

An Exploration on the Basic Point of Ethical Theory in Economic and Philosophical Manuscripts of 1844

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Abstract

At present, there are many views on the interpretation of Economic and Philosophical Manuscripts of 1844 in China, but there is a lack of exploration on the basic point of ethical theory. The analysis of the objectiveness theory, the subjectivity of the essential power of objectivity and the non-existence of the non-object in Economic and Philosophical Manuscripts of 1844 should be the basic point for the exploration of ethical theory.

Keywords

Economic and Philosophical Manuscripts of 1844; objectiveness; ethical theory; basic point.

1. Introduction

Economic and Philosophical Manuscripts of 1844 (hereafter this text will be referred to as *The Manuscript*) is one of the classic works of Marxism. It is known as the classic text reflecting Marx's ethical thought. It is the "birthplace of Marx's correct outlook on world and life" [1]. There are also a lot of research and interpretation of its ethical dimension in domestic academic circle, which is of great benefit to the in-depth understanding of *The Manuscript*. These different interpretations make people have to get rid of the "dazzling flowers" and return to the original source to ask the fundamental question of ethical theory, namely, the exploration of the basic point.

2. Academic Interpretation: The Colorful Ethical Vision Lacks the Exploration of Ethical Basic Point

At present, the interpretation of *The Manuscript* from the perspective of ethics hasn't been beyond the summary of Professor Li Peichao in Hunan Normal University. The relevant interpretation mainly focuses on economic ethics, ecological ethics, bioethics, gender and morality. The exploration of these horizons is undoubtedly helpful to the understanding of the manuscript itself, while few people have discussed the basic point. Professor Li's paper points out that it is reasonable to interpret Marx's ethical thought from the perspective of Marx's whole ethical thought and the whole content of *The Manuscript* [1]. If Professor Li put the interpretation of the ethical thought of the manuscript under a holistic framework, this paper mainly discusses what is the central point of the overall framework, that is, the core base point. This point is also clearly pointed out in the manuscript.

3. The Basic Point of Ethical Theory: The Subjectivity of the Essential Power of Object and the Existence of Non-object is Non Existence

There is no doubt that there are rich original ideas in *The Manuscript*, which is worth exploring. One of the shining stars is the interpretation of the theory of objectivity. The theory of objectiveness explains the foundation of ethics from the essential relationship. Because the

significance of ethics itself is to explore the performance of people in the relationship. The following focuses on the analysis of *The Manuscript* in the object theory.

3.1. The Relationship between Man and Himself becomes the Object Relationship Only through his Relationship with Others

In the “labor alienation and private property” part of *The Manuscript* discusses the fourth stipulation of alienation, that is, the alienation between people. It is pointed out that the relationship between man and himself can only become the objective and realistic relationship to him through his relationship with others [2]. And the same meaning was specially emphasized by Marx after that. It can be said that in the whole process of examining alienation, Marx talked about the living state of human beings. After dialyzing the first three provisions of alienation, Marx concluded that “the direct result is that people are different from each other”, that is, the relationship between each person is alienated, so it is “the essence of human beings is different from that of human beings”. If Marx's analysis here only uncovers the real situation of everyone in the national economy at that time and exposes the darkness, but if only exposing the dark curtain without pointing out the way, it is not the performance of a thinker, revolutionist and person actively engaged in human life who is interested in human liberation. After the analysis, Marx included the above three provisions of alienation, with a sense of historical penetration: “the relationship between man and himself only through his relationship with others can become an objective and realistic relationship for him.” [2] In addition to admiring Marx's amazing insight, we can't help but admire the relationship between object and the thread of human's essential power. This sentence shows that objectiveness exists as a kind of relationship, and only this kind of relationship, that is, object relationship, is realistic. The reality of man lies in the existence of this relationship. If a person wants to represent and then confirm his own reality, it must be realized through this relationship. Marx pointed out that the objective relationship to be adopted is the relationship between people and others.

Here we can see that Marx just grasped one end of the thread and pointed out that the reality of human beings lies in the objective relationship between people and others. If we look forward to the future again, the reality of human beings is more than the relationship between people and others? The reality of its subject is not only human? Beyond this thread, there are more extensive and deeper theories worth exploring, which are explained in the later part of *The Manuscript*.

3.2. The Object becomes Man Himself, and Man Realizes Objectification

The fourth point of “private property and communism” in the manuscript can be said to be a scattering expansion of the theory of human objectivity. The object of the theory of human being's objectiveness is not limited to others —— “any kind of human relationship between man and the world”, and any relationship with human can be the embodiment of objectiveness. In addition, in this part, the relationship between people and objects is analyzed in detail and deeply. The conclusion is: the object becomes the person himself, the person realizes the objectification, the object and the person are integrated. Marx argued that “... to him, all objects become the objectification of himself, the object of confirming and realizing his personality, and his object, that is to say, the object becomes himself.” [3] So how did this happen? It is realized through the expansion of object relationship.

“Any human relationship in the world is through their own object relationship, that is, through their own relationship with the object, the possession of the object, the possession of human reality It's human activity and human passivity...” [4]. The meaning of “possession” here is not to forcibly and arbitrarily occupy possession, but to act in a human way, that is to say, it is essentially a human activity with the object in a practical way. The “passivity” here is not purely passive, which contains the object in the way of its own accord with the essential needs of

human beings. Therefore, Marx said, "passive" in the private property sublation, perform as a kind of enjoyment. Here a key point is revealed: the object must be my object and the object of human beings, that is, "only when the object becomes the object of human beings or the object of human beings, can one not lose himself in his own object." [3] It emphasizes the characteristics of the object itself: the object is not arbitrary, random and blind, but targeted and purposeful. Only when there is a real relationship with man, it can he become an object.

Only the person who becomes the object can become the object of human beings, which is the restriction of the object from the perspective of the object as the object. At the same time, Marx thinks that the object of the object, namely the object itself, has a tendency of self-reliance, and there is a law that does not change with the will of human beings. This self-reliance tendency and regularity reflect its own uniqueness, and it is this uniqueness makes it possible to become the object of subject man, and to represent and confirm the essential power of human being. If the objective objects are the same, the subject that can be represented will be the same, which will inevitably lead to the reality of pure, abstract and no content. Similarly, the objective reality and uniqueness of the object also reflect the unique essential power of the subject, that is, human beings. Therefore, talents are concrete, realistic, perceptual and living people. "How the object becomes his object to him depends on the nature of the object and the nature of the essential force corresponding to it." [3] As far as the subject is concerned, "it (object) can only exist for me as my essential power as a kind of subjective ability exists for itself" [5]. In other words, from the perspective of human beings, if we want to recognize the objective reality of the object, we must admit that the object itself has the mobility and regularity which is not transferred by human will. To recognize this point is to recognize the uniqueness of the object and the reality of the object. We can't just be the people whose objects become objects. In this process, people themselves are also objectified and become objects of objects. In terms of the two-way restriction and confirmation between the object and the self, it shows that the object and the subject have the characteristics of mutual self-identity and mutual verification. "It is the stipulation of this relationship that forms a special and realistic positive way." [3] This special and realistic way of affirmation can confirm the essential power of the subject, that is to say, the real existence of the subject. "The particularity of each essential force is exactly the unique nature of this essential force, and therefore its unique way of objectification, its unique way of being objective, realistic and living. Therefore, people affirm themselves in the object world not only through thinking, but also with all their feelings." [5]

In the mutual restriction and confirmation between objects and people, the relationship between objects and people is realized, which makes the objects show the characteristics of human beings and the characteristics of objects. Therefore, when an object becomes an object-oriented person, man himself realizes objectification. "On the one hand, with the objective reality in society, it becomes the reality of human's essential power everywhere, and becomes the reality of human's own essential power. In other words, the object becomes himself..." [3] This blend of relations is characteristic of communism.

This theory can be said to point through the essence of ethical theory: in the existence of relational, human beings should not only represent themselves but also confirm themselves, It can't be separated from the relationship of objects, which is influenced by the objects as well as the objects. The best state of this kind of separation and combination is to achieve the state of harmony between human beings and objects and the integration of things and me. The ethical embodiment of this is that nature develops harmoniously almost naturally. Just as Bian Zhilin, a poet of the new moon school, artistically depicts the scenery: you stand on the bridge to see the scenery, and the people who see the scenery look at you upstairs. The moon decorates your window, you decorate other people's dreams. This kind of mutual objectivity is also a necessity. It can be said that Marx is here in the exploration and excavation of the relationship between objects and people, that man must be represented in the object and object activities, and then

confirm himself, and draw the conclusion of "essential power" cautiously. In other words, Marx has such a question, where is the root of the existence of objectivity? This is an exploration of the foundation of ethical theory. Marx completed this theoretical exploration in the critique of Hegel's dialectics.

3.3. The Essence of the Object, The Subjectivity of the Power, and the Non-object being is the Non-existence

If we say that in the part of alienated labor and private property, Marx grasped one thread of the objective theory, while in the part of private property and communism, Marx grasped the other end of the line, that is, people and objects comprehensively, realistically and sensibly confirm themselves, and the mutual essential strength becomes reality. Under what circumstances will this happen? Only when private property is sublated, that is, in a real communist society. There are two ends, one is the preliminary study of ethical theory, the other is the ideal ethical realm. What is the whole process between these two ends? Marx's investigation of this process is completed in the section of critique of Hegel's dialectics and philosophy as a whole in the manuscript, through the criticism of Hegel's phenomenology of spirit, mainly through the criticism of the article that the externalization of self-consciousness is set as the materiality. He grasped the essential points of the process from the initial exploration to the ideal state, and came to an exciting conclusion: "the subjectivity of the essential power of the object" [6] and "the non-object existence is the non-existence" [7] It is true that Hegel's speculative theory is limited under the rule of the "absolute spirit" of his preset expectation. Therefore, Hegel thinks that the activities of consciousness from the beginning to the end are only the link of returning to self-consciousness and going to the "absolute spirit". Marx pointed out that Hegel's pure speculative features are non-content, abstract and unrealistic. However, he criticized the process of consciousness returning to self-consciousness, that is, the externalization of consciousness into material nature, and then characterized and confirmed the existence of consciousness itself, and then sublated the material nature and returned to consciousness itself. Hegel thought it was a "process of alienation and sublation of alienation". Marx agreed with the deduction of the process, objectively and calmly pointed out that this is the process of objectification, but Hegel's objectification subject is the brain without body, which is subject to the uniqueness of "absolute spirit", so it is alienation. Marx critically absorbed the rational component of Alienation -- objectification, and reformed materialism.

"..... Setting is not the subject; it is the subjectivity of the objective essential power, so the activities of these essential forces must also be the activities of the object." [6] What this sentence wants to clarify is to absorb and deepen the rational elements of Hegel. What it points out is objectiveness, that is to say, it is characterized by objects and then confirm their existence. The whole process is the realization of essential power, which is inevitable. It is precisely because of the inevitability of this kind of essential power, that is to say, to represent and confirm oneself by the object that truly belongs to itself. The inevitability of this intrinsic requirement is embodied in subjectivity. Therefore, "the activities of these essential forces must also be the activities of objects". So what is the bearing object of subjectivity? Here is no longer Hegel's pure thinking and pure consciousness, but "realistic, physical, standing on the solid round earth, exhaling and inhaling all natural forces." [6]

What Marx emphasizes here is "the essential power of objectiveness". In critically absorbing Hegel's reasonable points and examining the theory of alienated labor and analyzing communism, Marx has come to the conclusion that objectiveness is an essential force of human beings, and the resulting activities are objective activities. This kind of activity inevitably brings about the reaction of the relationship between people and objects, which is the foundation of ethical theory.

In the following passage, Marx further elaborated from two aspects: "man is the direct natural existence" and "man is not only the natural existence, but also the natural existence of man" [6], that is, from the two aspects of man as a natural being and man as a social being. In this, Marx also more brilliantly expressed that the relationship between people and objects is not directly, simply and mechanically becoming objects, but the realization of the relationship of objectivity in the interaction, activity and passivity. In the part of expounding that "man is the natural existence directly", Marx further extended it to all existing things, and concluded that "if an existence does not have its own nature outside itself, it is not a natural existence and cannot participate in the life of nature non-objective existence is non-existence." [6]

As a result, Marx completed the core task of the theory of objectiveness. The existence of non-objectiveness is non-existence, and objectiveness is an activity that must be expanded as an object in reality as the essential power of the subject. The process and conclusion of this analysis laid a solid theoretical foundation for ethical exploration.

4. Further Space Worth Exploring

In the "private property and communism" part of the manuscript, Marx's scattered exposition of the object theory provides rich reference for the exploration of the basic point of ethical theory, such as the uniqueness of the object representation, the object becomes the object of the person, and so on, After that, Marx further explored the mechanism of mutual representation and confirmation between objects and people, that is, the interpretation of sense ontology, which also has enlightenment significance to the exploration of ethical theory. Therefore, Marx came to a conclusion that "the first object of man" is nature and sensibility [8]. This is certainly exciting. The nature of human beings, "nature is man's inorganic body", and realistic human beings inevitably require the possession of man and others, man and nature, and man's self-perception, which interact and interweave with each other and are not completely separated. So since there is the first object, is there a second object? I think it may exist. The second possible target is the social community, such as units, political parties, nationalities, countries, etc. The corresponding exploration cannot be limited to the content of the manuscript.

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