



CRITICISM OF FEUERBACH'S THOUGHT BY MARX AND ENGELS THROUGH THE REFLECTION ON THE TEXT OF *THE GERMAN IDEOLOGY*

Baohong Yang

Assistant Professor, College of Humanities, Xuchang Vocational Technical College, Xuchang, 461000 – China.

 <https://orcid.org/0000-0003-2003-9765> |  yangbaohong@xcitc.edu.cn

YANG, Baohong Criticism of Feuerbach's thought by Marx and Engels through the reflection on the text of The German Ideology. *Transformação: Unesp journal of philosophy, Marília*, v. 47, n. 1, e0240002, 2024.

Abstract: Feuerbach is one of the representatives of the young Hegelian. In the book *The German Ideology*, Marx analyzed the state of German ideology at that time through the comparison between materialism and idealism, and criticized him. Marx criticized Feuerbach's conception of "human nature", the limitations of materialism, his understanding of "reality" and his understanding of historical relations, starting from real people and their production. This critique laid the foundation for the development of Marxist materialist historiography.


Keywords: Hegelians. Marxism. Critique.

YANG, Baohong Crítica del pensamiento de Feuerbach por Marx y Engels a través de la reflexión sobre el texto de *La Ideología Alemana*. *Transformação: Revista de filosofia da Unesp, Marília*, v. 47, n. 1, e0240002, 2024.

Resumen: Feuerbach es uno de los representantes Del joven hegeliano. En el libro la ideología alemana, Marx analizó el estado de la ideología alemana en ese momento a través de la comparación entre materialismo e idealismo, y lo criticó. Marx criticó la concepción de Feuerbach de la "naturaleza humana", las limitaciones del materialismo, su concepción de la "realidad" y su comprensión de las relaciones históricas, partiendo de las personas reales y su producción. Esta crítica sentó las bases para el desarrollo de la historiografía materialista marxista.

Palabras clave: Hegelianos. Marxismo. Crítica.

Received: 28/04/2023 | Approved: 18/05/2023 | Published: 10/10/2023

 <https://doi.org/10.1590/0101-3173.2024.v47.n1.e0240002>



This is an open-access article distributed under the terms of the Creative Commons Attribution License.

CRITICISM OF FEUERBACH'S THOUGHT BY MARX AND ENGELS THROUGH THE REFLECTION ON THE TEXT OF *THE GERMAN IDEOLOGY*

Baohong Yang¹

INTRODUCTION

The current world is divided into two categories: the real world and the thought world, or rather the shadow one. In the vein of pure logical speculation, the German classical philosophical tradition has perpetuated this notion of the world of ideas, remaining detached from any practical application to the real world. Marx and Engels wrote *German Ideology* and, in their view, such a battle would inevitably lead Germans into a “[...] state of illusion and mental decline”, forcing them to expose their true nature and return to reality (Marx; Engels, 2003, p. 25). In addition, there is a certain difference between Marx's Materialism and Feuerbach's humanistic Materialism. Feuerbach focused on “human like” and “human nature”. He believed that the essence of consciousness is reason, will and emotion, which is different from Marx's and Engels' thought. In the formation and development of Marxist philosophical thought, Feuerbach's thought undoubtedly occupies an important position. Marx is, by no means, a Feuerbach style humanism. In criticizing religion, Marx not only affirmed Feuerbach's religious criticism, but also transcended Feuerbach and advocated the realization of freedom and freedom between people. On the one hand, Marx affirmed Feuerbach's great contribution. On the other hand, he opposed Marx's interpretation of Hegel's Dialectic in establishing scientific human studies., There are fundamental differences between Marx's and Feuerbach's “human” theory. From the perspectives of human nature and the relationship between humans and nature, Marx far surpasses Feuerbach.

The difference is that Feuerbach studies “humanoid” and “human nature”. Feuerbach believed that the distinguishing feature between humans and animals lies not only in their consciousness, but also in their awareness of the “species”, the essence of which is what he calls the nature of reason, will and emotion. Therefore, Feuerbach studied from the perspective of human society as a whole, while Marx and Engels did not pay attention to individuals. They were more concerned with distinguishing social humanity, which is contrary to Feuerbach's

¹ Assistant Professor, College of Humanities, Xuchang Vocational Technical College, Xuchang, 461000 – China. ORCID: <https://orcid.org/0000-0003-2003-9765>. E-mail: yangbaohong@xcitc.edu.cn.

description of people as more Essentialism or Mysticism. Marx believed that “[...] the essence of a person is the sum of the social relationships in which he discovers himself”, indicating that Marx did not consider human nature to be the “essence of species”. Moreover, “[...] real individuals, their activities and the material conditions of their lives [...] determine the overall configuration and evolution of the social structure, which reflects the Materialism method of Marx and Engels to study Historical materialism from the perspective of ‘real individuals’” (Marx; Engels, 2003, p. 25; Crome, 2021, p. 111).

1 RESEARCH PROCESS

1.1 THE OPPOSITION BETWEEN THE MATERIALIST VIEW AND THE IDEALISTIC

The early development of Marx's thought was a critique of German ideology and a construction of historical materialism: two sides of the same process. This process began with Hegel's view of the rational state in the *Rheinische Zeitung* and essentially ended with the “liquidation” of German thought in the German ideology. In his *German Ideology*, Marx states that “[...] consciousness is always perceived, and man's existence is his real life process (Baynes, 1928, p. 14).” This proposition reflects the interwoven relationship between Marx's “broken” ideological system and the “established” ideological system of historical materialism. Historical materialism was theoretically constructed after the overthrow of the German ideological tradition. In fact, the materialistic view of history is a revolution in Western philosophy and intellectual traditions. Its significance is that it overthrew Plato's tradition and regarded the conceptual world as the foundation of the sensory world and secular history as the confirmation of spiritual history. This thesis explores the connection between Marx's philosophical thought and the Western metaphysical tradition, centering on the *Rheinische Zeitung* - the *German Ideology* and Marx's criticism of German thought.

He critiques Hegel's “theory-only” conception of the state. From the political state to civil society, Marx was a longtime fan of Hegel's philosophy until the era of the *Rheinische Zeitung*, while his influence on Hegel's philosophy changed. The “material difficulty” of the *Rheinische Zeitung* era posed a great challenge to Marx, who argued that the empty soul of private interests had never been illuminated and inculcated by the idea of the state, and that his indiscriminate demand was a very serious and practical test for the state. If the conduct of a state, in a certain respect, descends to the point where it is judged by private property rights, rather than by private property ones, it is clear from this that it should choose its methods according to limited private property rights. Marx's work experience during this period made him realize that Hegel's concept of “Rationalism state” is lack of practical basis, and the interests in society are always influencing the behavior of the state, which makes it deviate from the rational direction of ethical entities.

The chapter on Feuerbach, in the *German Ideology* by Marx and Engels, reveals their writing strategy, namely, “[...] from Feuerbach to the opposition between materialism and idealism, to the chapter on Feuerbach, specifically the general ideology of German philosophy and the German ideology” process (Baynes, 1928, p. 41). Although the first chapter of Volume I (the Feuerbach chapter) is an unfinished manuscript, it amply demonstrates Marx’s and Engels’ clear method of writing, their vast theoretical framework of historical materialism and their thoroughgoing critique of the German ideology represented by the Young Hegelians. It is through this method that they can gradually develop their logical arguments and counter-arguments. In the first part, Marx and Engels wrote that:

As the German ideologists have publicly proclaimed, Germany has experienced an unprecedented revolution in the last few years. The disintegration process of the Hegelian system, which began with Strauss, has developed into a world-wide upheaval that affects all “the powers of the past” (Zhou, 2013, p. 523).

Since Hegel, starting with Strauss, the Hegelian system had undergone disintegration, increasingly dividing into the Young Hegelians and the Old Hegelians. The Young Hegelians adhered to Hegel’s dialectical viewpoint, attempting to draw revolutionary and atheistic conclusions from its dialectical method, with Feuerbach being one of its main representatives, who later turned to materialism. Marx and Engels also used to be Young Hegelians’ members, but they broke completely with them during this period, when the Young Hegelians and the Old Hegelians engaged in a long and intense debate. Marx and Engels described this phenomenon in *The German Ideology* as follows: “In the general confusion, some powerful kingdoms arose, only to disappear hastily, and many heroes appeared in a flash, but immediately disappeared because more brave and powerful opponents emerged” (Wang, 2019, p. 12), and “[...] some principles were replaced by others, and some intellectual heroes were annihilated by others, at a speed never seen before” (Chen, 2022, p. 6). Marx and Engels called it a “revolution”, but “[...] it is said that all of this happened purely in the field of thought” (Chen, 2018, p. 11). Obviously, Marx and Engels mostly gave a negative attitude towards the significance of this “revolution” because it was only a “revolution of thought” that attempted to “[...] liberate people from the bondage of words and phrases, but people have never been in bondage to words and phrases” (Liu, 2008, p. 1), so it cannot be considered a true revolution. Marx and Engels believed that the debate between the young and old Hegelian factions was inseparable from the discussion of absolute spiritual disintegration. After the last spark of life has gone out, the various components of this corpse decompose and recombine to form new matter (Wang, 1985, p. 7). In fact, Marx and Engels pointed out that, no matter how intense the debate between the young and old Hegelians, it could not conceal one fact: the disintegration of the absolute spirit. Hegel’s absolute spirit was no longer intact, it had been torn apart, and “[...] everyone tirelessly sells their share of it”. But they still

remained within the framework of the Hegelian system. Each person was a “parrot” (Tiede, 1979, p. 337; Macaulay, 2004, p. 262). They all “[...] boasted and imagined their own ideas as a transformation with world-historical significance, a factor that produced significant results and achievements” (An, 2017, p. 8), which Hegel himself could not surpass. This is Marx's overall evaluation of the level achieved by the Young Hegelian movement.

1.2 THE GERMAN IDEOLOGY

In the book “German Ideology”, Marx and Engels summarized the “universal ideology” represented by German ideology (Carver, 2015, p. 700). Marx and Engels clearly stated this point. Their criticism of the ideological system can be used to criticize the entire idealistic metaphysics. When we consider the connection between Marxist philosophy and Western ideology, it is difficult to understand his subversion of the entire Western ideology. Marx and Engels were different from their previous criticisms of German ideology (Johnson, 2022, p. 143). This time, they criticized this ideology from the perspective of historical materialism. They believed that the subversion of German ideology originated from the subversion of German real life. Marx's critique of modern civil society and its revolution is also a critique of German thought rooted in real life, and a critique of its prerequisite for existence.

However, the German critique, up to its latest attempts, has never left the basis of philosophy. Although this criticism has not studied its general philosophical premises, all the problems it discusses are ultimately based on a certain philosophical system, that is, the Hegelian system (Zhang, 2018, p. 212).

It is clear that here “the German critique” refers to the Young Hegelians' critique movement represented by Feuerbach, Bauer and Stirner, which was based on the Hegelian system (Carver, 2014, p. 700). Although they criticized various aspects of the Hegelian system, they all “[...] have never in fact got beyond the confines of philosophy” and “have never studied their own general philosophical premises” (Wang, 2021, p. 88). The Chinese scholars Pan and Fan (2023), at *Four Dimensions of Marx's View of Practice - Reading the Outline on Feuerbach*, points out that Marx and Engels argued that the Young Hegelians' philosophical premises “[...] contains not only the answer but also the question itself, which includes mysticism” (Pan; Fan, 2023, p. 35-38). Their critique of the Young Hegelians was aimed directly at the flaw in Hegelian philosophy, namely its mysticism. However, the Young Hegelians continued the mysticism of Hegelian philosophy and did not break through this limitation. Marx and Engels believed that “[...] the very fact of their dependence on Hegel explains why not one of these new critics has attempted a comprehensive critique of the Hegelian system, although each of them claims to have gone beyond Hegelian philosophy”

(Liu; Chen, 2023, p. 3; Ashizu, 2021, p. 85). In fact, “[...] their debates with Hegel and with each other were limited to each person grasping a certain aspect of the Hegelian system and using it to oppose the whole system, as well as to oppose the aspects grasped by others” (Liu, 2022, p. 75). The Chinese scholar Chen (2022, p. 15), in his book *Critical Inheritance and Transcendence of Feuerbach’s Humanism*, refers to Marx and Engels who first pointed out that the entire German critical philosophy, from Strauss to Steiner, was limited to the criticism of the concept of religion. They traced the source of their criticism of the young Hegelians back to the fundamental reasons, beyond the young Hegelians’ idealistic barriers, starting from the “premise” and “starting point” (Engels; Marx; Plekhanov, 2001, p. 110). Secondly, they analyzed the old Hegelians’ mistaken viewpoint who understood “[...] everything once they classified everything into the logical category of Hegel, explaining everything with ‘absolute spirit’”, which is the ultimate cause and inherent essence of all existence, eternal existence prior to the natural world and human society (Engels; Marx; Plekhanov, 2001, p. 114).

Marx and Engels’ discussion on youth and absolute idealism focused on religious qualification. They argued that both groups held a fundamentally idealistic worldview, as they believed that “religion”, “concepts” and “universal things” governed the existing world. The difference lies only in the fact that the Young Hegelians opposed this domination as illegitimate, while the Old Hegelians supported the existing system and the status of religion as legitimate.

Thus, it can be seen that, at that time, the entire German intellectual circle was still dominated by Hegelianism. They believed that “[...] religion, concepts, and universal things rule the present world” and that the domination and bondage that people experience in real life come from consciousness and ideas (An; Yang, 2012, p. 13). Chinese scholars An and Yang (2012, p. 14) mention, at the reinterpretation of Marx and Engels’ materialistic view of history from the chapter of Feuerbach’s *The German Ideology*, that the human liberation means liberating people from the rules of consciousness, thought and language. It also proposes, completely and logically, moral demands to people, replacing their current consciousness with human, critical, or selfish consciousness, thereby eliminating the limitations that bind them. Feuerbach is committed to restoring the religious world to its secular foundation, proposing famous propositions such as “man is the highest essence of man” and “God is himself”, which is a personal attempt to uncover the mystery. However, he did not understand the significance of revolutionary practice and did not propose the task of fundamentally eliminating religion by changing the secular foundation itself through revolutionary practice. According to Marx and Engels, they were the biggest conservatives. In Marx’s 1845 manuscript, *Theses on Feuerbach*, he wrote: “The philosophers have only interpreted the world, in various ways; the point is to change it”, which is the best description of the Young Hegelians’ movement (Bloch, 2003, p. 805). The Young Hegelians were satisfied with using one way to replace another way of interpreting the world, but no matter how the world is interpreted, it remains

the same world, and it has not changed because of their interpretations. Therefore, Marx pointed out that “[...] the most important thing is to transform the world”, and the activities of the ideologists of the Young Hegelian movement precisely lacked this point (Bloch, 2003, p. 810). In the same work *The German Ideology*, Marx and Engels also criticized Feuerbach as “[...] merely a theoretical and philosophical man”, which is consistent with the previous statement that Feuerbach is ultimately just a theoretician (Bloch, 2003, p. 815; Reed, 1992, p. 20). Marx and Engels used sarcastic language to criticize the Young Hegelians’ movement:

They only use words to oppose these words; since they only oppose the words of this world, they are by no means opposed to the existing real world. The only result that this kind of philosophical criticism can achieve is to explain Christianity from the history of religion, and it is still a one-sided explanation” and “As for all their other propositions, they only serve to further modify their demands: they want to make some insignificant explanations into discoveries of world-historical significance. (Bloch, 2003, p. 833).

Marx and Engels used the words “one-sided” and “insignificant” to sarcastically describe the “world-historical significance” that the Young Hegelians advocated for.

1.3 MARX AND ENGELS’ CRITIQUE OF FEUERBACH’S “HUMAN NATURE”

Feuerbach’s humanism, as a historical perspective, is incorrect, but its value orientation of attaching importance to human beings, affirming the priority of human values, and paying attention to the objectification of human essential forces, is of positive significance. Marx’s religious theory was deeply influenced by Feuerbach, and his religious ideas were developed and abandoned. Marx also acknowledged Feuerbach’s viewpoint in “The Essence of Christianity” that “[...] the alienation of human nature is the essence of religion” (Malesic, 2007, p. 43). Marx attempted to combine real life and boldly criticize religion, and his criticism was unique. Before the emergence of the basic principles of Marxism and Engels’ historical materialism, they once again elaborated on the prerequisites of historical materialism, emphasizing that “empirical observation” and “individuals in reality” are the prerequisites of historical materialism and the starting point of social science research methods. The scientific nature of this research method is that it is different from Idealism such as Hegel’s one, and it shifts the focus of research from “absolute spirit” to “social subject”, that is, individuals in reality. Moreover, it distinguishes itself from Feuerbach’s humanistic materialism, as Feuerbach studied the “generic man” and “humanity”. Feuerbach believed that the distinguishing feature of humans from animals lies not only in human consciousness, but also in their consciousness of a “species”, whose essence is the rational, volitional and emotional nature, as he called it. Therefore, Feuerbach approached the study from a perspective of human society as a whole, while Marx and Engels studied from the

perspective of the individual. Marx argued that “[...] the essence of man is the sum total of social relations in which he finds himself”, which shows that Marx did not consider human nature to be a “species essence”. And that “[...] the real individuals, their activity and the material conditions under which they live determine the whole configuration of the social structure and its evolution”, reflecting Marx and Engels’ materialist approach that starts from the “real individual” in their study of historical materialism (Malesic, 2007, p. 50).

Starting from the “real premises” of observing social historical phenomena, Marx and Engels elaborately argued the production, development and essence of social consciousness. They explicitly put forward and systematically expounded the principle that “it is not consciousness that determines life, but life that determines consciousness”, revealing the essence of historical materialism. Firstly, consciousness is a product of people’s social and material life:

The generation of ideas, concepts, and consciousness is directly intertwined with human material activities and interactions. The language of real life, as well as people’s imagination, thinking, and spiritual communication, are directly generated by their material behavior. The spiritual production manifested in the language of a certain nation’s politics, law, morality, religion, and metaphysics is also the same (Malesic, 2007, p. 55).

Social consciousness has two components: ideological and non-ideological. “Imaginations, thinking, and spiritual communication” belong to the non-ideological category, while “politics, law, morality, religion, and metaphysics” belong to the ideological one. Both are products of social existence. People need to produce in order to live. And to produce, they need social interaction, which requires language and consciousness as tools or means. Therefore, language and consciousness are only produced due to the urgent need for social interaction with others. Thus, social consciousness is inseparable from people’s social life. Secondly, social existence constitutes the content of social consciousness. “Consciousness can never be anything else than conscious existence, and the existence of men is their actual life-process”. Marx and Engels made a vivid analogy that the original image of people’s ideological system is like a photo taken by a camera, which is directly produced from people’s physiological processes in their daily life, just like “[...] the inverted image of an object on the retina” (Svet, 2006, p. 339). This reversed the relationship between idealism and existence, thought and reality, which not only conforms to general empirical facts but also provides a more accurate understanding of human society and its consciousness. Therefore, as Marx and Engels said, “German philosophy has descended from heaven to earth, and here we say: from earth to heaven” (Svet, 2006, p. 343). Apparently, Marx and Engels’ materialist view of history starts from social existence and then rises to social consciousness. They emphasized that social consciousness is not independent but rooted in social existence. Thirdly, social

consciousness changes with the changes in real-life situations. Social existence is specific, historical and constantly evolving, which means that social consciousness must also evolve. This view scientifically reveals the basic laws of how human thought and consciousness form and develop. As people's material and social life conditions determine their thinking status and developmental tendencies, understanding the material roots of thinking problems is crucial to resolving them. In order to do this, it is necessary to study the material basis on which people's thought problems arise in their social and material lives and to eliminate people's thought problems by changing the social and material conditions. In conclusion, the principle that "it is not consciousness that determines life, but life that determines consciousness" may seem simple, but its initial application dealt a blow to all forms of idealism, even the most hidden forms. This is because all traditional views on history were thoroughly overturned by this principle, which is the revolutionary significance achieved by the materialist conception of history.

1.4 A CRITIQUE OF THE LIMITATIONS OF FEUERBACH'S MATERIALISM

From the perspective of intuitive materialism, Feuerbach takes the "first nature" of "human" as the philosophical basis, "nature" as the "basic nature" as the characteristic, and "occurrence" as the logic. From the perspective of materialism, Feuerbach discusses and explains the fundamental philosophical problem of the relationship between "spirit and matter", "thinking" and "existence" in philosophy, thus refuting the idealistic feature of "head foot inversion" in Hegel's speculative philosophy. Thus, materialism regained its authoritative position. There are three basic connotations of Feuerbach's materialism, and it was through Marx's reflection and criticism of these three viewpoints that he surpassed Feuerbach's materialism. On the basis of dialectics, Marx praised Feuerbach's materialism for its dual criticism of Hegel's speculative philosophy and the religious view of speculative reason, and affirmed the contribution of Feuerbach's materialism. Marx also reflected on the limitation of Feuerbach's materialism to perceptual intuition and understanding of "human" perception, pointing out the incompleteness of Feuerbach's criticism of "materialism", "political conservatism" and "historical idealism". It is from this point of view that Marx critically exceeded Feuerbach's materialism while establishing the historical materialism, and finally formed the historical materialism with higher theoretical level and higher practical value, thus achieving the transcendence of Feuerbach's historical materialism.

The limitations of Feuerbach's materialism were gradually dissolved within the significant ideas of Marx's "human emancipation", "practice" and "communism". Regarding the issue of "human emancipation", Marx and Engels wrote:

Of course, we do not want to expend our energy in trying to enlighten our clever philosophers, so that they may understand that if they melt away philosophy, theology, and all the rubbish in the acid of “self-consciousness”, if they liberate “man” from the domination of these phrases, which have never held him in bondage, “mans” liberation is by that very token not furthered one whit; only real action on the basis of the existing material conditions can bring about real, practical liberation. (Deranty, 2014, p. 1208)

There are two ways to approach the issue of emancipation: through theoretical philosophy or practical philosophy. The former is achieved through the liberation of philosophy itself within the subjective realm of human thought, while the latter involves the practical liberation of the individual in the real world through real means. Therefore, the liberation of “real people” can only be achieved through the use of “real means” rather than through so-called “word and phrase revolution”.

The degree of human liberation is not arbitrary, but is connected with the conditions of reality. “Liberation” is a historical activity, not a mental activity. It is brought about by the conditions of industry, commerce, agriculture and communication, and it is promoted by historical relationships. Human liberation can never be a mental activity, but rather a historical activity that is promoted by the development of practical activities related to industry, commerce, agriculture and communication. The degree of people’s emancipation depends crucially on the degree of development of their practical activities. “Practice” is the theoretical cornerstone of Marxist historical materialism. Marx and Engels referred to “practical materialists” as those who based themselves on the real historical process and opposed and changed existing things in an actual revolutionary way, i.e., communists. They sometimes used the term “materialist communists” to refer to such people. It should be said that the meaning of “practice” in “practical materialists” is quite rich.

“If we occasionally encounter similar ideas in Feuerbach, they remain only scattered conjectures, and have little influence on his overall perspective. They can only be seen as potential seeds of development” (Deranty, 2014, p. 1209). “Revolutionary requirements” are what is meant by “similar ideas”. Feuerbach did not reject revolution, but he did not understand the importance of the practical materialists’ practical character. He remained at the level of theoretical idealism, believing that by transforming theology into anthropology, the real world could be changed and the monarchy could be transformed into a republic. The reason why Feuerbach did not possess the practical character of a materialist, and was unwilling to touch upon the real social world, is closely related to his “intuitive materialism”. Feuerbach’s intuitive materialism “[...] is limited on the one hand to a mere contemplation of this world, and on the other hand to mere sense perception” (Deranty, 2014, p. 1210). “Pure contemplation” means opening one’s eyes and seeing the world as it is. In the following passage, Marx and Engels pointed out what Feuerbach’s “pure contemplation” saw: “What he

sees is the mass of those sick with the itch, those who are worn out by labor, those who are victims of tuberculosis, in short, the great majority who vegetate rather than live” (Deranty, 2014, p. 1212). This is what Feuerbach’s “pure contemplation” observed. “Pure sensation” is a higher state than “pure contemplation”. It carries the meaning of reaching the essence of things. It is a feeling of something that is unfounded, a feeling that something is not right but cannot be explained. This is similar to Feuerbach’s understanding of the sensual world, where he simply felt that people should not be that way, and the relationship between people should not be that way. Therefore, Feuerbach is dissatisfied with this reality, but his criticism of reality is only an ethical and moral criticism. For Feuerbach, it is not only impossible but also unwilling to do so, because his views are deeply marked by the imprint of “intuitive materialism” in both the research object and the research method.

1.5 UNDERSTANDING FEUERBACH’S CRITIQUE BASED ON THE ISSUE OF “REALITY”

Regarding the emergence of religion and practical issues, Feuerbach believed that our true reflection of the objective world is also necessary, which is a sensory intuition. Feuerbach believes that, when we consider the perceptual existence world as the foundation and source of our understanding of God and consciousness, we should also connect cognitive thinking with perceptual intuition, in order to determine ourselves, correct our thinking and make it “a true and objective reflection of thought.” In this way, the object of thought and knowledge can maintain its initial connection and achieve unity. Marx and Engels elaborated on the question of “the premise of human history” in detail, and emphasized the importance of this “real premise and starting point” through three rules: firstly, Marx and Engels criticized the Young Hegelians’ erroneous origin as they declared “man” as religious people and took “the rule of religion” as the premise. Secondly, based on the “premise of reality”, humans transformed nature and left their mark on it, turning nature into historical nature and history into natural history. The relationship between humans and nature formed the productive forces. The relationship between humans society formed the relations of production. The sum of the production relations, formed on a certain basis of productive forces, constitutes the economic foundation of society. And the economic foundation determines the superstructure of society. Thirdly, the “[...] humanistic care of Marxism is manifested in the care for the real individuals in society” (Ivanecky, 2014, p. 173). This humanistic care is not an empty ideal but rather a transcendence of reality that does not belong to mysticism. It is a “realistic care” for the individuals’ present situation. And it is a profound concern for the existence, development and destiny of humanity, which is an exploration of the path of human social development and a yearning for an ideal society in the future. Marx and Engels pointed out that “As individuals express their life, so they are” (Ivanecky, 2014, p. 180). Therefore, what individuals are depends on the material conditions of their production, both with which

they produce and how they produce (Ivanecky, 2014, p. 190). The individual is determined by the material conditions of their production”, and production is intimately linked to the individual’s maintenance of their own life activities and the origin of all their social relations. At this point, Marx and Engels had actually formed the starting point of viewing material production activities as the entire process of social development, and a guiding thought running through the entire materialism.

Division of labor is the manifestation of the development of productive forces, and the form of ownership is determined by division of labor. The ownership they referred to is the relationship between people related to labor materials, labor tools and labor products, which is actually the content of production relations. But Marx and Engels did not fully express this content at this time. Therefore, the development and changes in division of labor and ownership, mentioned by Marx and Engels, should actually be the development and changes in productive forces and production relations. Marx and Engels pointed out:

The mutual relations between various nations depend on the level of development of productivity, division of labor, and internal communication of each nation. This principle is recognized. However, it is not only the relationship between a nation and other ethnic groups, but also the entire internal structure of the nation itself depends on its own level of production and development of internal and external communication. (Ivanecky, 2014, p. 199).

Marx and Engels actually acknowledged that the degree of development of division of labor is an objective criterion for the development level of productive forces.

1.6 FEUERBACH’S CRITIQUE BASED ON FOUR ASPECTS OF HISTORICAL RELATIONS

Feuerbach believes that the historical process is dominated by the internal general laws, that people’s material living conditions determine the emergence, development and extinction of religion, that the replacement of metaphysical thinking methods by materialist dialectic is the result of the regular development of human cognition, and that the dialectical movement of the unity of opposites is objective (Li, 2023, p. 1). Marx and Engels examined four factors and aspects of primitive historical relations: the production of material life, the satisfaction of needs and the emergence of new needs, family and social relations, and modes of production. The young Hegelians “only paid attention” to the history of consciousness or ideas, and were not interested in real historical processes. In order to criticize their views, Marx and Engels not only emphasized the objective basis of historical materialism and the determining role of social existence on social consciousness, but also elaborated on the specific content of real historical processes in order to thoroughly refute their idealistic view of history. According to Marx and Engels, the first type of production is the production of material life

itself, which satisfies people's basic needs such as food, clothing, shelter, and so on. Although this process of material production is a basic fact in historical development, Marx and Engels still consider it to be of great significance in constructing a historical perspective. The second type of production is the production for the satisfaction of new needs, which is the process of material reproduction. After the first type of production is completed and the first need is satisfied, the activities that satisfy needs and the tools that are used to satisfy needs will generate new needs. In order to satisfy these needs, people will constantly enhance their ability to produce material life itself. The third type of production is the production of social relations. Human beings reproduce themselves through reproduction, and the resulting relationships are family relationships. This family relationship was the only social relationship at that time, but as new needs grew, new social relationships emerged, transforming family relationships into subordinate relationships in social life. This continuously developing social relationship is also produced by people themselves.

After analyzing the specific content of the four aspects of real historical processes, the foundation of Marx and Engels' historical materialism has deeply rooted in the soil of the real world. Based on this solid foundation of historical materialism, Marx and Engels proposed that humans also have "consciousness", but this consciousness is not "pure consciousness", which refers to speculative consciousness. In the Young Hegelians' eyes, consciousness was "pure consciousness", independent and external to human beings. Marx and Engels believed that "'Spirit' has been in a bad state from the beginning, 'entangled with' material things" (Widukind, 2008, p. 285), indicating that consciousness is not independent from the beginning and depends on material things. They also believed that the so-called "pure consciousness" does not exist in reality. "Consciousness is a social product from the beginning" (Widukind, 2008, p. 297), and with the development of society, the forms of consciousness are constantly changing.

Marx's basic evaluation of Feuerbach's materialism was conducted from two perspectives: affirmation and negation. It was on this basis of affirmation and negation that Marx criticized and surpassed Feuerbach's materialism, and established historical materialism on this basis. Firstly, from the perspective of Feuerbach's materialism, Marx's criticism transcends pure objectivity and thus achieves a dynamic understanding of the world. When Marx was contemplating the direction of capitalism, he proposed using social reform to overthrow capitalism and establish a socialist and communist society. Marx believed that, in fact, the real world is an object of human emotional activity, and it is a process in which humans truly participate. In this process, humans truly participate in this process, and its characteristic is that it constantly generates and develops in this process. In this way, Marx thoroughly eliminated the drawbacks of Idealism in Feuerbach's historical concept of Materialism, and achieved a rational understanding of the objective world in historical criticism of Feuerbach's materialism, thus achieving a real sense of historical materialism, thus

realizing a revolutionary understanding of the law of human social development. Secondly, by criticizing Feuerbach's materialism, Marx's abstract, emotional and abstract understanding of human beings enables the realization of the concept of human beings' "historical generation". Marx believed that the social and historical relationships, in which humans live, are different, and the nature of humans is also vastly different. Therefore, human nature has historical and special characteristics, and human nature is constantly evolving. Therefore, Marx put forward the necessity of examining people from their perceptual activities, thus getting rid of the fetters of Feuerbach's materialism, and combining it with the revolutionary practice of the proletariat, thus forming a scientific, adaptive and unproductive theoretical system. It is through this understanding of human social nature that Marx further realized the important role of human society in human liberation, and finally stood on the ideological height of historical materialism to scientifically explain the historical destiny of capitalist and communist societies.

CONCLUSION

Starting from the "real human" and their production, Marx and Engels thoroughly criticized Feuerbach's ideas and came to the conclusion that the three factors of productive forces, social conditions and consciousness may and must contradict each other. Because division of labor not only makes it possible but also a reality that mental and material activities, enjoyment and labor, production and consumption are shared by different individuals. The only way to avoid contradictions among these three factors is to "[...] eliminate division of labor" (Mckinley, 2014, p. 273). However, contradictions will still arise between productivity and production relations, as well as between economic base and superstructure, which will lead to the replacement and transformation of social forms and ultimately lead human society into communism. This is the basic idea of historical materialism. And the logical premise of this vast theory, the "historical premise", must be the starting point for building the theoretical edifice of historical materialism. Without this foundation, historical materialism will inevitably lead to idealism.

REFLECTIONS ON MARX'S IDEOLOGY OF SOCIAL REVOLUTION

This paper argues that the goal of the social revolution, advocated by Marx, is capitalism, and that the overthrow of the destiny of capitalism is not to change some aspect, some element of capitalism, but to carry out a revolution based on the economic base and superstructure of capitalism in general. Marx's idea of social revolution is a combination of thought and action, of political and social revolution, of economic revolution and human liberation, of class revolution and national liberation, of revolutionary thought and action,

of political revolution and social revolution. It is the unity of revolutionary thought and revolutionary action, the unity of political revolution and social revolution, the unity of economic revolution and human liberation, the unity of class revolution and national liberation. Marx's revolutionary thought is both based on the practice of human social life and a questioning of the times from the human beings' perspective, taking their needs as the starting point, and the "people's revolution" as the starting point too. This is why Marx made a profound revolution, and his concern for the times was an active response, representing the people's interests and reflecting their voices. On the one hand, Marx's social revolution is scientific, historical, and an answer to the questions of the times; on the other hand, from the perspective of humanity, Marx's social revolution is a "people's revolution". Marx's vision of social revolution is not a theoretical reconstruction of abstract thinking, but a call for an overall social revolution and a force for social change.

REFERENCES

- AN, Q. N. The logical structure of "Feuerbach Chapter" in German Ideology and Marx and Engels' historical materialism, **Philosophical Trends**. v. 2, p. 8-10, 2017.
- AN, Q. N.; YANG, S. Q. Re-interpretation of Marx and Engels' historical materialism-from the perspective of Feuerbach's chapter of German Ideology, **Journal of Beijing Administration Institute**, v. 10, p. 13-14, 2012.
- ASHIZU, K. 'Hamlet through your legs' Radical Rewritings of Shakespeare's Tragedy in Japan. **Critical Survey**. v. 33, n. 1, p. 85-102, 2021.
- BAYNES, H. G. Freud versus Jung: An Elaboration of a Recent Debate Concerning Basic Psychological Conceptions, **British Journal of Medical Psychology**, v. 8, p. 14-43, 1928.
- BLOCH, E. K. Marx's Eleven Theses on Feuerbach. **Deutsche Zeitschrift Fur Philosophie**, v. 51, p. 805-833, 2003.
- CARVER, T.; BLANK, D. Marx and Engels's "German ideology" Manuscripts: Presentation and Analysis of the "Feuerbach chapter". **Springer**, p. 700-725, 2014.
- CARVER, T. "Roughing it": the "German ideology" main manuscript. **History of Political Thought**, v. 36, n. 4, p. 700-725, 2015.
- CHEN, C. A. Re-exploration of the Chinese translation of the complete works of Marx's "Three Stages Theory"-A preliminary analysis based on the comparison between the new MEGA and the translated version, **On Marxist Philosophy**. v. 1, p. 11-14, 2018.
- CHEN, C. A. A probe into Marx's view of communism-based on the study of MEGA2's three-stage theory of variant texts and original manuscripts, **Academic Research**. v. 7, p. 6-7, 2022.
- CHEN, X. X. Marx and Engels' critical inheritance and transcendence of Feuerbach's humanism. **Journal of Shanxi Normal University (Social Science Edition)**, p. 15-17, Jun. 2022.

- CROME, A. Seductive Splendour and Caricatured Simplicity: Catholicism and Nonconformity in Nineteenth-Century 'Jewish Conversion' Novels. **Bulletin of The John Rylands Library**. v. 97, n. 1, p. 111-128, 2021.
- Deranty, J. P. **Feuerbach and the Philosophy of Critical Theory**. *British Journal for The History of Philosophy*. v. 22, p. 1209-1212, 2014.
- ENGELS, F.; MARX, K.; PLEKHANOV, G. V. Ludwig Feuerbach and the end of classical German philosophy. **Electric Book Company**, p. 110-114, 2001.
- IVANECKY, P. The criticism of Benedict XVI to the Relativism of Today, **Teologia y Vida**, v. 55, p. 173-199, 2014.
- JOHNSON, S. Farewell to the German Ideology. **Journal of the History of Ideas**, v. 83, n. 1, p. 143-170, 2022.
- LIU, D. Y. On the relationship between Marx and Engels' philosophical thoughts from the analysis of the limitations and causes of Feuerbach's philosophy, **Journal of Kashgar Teachers College**. v. 4, p. 1-3, 2008.
- LIU, W. W; CHEN, Q. Z. Inheritance and Transcendence of Marx's Humanism to Feuerbach's Humanism - On the Enlightenment of Marx's Humanism to China's Social Development in the New Era. **Journal of North China Electric Power University (Social Sciences)**, p. 3-5, Febr. 2023.
- LIU, Z. J. **A Study of the Basic Theory of Ideological and Political Education in "The End of Ludwig Feuerbach and German Classical Philosophy"**. 2022. (Doctoral Thesis) – Jilin University, Jilin, 2022. p. 75-76.
- LI, X. Is the Theses of Feuerbach the Outline of German Ideology? **Advances in Historical Studies**, v. 12, n. 1, p. 1-10, 2023.
- MACAULAY, S. P. Diaspora by degree: Narrative and performance in interviews of expatriates from Wanganui, New Zealand. **Journal of American folklore**. v. 117, n. 465, p. 262-287, 2004.
- MALESIC, J. Illusion and offense in Philosophical fragments: Kierkegaard's inversion of Feuerbach's critique of Christianity. **International Journal for Philosophy of Religion**, v. 62, p. 43-55, 2007.
- MARX, K.; ENGELS, F. **German Ideology** (Excerpt). 1. ed. Beijing: People's, 2003. p. 25-27.
- MCKINLEY, A. Fluid Minds: Being a Buddhist the Shambhalian Way. **Buddhist Studies Review**. v. 31, n. 2, p. 273-291, 2014.
- PAN, L. S.; FAN, X. Y. Four Dimensions of Marx's View of Practice-Reading the Theses on Feuerbach. **Journal of Pingdingshan University**. p. 35-38, Jan. 2023.
- REED, C. Through formalism, feminism and Woolf, Virginia relation to Bloomsbury aesthetics. **Twentieth century literature**. v. 38, n. 1, p. 20-43, 1992.
- SVET, V. D. Possible Physical Principles of Image Transformation in an Inverted Eye Retina. **Doklady Physics**, v. 51, p. 339-343, 2006.
- TIEDE, D. L. Theios-aner in hellenistic-judaism - critique of the use of this category in new-testament christology - holladay, cr. **Catholic biblical quarterly**. v. 41, n. 2, p. 337-339, 1979.

WANG, K. X. The enlightenment of Feuerbach Theory on the formation history of Marxist philosophy. **Journal of Anhui University**, v. 6, p. 7-9, 1985.

WANG, X. D. The New Editorial Ideas of Chapter Feuerbach in Volume 5, Part I of MEGA2. **Journal of Beijing Administration Institute**, v. 1, p. 12-13, 2019.

WANG, X. D. Problems in the Study of Philology in Feuerbach Chapter-Mega ~ 2 History of Philology Research before the publication of Volume V, Part I. **Marxism and Reality**, v. 4, p. 88-90, 2021.

Widukind, D. R. Max Stirner, Hegel and the Young Hegelians: A reassessment. *History of European Ideas*. v. 34, p. 285-297, 2008.

ZHANG, G. S. **Historical narrative of Marxist philosophy of equality and its realistic logic**. Nanjing: Nanjing Southeast University Press, 2018. p. 212-213.

ZHOU, S. X. **Personal History and Historical Individuals** - A Study of Marx's Personal Theory. Beijing: People's, 2013. p. 523-524.