

Marx's Criticism of Feuerbach's Religious View and the Practical Significance of Religious Existence

Yuxin Guan

School of Zhejiang, Normal University, Zhejiang 321004, China

Abstract. The Enlightenment movement of criticizing traditional religion initiated by the young Hegelians pushed the religious criticism movement in Germany to a climax in the 19th century. After studying Hegel's idealist philosophy, Feuerbach found that it was inextricably connected with religious theology. In order to realize the real criticism of religion, Feuerbach put forward his own humanistic materialist religious view. But the humanistic religious view itself also has major defects. Marx put forward his own religious view after criticizing Feuerbach's "the origin of religion" and "the new religion of Love". Under the guidance of Marx's religious view, we also find that religion still has many positive practical significance to the socialist society. In the new era, we must strive to explore the theory and practice of actively guiding religion to adapt to socialist society.

Keywords: Religion; Feuerbach; Religious View.

1. Introduction

Under the influence of the Enlightenment movement represented by the French Encyclopedic school and the French Revolution, there appeared a fierce enlightenment trend of thought and social movement in Germany in the 19th century. Among them, the most representative is the Young Hegelians. Under such a social background, the Young Hegelians launched an enlightenment movement criticizing religion, hoping to realize the liberation of man and society. The movement of religious criticism was in full swing, but Feuerbach found the fatal defect of Hegel's idealist philosophy after in-depth study. On the basis of thoroughly criticizing Hegel's philosophy, Feuerbach established his humanistic religious view, and the philosophical basis of religious criticism changed from idealism to materialism. Marx once praised Feuerbach's humanistic materialism, but found that Feuerbach's materialism ignored the most fundamental things after in-depth study, so Marx deeply criticized Feuerbach's humanistic materialism, and put forward his own religious view. Under the guidance of Marx's religious outlook, China's religious development has been steadily advancing in the direction of socialism, and the future development of religion in our country is bound to be more adapted to the development of socialist society.

2. Feuerbach's Religious View

2.1. Feuerbach's Sublation of Hegel's View of Religion

As the religious criticism movement was in full swing, Feuerbach soon found that there seemed to be some internal connection between Hegelian philosophy and religious theology, and if one wanted to fundamentally negate religion, one must negate idealist philosophy at the same time. Feuerbach admits that the modern philosophy of speculative idealism was once an argument made by human reason against religious domination in order to restore the authority of human reason, which was thus sanctified-and thus determined the dignity and value of reason. However, due to the inherent similarity between idealist philosophy and religion, idealist philosophy cannot make a clear distinction with religion, and religion is even rationalized into a sacred yoke. Idealist philosophy became the rational product of religious theology. Hegelian philosophy is the culmination of modern speculative idealism, therefore, to negate idealism must negate Hegelian philosophy, Feuerbach thinks: "whoever does not sublimate Hagean philosophy, does not sublimate theology!"

According to Feuerbach, "Hegelian philosophy is the last refuge of theology and the last pillar of reason." Feuerbach believes that Hegel's "absolute spirit" is essentially God, and "absolute spirit" is externalized into a kind of naturalism, which is essentially equivalent to the so-called "God created". Feuerbach criticizes Hegel's idealist speculative philosophy deeply, he thinks Hegel reverses the relationship between spirit and existence, it is existence that determines spirit, rather than spirit that produces existence.

2.2. Feuerbach's Humanistic Religious View

Man cannot exist alone from nature, nor can he exist alone from other men. The kind of independent "self" or "subject" trumpeted by idealist philosophy is impossible to exist. In philosophy, Feuerbach categorically denied the existence of all supernatural and superhuman spiritual entities, and redefined the basis and starting point of his philosophy as nature and "man" as a member of nature. Feuerbach calls his new philosophy humanism, and humanism of this nature is undoubtedly a pure materialism.

Feuerbach repeatedly declared that the goal of his life was the criticism of religion. Feuerbach founded his humanistic materialism to serve the criticism of religion. When his humanistic philosophy negates a spiritual entity that exists independently from nature and man, he surpasses the limitations of Strauss and Powell, who still hold that the "man" who "creates religion" is a "spirit" and "self-consciousness". Feuerbach, on the other hand, believes that this "man" is a "real man" as a natural being. Only in human nature can we find the essence and root of religion, and the god or God of religion is nothing but the self-alienation or object of man after idealizing his own essence into a foreign object and expressing belief and worship to it. Feuerbach drew a conclusion from this: religion and God are essentially the self-alienation of man, who created religion and God according to his own "human nature". And Feuerbach's humanistic philosophy understands that the "man" who creates religion and God is a flesh-and-blood, sensual, natural and real man in real life.

3. Marx's Criticism of Feuerbach's Religious View

Feuerbach converted the highest achievement of the German religious criticism movement from its idealist philosophical basis to the humanistic materialist philosophical basis, which was a milestone progress in religion and philosophy, and had a particularly important influence on Marx and Engels. Marx once highly praised Feuerbach's historical contribution and believed that "only through Feuerbach can we move towards truth and freedom." But after deeply exploring Feuerbach's humanistic materialism philosophy, Marx gradually realized that Feuerbach's humanistic materialism ignored social practice and was full of empty discussions on the nature of "man" and abstract preaching on "love". Marx realized that in order to create a new world view, it was necessary to criticize Feuerbach.

3.1. Criticism of Feuerbach's Theory of "the Origin of Religion"

Feuerbach pointed out that the essence of God is the alienation of the essence of man. The religious world is the elysium imagined by people eager to get rid of the real suffering, and God as the "savior" is also the alienation and creation of man. Feuerbach pointed out the origin of religion, but did not reveal the social and class origin of religion. Marx deeply revealed the social roots of religion, "Suffering in religion is both the expression of real suffering, but also the protest against this suffering, religion is the sigh of the oppressed life, is the feeling of the merciless world." As Marx put it in his Theses, "Feuerbach reduces the essence of religion to the essence of man, but the essence of man is not an abstraction inherent in a single individual, but in its reality it is the sum of all social relations." Feuerbach only understood the essence of man as "class", but did not see that religion itself is the product of society. The reality of many disasters makes people dream of reaching the illusory heaven and give up the realistic struggle to hope for the afterlife.

The difference between Marx and Feuerbach lies in the fact that the proletariat can only solve the real social class exploitation and class oppression by means of revolution. We cannot rely on fantasy to

replace revolution, still less can we give up the real struggle and hope for the afterlife. Marx pointed out that the social origin of religion is the real class antagonism and class contradiction. To eliminate religion is to eliminate the social roots of religion, criticize the unreasonable social system, achieve social reform, and liberate all mankind.

3.2. Criticism of Feuerbach's New Religion of Love

Although Feuerbach criticized old religions such as Christianity, he did not advocate the elimination of religion, but the establishment of a new religion of "love". Feuerbach believes that the ethical relations of the human world are themselves genuine religious relations, and he points out that love is the criterion of existence, the criterion of truth and reality. But Feuerbach's so-called "religion of love" has only religious relations, but no economic relations between men, and is therefore isolated from society. In class society, people always belong to a certain class, and there is no such thing as harmonious "love" in society. This religion of "love" will only erase class differences and antagonisms, and will be used by the bourgeoisie as a tool to paralyze the revolutionary fighting spirit of the people.

Marx and Engels deeply criticized Feuerbach's new religion. He sharply criticized Feuerbach for abandoning the course of history, for observing religious feelings in isolation, and for assuming an abstract - isolated - human individual. In his Theses, Marx clearly points out that "Feuerbach fails to see that 'religious feelings' are themselves social products and in fact belong to certain social forms." By criticizing Feuerbach's "religion of love", Marx and Engels profoundly pointed out that religious feeling is a social product of reality, which is in contrast to Feuerbach's "love" and "religious feeling" existing outside the society. Marx also pointed out the essence of Feuerbach's idealistic view of history, and realized the transcendence of Feuerbach's humanistic view of religion with his own materialist view of history.

3.3. Marx's View of Religion

Feuerbach's religious view influenced Marx, but Marx did not stay on Feuerbach's religious view, he continued to explore along Feuerbach's road and found the more profound social roots of religion. Marx said, "The basis of the anti-religious criticism is that man created religion, not that religion created man." That is to say, religion is the sense of self and the sense of self of those who have not gained themselves or who have lost themselves again. However, human beings are not abstract beings living outside the world. Man is the world of man, the country, the society. This country, this society, has produced religions that are inverted worldviews because they are themselves inverted worlds."

Here Marx advances Feuerbach's view of religion. Marx found the social source of this inverted religious view, namely the inverted world, and the so-called inverted world is the capitalist world. Religion is the ideology of capitalist society. As an ideology, religion controls the "spiritual high ground" of the capitalist world, and through such "spiritual high ground", it everywhere promotes the rationality and legitimacy of capitalist society, and at the same time helps capitalist society eliminate various voices of discontent and resistance. As a kind of ideology for this kind of evil, religion was severely criticized by Marx.

Religion is rooted in the upside down world, and if the upside down world is turned upside down, then religion is no longer needed, so Marx advocates the abolition of religion, the elimination of religion. Marx believed that religion could not be destroyed by theoretical criticism, but only by overthrowing private property, the economic basis on which religion was produced. However, private property is protected by the state, and private property in capitalist society is protected by the capitalist state. In this case, the capitalist state must be overthrown and the proletariat's own state established. The proletarian state must practice the dictatorship of the proletariat. "This dictatorship is nothing more than a transition towards the abolition of all classes and into proletarian society." Proletarian society is communist society. In communist society, private property was completely eliminated. The

upside down world has been turned upside down. This leaves religion without any social basis. Religion thus loses its basis and eventually dies out.

4. The Practical Significance of Religion

4.1. The Reasons Why Religion Still Exists under Socialist Conditions

Through arduous revolution and struggle, the Chinese nation established New China under the leadership of the Communist Party of China. After the founding of New China, through the socialist transformation of all walks of life, the socialist society was finally built, and private ownership was abolished and transformed into public ownership. Marx pointed out that the economic basis for the existence of religion is private ownership, but why in today's China, where public ownership is the main body, various religions still exist and thrive? Combined with the social reality, I think it can be explained from two kinds of relationships with people:

One is the relationship between nature and man. Although the level of modern science and technology and productivity has been greatly improved, the ability of human beings to transform nature has also been greatly improved, and the relationship between man and nature has become more harmonious and more "reasonable", it has not yet reached a higher degree of control over natural forces. In reality, China is still in the primary stage of socialism, and has just achieved all poverty alleviation for the poor. The pressure of "relying on heaven to eat" has not really disappeared. After facing the impact of natural forces, people will unconsciously want to pray to God and Buddha for protection.

The second is the relationship between people. In today's society, the relationship between people has not reached the necessary "reasonable" level, and people will be oppressed by the society. Once some people in the society feel that they cannot grasp their fate or fall into despair due to misfortune, they will fantasize about seeking spiritual comfort in the religious world.

4.2. The Practical Significance of Religion to Socialist Society

After thousands of years of development and inheritance, religion itself has played a certain role in promoting the development of all times. With the change and development of The Times, religion also ADAPTS to the development of The Times, constantly carries out self-innovation, and makes itself more and more adapt to the developing times. As China becomes a developing socialist country, religion also has a positive significance for socialist society.

First, religion plays a certain role in promoting the construction of a harmonious society. The thought of harmony in Chinese traditional religion has a long history, profound connotation, extensive and subtle, and has an important enlightening effect on our construction of socialist harmonious society, harmonious world and harmonious culture. In particular, it holds a reverence for nature, protects mountains and rivers, opposes deforestation, and opposes the destruction of ecological environment, which is of great significance to the realization of harmonious coexistence between man and nature. In rural China, religion serves as a bridge through rituals, temple fairs and collective activities. These temple fairs and folk activities often form a joint force for the life order of local society. The excellent spiritual heritage or cultural tradition contained in religion is of great significance for promoting the harmonious development of human society.

Second, religion plays a guiding role in people's ideology. According to the attitude and standard of secular morality, egoistic love is practiced by some people, and the self is the premise and basis of others, the starting point or important condition for their consideration of problems. In contrast, religious moral attitudes mostly choose selfless love or unconditional universal love. Buddhism is divided into Mahayana Buddhism and Theravada Buddhism, and between them can also be said to be "great love" and "little love". The culture of filial piety and universal love in Chinese traditional religion are indispensable values in a harmonious society. Therefore, advanced culture in religion can play a guiding role in people's ideas.

Third, religion plays a role in inheriting traditional Chinese culture. Religious culture has occupied an important position in Chinese culture for five thousand years, and the ethical and moral education theory transmitted from religious belief and culture still has many valuable lessons for modern people, and has been educating our people up to now. Religion has given full play to the characteristics of "common culture" in the integration of many ethnic groups, and has always played an important role in strengthening and maintaining national inheritance. Through the study and discussion of the religious issues in the border minority areas, for example, it is helpful to straighten out the involvement between religion and nationality, and help to solve the already very complicated ethnic problems in the border minority areas.

4.3. The Direction of China's Religious Work in the New Era

For the religious issues in the new era, we need to observe and grasp at multiple levels and in all directions. It must be noted that in today's strong China, religion in society more reflects the characteristics of "independence and self-management", and there have been some useful practices and preliminary achievements in adhering to the direction of Sinicization, which has laid a certain foundation for continuing to move in this direction in the future, and there are corresponding experience accumulation. It can be said that religion in China as a whole is no longer a social phenomenon dependent on foreign forces, but has actively adapted to and closely integrated with socialist society, forming the characteristic development of the country's strong education, patriotism and love of religion.

Religion is a major issue that our Party must deal with well in the governance of the country, and religious work is of special importance in the overall work of the Party and the state. These two outstanding aspects must be paid special attention to and solidly promoted in the current religious work, and grasping these two points can play an important role in the theory and practice of the entire religious work, and can achieve the effect of twice the result with half the effort.

5. Summary

From the religious criticism movement in the 19th century to Feuerbach's humanistic view of religion, and then to Marx's criticism of Feuerbach and his own view of religion, all the above movements and theories have more or less had a certain impact on the future development of religion. In today's China, religion still has a long-term influence on the state and society. In the new era, we should strive to explore the theory and practice of actively guiding religion to adapt to socialist society, sum up the experience and achievements of Chinese religion in adhering to the direction of Sinicization, review the contemporary situation by reviewing history, and make every effort to promote the positive development of religious work and religious research in the new era in the future.

References

- [1] Luo Yi. Marx's Criticism and Transcendence of Feuerbach's Religious View [D]. Central China Normal University,2019.
- [2] Lu Daji. Introduction of the Young Hegelians and Feuerbach's Religious View Theory -- Historical Background of Marxist Religious Theory Part II [J]. Social Science Front,2010,No.176(02):26-40.
- [3] On Marx's View of Religion [J]. Science and Atheism,2017,No.106(02):31-35.
- [4] Sun Huthang. Reevaluation of Feuerbach's Religious Thought [J]. Studies on Marxist Religious Views,2014(00):97-117.
- [5] Zhang Qiagui. The sociality of religion and its practical significance [J]. World Religions and Cultures,2004(02):1-3.
- [6] Chen Qiaoyun. On the connotation, function and practical significance of folk religious belief[J]. Journal of Party School of Zhengzhou Municipal Committee,2010,No.105(03):78-80.
- [7] Huan Cuo, Pull hair grass. The root of religious existence in Modern Society [J]. New Theory of Tianfu, 2008 (S2):101-102.
- [8] Chinese Religion, 2018, No. 221(04):17-19.