Academic Journal of Management and Social Sciences
ISSN: 2958-4396 | Vol. 5, No. 2, 2023

Analysis of the Relationship between Marx's Doctoral Thesis and Modern Enlightenment Thought

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Abstract: Marx's Doctoral thesis, as the starting point of Marx's thought, has always been the focus of domestic scholars' attention. Marx's thought is the product of enlightenment, although Marx did not specifically discuss the inheritance of Enlightenment thought in the texts left by Marx, so in what sense Marx's thought inherited the Enlightenment thought is a topic worth exploring. In his Doctoral Thesis, Marx's analysis of Epicurean philosophy in ancient Greece is a key to understanding the relationship between Marx and Enlightenment thought, and the principle of agency in Epicurean philosophy can be regarded as the key to Epicurean philosophy. The relationship between Epicurus, enlightenment and Marx has become an inescapable topic in understanding Marx's thought.

Keywords: Epicurus; Marx; Enlightenment.

1. Introduction

The real purpose of Marx's Doctoral thesis is to think about enlightenment, and its core content is to reflect on modernity. In the paper, he once praised Epicurus as "the greatest enlightenment thinker". The ancient Greek philosopher Epicurus played an important role in the formation and development of Marx's thought. In his doctoral thesis, Marx made Epicurus the subject of his research. Ancient Greek philosophy is the source of Western thought, giving birth to many outstanding philosophers such as Socrates and Plato, so why did Marx choose Epicurus' natural philosophy as the topic of his dissertation? What does Epicurus as an ancient Greek philosopher have to do with enlightenment? In what sense does Marx consider Epicurus to be the greatest Enlightenment thinker? With these questions, let us go into Marx in the origin of thought, and explore the inextricably linked between Marx and Epicurus and enlightenment.

2. Epicurus and the European Enlightenment

What is Enlightenment? This has always been a topic of discussion. People often talk about enlightenment mainly refers to the modern European Enlightenment. In modern European history, enlightenment is mainly divided into British Enlightenment, French Enlightenment and German enlightenment, and the purpose of enlightenment is usually to liberate people from the oppression of religious theology, affirm the status of people in the world, and emphasize the subjectivity of people.

Epicurus is the representative figure of late Greek philosophy. The late Greek philosophy was born in the period of the decline of the Greek city-state system, and the Greek democratic system had always been the pride of the Greeks. However, in the Hellenistic period, the Greek mainland was deprived of its independence in political life, and the city-state system collapsed. Faced with the chaotic political situation at that time, people's attention shifted from the political life of the city-state to the escape from the real society and the philosophy It is inseparable from the present situation of the time in which man lives. It was in this atmosphere that Epicurean philosophy came into being. At that time, the Greek society people lived in hardship and social unrest, and the God that the Greeks believed in did not save the Greeks from the fiery life. Epicurus' atomism has a strong color of anti-theological teleology, attaches importance to perceptual experience, bases people's understanding of things on sensory experience, and emphasizes individual freedom. During the modern Enlightenment period, Enlightenment thinkers re-interpreted Epicurus' philosophical thoughts, and Marx found this close relationship in the Holy Family, pointing out that "Materialism opposed Descartes through Gassendi (who restored the materialism of Epicurus). French and English materialists. He always maintained close ties with Democritus and Epicurus." [1] The purpose of the Enlightenment in Europe was to liberate people from religious theology and feudal despotism. in medieval Europe, Christian theology ruled Europe and controlled all aspects of European life, and the attention to human subjectivity has been relatively missing. The main content of Epicurus' philosophy is the struggle against the gods or against the inevitability of fate. Epicurus does not recognize the existence of immovable promoters, and his resistance against theological teleology has strong ethical significance. People should pay more attention to the real life and pursue peace and happiness in the real life.

Epicurus' criticism of theological teleology also had an impact on the study of natural science in the Age of Enlightenment. Under the rule of Christian theology, there is another "God" behind the explanation of everything in nature, and the explanation of nature cannot understand nature in its own way. In the ancient Greek era, Aristotle can be said to be an encyclopedic figure and a representative figure of natural science in ancient Greece. In the Aristotelian era, ancient Greek philosophy developed increasingly in the direction of specialization. Although he also starts from sensibility and goes through a series of analysis and reasoning, what he finally wants to introduce is the ultimate origin or final cause, that is, the immutable, unique "entity" that exists independently of sensibility. Aristotle's idea was later used by Middle World Christian theology to try to reconcile total

religion with theology, and it became an idea that Enlightenment thinkers would reject. Epicurus is the most representative figure of the ancient Greek atomism philosophy, his philosophy has a strong color of materialism, and his rejection of theological teleology was discovered by the enlightenment thinkers at that time, such as the French enlightenment thinker Ghazanti paid great attention to Epicurus, and carried out a rational attitude to the revival of Epicurus' philosophy, introducing Epicurus' atomism into modern science. Enlightenment thinkers advocated rationality and science, freeing people's view of the world from religious theology. The development of natural science was contrary to religious theology. If philosophy wanted to continue to have the ability to explain reality, then philosophy should cut off its relationship with theology.

Epicurus' rejection of theological teleology had an impact on Enlightenment political philosophy. Especially in the French Enlightenment movement, a very important principle of the French Enlightenment is "equality", Epicurus introduced the "atomic skew movement" into the atomic theory, through the atomic skew movement atoms get rid of the external form and obtain independence, since every atom is independent and free, then he is also equal, in people's social life only will When others are regarded as the same existence as oneself, the relationship between people is equal, which is the contract theory advocated by modern French Enlightenment thinkers. Of course, in addition to the French Enlightenment, the German Enlightenment also absorbed the thought of Epicurus. For example, the young Hegelians criticized religion from the philosophy of self-consciousness and further analyzed it, and the European Enlightenment all revealed the traces of Epicurus' philosophy.

3. Epicurus from Marx's Perspective

Marx's Doctoral Thesis expresses Marx's enlightenment position by criticizing Hegel and the young Hegelians. Marx's doctoral thesis was carried out under the guidance of Powell, and found the basis of self-consciousness among the three philosophers in the Hellenistic period, and proposed the motion mode of "atoms out of the straight line and slanting", refuting the inevitability of Democritus, according to the motion mode of Democritus' atoms in the straight line movement, atoms can only move vertically in accordance with the established orbit In this way, everything is predestined, just like Oedipus can never escape the clutms of fate, then people will not be free. Kant once defined enlightenment as "the departure of man from the immaturity which he has imposed on himself." Man is to use his subjective ability, which, if still in the frame of fate, will always be dragged along, and Marx said in his doctoral thesis that "the bias breaks the 'bind of fate', and just as he immediately applied this idea to consciousness, so can the atom. The deviation, then, was something that had broken in him that he was fighting against." Marx fought all his life for the realization of human freedom, and this is precisely what he saw in Epicurus when he chose him as his subject.

Marx's view of Epicurean philosophy differs from that of the Enlightenment philosophers and the Young Hegelians. Marx found the difference between Epicurus and Democritus' atomic theory in the comparison of the two, in the scientific method, Democritus advocated the possibility of reality to examine and determine the causal relationship between things, his atomic theory of atoms is only the existence of pure material, Democritus "only adhere to the material aspect". For him, the atom is only a "pure and abstract category", Democritus's atomic theory only stays in the empirical hypothesis, Democritus from the real possibility to deduce the "relative necessity", this "relative necessity" is mediated by a series of conditions and causes, the analysis of the object will fall into an infinite dependence on the "evil cycle". Starting from the possibility of abstraction, Epicurus objectifies the materiality of "straight motion" and its own "formal determinations" of "skew motion" in the concept of the atom, and the whole of Epicurean philosophy manifests itself in the separation from the concrete being, in the individuality of abstraction "the negation of all relations of the other." Epicurean philosophy is based on the absolute principle of abstract individual self-consciousness, the embodiment of the principle of agency, freeing atoms from straight lines. Democritus' atomic theory could not explain how the phenomenal world developed, and his atomism did not reach the conceptual level.

Marx's Doctoral Thesis is not a purely philosophical text but also a political text. “The bourgeois enlightenment, especially the radical version of the French Enlightenment, which emphasizes the judgment of everything by abstract principles of reason and the construction of a new world, completely negates the legitimacy of reality and of history itself." [3] The freedom advocated by the Enlightenment was based on abstract human beings, while Marx believed that the so-called freedom should be based on the living individual. In Epicurus's theory of the atom, only atoms with mass are complete atoms. “Once in existence, the atom acquires an existence that contradicts his conception and is assumed to be externalized and fundamentally different from his own” [1] The atom, as an abstract individual self-consciousness, cannot be set up as an absolute principle, because the atom, once it has a quality, goes to its opposite, and here we can see the difference of views between Marx and the Enlightenment philosophers. For freedom to be attained at the philosophical level, it must be lost at the practical level, and while the Enlightenment philosophers preached formal freedom, it was in fact abstract freedom, which remained at the conceptual level, like the atom without its "quality. People are in a mutual relationship, atoms because of the "quality", thus, with individuality, atoms become a self-existence, is no longer a pure material existence, only with the "quality" of the atom will occur exclusion and aggregation, only in the mutual relationship between people are "real people".

Marx's exposition of Epicurus's atomic theory offered an abstract view of freedom that differed from the Enlightenment thinkers, In Marx's view, real life and its activities are the prerequisite for the development of human history, and the "real individual" must be a person who is in practice. Kant hoped to solve the problems brought by enlightenment by promoting enlightenment, while Hegel chose a different path from Kant, which was also chosen by Marx later, that is, to hold a critical position on enlightenment. Hegel opposed Kant's "transcendental self", because he did not go deep into social reality, but remained on "subjective self-consciousness" Kant's moral law is still at the subjective level. Marx was inspired by Hegel on this point, but he did not only stay at Hegel's level, Hegel's complete philosophy takes the absolute spirit as the highest peak of the system, which is a relatively closed system. Marx, in his Critique of Hegel's Philosophy of Right and **On the Jewish Question,** criticized the political emancipation advocated by the Enlightenment as empty, and only endowed individuals with abstract individual

rights, which in capitalist society were nothing more than empty cheques.

4. Marx's New Exploration of Enlightenment

In the analysis of Epicurus' philosophy, Marx opened up a path of ideological enlightenment which was different from that of enlightenment thinkers. Marx generally held a positive attitude towards Enlightenment philosophers' exalting of human reason and criticism of religion, and appreciated the rapid development of natural science since the Enlightenment, but Marx did not support the application of moral methods to the field of social history. In the Age of Enlightenment, "nature" replaced "God." The classical political economy represented by Smith, which Marx called "enlightenment national economics", started from the concept of the so-called "natural order" to establish a set of eternal social system, that is, the capitalist system, and considered it the most perfect social system in human history, but Marx believed that history was constantly developing.

What kind of research methods should be used in the field of social history? Marx sets his sights on Epicurus. Marx criticized Democritus: "The kind of knowledge which he considers to be true has no content, and the knowledge which can provide content like him has no reality." [4] In Epicurus' philosophy, perception is the final standard of truth, nothing can refute perceptual perception, from perceptual perception is not equivalent to knowledge, it is not to say that what one sees, what is knowledge, knowledge is to be grasped by conceptual thinking, but Epicurus despised "positive science", he started from "abstract possibility", and regarded the basis of physics as creation Creative imagination, then the interpretation of the real world is based on subjectivity, and subjectivity becomes the basis for the interpretation of the real world. As far as the concept of atom is concerned, the concept of atom is constructed through reason and is subjective. People exert their imagination and creativity to create a concept and use this concept to explain the material world. Marx's research method in the field of social history is based on the analysis of the contradictions between form and matter, phenomenon and essence in Epicurus' atomic theory The phenomena existing in the field of social history, such as the exchange of commodities in capitalist society, the relationship between laborers and capitalists, are only phenomena before they are conceptualized, and people have to explain them with new concepts to understand them, and the discussion of the essence behind capitalism is based on the mutual deduction of these concepts The process is presented.

Marx's new exploration of enlightenment is not limited to the exploration of laws in the field of social science, Marx believes that Epicurus is the first to integrate the contradiction between essence and reality into his thought. Marx's understanding of freedom is not like the Enlightenment thinkers who only attach importance to the "form" of freedom, Marx pays more attention to the "quality" of freedom. The phenomenal world is inseparable from the repulsive motion of atoms. "The phenomenal world arises from the repulsive motion of qualitative atoms and from the polymerization associated with the repulsive motion." [1] The repulsive world is "the first form of atomic motion." The individual cannot exist in a vacuum in society and is affected by multiple factors such as his own desires and the relationship between him and nature. In his Doctoral thesis, Marx also discussed the specific forms of exclusion, such as contracts in the political field, and the freedom of the individual is to be realized in real life, is the freedom in the establishment. The idea of social contract is a topic of concern for enlightenment scholars, but Enlightenment thinkers believe that "the explanation of social structure in modern social contract theory does not focus on the historical description of scientific evidence, but provides a set of normative standards in line with the principles of civil society a priori, so as to ensure individual freedom and build the political legitimacy of the community." In short, the contract thought of modern Enlightenment thinkers is based on natural law, that everyone enjoys innate human rights, and that people guarantee these rights by establishing a state, and this freedom is negative freedom. The thought of social contract expounded by Marx in his Doctoral thesis can be said to be a transcendence of the contract theory of Enlightenment thought. Through the analysis of Epicurus' atomic theory, Marx pointed out that Epicurus' atomic skew theory is not, atomic skew represents that people have free will, but real freedom must be connected with certain material conditions, that is, for the time Social reality should be based on the social reality at that time.

In ancient Greece, the state of life of the Greeks was free and self-sufficient, and freedom was a true state of the Greeks and a way of life of the Greeks, not a transcendental way. Freedom was people's practical life, and it was not a transcendental existence as the enlightenment thinkers did. Marx's understanding of enlightenment was not based on reason, but on the principle of the will in the rejection of sex as a transcendental principle, the freedom of the Greeks was, in Marx's eyes, closely linked to their way of life, the state of life that accompanied them from birth to death.

To interpret enlightenment with transcendental reason is not the ultimate goal of enlightenment, Marx is deeply aware of this point, the recognition of individual uniqueness is the ultimate destination of enlightenment. Marx's rejection of the principle of the transcendent imposed on everything, that reason becomes the new "God," is not what Marx wants to see. Marx wrote at the end of his doctoral thesis "People see the world in disrepute,/ suffering under the weight of religion... At this time, a Greek dared to be the first to raise the eyes of mortals, face the rape, and struggle. "This mortal, like the skewed atoms of Epicurus' atomic theory, in order to prevent enlightenment from falling into the trap of transcendentalism, it is only through "free will" that man, through his own agency, frees himself from the principles of transcendentalist reason. It can be said that Marx's thinking towards the Enlightenment in his Doctoral Thesis has been different from the absolute respect for rationality in the traditional Enlightenment. Marx's understanding of the world is based on living human beings, which is different from Hegelian dialectics to a certain extent.

In general, as a representative work of Marx's early thought, the transcendence of enlightenment shown in the Doctoral thesis opened up a philosophical road for the systematic construction of Marx's later philosophical thoughts.

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