

# Marx's Scientific Practice View from the Outline of Feuerbach

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## ABSTRACT

Marx, in his "Theses on Feuerbach" (hereinafter referred to as the "Theses"), starts from practice and reveals and criticizes the main flaws of previous philosophy: old materialism cannot see that the sensory world is a product of human practical activities; Idealism understands practice as abstract spiritual labor and exaggerates human subjective initiative. The innovation of Marx's new worldview lies in its grasp of the essence of practice, which is a realistic, emotional, and active objective activity of human beings, and is the essence of social life. The Outline established Marx's view of scientific practice, providing guidance for us to actively.

## KEYWORDS

"Theses on Feuerbach"; Scientific Practice View; Theoretical Innovation.

## 1. THE MAIN CONTENT OF MARX'S SCIENTIFIC PRACTICE VIEW

On the basis of criticizing the old materialism and idealism represented by Feuerbach, Marx succinctly and comprehensively expressed the main content of the new philosophy, taking practice as the starting point to deeply expound and demonstrate the new understanding of practice, the fact that practice is the foundation of cognition and the standard for testing truth, the essence of social life, and that the subject of practice is real people, forming the:

(1) Practice is an active and objective activity of real and emotional people

Hegel believed that all objective things are intermediate links in the process of spiritual return. In Hegel's view, before the emergence of nature and human society, there existed an independent cosmic spirit, which Hegel called the "absolute spirit". This "absolute spirit" is the origin of all things in the world. Hegel takes this as the starting point of his philosophical system. But in Feuerbach's view, Hegel's "absolute spirit" does not exist at all, it is just an illusory residue of faith in the creator of the world, and therefore Hegelian philosophy is only the last refuge of theology. In Feuerbach's view, the material world to which we belong is the only real world. This material world is perceivable. Our consciousness and thinking, no matter how super sensory they may seem, are always material. Matter is not a product of spirit, but spirit is the highest product of matter. However, Feuerbach failed to move forward on the basis of this 'pure' materialism, achieving dialectical materialism and historical materialism.

Marx's practice refers to the material activity of human beings actively transforming the objective world, which is a unique objective activity of human beings. Firstly, it refers to the material, realistic, and sensory nature and form of practice. As an activity in which people grasp the world in a "sensory" way, practice is different from how people grasp the world in a spiritual and conceptual way. Secondly, practice has the character of direct reality, which means that people regard themselves as the subject of practice and use practical means to interact with the object of practice. Practice is a unique and

active objective activity of human beings. The objectivity of practical activities refers to real activities with human themes and the world as the object, and human objectivity activities have subject agency, that is, people can not only continuously understand the world through practice, but also actively transform the world through practice. Therefore, practice has the significance of "revolutionary" and "practice critical" activities.

### (2) Practice is the foundation of knowledge and the standard for testing truth

Marx's introduction of practice into epistemology was a revolutionary breakthrough in the history of philosophical development. Marx first pointed out in his "Outline" that both old materialism and idealism have their own shortcomings in understanding practice. Old materialism understood practice as intuitive and sensory, and separated the relationship between knowledge and practice. Idealism regards practice as pure spiritual activity and reason as truth. Feuerbach knew that people could correctly understand the objective world and its laws of development, but he did not specify what methods to use to obtain this understanding, nor did he know how to test whether this truth conforms to objective laws. It is precisely because Feuerbach neglected practice that he used sensory intuition as the criterion for evaluating the truth of things, determining that the objective truth of knowledge is the "only criterion, which is intuition". But Marx believed that Feuerbach's viewpoint was wrong, as he did not truly depart from the realm of thought and theory. The form of truth that has been proven to conform to objective laws is subjective, but the content of truth is objective. Truth must reach a consensus between subjectivity and objectivity, and subjectivity must conform to objectivity. This conformity must be confirmed through practice. The judgment of whether knowledge or theory is true is not based on subjective feelings, but on the objective results of social practice. The standard of truth can only be social practice. The viewpoint of practice is the first and fundamental viewpoint of dialectical materialism epistemology.

Marx pointed out: "Whether human thinking has objective truth is not a theoretical problem, but a practical problem." The objective world is first and foremost our object of practice and transformation, and then our object of understanding. The understanding of the world is based on the transformation of the world, and the ultimate goal of understanding the world is to effectively transform it. Since the source, foundation, and purpose of knowledge are all based on practice, whether human knowledge has truth cannot be judged by knowledge itself, but by practice. Truth is not self proclaimed, only in practice can the truthfulness of knowledge be tested. People should prove the truth of their thinking in practice, that is, the reality and power of their thinking, and the inherent nature of their thinking

### (3) Practice is the essence of social life

Before Marx, people may have viewed the essence of society as a 'divine order' and explained it in a theological teleological manner; Or attribute the essence of society to the product of human will, purpose, and psychological activity, and explain the essence of society in a way that stays on the surface of will; Or attribute the essence of society to the natural conditions in which it exists, and explain society in a naturalistic way that naturalizes humanity. Marx explained the essence of society through practice, that is, understanding society as practice. Marx pointed out that 'all social life is essentially practical'. In Marx's view, social history ultimately boils down to the history of purposeful human practical activities, and material production practical activities are the premise and foundation of the entire social history, and the key to understanding the essence of human society. Marx's introduction of practice into epistemology was a revolutionary breakthrough in the history of philosophical development.

Practice is the foundation of human society, and all social phenomena can only find their ultimate roots and obtain scientific explanations through social practice. Understanding the essence of social life from the perspective of practice: firstly, practice is the historical premise for dividing the material world into nature and human society, and secondly, it is the practical foundation for unifying nature and human society. Secondly, practice is the foundation of humanity, and all social phenomena can

only find their ultimate roots and obtain scientific proof through practice. The practicality of social life is mainly reflected in three aspects:

First, practice is the foundation for the formation of social relationships. Practice is a social activity in which people purposefully and consciously transform the material world. Firstly, it is the practice of material production, which is the process of adjusting and controlling the material transformation between humans and nature through their own activities. In this process, people not only connect with the natural world, but also inevitably form certain relationships between people. The relationship between humans and nature and the relationship between humans are mutually constrained and coexist in the practice of material production. At the end of practice, the results obtained already exist in the practitioner's mind as a purpose in the form of ideas at the beginning of the process, and this purpose determines the way and methods of people's activities. It can be seen that the relationship between humans and their consciousness also arises from practical activities. Practice inherently contains three relationships, namely the relationship between humans and nature, the relationship between humans, and the relationship between humans and their consciousness, which in turn constitute the basic social relationships, namely the material social relationship and the ideological social relationship. Practice, in condensed form, encompasses all social relations and becomes the birthplace of social relations.

Second, Practice has formed the fundamental field of social life. People transform nature, society, and themselves through practical activities, forming the basic areas of social life, namely the material life, political life, and spiritual life of society. In the entire process of social life, material production practice plays a fundamental and decisive role. The production mode of material life constrains the entire process of social, political, and spiritual life. These three practices are both distinct and interactive, and are objectified as the basic structure of society, namely the economic structure, political structure, and conceptual structure of society.

Third, Practice constitutes the driving force of social development. People create their own history through material production, which is the fundamental driving force for social development; When humans enter a class society, the fundamental contradictions of society are concentrated in class struggle, which becomes the direct driving force for the development of class society; Class struggle can lead to social revolution, and social revolution and reform are important forces driving social change and progress; Science and technology are important levers for promoting social development; The historical subject is the decisive force driving social development. The driving force of social development can only exist in human practical activities, and material production practice constitutes the fundamental driving force of social development. Productivity is the ultimate determining force of social development, and productivity is the result of people's practical abilities. Social development is simply the process of human practical activities unfolding in time and space. It can be seen that practical activities are the driving force behind social development.

In short, all social activities are essentially practical. The people who make up society are those who engage in social practice activities, and the driving force behind social movements is the social practice activities of millions of people. The entire content of social life is the continuous social practice carried out by people in society. Practice is not only a manifestation of human consciousness and initiative, but also the root of human consciousness and initiative, and a manifestation and essential characteristic of human life.

(4) The subject of practice is the real person who is in a certain social relationship. Feuerbach criticized Hegel's abstract idealistic definition of human beings and recognized that humans are social beings with a class nature. He emphasized the need to grasp the essence of human beings in sensory objective relationships and define them as sensory beings, which is a leap forward compared to previous materialism. But this kind of emotional person is only a natural biological sense of human beings. Feuerbach believed that the essence of human beings is a commonality abstracted from individual individuals such as "you" and "I", "an inherent abstraction of an individual person". He

believes that this commonality is rationality, will, and emotion, which are not only inherent in human nature but also distinct from all other things; And it is a characteristic that people of all eras possess, which is eternal and unchanging, which is incorrect. Marx pointed out: "The essence of human beings is not an abstract object inherent in a single person. In its reality, it is the sum of all social relations." Firstly, the essence of human beings lies in their sociality. The main basis for distinguishing humans from animals can only be human social life. At the same time, the differences among humans themselves, such as the distinction between ancient and modern people, capitalists and workers, can only be attributed to their social life, rather than their natural physiological traits. Secondly, the essence of human beings is the sum of all social relationships, rather than any aspect of social relationships. Social relationships are the relationships formed between people in social life. The essence of human beings is mainly determined by their different positions and roles in production relations, and is the sum of all social relations. Finally, human nature is concrete and historical.

The provision of 'the sum of social relations' not only indicates its objectivity, but also signifies its variability and historicity. It is not fixed, but rather develops and changes. The essence of human beings is determined by social relationships, which are not fixed and unchanging, but constantly developing and progressing. The essence of human beings changes with the development and transformation of social relationships. Therefore, it is necessary to conduct a specific historical examination of human nature. It is incorrect to imagine human nature as a fixed and unchanging temperament or an abstract concept. Since social relations are dynamic, the essence of human beings as the sum of social relations is not abstract and fixed. The essence of human beings lies in the real, perceptible, and constantly evolving social relationships.

## **2. THEORETICAL INNOVATION OF MARX'S THEORY OF PRACTICE.**

The scientific practice view expounded by Marx in his "Outline" has distinct theoretical characteristics. Marx's view of scientific practice was summarized in the process of criticizing materialism and idealism represented by Feuerbach, and has important theoretical value.

### **(1) Overcoming the intuitiveness of old materialism**

Marx first affirmed the rationality of Feuerbach's understanding of things from the perspectives of reality, sensibility, and objects. In the Economic and Philosophical Manuscripts of 1844, Marx affirmed the historical achievements of Feuerbach's materialist philosophy. Feuerbach's publication of "The Essence of Christianity" restored the authority of materialism, exposed the essence of religious theology, pointed out the illusory nature of God as human nature, exploded the Hegelian idealist philosophical system, and liberated people's minds. Feuerbach pointed out that Hegel's "absolute spirit" does not exist at all. He is merely an illusory remnant of faith in the creator of the world, and therefore Hegelian philosophy is merely the last refuge of theology. In Feuerbach's view, the material world to which we belong is the only real world. Matter is not a product of spirit, but spirit is the highest product of matter. Engels pointed out, "This is naturally pure materialism." Marx also holds a positive attitude towards this, that is, the "basic core" of Feuerbach's materialism. However, Feuerbach's old materialism stopped here, and he failed to continue moving forward on the basis of this "pure" materialism, achieving dialectical materialism and historical materialism. On the contrary, he conflates the general worldview of materialism with its specific manifestations. So, Marx revealed the undeniable flaw behind this rationality, that is, the failure to see that these realities and objects are included in the scope of human practical activities. Old materialism only regarded reality as an objective existence detached from human practical activities, and regarded the objective object world as a pure object unrelated to human practical activities. It did not see the role and agency of human subjectivity, nor did it see the impact of human practical activities on the objective world.

Firstly, Marx's view of scientific practice achieved the unity of materialism and dialectics. Metaphysical materialism acknowledges the primacy of matter, but only recognizes the object and

denies subjective agency, believing that things are isolated and static. Marx called it "half cut" materialism, and in the process of criticizing old materialism, combined with practice, formed a scientific worldview and methodology. Marx believed that "social life is essentially practical. Any mystical thing that leads theory to mysticism can be reasonably resolved in human practice and understanding of this practice." Practice is not only the most basic form of human world relations, but also the most essential foundation of all human world relations. In Marx's view, a correct and profound understanding of the objective world must be based on dialectics of practical activities. The objective world is a unified entity that is universally connected, constantly evolving, finite, and infinite. Practice is all activities in which people transform the objective world, it is an objective material activity, a purposeful and active activity, and a social and historical activity.

Secondly, a new philosophical approach has been established to understand and transform the world from practice. Idealism holds that consciousness is the origin of the world, consciousness determines matter, and matter is the product of consciousness. In the view of idealism, humans and the objective world are unknowable, and it is believed that human subjective will is omnipotent, while practice is the practice of consciousness. Contrary to idealism, regardless of the type of materialism, they believe in the fundamental viewpoint of 'material first, consciousness second'. However, the old materialists represented by Feuerbach only regarded objective things as intuitive objects in the process of understanding things, and only understood them from the form of objects or intuition, that is, what they saw was what they saw. Only seeing the phenomena of things, unable to find the correct path to grasp the essence of things. Marx formed a scientific view of practice in his "Theses" and established a new philosophical line of understanding and transforming the world from practice. He first pointed out that matter is the origin, while emphasizing that objective things are not only objects that are intuitively perceived by people, but also objects that are transformed. The understanding of objective things is based on the transformation of objective things, highlighting the active role of human beings.

(2) Outlined the embryonic form of historical materialism.

Firstly, it overcomes the abstract theory of human nature. Marx emphasized the examination of human nature from the perspective of social relations, pointing out that human nature is the sum of all social relations based on practice. The essence of human beings is concrete and historical. Marx examined human nature from the perspective of practical development and change, believing that human nature will change with the changes in social relations, emphasizing the fundamental opposition between real and abstract human beings. Overcoming the abstract theory of human nature that separates old materialism from the practicality of others to examine human nature, the concrete and historical nature of human nature has been demonstrated.

Secondly, it overcomes the idealistic understanding of human history. Before the emergence of Marxism, both materialists and idealists did not correctly address the relationship between social existence and social consciousness in the field of history. After pointing out the practicality of social life, Marx then emphasized that "any mysterious thing that leads theory towards mysticism can be reasonably resolved in human practice and understanding of this practice." Marx attributed mysterious and illusory religious concepts to the self division and self contradiction of the secular world. And fundamentally, it is practice. This is actually Marx's further demonstration of the relationship between thinking and existence, and also the embryonic form of Marx's historical materialism.

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