmosphere. The persecuted Berlin "free man" group abandoned radicalism, fell into vulgar subjective idealism and advocated communism, but they only indulged in empty talk and didn't involve specific analysis. In his letter to Luge, Marx mentioned that the practice of "free men" cramming into some communist and socialist creeds by occasionally writing drama reviews is inappropriate, even unethical. He asked them to discuss communism in a more tangible way. In criticizing their impractical empty talk, Marx himself discussed his pursuit of communism in a more cogent way.

In "On Jewish Issues", Marx analyzed and criticized the concept of the liberalist Bruno Powell's conceptualism and empty liberation theory. Powell believes that "the first problem encountered by the Jews in Germany was the lack of political liberation and the country's distinctive Christianity nature"[12]. And he generalized the German religious problem into the relationship between religion and state, and advocated that religious liberation should be used to abolish religious shackles and obtain political liberation. The religious opposition between Christianity and Judaism (Christianity is the state religion, which masters national politics; Judaism is a common religion, which is free from administrative rights) is the reason for the political reality of the domination and oppression of the Jewish people in Christian countries, so religious liberation is the condition of political liberation. The conscious and imaginary religion have become the cause of the real political situation. The change of the real political situation must start from the imaginary religious world. Therefore, Powell advocated that "as long as the Jews and Christians regard their opposing religions as different stages of human spiritual development and as different snake skins ripped off by history and treat humans as molting snakes, their relationship is no longer a religious relationship." [13] The method of abandoning religion in self-consciousness to eliminate religious opposition is as ridiculous and unrealistic as giving up the idea of gravity in consciousness to avoid the danger of drowning. Marx examined the particularities of the countries of Germany, France and North America and the Jewish problems in a historical way. In Germany without political revolution and France with incomplete political revolution, the Jewish problem manifests itself as the opposition between religion and national politics. In North America, where political liberation is complete, and in countries where political liberation is complete, religious vitality exists in the lives of citizens, and the Jewish question has lost its theological

significance and became a truly secular question. Powell regarded religious restraint as the cause of political oppression, and the absolute opposition between religion and national politics lost its universality in the face of reality. Marx made a materialist analysis of the logical categories of Powell's form and content, cause and effect in the relationship between religion and politics. Religion is dressed in the coat of "heaven", but the "heaven" can't give it any practical content. The root of religion is in man's world, and religion is a reflection of human reality. Religious opposition is a manifestation of political oppression. Political dominating rights is the cause of religious oppression, and inequality in political status is manifested in the form of religious oppression. Therefore, Marx requires them to criticize religion from the secular structure of political countries, from the roots of religious content, and to get rid of religious restraints, rather than to criticize politics from the perspective of religion and the existence of ideas. Religion is free from mystery, and religious liberation will also be free from the illusion of self-awareness, which has a practical operation in earthly life.

Maine of the "free man" group inherited the German classical philosophical tradition and idealistic morality and loved the category of "due". Whether it is "self-consciousness" or "due" category, it is a mysterious fixation that is out of reality, out of reality, out of the people's real life, and has no real meaning to the people. Marx pointed out mercilessly the "free man", "unconstrained, trousers-style and casual form"[14], proposing to surpass "freeman's formalism" with "free, independent and profound content". In the past, when philosophers explained the world, they hid the mystery in their desks and philosophized and mystified the secular problems. The task now is to break through the dogma's stillness and to ruthlessly criticize everything that exists. It is necessary to replace the young Hegelian "free people" with realistic criticism and resort to pure reason, to find contradictions in the self-consciousness and to resolve the conflicts between subjectivism and formalism.

### **IV. THE DIALECTICAL DIMENSION OF SURPASSING "POLITICAL LIBERATION" WITH "HUMAN LIBERATION"**

Marx inspected the "political liberation" itself, the reality of the political state and the "principle of the world itself". Starting from the internal contradictions of "political liberation", he penetrated the root of the problem through the appearance of the problem, and scientifically explained the new principle of "human liberation".

#### A. *Dialectical revelation of progress and limitations of "political liberation"*

"Political liberation" is also known as "citizen liberation" or "political revolution". In "On Jewish Issues", regarding Christianity as the state religion to control national politics, Christianity's oppressive rule over Jewish people, restriction of Jewish people's participation in political life, and the desire of Jewish people to participate in politics on an equal footing with Christianity and other believers and to eliminate hierarchical political structures, Powell called these phenomena the "citizen liberation" and "political liberation" required by Jewish people. Marx's point of view on Powell in "On Jewish Issues" is involved in the "political liberation" problem domain. "Political liberation" refers to the abolition of the feudal political system and the establishment of a bourgeois democratic system. Marx conducted a dialectical analysis of "political liberation" itself. First of all, he affirmed that in the world system so far, "political liberation is certainly a big step forward." [15] A politically emancipated political country is an overcoming of the feudal religious state, an ideal and struggle for the bourgeoisie to abolish the feudal system, the pursuit of freedom and equality and historical progress. On the other hand, political liberation is only the liberation of a small number of people, the liberation of the man of property, and the incomplete liberation, and will surely be replaced by a higher liberation — "human liberation".

#### B. *Deepening the "political" nature of the "religion" phenomenon*

"Essence" is the internal connection of things and has a decisive influence on the nature and development of things. "Phenomenon" is the external manifestation of essence in a specific field. Marx stated in "capital logic" — "Capital: Critique of Political Economy" that "if the manifestation of things and the nature of things are directly integrated as one, all science will become redundant". [16] The scientific dialectics thinking of the combination of essence and phenomenon has been manifested in the "German-French Yearbook" period. In response to Powell's conclusion that the Jewish problem in Germany was not politically liberated, and that the country had a distinctive Christian nature and the solution to the problem relied on people abandoning religion in self-consciousness and abolishing religion in politics, Marx criticized Powell's one-sided understanding. To clarify the liberator and the target of liberation, it should also be clear what type of liberation is required and the essential conditions for liberation. Powell stayed at the "phenomenon" level of the Jewish problem. The Jewish problem manifested itself as religious oppression. The root of religious oppression is in political countries. The solution to the abolition of religion is also a solution at the apparent level, which

basically lies in political criticism and sinks into the social nature of religious issues.

#### C. *The "political liberation" to "human liberation" is a logical transformation from special to universal*

The term "man's liberation" first appeared in Marx's article "On Jewish Issues" published in the "German-French Yearbook", referring to "the liberation of all mankind." [17] Regarding the question of where society should go, by the 1840s, there had been various political and philosophical trends of thought such as liberalism, democracy, utopian socialism, humanitarian communism, and some people had proposed the ideals of "religious liberation" and "political liberation". "Religious liberation" is the liberation of a nation and a sect; "political liberation" is the liberation of private property, all of which are liberation of minorities, individual groups and special categories. Marx advocates "man's liberation" and puts forward the ideal pursuit of "man is the highest essence of mankind" and "man's complete reply to himself". Although Marx's "human" ideological connotation has not yet penetrated into concrete, realistic, historical and active people at this time and it refers to an abstract universal person, in the ideal category, its universality has achieved a high degree of surpassing the particularity and locality of "religious liberation" and "political liberation". The conversion of special and universal thinking in problem research and theoretical expression has already shone with the glory of scientific dialectics.

## V. CONCLUSION

The "German-French Yearbook" is an important node of the change of the connotation and mode of Marxism's thought. The starting point of Marxism's thought experienced a change from "self-consciousness", "the essential character of things", "the relation of reality" to "the principle of the world itself", in the form and content, essence and phenomenon, universal and special categories of thinking in-depth and transformation, in order to deepen the inner nature of objective things, reveal the nature of changes in the laws of scientific thinking of objective things laid a foundation. This is followed by a systematic exposition of the historical materialism in the German ideology, which reveals the general law of the development of human history and lays the theoretical foundation for the scientific socialism.

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