

An Exploration of Marxist Morality in the Anti-Dühring Doctrine

Linchen Shen

College of Marxism, Xinjiang University, Urumqi, 830046, China

Abstract

On the basis of criticizing Dühring's eclecticism in his Anti-Dühring, Engels scientifically and systematically discussed Marxist morality from historical materialism, and elaborated on the roots, basic connotation and fundamental characteristics of morality. It is of far-reaching practical significance to analyze the thesis on moral thought in the Anti-Dühring, to grasp its rich connotation, to deeply understand its contemporary value, and to use it to guide the practice of moral construction in contemporary China, to improve the moral quality of all people, and to strengthen the construction of spiritual civilization in the new era.

Keywords

Engels; Anti-Dühring Doctrine; Marxist morality; Contemporary value.

1. Introduction

Morality is the value scale that regulates people's behavior and is the cornerstone to ensure the orderly development of society. Morality has always had an important influence in the development of individuals, society and the country. Good social morality is a powerful spiritual force to promote national wealth and strength and perpetuate national prosperity. Exploring Marxist morality, taking communist morality as the value guide, keeping pace with the times and leading with socialist core values, promoting the progress of social civilization, guiding and educating citizens to be people with noble moral sentiments, is conducive to promoting the free and comprehensive development of people and pushing the development of social civilization to a new level. Good social virtue is conducive to the formation of an excellent social climate, help to unite the centripetal force of the whole people, more convenient for people's ideological and moral inculcation, thus forming a good social cycle for themselves and the people around them.

2. Engels' Criticism of Dühring's Metaphysical Morality in Anti-Dühring

Dühring believed that "the final and ultimate truth" is eternal, so morality also has eternal properties, and that morality is not shackled by time and space, but completely transcends this boundary and is applicable to any age and any nation, which is obviously an absurd and idealistic view. Engels analyzed the methodological errors of Dühring's moral theory and pointed out that Dühring was using the nihilism against morality to confuse the finiteness of individual cognitive ability and the infinity of human thinking, treating the knowledge that human beings have discovered and known as absolute and eternal truth; Dühring did not understand that the social and real human cognitive ability, practical activity and practice are dialectically related. Instead of acknowledging that human cognition is historical and relative, he cites some common knowledge and treats these basic common knowledge and experience as absolute truths, thinking that these experiences and a priori things are eternal and unchanging truths, completely ignoring the fact that the assertions of natural and social sciences.

Dühring's view that good and evil are absolute opposites, that good is always good and vice versa, is clearly an idealistic view of morality, a completely empty conjecture. Engels pointed out that morality is not static in terms of its type and content, and that the moral content contained in different kinds of attributes is constantly changing with the development of society, and is the product of a certain historical stage at that time, and that these morals are the reflection of the development of society under historical conditions at different stages of development in the past, present and future, and each plays a different role at each stage. Whatever the position of morality, its root is also the product of the social economy under the historical conditions of the time. The old philosophers before Marx and Engels were limited by the historical conditions of their time and did not reach a correct conclusion about the nature of morality. Marx and Engels, on the other hand, explained the principle that social existence determines social consciousness in the context of real people in real social practice activities, abandoned the old philosophical view of moral essence, and put moral essence on a scientific and practical basis. The essence of morality is a superstructure of ideas, i.e., as a special social ideology that reacts to the economic base. Any social morality must be limited by the historical conditions of the time and evolve with the socio-historical development. The fundamental property of morality as a social ideology is the general essence of morality; the intrinsic nature of morality that distinguishes it from other social consciousness is the special essence of morality; the essence of morality in a deeper sense is the inevitability and regularity of the spiritual activities of human social practice, and these inevitability and regularity become the social norms that people follow together.

3. Engels' Scientific Elaboration of Marxist Morality in the Anti-Dühring

3.1. Morality Is A Product of Socio-Economic Conditions

"All previous moralism is in the final analysis a product of the socio-economic conditions of the time" [1]. Morality arises in the relations between people and the social relations formed on this basis, and the emergence of human moral concepts is inextricably related to material production and social interaction, and it is impossible to consider and study moral concepts without the factors of material production and exchange [2]. The roots of morality have to be traced to the reality of people's social and material production life. The process of labor led to the complete separation of man and animal, and the creation of language, which further promoted the evolution of the ape brain to the human brain; the key to this transition was human labor, which, with the continuous innovation of production tools, led to the creation of the social division of labor, which intensified the creation and development of social consciousness. The emergence of consciousness and language provides sufficient subjective and objective conditions for the emergence of social consciousness, and these conditions create sufficient and fertile soil for the emergence of morality, in which the roots of morality emerge along with the development of human society. Therefore, in essence, labor is the most direct source of morality. In the process of material production activities and interactions, people are bound to produce various relationships, and the further sharpening of these relationships will lead to conflicts. The morality is a certain reflection of these habits. Moral concepts do not arise out of thin air, but must be explored in the socio-economic context in which it depends, and in the economic relations of social development under historical conditions.

3.2. Superstructure Is the Essence of Morality

Social consciousness does not exist from the very beginning, so morality does not always exist, but appears along with the development of social consciousness and has certain internal development laws. Engels pointed out that morality is a specific product of the "socio-economic conditions" of people's "economic relations of production and exchange". Morality, as a kind of high-level conscious social consciousness, is essentially different from political, philosophical,

legal, religious and other social ideologies, and has its own unique nature and inherent prescriptiveness, that is, morality regulates and restrains the contradictions existing between people, society and society in social relations.

The morality of a certain period of time may be ahead of or behind the level of social and economic development at that time, and the backward morality will be in conflict with the advanced morality, in order to solve the conflict between the old morality and the new morality, it is necessary to struggle, and the old morality in the struggle will not die easily. Morality is class-based, historical, and constantly changing with the process of human social development. The morality of class society is class-based. Historically, the morality of the slave class, feudalism, and capitalism are all exploitative morality of the ruling class that exploits and oppresses the majority of the ruled class, and are used to enslave and bind the masses of people. Socialist morality is different from the exploitative and class-based morality of the past. It is the most progressive morality in the history of human society, with the purpose of serving the people wholeheartedly, taking collectivism as its principle, putting egoism after the state and society, respecting the value orientation and interest needs of people, and focusing on the free and comprehensive development of people.

4. The Contemporary Value of Marxist Morality

Today's world is a modern society with civilization development, morality is also developed at all levels, the moral situation of the whole society shows a good development trend, but we should also see that there are still many bad moral problems in society, "some places and some areas of moral misconduct exist to varying degrees"[3], in-depth study of the rich connotation of the Marxist concept of morality, for strengthening the moral construction of the whole people, improve the ideological and political consciousness of the people, civilization connotation has important significance.

4.1. Insist on the Unity of Marxist Morality as the Guide and Socialist Core Values as the Leader

A country is prosperous when it contains morality, and a person is established when he or she has morality. With the vertical development of globalization and the horizontal development of China's reform and opening up, our society is in a critical period of development, and it is of great significance to enhance the moral literacy of all people to strengthen the construction of spiritual civilization in the new era and consolidate the ideological and moral foundation of all people. "Every cultural advance is a step towards freedom"[4]. Morality plays an increasingly important role in the progress of civilization and the harmonious development of society today. The Marxist concept of morality provides the methodology for moral development in the new era, and the socialist core values specifically expound the reasonable core of Marxism on morality and values, which is the yardstick for strengthening moral construction and scientifically establishing the pursuit of values. It is necessary to adhere to the unity of Marxist morality as the guide and socialist core values as the leader, to continuously promote the all-round development of people, to carry forward and practice socialist core values, to cultivate the correct value identity of citizens, to combine them with moral practice, and to form a good moral ethos and a common code of daily conduct for people to follow.

4.2. Insist on Keeping Up with the Times and Continuously Strengthening the Ideological and Moral Construction

Keeping up with the times and constantly strengthening the ideological and moral construction, socialist morality can maintain its advanced nature. The people's aspiration for a better life is not only materially rich, but also spiritually enriched. The simultaneous and coordinated construction of social morality and law is a complex system project, and the state should

organically combine morality and law, moral rule and rule of law, moral construction and legal construction on the same footing, so that they can really become fruitful basic strategies for governing the country. Legal means can supplement the shortage of moral means in social functions, and morality has a strong public opinion power, which can inspire people's noble moral sentiments and inspire their consciousness. "As long as the Chinese people pursue a beautiful and noble moral state from generation to generation, our nation will always be full of hope"[5]. Strengthening ideological and moral construction in the new era is of great significance for consolidating the common ideological foundation of the unity and struggle of the entire Party and the people of all nationalities, gathering social consensus, establishing common ideals and lofty ideals, and achieving the great rejuvenation of the Chinese nation.

References

- [1] Marx, Engels: Selected Works of Marx and Engels, Vol.3(People's Publishing House, China 2012).p.471.
- [2] Mingsheng Chen. A Study of Engels' Moral View (MS. ,Yunnan Normal University, China 2014)
- [3] The CPC Central Committee and the State Council issued an outline for the implementation of civic morality in the new era [N]. People's Daily, 2019-10-28(001).
- [4] Engels.: The Anti-Dühring Doctrine (People's Publishing House, China 2018).p.121.
- [5] Xi Jinping: Xi Jinping talks about governance (Beijing Foreign Language Press, China 2014).p.106.