

Decoding the Social Power of Ideology

-- The Reinterpretation of German Ideology

Xue Yang, Yi Luo

Master candidate of Basic Principles of Marxism, College of Marxism, Sichuan Agricultural University, Sichuan, China

Abstract

In German Ideology, Marx discussed the origin and development of ideology around social power. Ideology comes from the alienation of perceptual consciousness produced in people's material communication. It and social power are the two results of spontaneous division of labor, which are inseparable. Therefore, ideology is essentially the conceptual expression of the social power relationship between people. Although Marx did not clearly put forward the relationship between ideology and the reproduction of social power, ideology is rooted in people's social existence. On the one hand, it changes people's activities, on the other hand, it is also changed by activities. Therefore, ideology can be understood as a means of maintaining and reproducing the social power of the ruling class. The purpose of Marx's clarification of ideology is to criticize the concept and category ideology that has cleaned the perceptual power, reveal the social power relationship it covers, let history show its original face without a priori, and finally, the current ideological shackles can be broken through realistic movement.

Keywords

Consciousness; Ideology; Social power.

1. Introduction

Marx believes that the whole criticism of German philosophy from Strauss to Steiner is only limited to the criticism of religious ideas. The real world is considered to be a product of and governed by the world of ideas. Thus, the struggles of the German philosophers were confined to the realm of pure thought and did not touch social reality. "They have only words against them; Since they are only against the word of the world, they are by no means against the existing world of reality [7]." These philosophers did not stray from the base of Hegelian philosophy to consider the connection between philosophy and reality, and the connection between their criticism and the material environment. Therefore, we must be "standing on the position of outside Germany" expounds source idea of reality, starting from the actual life of people, analyzes on the origins and development of ideology, we must criticize the abstract ideology, which seems to have independent life without the economic foundation and social existence of certain social development, and reveal the social relations behind it, so that history appears as it is.

Academics on the ideology of the text study is rich, mainly according to the classic texts of Marx and Engels ideology concept, theory of ideology and ideological criticism to analyze, but based on "German ideology" text, from the Angle of social power, illustrates the ideology of study is relatively rare, Only Pan Le [1] and Ge Shiguo [2] were slightly involved in the study of related issues, but they did not systematically discuss them. "The concept of 'social power' is the keystone of the edifice of historical materialism [3]." Marx just discovered the power system in civil society and revealed the essence of social power of capital. Therefore, it is necessary to

reinterpret ideology from the perspective of social power, and expound in detail the origin, essence, purpose and ultimate direction of ideology centering on Marx's thought of social power.

2. Marx's Thought of Social Rights

In the period of *Rheinische Zeitung*, Marx found that the application of Hegel's principle of legal philosophy could not explain the problems related to material interests in real life. Generally speaking, law should represent universal rights, be realistic and reasonable. However, in real life, the historical rights formed by farmers were deprived by legislation presided over by the bourgeoisie, and the natural law deviated from the material interests in the real world, and this contradiction could not be solved by revising existing laws. The actual law is just a means to safeguard the private interests of the bourgeoisie, which shows rationality under the argument of Hegel's philosophy of law and represents the universal rights through the false community of the state. In the face of private interests, law loses its binding force, and the state becomes a tool to safeguard private interests. Once someone touches this interest, he will be accused of violating the law and the general interest. Since the hope of private interest is so clearly exposed here, and is reducing the state to the level of private interest, how can it not be concluded that private interest, which represents the hope and is bound to reduce the state to the level of thought of private interest? Any modern state, however contrary to its conception, is compelled to exclaim that your ways are not my ways, and your ideas are not my thoughts, when it comes to the practical use of this legislative power." The actual law is actually the privilege of the bourgeoisie, and the essence of the privilege is private interests. By this time Marx had realized that the relationship of material interests and the struggle for material interests could not be explained by rational law. The principle that drives people to act is not rational laws, but irrational material interests. Because when it comes to material interests, there will be confrontation and conflict. "There is nothing more practical in the world than to destroy one's enemies." How can confrontation and conflict in the real world be rational? Therefore, material interests come from before reason, that is, the realm of irrationality.

Found in the irrational root material benefits, driven Marx began a critique of Hegel's law philosophy analysis, the analysis of this important result: like a material interest, structure, the relationship between law and politics, there is also an irrational root [3], the irrational realm is the civil society (range) should be more accurate. Thus, the task becomes an analysis of civil society, but in the process of which Marx finds that the object of his study is a series of rational economic categories, such as capital. However, civil society as a perceptual communication form between people should not be composed of a series of categories and logic, because once so, civil society can only be rational. Therefore, we need to criticism of ideological concept or category, back to the fact itself before conception, category, the civil society before reduction for rational relationship of material life, and social power relations is the first manifestation of the relationship between material life, the power of the law, political power is a social power is derived. The relationship between law and the form of state is based on the power relationship between some people and others. This power relationship is not dominated or dominated in concept, but perceptual power in real life. One cannot realize the power to dominate others in real life by thinking about making others do things in one's mind. Therefore, this power relationship must be objective and independent of one's will, and everyone is governed by it, but does not know it. "They know nothing of the origin and development of this power; So that they are no longer able to harness it, on the contrary, it now passes through a unique series of stages in its development, in which it does not depend on, but governs, the will and action of men. [8]"

Marx broke through the fog of ideology, such as concept and category, and discovered the social power system operating in civil society. Ideology is accompanied by social power, and it is the

result of the process of spontaneous division of labor in two aspects. It is social power relations that are embodied behind ideology.

3. The Origin of Ideology

3.1. Perceptual Awareness of Practice

To explore the source of ideology, we need to go deep into the long river of human history. Because "ideology itself is only one aspect of this history." Thus, after a general critique of German ideology in the first chapter of volume I, Marx first addressed the premise of history, that is, actual individuals and their activities. "We begin with premises which are not arbitrary or dogmatic, but practical premises which can only be set aside in imagination. These are actual individuals, their activities and their material conditions of life, both those they have and those created by their own activities. [9]" Realistic individuals and their activities are undoubtedly the premise of all human history. It is when people began to produce their means of living, that is, when they began to work, that man and animals were separated and human history began. People have history because they have to produce their lives and they have to do it in a certain way: this is conditioned by their physical organization, just as it is conditioned by their consciousness [10]. History is man's history, and consciousness is man's consciousness. When people produce their material life itself, they also produce consciousness. This kind of production is not only for people's biological existence, but also reflects people's social existence to a greater extent. In other words, men are consistent with their production, both with the products they produce and with the way they produce, and it is in material production and life that man becomes himself. Thus, the production of consciousness is initially directly "interwoven with people's material activities, with people's material intercourse, and with the language of real life. [11]" Consciousness did not begin as pure consciousness, but as a result of the exigencies of human relations. My relation to what is my consciousness, and animals cannot have relation to what and therefore have no consciousness. Consciousness is human consciousness, which originates from and is restricted by people's real life. "It is not consciousness that determines life, but life that determines consciousness." Consciousness is the product of perceptual communication between people in real life, so it is practical and perceptual.

3.2. Alienation of Perceptual Consciousness

According to Marx, the development of consciousness mainly goes through three stages. The first stage is awareness of the environment and other things. "Consciousness is at first only a consciousness of the immediate and perceptible environment, a consciousness in the narrow connection between other people and other things other than the individual who begins to become aware of himself. [11]" At this stage, man's awareness of nature is still "a purely animal consciousness", because nature has not been changed by the course of history, and "man's relation to nature is exactly the same as that of animals to nature". As productivity grew, people "began to realize that they had to interact with the individuals around them, that they were always living in society." This is the second stage of consciousness, but it is still "pure herd consciousness", when "man is different from the sheep only in that his consciousness takes the place of his instinct, or his instinct is the instinct that is realized." With the improvement of social production efficiency, the growth of people's needs and the increase of population, the consciousness of group accumulation has been further improved, and the division of labor has also developed at the same time. At first, the division of labor was just the division of labor between men and women. Later, due to physical strength, need, contingency and other factors, it came into being spontaneously, and "it really became the division of labor when material labor and spiritual labor were separated." This separation makes it possible for ideology to be

idealized, at the same time, the emergence of ideologues also created conditions for the rise of consciousness to ideology.

At this point the development of consciousness enters the third stage, "from which consciousness can realistically imagine that it is something different from consciousness in existing practice; It can actually imagine something without imagining something that actually exists. It is then that consciousness breaks away from the world and constructs' pure 'theories, theology, philosophy, morality, etc. [11]" The division of labor causes the alienation of human perceptual existence, and makes people's consciousness alienated into ideology. Ideologues construct pure theories in their minds with theological and speculative language, and make ideology separate from the real world and show the appearance of independence. Ideology is relatively independent from people's material life, indicating that mankind has changed from the rule of nature to the rule of man to man, that is, the power relationship between people.

4. First, The Nature of Ideology

4.1. Ideology and Social Power Are Two Sides of the Same Process

Due to the continuous development of productive forces and division of labor, the practical and perceptual consciousness rooted in people's real life is alienated into ideology. "The division of labor makes it not only possible but a reality that mental and material activities, enjoyment and labor, production and consumption are shared among different individuals. [12]" The unequal distribution of labor and its products, i.e., ownership, appeared at the same time when spirit and matter were no longer intertwined and the perceptual society began to split. "Ownership is the domination of the labor force of others", that is, social power. "The joint activity of different individuals conditioned by the division of labor produces a social force, that is, multiplied productivity. [13]" The essential power of objectivity of individuals who submit to the division of labor in their communication is alienated into "some alien and coercive force outside them." This power, social power, does not depend on people's will and behavior but governs their activities. The origin of social power is spontaneous division of labor. "So long as the division of labor is not voluntary, but natural, man's own activity becomes to him an alien and antagonistic force, which oppresses him, rather than he controls it. [13]" The division of labor causes the alienation of the essential power of human objectivity and forms the kind of power of social power. With the expansion of communication and the further development of division of labor, individuals are increasingly under the control of social power, which is alien to them. People are increasingly separated and even confronted with each other. This kind of power is also the realistic source of class. Class itself is a dominant material power, and class struggle is essentially fighting for the dominant position in the power relationship. It can be concluded that spontaneous division of labor makes: on the one hand, the alienation of the essential power of man's object becomes the power that dominates every individual's perceptual existence, namely, social power. On the other hand, with the development of division of labor, the consciousness generated by interpersonal emotional communication is alienated from the real world with relatively independent ideology. Social power relation and ideology are two results caused by spontaneous division of labor and they are inseparable symbiotic relations.

4.2. Ideology Is the Expression of Social Power

With the development of division of labor and private ownership, there is a contradiction between individual interests and common interests. "It is precisely because of this contradiction between special interests and common interests that the common interest takes the form of an independent state separated from the actual individual interests and the interests of the whole, and at the same time takes the form of an illusory community. [14]" The

contradictions and conflicts between special interests and common interests lead to the establishment of the state as an illusory community, and the class holding power performs the functions of the state in order to actually interfere and restrain the class struggle through the illusory universal interest of the state. All the struggles within states, be they democracies, aristocracies, or monarchies, are but illusory forms of struggle against each other; but the real struggle is in the illusory form of community, the sensuous conflict between men for dominance in the relations of power. But this kind of power relation does not show in reality, but by the dominant class in the power relation -- ruling class through the concept, the power relation in the form of non-power relation, namely ideology. "The conditions under which certain productive forces can be utilized are the conditions under which certain classes of society govern, and the social power of that class arising from the state of its property is every time expressed in the corresponding form of the state as a practical idea. [15]" In the form of the state, the ruling class said that the special interests of the ruling class are universal and common interests, so that social power can obtain the expression of the concept, and covered up the power relations behind it. The result of this process is to wash away the perceptual power relations between people who control and are controlled and dominated and dominated behind ideology, so that it can obtain the source of rationality. Therefore, ideology is nothing more than the conceptual expression of social power.

5. The Purpose of Ideology -- The Maintenance and Reproduction of Social Power

It is the western Marxist scholar Lgorton who puts forward that ideology is the strategy to maintain and reproduce social power. Lgorton absorbed the ideological thoughts of Althusser, Williams and Gramsci, defined the connotation of ideology from the level of discourse practice, and pointed out that ideology is the field where different classes struggle for their own interests at the level of discourse, thus realizing the maintenance and reproduction of social power [4]. The author holds that although Marx did not explicitly put forward the connection between ideology and reproduction of social power, through the analysis of the concept of ideology in The German Ideology, Marx's thoughts in this period actually implied that ideology was the means of maintaining and reproduction of social power. This can be seen from the fact that ideology originates from and is restricted by social existence and its role in safeguarding the interests of the ruling class.

Ideology is the product of separation from people's material production and life, and is the 'pure' theory, theology, philosophy, morality and so on that consciousness "breaks away from the world structure." Therefore, it is relatively independent. However, when we examine consciousness from actual life, we find that even the fantasies in people's mind are the inevitable outcome of their material life process. Therefore, "morality, religion, metaphysics and other ideologies, as well as the forms of consciousness adapted to them, no longer retain the appearance of independence. [16]" Independence is only the appearance of ideology. Ideology, like consciousness, is inseparable from real life and people's material communication. It has no independent history of its own. The origin of ideology is people's social existence, but ideology and social existence are not mutually separated and opposite. As a product of social existence, consciousness is not external to social existence, but itself a part of social existence [5]. "People who develop their own material production and material communication are changing their own reality while also changing their thinking and thinking products. [16]" As a kind of spiritual power, ideology has its own logic and law of evolution and development once it comes into being. It is relatively independent and becomes an indispensable part of society in its own unique way. People living in a certain period are always in a certain ideological atmosphere, changing their own activities and being restricted by their own activities [5]. It can

be seen from this that although the relationship between ideology and reproduction of social power cannot be clearly found in Marx's text, ideology is always intertwined with people's real life because it does not exist independently and affects people's activities while being changed by real life. This essentially contains the inner connection between ideology and reproduction of social power. This point is further illustrated by Marx's description of the dominant ideology. "The dominant thought is nothing more than the conceptual expression of the dominant material relation, the dominant material relation in the form of thought. [17]" The dominant thought is the conceptual expression of the power relationship between the ruling class and the ruled class. Ideology is the ideological derivative of the dominant material relationship, and behind it is social power, which reflects the extension of the economic power of the ruling class in the ideological field. It is by establishing ideological domination that the ruling class obtains discourse hegemony and creates legitimacy basis for its class rule [2]. "Every attempt to replace the old ruling class of the new class, in order to reach own purpose had to put their own interests as the common interests of all members of society, that is to say, in the expression of the concept is: to give their ideas in the form of universality, portray them as the only rational, the thought of universal significance. [18]" In modern society, ideology expresses perceptual power, namely social power, as right in the form of law and state, and converts power relations into non-power relations to obtain rational argumentation. "The dominant individuals in these relations must, in addition to the necessity of constructing their own power into the State, give to their will, which is determined by these particular relations, the general expression of the will of the State, that is, law. [19]" Law is nothing more than the expression of the will of the ruling class. Therefore, the form of law and state is to maintain the power of the ruling class, so that all people except the ruling class are under the control of this power, and this power is constantly reproduced in ideology. Therefore, the right system of the state and the law, on the surface, is to safeguard the demonstrated rights, but in essence, it is to protect the power relations covered by the ideology of ideas, categories and so on, and to place all people in the ideological world, so that the social power can be maintained and reproduced. For example, in order to maintain their social power, some ruling classes regard freedom and equality as the universal rights of everyone. Individuals who grow up under this ideology will take freedom and equality as their inherent rights, thus influencing and changing their own activities. Once this group consensus is formed and reflected in people's activities, the ruling class successfully uses ideology to maintain and reproduce its social power.

6. Orientation of Ideology -- Criticism of Ideology

6.1. Ideological Criticism and Historical Materialism

Human history, which is based on the actual individual and material production activities, is actually covered by ideology such as ideas and categories. If these premises are not premised and clarified, it is impossible to truly understand human activities and historical reality. The critique of ideology, therefore, is to reveal the true foundations of history as they really are. "This view of history is different from the idealist view of history. Instead of looking for a certain category in each era, it always stands on the basis of real history and explains various ideological forms from the perspective of material practice rather than conceptual practice." In this sense, the criticism of ideology is actually the application of historical materialism, which makes the concepts and categories that have been cleaned out of all perceptual power appear without a priori, deprives the stipulations of concepts and categories on people, and reveals the hidden social power relations from people's actual life. "It is through the criticism of Hegel's spiritual alienation, Feuerbach's religious alienation and the alienation of labor that national economists try their best to conceal that Marx's view of historical materialism gradually mature.

When the reality of human history based on production was clearly presented to Marx, Marx found a frame of reference to criticize all ideological forms. [20]"

6.2. The Purpose of Ideological Criticism Is to Break Through the Bondage of Perceptual Experience Through Revolution

Each era ideology are the constraints of perceptual experience and boundaries of that age, ""ghost" and "chains', 'highest existence', 'concept', 'doubts obviously is a kind of isolated individuals, dialectical, spirit of the concept of performance, is his idea, about the idea of the constraints of real experience and boundaries; The modes of production of life, and the forms of intercourse associated with them, move within these limits and bounds. [12]" When the shackles of experience no longer adapt to the existing forms of communication, it needs a realistic movement -- revolution to break through. It is not Marx's ultimate goal to clarify ideology, either to criticize and ridicule German ideologues such as Feuerbach, Bruno Powell and Steiner, or to expose the falsity of ideology. Interpretation of Marx ideology's ultimate purpose is to awaken people consciously promote the progress of the society and history, and "use realistic means" to realize the human liberation of "real", the history of the social revolution is the power of the theory of the dynamic and any rather than theoretical criticism, resistance of reality can only be done through real revolution. [6]"All forms and products of consciousness cannot be destroyed by spiritual criticism..... They can be destroyed only by actually overthrowing the actual social relations from which all these idealistic fallacies arise; The motive force of history and of religion, philosophy and any other theory is revolution, not criticism. [21]" And the real revolution is to break through the bondage of the current perceptual experience, until then, people's social existence can be consistent with their own essence.

References

- [1] Pan Le. (2017). Marx's Thought of Social and Its Contemporary Meanings, Philosophical Analysis, Vol, No5, 64-75.
- [2] Ge Shiguo. (2010). Thought-type power: a functional interpretation of marx's ideology concept. Marxist studies, 000(010), 86-92.
- [3] Wang De feng. (2008). Property and Origin of Social Power-An Analysis in terms of Historical Materialism Philosophical Analysis, 000(007), 18-23.
- [4] Zhang Xiumei, Chen Haoran. (2010). Ideology: The Maintenance and Reproduction strategy of social Power -- On Eagleton's ideology. Seeker (09), 58-60. doi:10.16059/j.cnki.cn43-1008/c.2010.09.004.
- [5] Hao Baoquan. (2014). "False Consciousness" and "Conceptual Social Existence": Marx elaborates the dual logic of ideology. Scientific Socialism (01), 47-50.
- [6] Wang Lili. (2011). Ideological Criticism of Marx and Engels and its Significance -- Ideological Criticism in German Ideology. Journal of Beijing Institute of Governance (06), 73-76.
- [7] Marx and Engels Collected Works, Volume 1 [M]. (in Chinese) People's Publishing House, 2009, page 516.
- [8] Marx and Engels Collected Works, Volume 1 [M]. (in Chinese) People's Publishing House, 2009, page 538.
- [9] Marx and Engels Collected Works, Volume 1 [M]. (in Chinese) People's Publishing House, 2009, page 518.
- [10] Marx and Engels Collected Works, Volume 1 [M]. (in Chinese) People's Publishing House, 2009, page 533

- [11] Marx and Engels Collected Works, Volume 1 [M]. (in Chinese) People's Publishing House, 2009, page 524
- [12] Marx and Engels Collected Works, Volume 1 [M]. (in Chinese) People's Publishing House, 2009, page 535.
- [13] Marx and Engels Collected Works, Volume 1 [M]. (in Chinese) People's Publishing House, 2009, page 537.
- [14] Marx and Engels Collected Works, Volume 1 [M]. (in Chinese) People's Publishing House, 2009, page 536.
- [15] Marx and Engels Collected Works, Volume 1 [M]. (in Chinese) People's Publishing House, 2009, page 542.
- [16] Marx and Engels Collected Works, Volume 1 [M]. (in Chinese) People's Publishing House, 2009, page 525.
- [17] Marx and Engels Collected Works, Volume 1 [M]. (in Chinese) People's Publishing House, 2009, page 550.
- [18] Marx and Engels Collected Works, Volume 1 [M]. (in Chinese) People's Publishing House, 2009, page 552.
- [19] Marx, Engels. The Ideology of German Will: An Excerpt [M]. (in Chinese) People's Publishing House, 2003, page 99.
- [20] Yu Wujin. Ideology [M]. (in Chinese) Shanghai People's Publishing House, 1993, page 56.
- [21] Marx and Engels Collected Works, Volume 1 [M]. (in Chinese) People's Publishing House, 2009, page 544.