

The Dimension of Virtue in Marx's Freedom Thought

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ABSTRACT

Marx's thought of freedom contains two aspects. On the one hand, freedom is a process of overcoming obstacles and inhibitions, in particular the process by which a man is freed from the external compulsion of social domination and natural necessity through his practice. On the other hand, and more importantly, freedom is a man "realizes himself" by formulating the possibilities that ought to be and acting accordingly. The connotation of "freedom" is not only not involved in other things, it also lies in the merits and faults of the person, which is the virtue dimension of Marx's freedom thought. The moral dimension of freedom is to emphasize the freedom of self-discipline, and the freedom of non-interference and non-domination should be based on the freedom of self-discipline.

KEYWORDS: Marx Freedom Virtue.

Marx once wrote, "Freedom consists not only in what I live by, but also in how I live, not only in achieving my freedom, but also in achieving my freedom freely." Marx devoted his life to "revolutionizing the real world, actually opposing and changing the existing things." The deep value of Marx's philosophy is: for human freedom and liberation. Marx said: "Since man draws all his knowledge, sensations, etc., from the experience of the sensual world, it is necessary to arrange the world around him in such a way that he may know and comprehend in it what is truly human, that he may feel himself human." Deep in Marx's thought of freedom is a belief in the self-fulfillment of human beings towards a better and brighter future.

Marx's thought of freedom contains two aspects. On the one hand, freedom is a process of overcoming obstacles and inhibitions, in particular the process by which man is freed from the external compulsion of social domination and natural necessity through his practice, On the other hand and more importantly is the man "realizes himself" by formulating and acting upon what should be possible. The connotation of "freedom" is not only not involved in other things, it also lies in the merits and faults of the person, which is the virtue dimension of Marx's freedom thought. The moral dimension of freedom is to emphasize the freedom of self-discipline, and the freedom of non-interference and non-domination should be based on the freedom of self-discipline. Engels wrote: "Man should understand himself to make himself the measure of all relations of life, to value them according to his own nature, to really arrange the world according to his own way, according to the needs of his own nature..... Should not go to the other shore of meaning..... But seek the truth in the bosom of those who are close at hand." Although the nature and state of life represent the degree and state of human freedom and liberation, the value dimension inherent in human freedom and liberation is the most fundamental basis for guiding people to what kind of life nature and state they ultimately achieve.

1. THE INFLUENCE OF ROUSSEAU'S MORAL SELF-DISCIPLINE AND KANT'S SELF-REGULATORY FREEDOM ON MARX'S MORAL SUBJECTIVITY THOUGHT

Marx inherited the tradition of modern enlightenment thought more deeply than the thinkers of his time. Rousseau's conviction of human conscience and Kant's expectation of the best life have echoes of the soul in Marx. Rousseau said that the fundamental problem of his theory of the social contract was to find a form of union which would preserve and secure the person and wealth of each union with a community force, and by this union would make each individual united to the whole merely subject to himself, and thus remain as free as ever. But the "freedom as before" mentioned here is not the freedom in the former state of nature, that is, the freedom in which man is governed by the laws of nature, and is not constrained by power or restricted by reason.

He called freedom in the state of nature "freedom limited only by the power of the individual", called the freedom in the state of society which the social contract may bring to man "the freedom of society bound by the general will", and, in particular, he pointed out that the benefits of the state of society are also "moral self-discipline". It is true that Rousseau means by no means "general will." For him, the general will look at the private interests of individuals, and is therefore only the sum of individual wills, while the general will means that eternal justice which is based on the common good, and which is therefore concerned with the moral self-discipline of man. The introduction of "moral" value made Rousseau distinguish his own contract theory from all the previous contract theories, and also made him distinguish the reason he understood from the reason advocated in the contemporary mainstream thought. "General will" and "morality" do not deny the theory of individual value standard, nor do they despise rationality in general, but they only suggest a spiritual inner dimension of self-discipline for the individual as the subject of value, which is a dimension of virtue. Rousseau's theory of social contract leads freedom from external social freedom subject to rational guidance and constraint to moral self-discipline and to the practice of practical rationality. This directly affects Kant; it directly affects Marx.

As we all know, Hume's philosophy greatly influenced Kant. Kant himself once said that it was Hume's philosophy that awakened his dreams of dogmatism. Rousseau, however, had a more internal influence on Kant than Hume. If Hume's inspiration to Kant's mind is mainly to critically reconfirm the understanding of reason, then Rousseau's inspiration to Kant can be said to be mainly to critically reconfirm the practical reason, and the criticism and the practical reason is exactly the center of gravity of Kant's philosophy. According to Kant, there are two fields of human cognition, namely, the field of natural concept and the field of free concept. Legislation based on natural concept is theoretical, it follows the law of cause and effect; Legislation based on the concept of freedom is practical, it follows the law of freedom.

According to this, Kant divided human reason into theoretical reason and practical reason, and endowed practical reason with a unique object of study: freedom of will. In Kant's view, theoretical reason does not attain independence in the field of knowledge, because here the objects of knowledge are given, and reason has no freedom to study them. But in the field of practice, pure reason is free, because the object of the moral field is reason's own stipulation, not given objectively, but determined by itself. Kant's understanding of man consists of two interrelated basic aspects. On the one hand, man is a rational being. Different from natural objects, man has the character of always trying to transcend natural necessity and pursue transcendental noumenon, that is, he has the ability to perform freely. Man is not only the existence of a phenomenon, but also the noumenal existence, and man himself has the possibility of absolute perfection. On the other hand, man is a being with limited

knowledge. Unlike God, man is also physically located in time and space, his existence is limited and in fact always driven by natural desires, and he has an empirical character. People are always imperfect in reality. Kant's thought of freedom takes the dual existence of human beings as the logical premise of his theoretical construction.

Kant, in his *Principles of Moral Metaphysics* and *Critique of Practical Reason*, argues that as an actor I should conform to the requirements of moral law. When Kant pondered the question "what should I do?" he also pondered the question "what can I actually do?" Kant's moral philosophy is mainly sentimentalism against happiness. The theory of happiness holds that man is a natural being who can only act to satisfy his emotional desires by being driven by his natural nature. Kant first emphasized that man is a rational being. Different from animals, man has the will ability to self-legislate and then obey, and he has the will of self-discipline, which is the true free nature of man. Kant does not deny the fact of man's empirical character and his pursuit of happiness.

But he argued that, while men are in fact always driven by natural nature, they are always conscious of subduing natural nature by their moral nature. Kant does not think that human nature is absolutely good, but people have a tendency to be good, and the moral law is to make people take a perfect ideal as the goal because of the imperfection of the real existence, and constantly improve the realm of people. What Kant advocates is a kind of personal freedom. Kant believes that it is precisely because of the dual nature of human existence, so people have the possibility of good existence and evil existence. Good is man's free choice to follow moral laws, evil is man's free choice to violate moral laws. Human nature is not ready-made good or evil, but makes itself good or evil in the act of the will. The suspension of freedom (freedom of will) is the premise for a person to become a person, and whether he can truly become a person and realize the freedom of self-discipline is a process of choice and action. Of course, this choice and action in Kant are more focused on ethics than on criticizing the practical activity of transforming the world. When Kant asserts in morality that the moral law is an "absolute law" for the human will, he affirms that the human will has the capacity to defy the moral law and establish new rules of action. So freedom is freedom to choose, freedom to do. In this point, Kant's freedom is the ability to "initiate" behavior, is a positive view of freedom. At the same time, the "freedom" in Kant's practical reason means not being restricted by any perceptual desires, which makes people inevitably get rid of the perceptual world in which they really live and are governed by the causal series, so that Kant's freedom leads to mysterious and subjective idealism.

2. THE MORAL DIMENSION IN MARX'S FREEDOM THOUGHT IS THE ETHICAL VALUE ORIENTATION THAT IS CONSTANTLY REALIZED IN PRACTICE

Marcuse once said that Marx "accepted humanism not as a branch of philosophy, but as a historical fact, or rather as a historical possibility." By changing the existing social conditions that hinder the realization of the "full individual," new social conditions for the realization of the "full individual" can be established. Marx accepted the "value" of humane society (socialism) as a criterion for thought and action, just as people accept the value of health as a criterion for the diagnosis and treatment of disease. Marx's theory is not a description and analysis of the 'in itself' capitalist economy, but a description and analysis of another society in the light of the possibility of a realistic goal that has become an act." Marx's vision is from the very beginning the vision of general freedom. His concern is human freedom, and his attention is focused on the two features of modern society that are opposed to human freedom: the inevitable suffering and the waste of life. This demand for freedom highlights the special and important theoretical quality and strong ethical orientation of Marx's

philosophy, that is, the moral dimension of Marx's freedom thought. In essence, the problem of freedom is not a simple theoretical problem, but a practical problem. The study of the dimension of virtue in Marx's free thought is more to make each of us clearly see the nature in the real practice and truly arouse the conscience. This dimension of virtue cannot be removed by the external pursuit of experiential life, but can only be blinded by experience. To realize the significance of the dimension of virtue in Marx's thought of freedom lies in the continuous struggle against all kinds of forces that blind virtue. Human development cannot start from some pre-set transcendental framework, but must pay attention to the analysis of the free development of each generation in reality, pay attention to the analysis of economic, political and cultural relations that affect and restrict the realization of human freedom and liberation, so as to break all kinds of relations realistically and change people's lives through practical activities. "Since man is free not by the negative power of escaping from something, but by the positive power of manifesting his true personality, it is not necessary to punish the criminal acts of individuals, but to eliminate the antisocial roots of criminal acts, and to give every man the necessary social space in which to reveal his vital vitality." Since man's character is created by the environment, it is necessary to make the environment conform to human nature. Since man is by nature a social creature, it is only in society that he can develop his true nature, and the power of his nature must be judged not by the power of a single individual, but by that of society as a whole." All Marx's efforts in his life were to make man what he is, to realize the original connotation of man: that is, man constantly opens his possible living space and existence significance in practice, and finally realizes man's freedom and liberation. The proposition of "people-oriented", which is full of humane and ethical spirit, is closely connected with the socialist movement. The transcendence and sublation of all kinds of alienation in real life is the path and way to the free and all-round development of human society. Marx reduced the so-called "complete restoration of man" to a historical social activity: "The difference between the individual with character and the accidental individual is not only a logical difference, but a historical fact," and thus "the consistency of the change of circumstances with the activity or self-change of man can only be regarded and reasonably understood as a revolutionary practice."

In terms of the relationship between man and nature, Marx acknowledged the priority and basic status of external nature for man, and stressed the influence and function of man's choice and creation in practice on the perceptual world. In Marx's view, man's creative relation to nature is not an arbitrary and unrestrained activity aimed at the infinite exploitation of natural forces and resources. It was founded as an activity which, in the final analysis, must be subordinated to the principles of revolutionary practice, to humanitarian ideals and values. In terms of the relationship between man and society, Marx not only acknowledged the positive role of society in promoting man's existence, activity and development, but also acknowledged its negative and restrictive aspects, advocates the healthy interaction between human and society through practice. Marx believes that man, as the unity of his social expression and personal expression, is a creature "created" and "creating" history. Man not only accepts the existing way of life, participates in the existing social ideology, but also transforms this way of life, puts forward new ideas, and thus "creates" social consciousness. In terms of the relationship between man and himself, Marx attached great importance to the self-understanding and self-transformation achieved by man in practice and through practice, and believed that it was through this real human self-awareness and self-transformation that man could consciously choose and create, deal with the relationship between himself and the external world theoretically and practically, and rely on and master the external world realistically and practically. To facilitate the continuous transformation of the man's attachment to the world into the man controls the world. The subject of virtue is an important spiritual characteristic in Marx's free thought. If freedom is not associated with virtue, then the study of freedom lacks the brilliance of humanity! Marx's free

thought is not only the ideal living state of human beings, but also a dynamic process of development and perfection of human beings living on the vector of history based on reality.

For Marx, we have seen that freedom contains both positive and negative aspects; on the one hand, freedom is the process of overcoming obstacles and inhibitions, and in particular the process by which man, through his activities, is freed from the external compulsion of social domination and natural necessity. Freedom, on the other hand, is the freedom of man to "realize himself" by making possibilities and acting on them. Marx believed that these two aspects of freedom were joined together in material activity. Insofar as man, through objectification, creates his own world of objects, and thus his own unique object existence, man can be said to be the only "free" - he is his own reason - and not the "other" being. The connotation of "freedom" is not only that it does not involve anything else, it is also that the free man has his own merits and faults. "Freedom" can be defined not only as the nature of man's unique life activity, but also as a value orientation of man in his whole historical practice. Marx's so-called freedom refers to the state of self-discipline that man achieves by sublating the external domination of himself by the power of alienation. Freedom is not only freedom from external constraints, freedom is a kind of self-realization. There are many people who believe that Marx's discussion of freedom has never involved the spiritual world of human beings, and Marx's theory blindly focuses on material matters, so the power to get rid of alienation only means to get rid of the domination of external things over human beings, which is what Marx's existentialism lacks. In fact, I believe that the great significance of Marx's theory of history lies in the fact that he points out that the ultimate goal of mankind should be to free itself completely from the bondage of all things and the bondage of external necessity, and thus to advance towards the realm of freedom most in accordance with human nature. Marx realized that since man's liberation from material desires cannot be embodied as a natural process, the only practical way is to make more and more people consciously restrain their already expanded material desires by means of artificial guidance, and exchange their physical and mental freedom with a moderate level of consumption. Marx regards "free and conscious activity" as "human's class characteristic", but this kind of free and conscious nature of man is not a super-historical stipulation and abstract existence, but actually generated through man's realistic historical activity. Marx pointed out that "the realm of freedom exists beyond the realm of real material production" and that it therefore "begins only where labor, which is determined by necessity and external ends, ceases." Here, we can clearly see that Marx has realized that the fundamental overcome of alienation is to give up dependence on anything, but Marx did not choose a life without desires, which is not the way of real human existence. After reflecting on the characteristics of human existence, Marx pointed out that the kingdom of freedom can prosper only on the basis of the kingdom of necessity.

The material exchange between man and nature is inevitable, but we cannot get rid of the thinking and interpretation of freedom just because man's objectified activities can never get rid of the material field. Man's way of existence determines that man's pursuit is endless. If the external freedom is not satisfied, it is even more impossible to talk about the inner freedom of man's mind. Therefore, material development is necessary and necessary, and is a prerequisite for reaching communism, but Marx still implies that human beings should consciously rid themselves of the slavery of such things, and let human beings reflect on their own lives. If Marx's view of history is limited to the intellectual freedom within the field of experience, then the goal of an ideal society containing absolute values cannot be highlighted. All his life, Marx hoped to satisfy the freedom of the body through man's own practical efforts, and also to reach the freedom of the mind through man's practical efforts, but this freedom of the mind is "should". This kind of should is that Marx makes the criticality and transcendence of his own theory become reality through human practice in the course of history, so that human

beings can promote the development of history in this tension between the should and the reality. Marx clearly understood that freedom is a union of free men. And to achieve this state of perfection depends on self-discipline, otherwise it is impossible. This is why Marx divided human existence into three stages. The independence of man, which is based on the dependence of things, is only a transitional stage; the true state of man's existence is the association of free men. Marx's theory of practice is a theoretical development of negation of negation. Marx does not deny the role of material power in human freedom and liberation because of man's dependence on things. On the contrary, he is fully aware of its great role and its alienating power. Marx asked human beings to open the free space and the meaning of freedom in their own way of existence, and this process has no end, so people are always on the road. However, the desire for the perfect living state of freedom is indispensable. It is because of it that people have motivation and direction, and it impels people's survival and development.

3. CONCLUSION

It is not important for man to realize his own existence; the most important thing is that man can change his own existence. In the process of realizing freedom freely, people with the dimension of virtue devote themselves to cultivating and shaping the subject who has consciousness, willingness, self-discipline and freedom.

Freedom needs to be accompanied by ethics that promotes the virtues of mature personality. The unique free life activities of human beings should not be eclipsed because of the lack of the transcendental dimension of virtue, and Marxism should not be powerless because of the lack of ethical value orientation in practice. People constantly seek freedom from the outside, but the transcendental dimension of freedom is obscured. Virtue and freedom are the two most important contents of morality, and freedom is the premise of moral issues, but the purpose of morality is virtue, and freedom supported by virtue can truly reflect the nobility of human beings. Virtue represents an inner "moral self" and a kind of beautiful personality. The most important thing is that it shows the existence value of self as a concrete individual. As Hegel said, history is nothing more than the progress of free consciousness. They are neither given by the external material world nor by God, but are the process by which man realizes his "free" nature, which is latent in himself. This process of which Hegel speaks is accomplished in the absolute idea, but Marx places it in the concrete historical process of human practice.

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