

Research on "true community" concept: Textual analysis based on The German Ideology

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ABSTRACT

The German Ideology is an important symbol of the maturity of Marxist philosophy. The idea of "true community" deeply reflects the internal logic and development of this original discourse in The German Ideology. Among them, "realistic individual" is the logical source of constructing "true community", the emergence, development and extinction of division of labor is the realization possibility of constructing "true community", and the free and all-round development of people is the ultimate goal of constructing "true community".

KEYWORDS

The German Ideology; True Community; Marx; Engels.

1. INTRODUCTION

"Community" is not the first concept of Marx and Engels, it is an ancient concept. Since the ancient Greece, many philosophers have put forward their own opinions and viewpoints from different perspectives such as social development, political structure, legal checks and balances, and moral requirements. Marx and Engels also paid great attention to the problem of "community". In The Introduction to the Critique of Hegel's Philosophy of Law, Marx had pointed out that "man is the world of man, the state, and society. He is not an abstract hibernating being outside of it." (Marx, 1970) Obviously, this fundamentally highlights the essence of human beings, that is, the social attributes of human beings, who have the characteristic of depending on the state, society and other forms of community for survival, and community is the basic way of human existence. Since then, based on the pursuit of an ideal society, Marx and Engels have launched an in-depth study, and on the basis of reflecting on the traditional idea of community, they have deeply criticized the abstract community and false community in modern society, and then put forward the idea of building a "genuine community."

The Logical Source of the "true community": The "Actual Person"

In the view of Marx and Engels, the previous examination and understanding of "Man" and "the essence of man" were essentially false concepts that were detached from real life, formed in the logic of thinking that "Existence is determined by consciousness" as its basic position, and that "stayed within the theoretical domain .Hegel, for example, "abstracts both the reality of man's activity as the 'impersonal reason' of self-movement and the reality of man and his 'spirit,' as 'impersonal reason.'" (Marx & Engels, 2011)As a result, Marx and Engels carried out a radical change, liberating "man" and "human nature" from the "shackles of conception, dogma, fantasy, and speculative existences", and understanding "Humans, flesh and blood" with "examination techniques that are in line with practical realities" (Marx, 1973).This is undoubtedly a fundamental change in the history of Western philosophy, in which Marx and Engels completely abandoned the idealistic approach to history,

which "begins with awareness as a living person", and shifted to the materialistic paradigm of history, which "begins with the actual, living person themselves" (Marx & Engels, 2011).

In the view of Marx and Engels, any community in the form of social organization emerges from the life process of certain individuals. The "human being" in this context does not mean "someone who appears to be alone and immobile in some false sense", it can only be "a person in a genuine, empirically observable developmental process under specific circumstances" (Marx & Engels, 2011). In other words, what Marx and Engels emphasized was the living, sensually active, concrete, historical "real individual", rather than the biological and general sense of living human beings, which is the necessary premise of the method of investigation that they have always advocated and applied. In this sense, the "real individual" is the logical source for the construction of the "true community".

And although Feuerbach pointed out Hegel's mistake on this issue, arguing that on the question of the relation between thinking and being, "One should start from feeling man and nature, not from an idea, in order to comprehend the unity of thinking and being, of spirit and matter, of man and nature." (Marx & Engels, 2011) he fell into the mistake of understanding man's real activities only at the level of the abstract individual and his sensuous intuition, and lacked the historical perspective, thus failing to see the significance of human practice. Marx and Engels pointed out that "he fails to understand that the sensuous world he lives in is not something that has always existed; rather, it is the result of historical events, industrial and social conditions, the actions of generations, and the shifting demands of their respective social systems. Even the most basic object of 'sensual certainty' is given to him only as a consequence of social development, as a result of industrial and commercial intercourse." (Marx & Engels, 2011).

Marx and Engels profoundly exposed the theoretical limitations of all previous materialism (including Feuerbach's Materialism), which "viewed people as 'sensible objects' instead of 'sensible activities', emphasized that the reality of human beings should be interpreted in terms of their "sensible activities", i.e., practices. As a result, the "real individual" can be understood as "the person who produces material goods, working within specific material parameters, requirements, and circumstances that are not subject to their capricious control." (Marx & Engels, 2011) In the process of continuous material production and social interaction for their own survival, human beings also produce thoughts, ideas and consciousness corresponding to them. Human thinking, consciousness and other spiritual materials are the direct products of man's material activities. It can be said that the main practice of man is the production of material and spiritual materials, and in this process, relatively stable economic and political relations are inevitably formed, so that man inevitably exists in the social relations created by his own hands, which profoundly reveals the nature of man, that is, "it is the totality of social relations in its actuality. "This fundamentally denies the paradoxical logic of the traditional philosophy of "descending from the heavens", and shifts the theoretical perspective to people engaged in perceptual and object-oriented practical activities in the real life world, in order to truly recognize that human practice is the intrinsic driving force of human beings to become "free human beings", and that the "genuine humans" are the most active and fundamental elements in the process of constructing the "true community".

Based on the theoretical perspective of the materialist concept of history, the "real individual" is a concrete, historical person, not an abstract person who transcends history and reality, with the important premise that the human being exists and develops by being attached to a way of life formed under certain historical conditions. People's way of life is determined by their mode of production. "People are themselves as they express their lives." (Marx & Engels, 2011) That is to say, real people are the main subjects of social life, and through their activities they create the real conditions of material life in order to satisfy the needs of their flesh and blood for survival in the first place; and the existing real conditions of material life in turn provide opportunities for the further development of the activities of real individuals, and to a certain extent continue to satisfy the various needs of the people's production and interaction, so as to build a way of life for the real people who are in the midst of all the social relations. In this continuous process of development, the development of

productive forces is inevitably driven by changes, and with the development of social productive forces, the way of life of "real individuals" will inevitably undergo corresponding changes, and ultimately form a "true community" based on highly developed productive forces, transcending the special interests of individuals, and more in line with the free and comprehensive development of "real individuals". It is also in this "community" of social life that the individual is the "real individual" who possesses his or her full essence in the true sense of the word and realizes the value of his or her own existence.

2. POSSIBILITY OF REALIZING THE "TRUE COMMUNITY": THE BREAKDOWN OF THE LABOR DIVISION

With the development of the material production of "real individuals" and the deepening of their interaction with each other, the division of labor has also developed accordingly. At the same time, Marx expresses that it is the formation and development of the division of labor that "makes it possible—in fact, a reality—for different people to engage in the same mental and material activities, pleasure and labor, production and consumption", resulting in the fact that "the social context, the productive forces, and consciousness can and must clash with one another." (Marx & Engels, 2011). That is to say, the change in the mode of production has been accompanied by major changes in the community of social life, and the development of the division of labour has been one of the major factors in the contradictions that have arisen within the respective systems of modes of production and forms of interaction, as well as between the two, and the real elimination of the contradictions between existing social relations and existing productive forces can only be achieved by eliminating the division of labour. In this sense, the division of labor is by far one of the main forces driving the historical development of society. The evolution of the community is essentially the result of the action of a realistic division of labor that is constantly evolving on the basis of the development of the productive forces.

Insofar as the division of labor is natural and not voluntary, as it develops there is bound to be a quantitatively and qualitatively unequal distribution of labor and its products, which implies that people are unequal in their possession of the means of production. According to the logic of Marx and Engels, this will inevitably lead to inequality in the relations of production and in the social status of the people, and the domination and exploitation of one part of the population by the other part of the population will inevitably become a reality, thus giving rise to private ownership. In the view of Marx and Engels, "private ownership and the division of labor are two equal ways to express the same thing—private ownership in terms of activity, and the division of labor in terms of activity's products" (Marx & Engels, 2011), that is to say, the different stages of development of the division of labor correspond to the different forms of ownership. Therefore, along with the continuous development of the productive forces, the division of labor is bound to undergo a historical process from its emergence to its development and then to its demise. Correspondingly, the form of social organization of mankind also develops from the organic group "with naturalness and dependence to the "fake community" with subsidiarity and one-sidedness, and then to the "true community", with its freedom and comprehensive nature.

From the perspective of the whole process of human social development, in the early society in a primitive state, the division of labor and interaction between people is based on the fundamental premise of the exchange of material energy between human beings and nature, and due to the weakness of individual power and the need for survival, people adopt the production and life style of co-production and co-dominance in the form of a "organic group". It is with the great increase in the productive forces of society that the naturally occurring division of labor has become a limitation on the development of the productive forces, and as a result, the division of labor continues to expand and deepen with the development of the productive forces until material and spiritual labor are gradually separated, and the division of labor in the true sense of the word emerges. At the same time,

it is also due to the development of the division of labor that people's dependence on things gradually increases. Driven by the development of the productive forces and materialistic desires, the contradiction between the special interests of a single person or a single family and the common interests of all individuals interacting with each other gradually arises and intensifies, thus giving rise to different classes representing different interests. The economically dominant class claims to be the representative of the "universal" "common good" and thus exploits and oppresses the other classes. The economically dominant class, in order to better dominate the other classes, adopts a form of independence from the actual individual and general interests, i.e., a fake form of community, the State. In essence, the so-called "common interest" represented by this class is still a "special and unique general interest" and a "foreign" force in relation to the other classes. The state is only a product of irreconcilable class contradictions.

Of course, "for man, his own activity becomes an alien and antagonistic force, a force that oppresses him rather than one that he harnesses, as long as the division of labor is not voluntary but occurs naturally." (Marx & Engels, 2011). This also means that the emergence of the division of labor makes people labor within a certain special sphere of activity imposed on them, and this labor is only a means of earning a living, forced, restricted and one-sided. In other words, the division of labour led to the alienation of labour, the separation of brain and body, of urban and rural areas and of workers and peasants, as well as the antagonism of classes and the State, and the gradual tendency of human beings to develop abnormally and unilaterally in such alienated social relations, which led to the continuous alienation of the relations between human beings. Both the alienation of labor and the alienation of human relations have reached their peak in the capitalist society, i.e., "while the active individual lacks independence and individuality, capital possesses both" (Marx & Engels, 2011), the worker has become a mere accessory to the machine, the "thing" has become a kind of domination and enslavement of human beings without being dominated and controlled by human beings, and there is nothing else in the interaction between human beings except the naked transaction of money. Therefore, in the view of Marx and Engels, it is only when people regain mastery and control over the power of these things that they can be emancipated from the fixed and narrow scope of their labor and achieve free and comprehensive development in the true sense of the word. Of course, it is only under the conditions of community that the individual has the possibility of attaining free and comprehensive development; and it is only under the conditions of a true community that the individual can attain true freedom.

3. THE ULTIMATE GOAL OF THE "TRUE COMMUNITY": THE EMANCIPATION OF ALL PEOPLE

The problem of the real human being has always been the focus of attention of Marx and Engels, and all their doctrines are centered on the emancipation of the whole human race and the realization of the free and comprehensive development of every human being. The idea of "true community" is a scientific assertion on the future trend of social development made by Marx and Engels on the basis of their understanding and grasp of the law of development of human society while exploring this issue. In the view of Marx and Engels, in order to realize the true emancipation of mankind, it is necessary to start from two aspects, one of which is emancipation in the philosophical sense and the other in the practical sense.

To realize the philosophical emancipation of man, i.e., to revolt against the domination of the idea that "the world of ideas produces the real world", to completely overthrow the view of man, from which thoughts, ideas and concepts have hitherto generated, dominated and determined reality, and to free man from the slavery of imaginary beings. In the preface to the first volume of *The German Ideology*, Marx and Engels state bluntly that their most immediate aim in completing this work was "to reveal and discredit the philosophical struggle to appeal to the frivolous and spiritually depleted

tastes of the German public, as well as the philosophical struggle against the shadow of reality." (Marx & Engels, 2011)

Western traditional philosophy enshrines the logic of thinking and understanding the existence of reality from consciousness, believing that ideas and concepts are the decisive origin, and that the embodiment of human values and the development of human existence are nothing more than presentations in the activities of human consciousness, a logic of thinking that has been played out to the extreme in Hegel's philosophy. Even the "so-called world-shaking critique, which swept away all the forces of the past, of German philosophy as a whole" by the modern German philosophers, took place only in the pure realm of thought with its point of departure in the realities of religion and true theology, and did not take place, as they claimed to have done, so far beyond the Hegelian philosophy. As Marx and Engels pointed out, "they overlook the fact that they are merely opposing words with words; and as they are opposing only the words of the world, they are not opposing the reality of the existing world. The only outcome that this philosophical criticism can accomplish is to provide a partial, historical account of Christianity", and "it never occurred to any of these philosophers to question the relationship between German philosophy and German reality." (Marx & Engels, 2011)

Marx and Engels ruthlessly exposed and deeply criticized this, believing that "spiritual alienation from man's nature is a form of religion." and that the resort of "man's nature" to "a certain form of religion precisely indicates man's self-alienation in the real state and civil society". In this regard, Marx and Engels clearly stated that their logic is "life determines consciousness, not consciousness determining life." (Marx & Engels, 2011) This reflects the logical turn of the materialist conception of history, which states that only by understanding the existence of human beings in terms of the reality of life can the essence of human beings be fundamentally explored and a scientific theoretical guide be provided for the true emancipation of human beings.

If "man" is liberated from the domination of the word "self-consciousness" only in the philosophical sense, in essence, the "liberation" of "man" is not a step forward. The entire issue, according to practical materialists like communists, is revolutionizing the current world by genuinely opposing and altering what is already in place (Marx & Engels, 2011). In this way, the true emancipation of human beings can only be realized in the real world and by using realistic means. In other words, emancipation in the real sense is more important and more profound than emancipation in the philosophical sense.

According to the position and viewpoint of Marx and Engels, from the point of view of the entire historical activity of mankind, man is always in the midst of all historical practices, and his fundamental goal is to realize his own free and comprehensive development. Only by realizing this goal can all the essence of what makes a human being a human being truly return to the human being himself. Thus, Marx insisted that "the true community of man is the essence of man" and that "life itself, material and spiritual life, human morality, human activity, human enjoyment, and human nature" must be the future form of "community." (Marx & Engels, 2011). The most essential requirement and the most crucial symbol for realizing the free and comprehensive development of human beings is the realization of "freedom of labour" for each individual. In their view, labour is the essential characteristic of human beings that distinguishes them from animals, the fundamental attribute of human beings, and the decisive force that promotes the development of human society; therefore, the liberation of human beings will ultimately be realized in individual labour, and the freedom of labour is the core content of the free and comprehensive development of every human being.

According to Marx and Engels, history has long been the history of the world, and the emancipation and development of human beings should break through the limitations of nationalities and territories, and be practically connected with the production of the whole world, including material and spiritual production, so as to gain the ability to produce comprehensively by themselves, and thus to realize the material and spiritual enrichment of the individual. It is only through the real work of each

individual, constantly promoting the development of the productive forces, and with the help of the revolutionary forces of reality, that the transformation from "the domination of things by man" to "the domination of things by man", from "the alienation of human development" to "the free and comprehensive development of the human being", and from the "territorial freedom of the human being" to the "freedom of mankind as a whole" will be realized, so that each free and comprehensive human being will be united in forming the "true community".

4. CONCLUSION

The "true community" indicates the general trend of the development of human society, but it does not stop at abstract theories; in a deeper sense, it is a practical reference to the realistic movement towards the realization of the "union of free men". According to Marx and Engels, the construction of the "true community" is in line with the trend of world history, which means that the "true community" will realize a common productive life for all humankind, not a localized and territorial one for one nation or country. Of course, to this day, socialism has not yet completed its historical task of replacing capitalism, and socialism is gradually advancing in the course of difficult explorations, with new changes in the development of capitalism that Marx and Engels did not foresee, but the fundamental prerequisites and basic bases for the realization of the communism of the union of free men and the construction of the "true community" remain unchanged, namely, the highly developed level of productive forces and the universal interaction of all parts of the world and all peoples.

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