The Formation Mechanism of Marx's World Historical Thought and its Methodological Significance

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Abstract: Marx's view of world history holds that the formation of world history requires the interaction and connection of the two intermediary conditions of the world market and world exchanges, and the world market is the basis for the emergence of world exchanges. At the same time, the methodology of world historical thought is historical and logical, requiring us to look at the essence of things and problems dialectically, developmentally, and objectively, to use the methodology of unity of purpose and regularity, unity of universality and particularity, and unity of criticism and creativity to objectively and dialectically view the development of history, firmly grasp the principles of practical theory, and provide rational ideas and feasible methods for us to grasp the development direction and trend of world history, clearly recognize national development, and choose the development path. It provides confidence for our country to unswervingly follow the path of socialism with Chinese characteristics.

Keywords: World history Formation mechanism methodology.

1. Introduction

President Xi Jinping said, "To study Marx, we must learn and practice Marx's ideas on world history." Marx's world history is not simply the history of natural development, and definitely not the history of human development in the general sense, but a breakthrough in the limitations of space and territory, elevating consciousness to the height of "universality"[1]; starting from the reality of material production and labor, taking human development as the core and essence of world history, systematically exploring it is a forward-looking and insightful scientific theory that takes human development as the core and essence of world history, systematically explores the process, laws, and directions of human beings' gradual development from a primitive, isolated, and scattered state to a close connection, and indicates the respective tasks, roles, and historical trends of capitalism and communism in world history[2].

Marx and Engels first proposed the idea of "world history" in their work, The German Ideology. According to Marx, the meaning of "world history" consists of world history in the sense of "common time" and world history in the sense of "ephemeral time". World history in the common sense refers to the interdependence of all countries in the world, the unity of the whole, and the existence of more or less interconnectedness among all countries and regions; world history in the ephemeral sense reflects the formation and expansion of the world market as a result of the intensification of the capitalist mode of production. The organic unity of the common-time "world history" and the ephemeral "world history" forms the overall world history. The final outcome of world history is the inevitable replacement of capitalist society by communist society[3].

2. The Theory of the Formation Mechanism of World History

Marx pointed out through his critique of the two old practical views of Hegel's discursive philosophy and Feuerbach's intuitive materialist philosophy: "The transformation of history into world history is not some abstract action of 'self-consciousness', cosmic spirit, or some metaphysical monstrosity, but a purely material, empirically ascertainable process." It is a purely material, empirically ascertainable fact that can be demonstrated by every person who lives a real life and who needs to eat, drink, and clothe himself."[4] This means that the transformation of history into world history is not determined by the consciousness of God or man but by the practical activity of real people. It is the inevitable result of the development of productive forces and the process of forming a new civilization, as well as the development of man [5].

2.1 Mediating Mechanisms in the Formation of World History

The formation of world history requires two mediating conditions: a world market and the world interactions that arise from the world market. The interconnection of the two is what makes the connection between countries and regions more and more intense, and the production and consumption of each country are thus global. Moreover, the better the development of the world market and the more widespread the world interactions, the more complete the transformation of history into world history will be.

2.2 Intermediation Mechanisms in the World Market

As the establishment and development of the capitalist mode of production, the establishment of the capitalist market system driven by the development of large capitalist industries, the formation of international divisions of labor and international trade, and the growing consumer demand of people have given birth to the world market, the whole world is also involved in the institutional prison of capitalism. The increasing privatization of the means of production, the diminishing surplus value of workers, and the deepening oppression and exploitation of the proletariat gradually led to
worldwide confrontation and conflict between the proletariat and the bourgeoisie, which inevitably led to the demise of capitalism and its replacement by communism.

2.3 Mediating Mechanisms of World Interactions

World interaction is a two-way activity process, referring to the economic, political, cultural, and other aspects of communication and links between the countries of the world to achieve their own purposes. The more closely the world is connected, the more those countries and regions that were self-sufficient and closed-door types in the past have had to open their doors again to receive transactions from various countries in all aspects, only followed by the formation of national divisions of labor and the continuous expansion of the scale of worldwide production, which provided objective conditions for the jump from history to world history.

Marx’s idea of world history is directly derived from Hegel's idea of world history, but it is not a simple generalization or extension, but a criticism of Hegel's absolute idealistic view of practice, a creative excavation of its scientific connotation from the level of materialism, a pioneering link between the idea of world history and the mission and emancipation of mankind, a broadening of its value core, and a finding of the inevitable demise of capitalism and the inevitable success of socialism. The law of world development is that capitalism will inevitably die and socialism will inevitably succeed [1].

3. Methodological Connotations and Principles of World Historical Thought

3.1 The Methodological Content of World Historical Thought

World history is not only an idea but also a philosophical methodology, i.e., a method that unites historical views and values, the unity of universality and particularity, and the unity of criticality and creativity.

3.1.1 An approach that unites historical perspective and values

Historical view, or historical scale, Marx believed that we should stand on the historical scale to see the problems, follow the objective laws of social development, determine whether the relations of production are in line with the current level of development of the productive forces, and determine whether the superstructure is in line with the requirements of the economic base. Values require us to judge problems from the perspective of the value scale and to transform society and history with purpose and consciousness. Therefore, we should give full play to the subjective initiative of individuals under the premise of observing the objective law of development and judge issues according to the subjective purpose and value orientation of people, so that the results of things are more in line with our expectations. Therefore, the law of unification of historical perspective and values is also the law of organic unity of conformity and conformity of purpose.

3.1.2 The unity of universality and specificity approach

The laws of world history are both universal and specific, such as the social systems of different countries, the historical characteristics of different regions, and the customs of different peoples. It is this coexistence of universality and particularity and the repeated role of the universality of history beyond the particularity of history that has led to the continuous progress of history, the continuous evolution of world history, and the formation of our colorful world. Marx skillfully combined the universality and particularity of history in an organic and dialectical way, respecting the universality and individuality of world history and pointing out the diversity and particularity of the development of the path of socialism.

3.1.3 A unified approach of criticality and creativity

Marx's materialist dialectic was derived from Hegel's dialectic. He believed that the essence of dialectic is to criticize and revolutionize, that things contain both affirmative and negative elements, and that the development and destruction of things coexist. It is necessary to affirm the positive elements of capitalism in the course of the world's historical development, such as the promotion of the great industrial development and the development of public ownership resulting from the intensification of private ownership of the means of production, and at the same time to criticize the negative elements of capitalism (for capitalism itself) that exploit and oppress the surplus value of labor and force the inevitable demise of the capitalist system. The bourgeoisie, despite spreading their so-called set of civilized ideas to all parts of the world for the benefit of the whole world, essentially apply their bourgeois ways to control the laborers, wildly exploit and oppress their surplus value, and make the laborers transform the world according to the values of the capitalists. "It forces all peoples, if they do not want to perish, to adopt the bourgeois way of life; it forces them to introduce in themselves the so-called civilized system, i.e., to become bourgeois. In a word, it creates a world for itself in its own image."[6] According to the development trend of world history, Marx discovered the power of the proletariat and indicated the historical mission of the proletariat to liberate all mankind, pioneered the historical development process in which capitalism must perish and the proletarian revolution must triumph, and also criticized the hypocrisy and narrowness of capitalist civilization while also creatively proposing the ultimate goal of the comprehensive and free development of man[5].

3.2 Methodological Principles of World Historical Thought

3.2.1 The Principle of objectivity and realism

Marx's methodology of world historical thought is based on the basic laws of objective facts, interpreting the world from practice, and possessing objectivity and realism. Long before Marx, Hegel had already proposed the philosophy of real society, and he decisively criticized pragmatism for viewing reality as something ready-made and fixed and for misinterpreting the reality of world history. He believed that the way to reveal the true veil of reality is to interpret social reality with ideas, which is typical of idealism. Marx, who was looking at material production and real life, re-examined the idealistic view at that time and explored the laws and
trends of world history based on the methodologies of objectivity and realism.

3.2.2 The principle of development and dialectic

Everything has a dual nature, and Marx believed that we should look at the essence of the problem in two ways and use dialectical thinking to think about the development of world history. We can neither omit the role of history in promoting reality nor ignore the role of the past in cautioning and learning from reality. We are only a transient presence in the development of history, and it is the uniqueness of the individual that makes the great world, as Lenin said: "World history is a whole, and the individual peoples are its 'organs'" [7].

3.2.3 Practicality principle

Our perception and grasp of the world are only perceptual knowledge, and it is only through individual subjective initiative that perceptual knowledge is transformed into rational knowledge and tested by practice before the truth is realized[8]. Practice is the only criterion to test the truth. From the nature of truth, truth is the correct reflection of objective things and their development laws, and its nature lies in whether the subjective perception conforms to the objective reality[9]. Therefore, the test of truth is to test the conformity of the subjective perception with the objective reality and the degree of conformity. Therefore, only by linking subjective perception with objective reality can we judge the truth, and the only thing that can link subjective perception with objective reality is practice. Because human perception is not beyond the scope of subjective thought, it cannot confirm whether it conforms to objective reality; objective things exist outside of human consciousness, do not have the ability to compare human perception with objective reality, and therefore cannot serve as the standard for testing truth[10]. Therefore, the only criterion for testing the truth of cognition is practice, which is the bridge between subject and object. From the perspective of the characteristics of practice, practice has a direct reality, which can turn abstract knowledge into real, concrete things. Only in the practical activity of transforming the objective world can people closely combine and contrast their subjective understanding with objective reality[11]. It is this major principle that makes Marx's world-historical thought transcend Hegel's idealism and Feuerbach's pure materialism.

4. The Methodological Significance of World Historical Thought

4.1 Opening up New Horizons in the Study of World History

On the basis of respecting the objective facts, Marx made an in-depth understanding and interpretation of the previous studies, took the essence and removed the dross, innovated and criticized on the basis of the original, broke all kinds of restrictions and limitations, and finally formed a complete and scientific theoretical system and formed ideas of inter-temporal significance to help people recognize the essence of things, the universal laws of world historical development, and realize the free and comprehensive development of human beings, which is a milestone in the history of world historical development.

4.2 To Observe the World with a Broader Perspective and Grasp the Laws and Trends of World History

Marx's view of world history sees the world as a whole, interconnected and closely interacting, with countries, regions, and nations being interdependent, cooperating, and competing with each other. As globalization develops day by day and international trade becomes more frequent, not only in the ensuing flow of commodities, technologies, and factor resources but also in the flow of national governance experiences and social systems We need to seize this windfall and opportunity to continuously learn and develop to grow our strength.

4.3 Helps to Make New Demands on the Development of World History

According to Marx's view of world history, the world is in the process of continuous development, so new requirements should be put forward to keep pace with the times in the view of world historical development. For example, with the deepening of globalization, the destinies of all countries are closely linked, and problems in one country will inevitably involve other countries, such as the Russia-Ukraine conflict. Therefore, it is urgent to build a community of national destiny. China is the initiator of the community of destiny and the practitioner of the global governance system, firmly serving international affairs and actively asking the world to work together and cooperate to deal with real and potential crises, as well as volatile national wars and trade wars, and to respond to challenges with a new attitude and approach.

4.4 Able to Correctly Understand and Grasp the National Situation and Achieve Development

Marx's world-historical methodology inspires us to use the dialectical thinking of "concrete appearance, macro abstraction, and thinking concrete". We should learn to see the essence through the appearance, grasp the current problems and situations in our country, the human condition of our country, and the main contradictions of society, and apply precise measures. Our current main contradiction is the contradiction between the people's growing need for a better life and the unbalanced and inadequate development of our country, so we need to focus on the development of our country and the problem of inadequate and unbalanced development. How to achieve supply-side structural reform, increase domestic demand, promote high-quality growth, etc. in order to solve this major contradiction is the task that our country needs to solve at present. Also looking at globalization—which kind of situation is our country in, what are the opportunities and challenges, how to grasp the opportunities and overcome the challenges, improve our international competitiveness and international status, make greater contributions to globalization, and put forward Chinese solutions and Chinese wisdom for the world—is also our current task.

4.5 Understand the Direction and Path of Social Development Accurately
Marx pointed out that the trend of the development of world history is inevitably the demise of capitalism and the victory of socialism, which provides us with a clear direction and full confidence to unswervingly take the road of socialism. In the choice of a development path, we cannot remain unchanged; we must look at development with a realistic and more objective perspective, based on national conditions, to find a direction and path suitable for the development of our country. Chairman Mao's flexible revolutionary method of "encircling cities in the countryside and seizing power with arms" enabled us to achieve the great victory of the New Democratic Revolution; Deng Xiaoping's groundbreaking proposal of socialism with Chinese characteristics and unswerving pursuit of the road of socialism with Chinese characteristics enabled us to achieve the great leap from standing up to becoming rich. President Xi Jinping's new thought of socialism with Chinese characteristics in the new era is guiding us to achieve a great rejuvenation and a leap to become stronger. Therefore, we should reasonably apply Marx's world history thought and, moreover, base our actions on our own national conditions, reasonably innovate, find an ideological approach suitable for local development, and bow to the cause of socialism with Chinese characteristics.

References


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