

Traceability and Enlightenment of Western Marxist Modernity Critical Thoughts

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Abstract: Western Marxism has developed a critical theory centered on modernity. Western Marxism, based on the integration of Marxism, originated from "Enlightenment" and developed from Lukács' theory of objectification, which led to the Frankfurt School's theory of the domination of modernity, and Habermas's "theory of social interaction," which brought a turning point to the critical theory of modernity. Social Interaction Theory" of Habermas brought a turning point for the Western Marxist critical theory of modernity. In the current process of China's modernization, Western Marxism's critical theory of modernity has also brought certain insights into Chinese-style modernization. In the process of development of Chinese modernization, it is necessary to take the road of modernization firmly and unswervingly, but it is also necessary to look at modernity dialectically, adhere to the principles of Marxist methodology, avoid the problems that have occurred in the process of Western modernization, and push forward the development of Chinese modernization.

1. Introduction

During the development of the times, the Western Marxists have integrated Marxism with the Western thought trends, and thought about the real problems, thus generating a reflection on the relevant concepts of modernity. With the further evolution of the contemporary world, many challenges have arisen. In order to solve the social turmoil and various problems arising from the development of capitalism, Western Marxist scholars combined Marxism and reality to produce a series of critical theories of modernity, and clarifying the development of Western Marxism's critical thought of modernity has a certain revelation effect on China's modernization, which is conducive to avoiding mistakes that have already been made on the Western modernization path. It is helpful to avoid the mistakes that have already appeared in the western modernization road on the road of China's modernization.

2. The Traceability of Western Critical Thought to Modernity

2.1. The "Enlightenment" thought is Considered the Root of the Critical thought of Modernity.

From the 17th century to the 18th century, the Enlightenment in the West developed rapidly, and

since the Renaissance and the Enlightenment, the modern Western sense of "Enlightenment" has gradually and clearly appeared in people's field of vision, and the ideal pursuits of human beings, rationality, freedom, and democracy embedded therein have been understood by people in a more direct paradigm. According to Hegel, the sublimity of our age lies in the affirmation of the self, and spiritual property is essentially independent. The central principle of modernity is the empowerment of the subject, that is, the full realization of the potential of all aspects of the spiritual totality of culture.[1]

From its inception, the ideology of "Enlightenment" was a strong push for the collapse of traditional ways of thinking and value, and at the same time opened the curtain on a new world history based on a new rationality and the establishment of a modern world order, which would control the center of world public opinion. However, the catastrophic destruction of the two world wars, which led to the outbreak of the economic crisis and continued to affect the entire West, the prolonged and endless struggles between the East and the West, and the destruction of people's living environments and even the endangerment of entire ecosystems, which brought a serious mental burden to the war-weary people, are all problems that would lead to the rejection of the Enlightenment and modernity. All these problems will lead to skepticism and reflection on "Enlightenment" and "modernity". Enlightenment and "modernity" both contain the concept of dialectics, and they both emphasize an objective attitude in examining things, society, history, the future, and the search for truth. The concept of "Enlightenment" inspires a continuous passion for reflection, exploration, challenge, and enterprise, which reflects the development trends of today's society. That is, to promote the development of society to a more developed and convenient state.

2.2. The Theory of Materialization is the Origin of Modern Critical thought and Provides People with a New Perspective

Western Marxism is a school of thought that initially recognized the problems of capitalist society and criticized it from a philosophical point of view, and over time, this criticism has been deepened, involving many fields such as society and culture. Among them, Lukács, Gramsci, and others, the classic representatives of the early development of Western Marxism, were on top of the latest achievements of Marxism at that time, to typify the social environment at that time, to think about the real problems at that time and to think about the real problems at that time, and to try to find the optimal solution to the real problems of the society at that time. As a result, he criticized the capitalist society at that time.

Under the influence of Marx's "commodity fetishism", Lukács drew on Weber's thinking and integrated it into his "materialization theory" to construct a unique thinking mode. Lukács's materialization means "man's own activity, man's own labor, as something objective, something not dependent on man, something that controls man through self-discipline that is different from man, in opposition to man". [2]Lukács's theory of objectification will not only focus on the economic or political aspects of society, but also include the inner and cultural aspects of man in its thinking. Lukács's theory of objectification explores nature, human beings, economy, politics, consciousness, and labor, etc. In particular, his profound analysis of the manifestations of human objectification in modern capitalist society has put forward the concepts of atomization, digitization, and objectification, thus providing a new perspective for today's society to examine the behavior of human objectification. [3]Lukács's theory of objectification also became the starting point of critical theory, which had a significant impact on the later critical theory of modernity and played an important role in the reflection of modern capitalist society.

2.3. Development of Critical Theory of Modernity - Frankfurt School Theory of Modernity Domination

In the middle of the 20th century, late monopoly capitalism gradually expanded in the period of capitalist society, and the monopoly situation intensified, in such a social background, there is a need for new theories to answer the real problems. Based on Lukács's theory of objectification, the Frankfurt School thinkers not only explored it in depth, but also developed it into a doctrine of domination in the "alienation of the human being from his own self in a state of false consciousness". [4]It takes a critical look at the industrial civilization of today's society and the manipulation and deception it brings.

The core of the dominance theory is its critique of the technological rationality of time. According to Horkheimer and Adorno, with the development of science, scientific rationality is no longer seen merely as a form of discipline, it is no longer seen merely as a limitation, it is seen more as a spiritual motivation that can stimulate the individual's potential and promote his or her development. Science and technology are no longer regarded as a favorable, friendly, or harmless neutral tool that people can control, but they are no longer under the control of the people and have become a force that can dominate them. Horkheimer and Adorno have shown that "Enlightenment is the same thing to the thing as a dictator to the people. When dictators are in control of political power, they can understand the citizens, just as scientists do when they manipulate things".

The theory of domination referred to here, that is, Horkheimer's and Adorno's theory of domination, is not a critique of the immediacy of the entire capitalist system of production, as Marx's critique of political economy was, and is different from Lukács's critique of materialized consciousness. Their theory of domination was a direct critique and rejection of the new modern forces that were emerging in the developed industries at that time, which had an enslaving and dominating effect on human beings. The Frankfurt School's critical theory of modernity has unique advantages: on the one hand, it analyzes today's world in depth from a variety of perspectives; on the other hand, it covers all levels of today's world; and lastly, it employs means of research that include both academic research and practical application. Led by the critical thought of the Frankfurt School, It is also for this reason that, starting from the critical theory of the Frankfurt School, the modernization process of Western Marxism has been able to advance rapidly and form a complete system of thought.

2.4. The Turning Point of the Critical Theory of Modernity - Habermas' "Theory of Social Interaction"

Habermas's "Theory of Social Interaction" was officially published in 1982, and the birth of this important work also brought an important turning point to the critical theory of modernity of Western Marxism. In this important work, Habermas also put forward a new concept of rationality and rationalization of the explanation, the emergence of a different idea about society, but also outlined a new theory of modernity. Habermas' theory of interactional rationality has also been an important theoretical foundation for exploring the concept of modernity in today's world.

In Habermas's view, communicative rationality is the idea that decisions made by people in a society can be made by people discussing with each other, without any form of coercion accompanying the entire decision-making process. Habermas initially regarded communicative rationality as a kind of instrumental rationality, and he firmly believed that through the use of science and technology, human beings could control the natural society and communicate more conveniently and efficiently, and that this ability to use science and technology was precisely to satisfy the needs of human beings' survival. However, in the later part of the theory, he also regarded communicative rationality as one of the most basic abilities possessed by human beings,

which is potentially utilized in people's daily life. This capacity can stimulate thinking, discussion, and expression, and even though it may encounter social obstacles in some cases, it is still a goal that we should strive for in our daily lives.[5]

Habermas has long been engaged in the study of modernity and has been working on a constructive critique of it. His core theory is based on the theory of interactional behavior to support the Enlightenment camp position of modernists. Although Habermas's theory of interactional behavior is not a perfect theory and has its share of regrets, he still adheres to the spirit of human-centeredness and always puts the value of the theory on the ultimate concern for human beings. Habermas's theory of the act of interaction has not fundamentally left the most fundamental ideas of the Western Marxist critical theory of modernity, and the difference between the two lies mainly in the use of different methods, perspectives and conclusions. A turning point was formed for Western critical thought on modernity.

3. Revelations of the Times for the Western Marxist Critical Theory of Modernity

As socialism with Chinese characteristics enters a new historical stage, China's modernization needs its own path. Taking Chinese-style modernization is the necessary path to realize the great rejuvenation of the Chinese nation. In the process of the development of Chinese-style modernization, the modernity critique of Western Marxism provides the following insights for the course of persevering in and perfecting the path of Chinese-style modernization.

3.1. Steadfastly Follow the Path of Modernization and Development

At present, although China is in the process of rapid modernization, there are still many challenges, such as excessive economic growth, serious natural pollution, and socio-psychological backwardness. However, we must realize that these challenges can only bring temporary opportunities, not real challenges, for the future of our country. Today's China should firmly embark on the path of modernization and should never waver from it.

The definition of modernization is not limited to the Western model, so Westernization is not equivalent to modernization. Western Marxism holds that the capitalist social system is the root cause of the ills of modernization and development, and that the fundamental requirement of modernity is to be combined with the socialist system. Only by combining modernity and the socialist system can the negative effects arising from the development of modernization be completely eliminated. This is because the pursuit of modernity alone will lead to social inequality, imbalance in the distribution of resources and other problems, while the socialist system alone will not be able to push forward the modernization process and lacks efficiency and momentum. Therefore, the only way to achieve the two goals of modernization and equitable development is to combine the two. Chinese-style modernization is a unique model of modernization and development, which not only breaks with the traditional development model, but also overcomes many of the challenges that exist in Western modernization and development. It is centered on communal relations of production and strives to satisfy the needs of every member of society, eliminate blindness in production, and curb the spread of consumerism. The socialist system aims to promote the freedom and common prosperity of all human beings, not just to satisfy individual interests. This system affirms the value of the human subject, and at the same time solves the problem of the state of being of the human being, so that the human being does not become a "one-way man". The development of Chinese-style modernization must unswervingly follow the socialist path to ensure that it continues to advance in the socialist direction.

3.2. Dialectical View of Modernity

"Western Marxist theorists have taken a dialectical view of modernity, and their views have provided the Chinese people with a new way of thinking, with a view to providing strong guidance for the realization of socialist modernization. [6]Although some developed countries in the West have made achievements on the road to modernization, they have also brought about many negative problems. China is also facing various challenges and difficulties on the road to modernization. Although modernity may bring some challenges, we should not regard them as the inevitable result of modernity, but rather examine them from an objective point of view in order to better realize the goals of socialism and use them as a powerful impetus to push for reforms and improve the socialist system. We should not rush to solve problems that can only be solved after modernization is achieved. With modernization comes many drawbacks that leave people helpless. We should actively utilize the advantages of modernization and try to minimize its costs as much as possible. Benefits fully from the fruits of modernity while striving to minimize its costs. While pursuing modernization, we should aim to promote the all-round development of human beings in order to promote the all-round progress of society, to achieve the "best of both worlds".

3.3. Firmly Upholding the Principles of Marxist Methodology

Although Western Marxism has made outstanding contributions and efforts to explore the path beyond capitalist modernity at both the theoretical and practical levels, so far it has not yet constituted a genuine and thorough movement against capitalist modernity, and all programs have been relegated to utopian visions in rhetorical debates. Among the group of Marxist theories in the world that have been subject to trial and error since the 20th century, only the Chinese road and Chinese program have achieved "extraordinary" results in practicing the Marxist ideal of transcending capitalist modernity in theory and practice, history and reality. This Chinese modernization path, which is called "new modernity" by scholars, provides a promising path beyond civilization for the world to explore "Marx's question" of transcending capitalist modernity.[7]

Chinese modernization is the latest theoretical and practical achievement of Marxism in China. The report of the Twentieth Party Congress emphasizes: "Marxism is the fundamental guiding ideology on which we founded the Party and the State, and on which we have built the Party and the State. Practice tells us that why the CPC is capable and why socialism with Chinese characteristics is good is, in the final analysis, the line of Marxism, the line of Marxism that has been Chineseized and modernized. Possessing the scientific theoretical guidance of Marxism is fundamental to our Party's firm faith and belief and grasping the historical initiative." The realization of Chinese-style modernization must always adhere to the principles of Marxist scientific methodology. The best leader of China pointed out that "we should pay close attention to and study the new results of foreign Marxist research, analyze and discriminate, and neither adopt a general attitude of rejection nor wholesale copying. At the same time, we should insist on doing a good job of our own affairs, continuously developing socialism with Chinese characteristics, continuously strengthening China's comprehensive national strength, and fully demonstrating the superiority of China's socialist system." [8]

4. Conclusion

The critical thought of Western modernity is developed by Western Marxist scholars on the basis of criticism and reflection on real problems, which has a certain practicality, and at the same time provides some theoretical reference basis for the development of Chinese-style modernization. But

in this process, it is also necessary to deeply recognize the limitations of the Western critical thought of modernity. It is important to insist on the correct treatment of the critical thought of modernity, which is conducive to the improvement of China's approach and policy on the road to modernization. A firm commitment to the principles of the socialist method is an important foundation for the development of Chinese-style modernization. To find problems and solve them in development, to maintain a dialectical attitude, to strive for the great rejuvenation of the Chinese nation, and to realize the goal of China's modern power.

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