

Study on the Social Discourse Construction and the Cognition of Modernity

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ABSTRACT

Modernity has always been a topic of discussion in sociology. It seems to be closely related to all the phenomena and problems in our society today, in the other way we abstract all the characteristics and states of modern society as modernity. The construction of the concept of modernity has been deepened and improved with the progress of history and society, thus constituting a set of logical and self-consistent concept system. At the same time, the concept of modernity has given birth to a set of discourse system for communicating and describing social phenomena. The discourse of modernity and the concept of modernity itself influence each other and construct each other, together shaping modern people's ideology and having an all-round influence on people's lives. This study focuses on the mechanisms of constructing modernity and its discourse system as well as its impact on society, while studying the socially relevant issues arising from it.

Keywords: *Modernity, Social discourse, Rationality*

1. INTRODUCTION

With the development and progress of human society, the traditional social form and its elements are transformed into what we call the modern model, and people call this transformation process modernization, and the characteristics of the completed transformation are called modernity. The concept of modernity is the result of a long process of modernization, which is summarized and abstracted by human beings. The question is why, in the course of human history, a development process called modernization has arisen in comparison with the results of past developments. Why do people realize that they are in the process of modernization and that there is a huge difference from tradition. These questions concern the scholars who first defined the concept of modernity, and if one is to understand how modernity was constructed, it is important to understand the times and problematic consciousness of these scholars based on the times and problems in which they lived. Among the scholars who generated this problematic consciousness, Hegel is an important representative. From the point of view of the philosophy of history, Hegel takes the concept of modernity as a concept of the times, viewing it as a new era completely opposite to the past. He describes this new era in this way: "The spirit of man has broken with his old world of life and ideas, is burying everything of the

old in the past and embarking on his own transformation." [1] It is clear from this that there is as much a rupture between the modern and the pre-modern, and that the former is as much about a radical rebellion against the latter. In this way, rupture is the key to the construction of the concept of modernity and the zeitgeist that characterized Hegel's time. The concept of modernity arose based on the dramatic changes of the times and provided the impetus for further and more dramatic social changes.

In the discursive construction of modernity, rationality is its foundational principle. The progress of rationality is arguably the most important indicator of modernization at the level of thought. At the same time, rationality has become an important weapon for revolting against pre-modern society and intensifying its fractality. How to deepen the understanding of rationality and critique the past is an important issue in the era when modernity was born. [2] But the question is whether the utopia of reason and liberty promised us by the early enlighteners, as weapons to challenge the existing order, is really hopeful. Where is the legitimacy of modernity, a radical rebellion against the past. Rationality, as an important tool for justifying modernity and as the most significant distinction from pre-modern society, is an important source of superiority of modern society. [3]

2. MODERNITY AND DIVISION OF MODERN SOCIETY

When we got rid of the religions and various sacred values of the past, we built a rational-based system to govern our society. This seems to be moving from superstition and ignorance to civilization, and we are no longer regulated by religion and tradition. We truly face nature and society, using science and technology to transform and explore the world we live in. The world does indeed work and develop as we envision it. But thinkers have found that in the process, we have lost an overarching power, a system that truly integrates people's ideas and lifestyles. [4]

To describe this state of fragmentation, I think relativism is a good starting point. When we lack the overall power of integration, we will not fall into a state of chaos, but a multi-value orientation will emerge as the times require. We will consciously embrace a concept according to our own preferences, standpoints, knowledge reserves, and even the temptation we are temporarily fascinated by. [5] Of course, relativists will emphasize that they pursue value diversity, and as long as they do not cause harm to the lives of others, such people's choices should not be interfered with. Unfortunately, in daily life, especially on the Internet, disagreements over a trivial matter have turned into Internet debates, and finally rose to cyber violence. There are many such phenomena. I use relativism as a shield when others interfere in my affairs, and when attacking others we abandon relativism completely. [6]

Tradition and religion were relied upon to maintain the power of totality in the past, but after the disenchantment of science and technology, all of this has collapsed. The disintegration of religion and tradition has not only weakened the power of totality, but also created a lack of faith. The weakening of totality created relativism, and the absence of faith created nihilism. [7] In modern times, in an attempt to overcome nihilism, various forms have been invented to give us something to fall back on, but we are only disappointed to find that these forms are either consumerist, cynical, or radical, and that the end of relativism is inevitably nihilism. These trends, which are based on the dictum of egoism, do not really free people from the emptiness of values, nor do they really allow them to realize themselves. [8]

3. THEORETICAL SOLUTION PATH FOR DIVIDED SOCIETY

3.1. Aesthetic value

It is worth noting that in constructing their theories of modernity and reconstructing totality, many thinkers have turned their attention to the realms of art, trying to find their way out of them. The fields of aesthetics and belong to those fields that people know exist but seldom

know about, and therefore whose value people ignore. Aesthetic issues are often considered to be too idealistic and out of touch with reality. Scholars are talking about it. Although they have a certain relationship with life through obscure language descriptions, they seem to have a certain distance. Indeed, aesthetic value has always been an important indicator of modernity. [9] If we examine the term "modern" in the light of its conceptual history, we will find that modernity seeks to clarify itself first and foremost in the field of aesthetic criticism. Scholars in the field of aesthetics have sought to reach a consensus on the value of beauty in order to create an integrating force of subjectivity; after all, people have always gone after beauty. The ideal of art is transferred to the realm beyond art, and it is realized as an idea. If we can find the truth about beauty and build totality on it, we may be able to construct an aesthetic utopia. Perhaps beauty is easier to agree on intuitively than other issues in the context of a given time. But the question is, if people do seek beauty, it is unlikely that a consensus can be reached if this is used as a bond. In life, people are often concerned with everyday life, and the pursuit of beauty has no priority. Such an ideal is also merely a kind of aesthetic elitism, and those who hold such an ideal are seen as mere eccentrics. Aesthetic utopia may be a great idea, but the reality is only an overly romanticized delusion. [10]

3.2. Ethical value

Morality as an integrating force has always been of interest to thinkers, while being deeply relevant to each of us. Ethics is often seen as a reconciling force, rather than a coercive one. But it is worth noting that ethics itself seeks the good rather than being a means of discipline. Of course, it is not inconceivable to use morality as the basis for integrating forces. Talking about moral philosophy, for one, emphasizes the moral law and regards it as an a priori category, a life prescribed in the field of ethics. Hegel also believed that the ethical sphere should concretize itself, that is, manifest itself, in the state, strictly speaking in government. He also sees ethical totality as "the oneness of the individual and the general". But is there really a sameness in the moral sphere? We can see from Nietzsche's master-slave morality that the morality that we are admiring to-day is, in Nietzsche's view, only a slave morality, which is weak and hypocritical in his view. At the same time, it is still doubtful whether ethics, as an overarching force, can be truly convincing. [11] In modern society, moral issues are often used as a tool to criticize others rather than as a common pursuit of ethical values, making it difficult to reach consensus on ethical issues. On the other hand, under the impact of notions such as utilitarianism, people choose non-ethical means to do things when faced with choices on many issues. In this context, morality is no longer a moral law that people should follow, nor is it a value goal that people should pursue, but has become a

kind of pressure from the external environment in people's lives, and in some cases people may even dismantle moral requirements for the sake of living. At the same time, moral requirements are more related to the pre-modern society, and the moral concept constructed based on modernity is not perfect and conflicts with the traditional moral concept, which is also the problem of moral values in the development of modern society. A similar problem remains with ethical pointing as opposed to relying on aesthetics. An important reason why aesthetic and moral values are difficult to truly address the divisive issue of modernity is that they are not entirely in accordance with rational principles, which is somehow inconsistent with the concept of modernity; rather, they are more of a contingent pursuit of values. [12]

3.3. *Communicative rationality*

Communicative rationality is a theory or set of theories which describes human rationality as a necessary outcome of successful communication. This theory is tied to German philosophers Jürgen Habermas and along with its related theories such as those on discourse ethics and rational reconstruction. This view of reason is concerned with clarifying the norms and procedures by which agreement can be reached, and is therefore a view of reason as a form of public justification. According to the theory of communicative rationality, the potential for certain kinds of reason is inherent in communication itself. Building from this, Habermas has tried to formalize that potential in explicit terms. According to Habermas, the phenomena that need to be accounted for by the theory are the "intuitively mastered rules for reaching an understanding and conducting argumentation", possessed by subjects who are capable of speech and action. The result of the theory is a conception of reason that Habermas sees as doing justice to the most important trends in twentieth century philosophy, while escaping the relativism which characterizes postmodernism, and also providing necessary standards for critical evaluation. [13] However, we find this path increasingly difficult to follow in the light of social experience. In today's media conditions, it is increasingly difficult to communicate in a truly communicative and rational manner. Problems such as echo chamber, confused public opinion, and disinformation are seriously undermining the public sphere as an environment for communication, and they are getting worse and worse, with no tendency to abate. [14] Although Habermas is confident in his path of communicative rationality, and it is self-consistent in his theoretical system, it remains to be seen whether it can solve the dilemma in modern society.

4. DISCOURSE CONSTRUCTION AND LINGUISTIC TURN

The twentieth century witnessed an important trend in the history of thought known as the "linguistic turn," in which thinkers such as Wittgenstein reminded us that when we use language to discuss problems, is language a tool, a medium, an object, or is the problem itself being discussed? Are we dealing with a mere misuse of language, or are we just playing with language game? The fact is that problems arise from a mis-understanding of the logic of language. In a word, if we research the construction of modernity, we should pay attention to the function of discourse. [15] Discourse is not only a tool for people to communicate, but also a vehicle for people to understand the world, in the sense that it is impossible for people to construct concepts apart from discourse. At the same time, whether the way people use discourse affects how they perceive the world, in other words, whether the discourse people use on a daily basis and the descriptions of things place limits on thought. Talking about the construction of modernity, people's understanding about these concepts of social science is mistake for social reality? Although theoretically and logically construct-ed discourse system takes concrete social phenomena as a basis, when it abstractly becomes a discourse to explain social phenomena, it follows only the logic of language.

Different thinkers have shown us different perspectives and rationales for the discourse on modernity, yet all of them are hardly responsive to the times. However, the times are still moving forward and modernity is also deepening. Postmodern theorists believe that modernity is dead, and in the process of its deepening, they are moving towards the opposite side. [16] Personally, I think that postmodern theorists may not realize that they are also just playing a conceptual game, just lost in a dead end of the discourse.

In fact, with the development of the times, the various qualities of modernity based on social reality will continue to deepen, and new things will constantly appear and become more and more difficult for hu-man beings to understand. In order to describe and understand the complex and changing social facts, hu-man beings can only study social phenomena by using discourses based on reason and logic. [17] However, the discourse that people create inevitably becomes part of society and further complicates social problems. Modernity and the discourse systems created to explain it interact with each other, with the result that the concept of modernity becomes increasingly incomprehensible. [18] This is perhaps the reason for the critique of modernity and the emergence of postmodernist thinking. However, modernity is still deepening, and hu-man exploration of modern society has not stopped. If human beings can truly understand the dialectical relationship between the concept of modernity and the discourse that explains it,

analyse the use of language to produce problems, continuously learn more deeply about the mechanisms of using and constructing discourse, and pursue a more in-depth view of the problem. [19] In this way, although a complete explanation of the problem cannot be achieved, the social sciences and human society will continue to progress and develop.

5. CONCLUSION

Today, many social problems and social contradictions seem insoluble, and these problems are largely due to the fact that human beings recognize and analyse problems only in fixed structures, that is, in fixed systems of discourse, and go about solving social problems from the standpoint of modernity based on this. More profound perspectives exist, even if they are difficult to understand. What one person finds unbelievable to understand may seem commonplace to another, a difference in background knowledge and discourse systems of different people. [20] It is necessary to understand modern society more deeply, to study modernity more deeply, to overcome the problems caused by modernity and the discourse system that limits people's thinking from different perspectives, and to truly master the discourse to construct a perspective on modernity. Modernity is an unfinished business, and the process of constructing a discourse about it has no end.

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