

On the Logical Progression of the Morality of Anti-Dühring

Ziqiong Yuan*, Zehua Liu

Zhejiang Normal University, Jinhua, 321004, China

*2420418799@qq.com

ABSTRACT

The Anti-Dühring Theses is Engels' most powerful exposition of the concept of morality. In this work, Engels put the concept of equality based on materialistic view of history with extremely pungent strokes, used scientific criticism as a weapon to counter Dühring's concept of equality, and took "elimination of classes" as the logical destination of the proletariat, thus forming the logical progression of the idea of equality, which constitutes the basic content of the Marxist concept of equality.

KEYWORDS

Engels; Morality; Idea of Equality; Anti-Dühring; Class Elimination.

1. MATERIALISTIC VIEW OF HISTORY: THE LOGICAL STARTING POINT OF ENGELS' MORAL THOUGHT

Engels' analysis of moral concepts is based on the materialist conception of history, which states that morality does not fall from the sky but occurs through the sensual practices of "real people". Morality is real and historical. Morality, as an ideological category, is determined by a certain mode of social production and interacts with it.

1.1. The Real Person: The Subject of Moral Confirmation

The word morality is derived from the Latin word *moralis*, which can be understood as character cultivation, customs and habits, etc. It combines the normative nature of the regulation of moral principles and the self-regulation of self-regulation. Engels used the materialistic view of history to comprehensively examine the historical process of human society, especially from the mode of production of material resources. He clearly pointed out that morality originates from social and economic relations, and its essence is a social ideology. The emergence of moral issues mostly stems from people's thinking about the coexistence of individuals and others under the limited nature of material resources. On the question of the origin of morality, ancient and modern Chinese and foreign thinkers are divided, but they often ignore material interests, which puts the moral question in the predicament of metaphysical idealism. For example, the theory of divine revelation attributes morality to divine revelation, Socrates believes that morality is endowed by God, Hobbes believes that morality originates from "self-preservation", Mencius believes that "benevolence, righteousness, propriety, and wisdom" are inherent in me, and Kant emphasises that morality originates from "pure reason". Kant emphasised that morality originates from "pure reason", i.e., "good will". Engels emphasised that morality is the product of "real man", an ideology that emerges from the real practice of man.

Starting from the "real man", Engels believed that people satisfy their material needs in labour production and at the same time produce social relations, especially economic relations. Therefore, morality is determined by the socio-economic base of society and must be examined from the fact of economic relations. Realistic economic conditions are the origin of morality. On the one hand, the mode of production and people's material living conditions determine the emergence of morality, and human beings have forged various social relations in the course of their long practice. With the development of consciousness and language, people have formed the germ of morality such as moral consciousness and values to regulate the order of their lives in dealing with the social relations of daily life. The labour of material production not only creates the subject and need of morality, but also creates human society. The essence of man lies in his social nature, and morality is formed precisely in the process of resolving disputes over interests, adjusting social relations, and maintaining social harmony and stability.

Morality, as an accumulation of human thought, has always been closely linked to material interests. The basis of morality is interest, and interest determines morality, i.e., "once an idea leaves interest, it will definitely make a fool of itself". Morality confirms its roots in the intertwining of interests and is the product of socio-economic relations and the outward expression of material interests. As human beings learnt to work from the tribes, the productivity expanded and the division of labour deepened, human language was gradually formed, and language was a tool for expression, so human beings began to know themselves and became "conscious beings". Language accelerated the speed and density of social interaction and exchange of ideas, and formed social opinions and customs, which were further sublimated into morality. Starting from the "real man", Engels proved that man is the core of all morality, analysed the roots of socio-economic relations from which morality arises, criticised the idealistic view of morality, and laid a scientific foundation for the nature of morality.

1.2. Morality is Historical and Real

Engels suggested that morality is a historical category that changes as social production changes. Different social forms have different moral connotations and requirements. The essence of morality not only varies significantly, but also departs from each other in different peoples and times. In the *Anti-Dühring Theses*, Engels describes three types of morality: feudal morality, capitalist morality and proletarian morality. The contradictory relationship between these three types of morality reveals the progress and development of mankind in the field of morality. For example, Engels argues that "Do not steal" is a principle of public morality for different social forms and classes because morality has a corresponding inheritance at the same stage of historical development as private ownership. The moral precept "Do not steal" is in the interest of the people at this stage of history, mainly, of course, in the interest of the ruling class. In a class society, although there are class conflicts and class struggles, in order to maintain the common interests of normal production, life and mutual interaction, it is necessary to establish a common moral code, only that these "common morals" belong to the realm of history, are changing and developing, and are not eternal. In this way, he refuted Dühring's eternal morality.

In addition, Engels emphasised the class nature of morality. The prevailing moral concepts of the times are bound to bear the class imprint of the ruling class. For example, the morality of early Christianity reflected the moral demands of the conquered, whereas the moral demands of the bourgeoisie were aimed at breaking through the feudal bondage and developing the capitalist economy. The moral demands of the proletariat, on the other hand, represent the fundamental interests and historical mission of the proletariat. On a smaller scale, there will also be moral differences in the trades within the trades, just as we demand impartiality from judges and love from teachers. Under capitalist privatisation, bourgeois morality dominates and serves the rule and interests of the bourgeoisie. Although proletarian morality does not dominate, it represents the fundamental interests of the proletariat and foreshadows the moral landscape of future socialist society. From the perspective of the materialist view of history, Engels proposed that morality between different classes

is in an eternal relationship of unity of opposites and will attract and transform each other. Engels' viewpoint reveals the historical, class and developmental nature of morality, and provides us with a new perspective for an in-depth understanding and study of the concept of morality.

2. SCIENTIFIC CRITIQUE: THE LOGICAL UNDERPINNING OF ENGELS' MORAL THOUGHT

2.1. Criticism of Dühring's a Priori Epistemology

Dühring constructed his comprehensive philosophical system and model theory of the world based on idealistic a priori theory, and was convinced that his theory was the ultimate and perfect system, and the moral theory constructed on the basis of it was considered by him to be eternal and applicable to all worlds and times. This idealistic a priori theory thus constitutes the epistemological cornerstone of Dühring's eternal moral theory. In response, Engels offers a profound critique in three dimensions.

First, Engels refuted the principal determinism. He pointed out that Dühring's so-called principles were those formal principles derived from thinking rather than from the external world. These principles were imposed by Dühring on nature and human beings, requiring them to adapt to them. As far as the principles of good and evil are concerned, they have been recognised in ancient and modern times and seem to have a universal and eternal rationality of value. However, according to Engels, the ideas of good and evil have become so powerful from one people to another from one age to another that they are often in direct contradiction to each other. Dühring's attempt to obtain a universal principle of good and evil was doomed to failure. Dühring's view of principles as categories that existed before the formation of the objective world and his use of them to construct the real world is idealism that inverts relations, puts the cart before the horse, and is a simple imitation of Hegel's philosophical system.

Secondly, Engels criticised the idea of a system of final completion. He believed that all processes in nature are in systematic connection, and this understanding is of great significance in advancing natural science to grasp the systematic connection of things. If someone tries to establish at a certain stage of history a finalised system that includes all kinds of connections in the world, it would mean that the progress of human understanding and history would eventually come to a halt, which is absurd. He repeatedly emphasised that we should reject any moral dogma as an eternal ultimate and henceforth unchanging ethical law, and reject all the unreasonable demands it imposes on us, which are based on the pretext that there are also unchanging principles in the moral world which are above history and the differences of peoples.

Finally, Engels exposes the absurdity of considering mathematics as a free creation of knowing. He argued that both the concepts of number and of form are derived from the real world and are not products of pure thought. Counting requires countable objects and the accumulated experience of long historical development as a basis. The concept of shape, on the other hand, requires objects of concrete shape to be compared in the first place. Therefore, the objects of pure mathematics are the spatial forms and quantitative relationships of the real world. At the same time, mathematics also stems from the needs of human practical activities, as do other sciences. There can be no truth that is reasonable in all cases.

Engels' critique reveals the flaws and absurdities of Dühring's theory and emphasises the complexity and dynamism of the real world, as well as the limitations and development of scientific understanding.

2.2. Criticism of the Presuppositions of the Eternal Moral Theory's View of Truth

Firstly, Engels deeply revealed the inherent contradiction of human thinking in response to Dühring's metaphysical view of human thinking. He pointed out that history carries the wisdom and rationality

of countless billions of past, present, and future, and that people of the present can only stand on the shoulders of people of the past to look at the world, and that there are certainly finiteness and infinity in human understanding.

In terms of human sensibility, possibility, and the ultimate purpose of history, human cognitive ability is infinite, and thinking has supremacy; however, only a very few people can penetrate the truth, and the cognitive ability of individuals is limited. This means that human thinking is both supreme and non-supreme, and human cognitive capacity is both infinite and limited. This contradiction is the intrinsic motivation that drives the development of human understanding and thinking.

Dühring recognises that eternal truth is unchanging and unconditional knowledge, and that this unconditionality is based on the absolute supremacy of human thinking and the possession of unconditional access to truth. Only the absolute supremacy of thinking allows the principle of eternal truth to be obtained from thinking; the possession of the unconditional right of access to truth in the experience of constantly practising fallacies, as in that infinite game.

In Engels' view, on the other hand, the supremacy of thinking is realised by a series of very non-supremacist thinking people: the guys with the fallacy experience card are not representing the side of truth.

He pointed out that there are no eternal ultimate truths in the non-biological sciences of mathematics, astronomy, mechanics, physics, chemistry and geology, nor in the sciences that study living organisms. With the development of practice, mankind has had to overturn the foolish perceptions of the past. It is a general rule that everything in nature is born and dies and repeats itself. In the science of history, there is even less eternal truth.

Dühring, because he did not understand the dialectic between truth and fallacy, always fantasised about eliminating fallacies, a view criticised by Engels. He argued that truth and fallacy have absolute significance only within a very limited sphere, and that once this sphere is exceeded, the opposition becomes relative. Engels used Renoir's Boyle's Law as an example of such dogmatic clichés to be avoided in any science, let alone in morality and law.

2.3. Criticism of the Self-contradiction of Dühring's Concept of Equality and Freedom

Engels believed that Dühring's idea of complete equality and absolute freedom was suspected of putting the cart before the horse. Free will is the ideological basis of morality and does not represent the acquisition of equality. Specifically, Dühring constructed an absolute world of equality in his mind in order to corroborate equality, a virtual world divorced from the real world, so much so that at a later stage, Dühring himself began to revise his old views by acknowledging the existence of various elements of inequality in society. However, in Engels' view, Dühring's revision was self-contradictory and could not stand the test of reality.

In the axiom of perfect equality, Dühring argued for the equality of all men on the one hand, and the subordination of immature children to their parents on the other. Engels refutes this by saying that children, because of their physical and volitional immaturity, should not be included as actors, and that it is unreliable to prove equality. When we talk only about actors, if there is a male and a female among two people, there is inequality between the two in terms of gender; and it is difficult for two people to have the same will and thoughts. Even if they are both male, they do not have the same looks, character, age, etc., and thus cannot be completely equal. Doolin wants to step out of the blind spot of the ideal world he conceived; he takes a step, but does not go out. In addition, Dühring's double standard is reflected in his distinction between human nature, which he distinguishes between human beings who are humane and those who are bestial, and in his assertion that human beings can take up arms to defend themselves against the violent methods of bestial beings, which is patently

inhuman, immoral, and unfair. In response, Engels refuted the theory of the evolution of natural man from primitive man, in a way that is quite interesting to each other.

In terms of the critique of absolute freedom, Engels points out that we cannot explore morality and law in an empty bottle; we must incorporate free will, the division of responsibility, and social outcomes. In other words, we cannot discuss morality apart from necessity.

The concept of freedom is an important part of morality. Dühring asserts that freedom is inherent in life, the result of the interaction of reason and sense within the human body, and has no basis in necessity. However, Engels expounded the dialectical relationship between freedom and necessity through the dialectical movement of thought and matter, refuting Dühring's metaphysical view of freedom and necessity as absolute opposites. Examining freedom and necessity in their totality, they are not separated and opposed to each other, but are interdependent, interconnected and jointly promoted. He points out that freedom is never a denial of necessity, but rather a good use of the environment based on the knowledge of necessity and the use of necessity. The degree of freedom of a person depends on how well he grasps the laws, and there are bound to be differences in freedom between individuals. If there is to be freedom, human initiative must be brought into play, and if there is to be equal freedom, all must unite to arrive at a communist society.

3. THE DESTRUCTION OF CLASSES: THE LOGICAL PURPOSE OF ENGELS' MORAL THOUGHT

3.1. The Dying Bourgeois Morality

After his scientific critique of Dühring's morality, Engels never denied the progressive and scientific nature of the moral concept itself. It is repeatedly mentioned in the Anti-Dühring Theses that the moral demands of the bourgeoisie have played a practical political role in history. No matter how impractical and incompatible with the poor the bourgeoisie's weaving of moral concepts is, it has actually become the biggest bearer of and ultimately responsible for moral demands and has played a revolutionary role in cracking the immorality of feudal superstition.

However, Engels also pointed out that capitalism's private appropriation of the means of production was the root cause of social immorality. The morality of the capitalist burst into a fleeting light in the Middle Ages, and then became unbearably pedantic after mass production. In this regard, Engels, after an in-depth analysis of Marx's doctrine of surplus value, gave a clear assessment: "The modern capitalist, like the slave-owner or the feudal lord who exploits corvée labour, accumulates wealth by appropriating the unpaid labour of others. The difference between these forms of exploitation is simply the difference in the manner of appropriating this unpaid labour. Thus, the hypocritical notions of justice, righteousness, equality of rights, equality of duties and harmony of interests of the modern social system preached by the bourgeoisie lose their last foothold."

Bourgeois morality, maintained only based on capitalist class domination, is morality only in form and not in fact. Today, the growing distrust and antipathy, hatred and hostility of capitalism are the consequences of hypocritical morality. The crippled hotbeds of reason cause weakness and greed within the bourgeoisie, and spiritual and moral metamorphosis that is difficult to revive.

3.2. Proletarian Morality to Be Proved by History

After the bourgeois revolution in France in the 18th century, the rationalists with a golden spoon in their mouths advocated the concepts of "liberty, equality and fraternity", which had a profound impact on the proletariat, which expelled the spell of obligation that had been cast by the bourgeoisie's complicity, and which provided a reference for its moral demands. Although these ideas were initially formulated by the bourgeoisie in its own interests, in a broader sense they reflected the reality of social inequality and class antagonism. For the proletariat, these ideas were not only a revolt against

oppression, but also a quest for a better future. Engels pointed out that the moral demands of the proletariat shared similarities with the bourgeoisie but were more far-reaching and penetrating. Proletarian morality is no longer confined to a particular field, but pursues equality on all levels, political and economic. Its central demand is the "elimination of classes", which is not only the elimination of formal inequalities, but also the elimination of private ownership of the means of production and the realisation of true equality. This demand is consistent with the goal of changing the real economic structure and eliminating private ownership.

The "elimination of classes" is not only a moral demand of the proletariat, but also an inevitable trend of social development, which will eventually be proved by history. The system of private ownership in capitalist society can no longer meet the needs of socialization of production, and the high degree of development of the productive forces will lay the material foundation for the realisation of true morality. Engels emphasised that morality, as an ideology, would progress with the development of the productive forces and that its general trend was upward. Engels' view of morality is based on the reality of human beings, and the emancipation of human beings is the starting point and value claim of his theory. According to him, the emancipation of mankind is not a simple ideological change but is to be realised in the development of the productive forces and the elimination of classes. It is only in a communist society that the relationship between man and man and man and society can be truly harmonious, and mankind can achieve true morality and emancipation. This emancipation is not only for the proletariat, but also for all mankind, reflecting the ultimate concern of Marxist morality.

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