

# The Application and Reflection of Marxist Historical Materialism in Contemporary Historical Research

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**Abstract:** Since the birth of Marxism, especially since the 1960s and 1970s, the analysis and interpretation of whether Marx has a concept of justice in the West has caused widespread discussion and attention in the academic community at home and abroad. The heated debate revolves around whether Marx's ideas cover justice and whether he condemns capitalist injustice. This article explores the application and reflection of Marxist historical materialism in contemporary historical research. Seriously summarizing and reflecting on the historical process of the popularization of Chinese Marxist philosophy can help us better promote the popularization of contemporary Chinese Marxist philosophy. They strive to answer various questions in contemporary society with reinterpreted and revised "historical materialism", and find a feasible path for social change and human liberation. It reflects the deepening understanding of the CPC and its leaders on the popularization of Chinese Marxist philosophy. Summarizing its characteristics and reflecting on its experiences and lessons can help better promote the popularization of contemporary Chinese Marxist philosophy.

## 1. Introduction

Marx's view of justice has always been an important theoretical and practical issue. The popularization of modern and contemporary Marxism broadly refers to the popularization of Marxist philosophy; In a narrow sense, it means combining the popularization of Marxism with Socialism with Chinese characteristics's theoretical system. Today, with the rapid development and change of social life practice, these thorny theoretical and practical problems have inevitably been placed in front of all Marxist theoretical researchers. No matter from the perspective of practice or theory, we need to seriously consider the theoretical challenges faced by Marxism and creatively develop the theory of historical materialism[1]. Since the birth of Marxism, particularly in the 1960s and 1970s, the Western analysis and interpretation of whether Marx has a view of justice have sparked extensive discussions and garnered attention in academic circles both domestically and internationally. The heated debate revolves around whether Marx's thought covers justice and condemns capitalist injustice[2]. As a world outlook and methodology for understanding social history, historical materialism has the closest relationship with social real life, and it is also the most vulnerable to the challenge of social reality contradictions[3]. In fact, since the birth of Marxism, the theory of historical materialism has been tested by social real life, and it has been seeking theoretical development and innovation, facing reality, advancing with the times and boldly exploring, which should be said to be the essence of Marxist theory[4]. Marxist philosophy is the foundation of Marxism. To promote the popularization of Marxism in China, we should first promote the popularization of Marxist philosophy. The Communist Party of China has a fine tradition of studying and promoting the popularization of Marxist philosophy in China over the years, so it is helpful for us to better promote the popularization of Marxist philosophy in contemporary China by seriously summarizing and reflecting on the historical process of the popularization of Marxist philosophy in China[5]. They try to answer all kinds of problems in contemporary society with reinterpreted and revised "historical materialism" and find a feasible way for social change and human liberation. These theoretical attempts to "reconstruct historical

materialism" have left us rich ideological material, which has certain enlightening significance for our study of historical materialism.

## **2. The Application of Marxist Historical Materialism in History**

### **2.1. Transforming Marxist historical materialism into a series of working methods**

In modern history, the reason why the Chinese people chose Marxism as their guiding theory is that Marxism effectively solved the practical problems of the Chinese revolution. Marxism not only scientifically answered the historical confusion of where Chinese society went, but also successfully guided the Chinese revolution and saved the Chinese nation[6]. The transformation of philosophical methods into working methods and leadership methods was formed by the CPC in the long and arduous revolutionary struggle against dogmatism and opportunism within the party, and quickly became known and used by the majority of party members and cadres, workers, farmers, soldiers, and revolutionary intellectuals. This is another major contribution made by Mao Zedong to the popularization of Chinese Marxist philosophy[7]. As shown in Figure 1, Marx began his critique of the liberal view of justice in his critique of Hegel's philosophy of rights. When discussing the actual possibility of German liberation, Marx said: "A field... does not advocate any specific rights, because there is no particular mistake, but overall it is wrong.



Figure 1 Critique of Hegel's Philosophy of Rights

I have no objection to the criticism of Hegel before, as Marx, whom I respect the most, has already made the most systematic criticism of Hegel's philosophy in the Introduction to Hegel's Critique of Legal Philosophy. His Hegelian theory of state created a discourse on "the other side of the world, although this other side of the world is only the other side of the Rhine", fully expressing his most profound satire on Hegelian philosophy[8]. In my eyes, Marx's sarcasm is enough to express my attitude towards Hegelian philosophy. After all, what Hegel called the "other side" of "science" was nothing more than his self righteous dream. In the eyes of the vast majority of Western Marxist theorists, only historical materialism can represent true Marxism. Therefore, reinterpreting Marxism and continuously improving it are directly related to the "reconstruction of historical materialism". In a sense, the Western Marxist trend of thought is a new perspective and theory generated in the research process of historical materialism. The call to "pay attention to work methods" was issued to the entire party, and multiple articles on work methods and leadership methods were specially written, such as "Opposing Capitalism", "Caring for the Life of the Masses, Paying Attention to Work Methods", "On Improving the Party Committee System", "Several Questions about Leadership Methods", "The Working Methods of the Party Committee", etc., thus forming a set of effective work and leadership methods that are easy for the cadres and masses to master and parallel.

### **2.2. Adhere to the mass line**

Adhering to the mass line is the essential requirement of Marxism. China's adherence to the mass line in the popularization of Marxist philosophy is the most distinctive feature of China's

popularization of Marxist philosophy in China. Western Marxists have "excavated", "supplemented", "revised" and "perfected" historical materialism around Marx's historical dialectics, the overall methodology principle, the relationship between subject and object in the historical process, alienation and humanitarianism, ideology and practice category[9]. They try to answer all kinds of problems in contemporary society with reinterpreted and revised "historical materialism" and find a feasible way for social change and human liberation. The popularization of Marxist philosophy among the people should always follow the mass line, be close to reality, life, and the masses, and be mastered by the masses, so that it will take root and grow in the soil of China and keep its vitality forever. After the founding of the People's Republic of China, Mao Zedong called for philosophy to be liberated from philosophers' classes and books and become a sharp weapon in the hands of the masses[10]. By comparing the appearance of China revolution before and after the spread and development of Marxism in China, it is confirmed that only by mastering the real theoretical weapon of Marxism can we better serve the motherland and the people and create and realize our own life value in the historical process of realizing the great rejuvenation of the Chinese nation[11].

### **3. Reflection on the Experience of Marxist Historical Materialism**

#### **3.1. Theory must be linked to practice**

The great strength of Marxism Leninism lies in its connection with the specific revolutionary practices of various countries. Talking about Marxism without the characteristics of China is only an abstract and empty form of Marxism. As a major theoretical school in the Western Marxist trend, the Frankfurt School has also left behind highly contemporary theoretical achievements in the "reconstruction" of historical materialism. It starts from its own humanistic standpoint and understands Marxism as "social critical theory", as "practical materialism" and "critical materialism". The positive and negative experiences and lessons of history have proven that if the two are well combined, the socialist construction cause will develop smoothly; If the combination is not good, the socialist construction cause will suffer setbacks. During the Cultural Revolution, the philosophy of workers, peasants, and soldiers was politicized with philosophy, deviating from the fundamental principle of integrating theory with practice, falling into the quagmire of vulgarization and obscuring the true spirit of Marxist philosophy. Therefore, to concretize Marxism in China and make it carry the necessary Chinese characteristics in every manifestation, that is to say, to apply it according to the characteristics of China has become a problem that the entire party urgently needs to understand and solve

#### **3.2. Search for binding points and specific forms**

There are at least two integration points in achieving the popularization of Chinese Marxist philosophy: firstly, China's excellent traditional culture. This is an inheritance of history and a spiritual home shared by the Chinese people. When combining Marxist philosophy with excellent traditional Chinese culture and promoting it to the people, profound philosophical principles are easily understood and grasped by the people. The second is to combine with the needs of the people. Only the methodology of historical structure is the true Marxist methodology. Without the methodology of historical structure, there can be no adherence to and development of Marxism. Whether it is using the "historical proactive methodology" to explain the critical spirit of Marxism or using the "historical structural methodology" to explain the scientific character of Marxism, the theoretical intention of Western Marxists is to restore the overall principles of Marxism, make theory closer to reality, and find a more powerful ideological weapon to solve current social and practical problems. For China, the needs of the country are the fundamental interests of the people. As a researcher and propagandist of philosophy, we must pay attention to the difficulties and confusions in the material life and spiritual needs of the people, provide philosophical answers and guidance, arouse psychological resonance among the people, and make them more believe in Marxism, using it as a scientific worldview and methodology to understand and transform the world.

These two connection points are interrelated and inseparable.

### 3.3. Follow the law

The popularization of China's Marxist philosophy is not based on the previous book propaganda, and it should not be a timely work, otherwise it will become rigid and stifle the vitality and vigor of Marxist philosophy. Therefore, from this point of view, the popularization of philosophy can't be done alone, and it can't be the original book, which can improve the theoretical level of China's Marxist philosophy. At the same time, the developed Marxist philosophy in China is more closely related to the actual needs of the people and is more conducive to popularization. In social real life, "personality" is the dynamic mechanism that leads people's life energy to a certain direction. Personality is not the sum of a person's behavior characteristics, but the internal driving force to promote people's behavior. Just as everyone has his own personality, every society has its own "social personality". The role of social character is to cultivate and channel people's life energy and promote the orderly development of society. We should follow the law of people's understanding and the law of things' development, and correctly handle the three relations, as shown in Figure 2.

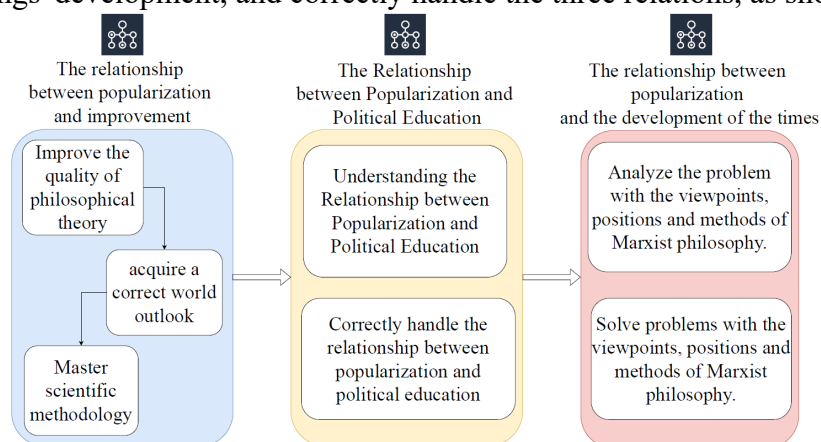


Figure 2 Follows the law of people's understanding and the law of things' development

In the process of learning, practicing and reforming, intellectuals have a brand-new understanding of China's Marxist philosophy, and have an academic debate on some major issues in the socialist revolution and construction and some basic viewpoints of Marxist philosophy. According to the characteristics of today's era, we should solve the problems that people are most concerned about, such as harmonious society, financial crisis, and the "China model" that is heated abroad, so as to keep pace with the times and share the common destiny with the people.

### 4. Conclusions

In summary, in the eyes of many Western Marxists, if historical materialism cannot keep up with the pace of changes in the times and is detached from living social practice, it cannot guide the revolutionary practice activities of socialism, and will be shelved by people and become a rigid dogma. When we criticize these issues mentioned above, we are all putting them out of context and not realizing that the emergence of these problems is mainly due to serious flaws in our theoretical research, apart from political factors. The changes of the times have raised too many theoretical issues, such as human subjectivity, the interaction between subject and object, human alienation, human irrationality, social ideology, a new understanding of capitalism, the historical role of the proletariat, and the path of future social change. His political economic theory provides us with a principle composed of four links: production, distribution, exchange, and consumption. Marx's concept of justice actually covers every aspect of his economic analysis and is reflected in a holistic way of thinking. In the application of Marxist historical materialism in contemporary historical research, it can adhere to both the class oriented party spirit principle of Marxist philosophy and the scientific character of Marxist philosophy, improve the ideological and theoretical level of the people, and thus achieve the goal of distinguishing right from wrong and solving problems.

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