

The Concept Purport of Lukacs' Materialization Theory and The Times Review

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Abstract

"Materialization" is a major problem that Lukacs, a young man, found when examining the ills of capitalist society. Through the reinterpretation of some theories of Simmel and Max Weber and the logical inheritance of Marx's theory of alienation and Hegel's dialectics. It reveals the materialization phenomenon and the cultural dilemma in the capitalist society dominated by rationalism. With the rapid development of material life and cultural life today, an objective analysis of Lukacs' materialization theory is of great significance and enlightenment to our socialist modernization.

Keywords

Lukacs; Materialized; Rationalism.

1. The logical Starting Point of Lukacs' Materialized Thought

With the success of the October Revolution of the Soviet Union, the proletariat of central and Western Europe was greatly encouraged and set off a proletarian uprising in their own countries. But these proletarian uprisings were aborted one after another for a variety of reasons, so the proletarian movement in central and Western Europe entered the trough period. Under such background, Lukacs began to rethink the reasons for the failure of the proletarian revolution and the theoretical way to guide the revolution. In his opinion, the reason why Marxism did not achieve fundamental success in the proletarian revolution in central and Western Europe was that some theorists of the Second International did not find the orthodox thought of Marxism guiding the revolution. At the same time, along with the capitalist exploitation of the proletariat, there is a through the phenomenon of the whole society and radiation: along with the increasing maturity of Commodity Exchange, commodity economy as the main body of a capitalist society, the structure of the commodity and its stipulation has penetrated into all fields of social life, labor itself also became a special commodity, is restricted by the object to human life. Under such constraints the relation of man to man is expressed as an external and not subject to subjective determinations. On this basis, Lukacs put forward his materialization theory through Simmel's cultural alienation, Weber's rationalization and Hegel's critical inheritance of dialectics theory.

The first half of the 20th century was a time of intense thought collision, with various ideas bumping into each other. In Lukacs' eyes, the old world, dominated by capitalism, was in tatters, and the new value system, with its new vitality, had not yet been established. He criticizes a series of difficulties existing in the capitalist society led by positivism. It is worth mentioning that his criticism not only involves the existing economic and political fields of capitalist society, but also goes further to reflect on the cultural troubles of capitalist society. As Lukacs' most respected teacher, Simmel's theory greatly influenced the composition of young Lukacs' world outlook. Lukacs, through the interpretation of Simmel's Monetary Philosophy, has a more profound understanding of the representation and connotation of alienation. This also foreshadow his later discussion of materialization. Simmel pointed out that the social division of labor in commodity economy led to the cultural separation between subject and object. With the progress of big machine production in capitalist society and the

increasingly frequent exchange of goods, the unique subject-object relationship between laborers and labor products appeared cracks. The close connection between goods means that the goods produced by the worker become only one link in the chain, and the worker no longer has time to grasp the relationship between his subject and the product he is facing. When the totality of this labor is completely separated from the laborer, the subjective character contained in the commodity cannot be found. This also gives rise to the so-called "one-sided" production and people. Consumers are unable to see the internal connection between producers and them from a wide variety of commodities, and producers are also difficult to grasp the commodities created by their own hands, which is the main driving force behind the formation of alienation theory in Schimmel's opinion. Thus it can be seen that Lukacs was greatly influenced by his teacher in his later materialization.

If the cultural alienation advocated by Schimmel has become the main driver of the alienation problem, then Max Weber's rationalization reveals the core of the instrumental rationality and value rationality prevalent in capitalist society. In the production and exchange of a large number of heavy goods in the industrial society, the rationalization theory under the guidance of tool rationality provided theoretical support for the realization of mechanized production. Weber started from the process of commodity production and explained the importance of quantitative principle in the continuous evolution and development of mechanized production and management. However, Weber also had a lot of worries about the constant expansion of rationalization. He thought that "the rationality of value is itself irrational. To it, the more irrational it is, the more unconditional it is to think only of the fixed value of the act (pure thought, goodness, absolute duty, absolute beauty), the less it cares about the consequences of the act. Here Weber realizes that this rationalization of the quantitative calculation of everything is highly uncontrollable, and that if left unchecked, man will soon lose his own initiative, and thus become confined to things and lose his own ability to think and to believe in holiness. Lukacs materialization theory criticism inherited webber's this view, he believes that this kind of rationalization of computational principles while in the process of the development of the capitalist society has played a key role, but under the control of the rationalization of computability, organic unity between labor products began to split, then workers can't control the production process, eventually led to the production and people "one-sided".

As a "banner bearer" of Western Marxism, Lukacs spared no effort to explore the orthodox methods hidden in Marxist philosophy. In Lukacs's view, "Orthodox Marxism does not imply uncritical acceptance of the results of Marxism's studies. He is not a 'belief' in this or that argument, nor is he a commentary on a 'holy book'. On the contrary, orthodoxy in Marxist questions refers only to the method." Lukacs, in his history and Class Consciousness, tries to find a new deconstruction of Marxism from Hegel's logical deduction of dialectics and find the logical starting point of Marxism in The context of Hegel's dialectics. Therefore, there are also later people who call the Western Marxism since Lukacs as "Hegelian Marxism". To find the connection between the two, Lukacs first had to solve two questions. The first question was what was the relationship between the dialectic tradition contained in German classical philosophy represented by Hegel and Marx's thought? The second question is why this consistent dialectics is not confined to theory alone, but can be incarnated as the guiding ideology of the proletarian revolution. It is not difficult to see that the direct purpose of Lukacs' two questions is to reflect the reality of the European revolution. To him, the clarification of dialectics is directly related to the abolishment of materialization, to the success or failure of the proletarian revolution, and to the realization of the true liberation of the proletariat as the essential power of the existence of reality.

When Lukacs sorted out the German classical philosophy, the key point of his insight was the internal contradiction between the German classical philosophy and modern capitalism, which led to the fact that the German classical philosophy could not solve the crisis of modern capitalism. The fundamental contradiction is that human beings seem to have broken free from the bondage of nature and become independent of it, but the fact is that we are still trapped in the cage of "second nature". The "second nature" he refers to here is that in the current capitalist society, human beings have created a materialized world with their actual production process independent of human beings and counter-

directional restraining forces. In such a materialized world, we are still pure materials dominated and manipulated by it. That is to say, the actual process of human production is subject to the necessity of external form, rather than the freedom of content. Lukacs inherited Hegel's concreteness of the concept between form and content, affirming that Hegel's concrete concept derived from the logical system of content is a kind of dialectics about content. Secondly, his understanding of the proletariat and its class consciousness also has the shadow of Hegel's philosophy, here he mainly emphasizes the interaction between subject and object in Hegel's "entity is subject" and the creative principle of subject. He always focuses on the production process of human beings and the existence of human beings. He emphasizes that in the interaction between subject and object, the object that should have been organically integrated with the subject into a whole has achieved complete exclusiveness and self-discipline, and has become the ruling force that in turn dominates the subject. At this point, the totality of man as the core of the organic unity of subject and object has been eliminated, and man no longer has the priority of totality in principle, but is subordinate to the object for production and life. From Lukacs' logical deduction, we can easily see that Lukacs has placed dialectics in the central part of Western Marxism on the basis of sublating Hegel's dialectics.

2. The Physicochemical Phenomenon under Lukacs' Pen and Its Basic Characteristics

In 1923, Lukacs formally put forward the core idea of his early thought--materialization theory in his book *History and Class Consciousness*. As mentioned above, Lukacs has long criticized the capitalist society under the influence of positivism. He believes that the instrumental rationality and value rationality advocated by the capitalist society not only accelerate the development of commodity economy, but also give rise to the phenomenon of materialization. The theoretical origin of the word "materialization" can be traced back to Marx's description of commodity fetishism in *Das Kapital*. But it is worth mentioning that Marx's concept of "alienation" had not yet entered Lukacs' eyes. Lukacs defined objectification as: "Man's own activity or labor, as something objective and independent of man, something that controls man through his own discipline, is opposite to man." It is not difficult to see from here that Lukacs believes that the emergence of materialization is closely related to the development of capitalist commodity economy. Throughout the development course of human society, commodity economy also shows a leap from linear growth to exponential growth in the long transition from agricultural civilization to industrial civilization. Previously, in modern capitalism commodity economy has emerged, but the productivity of agriculture civilization period relatively backward, content and the content of production and exchange relations between doesn't dominate the social economic structure, the society relies mainly on the on the basis of the agricultural civilization and patriarchal consanguinity as the core of the interpersonal relationship to sustain. With the disintegration of the natural economy in feudal society and the development of commodity economy, the western society ushered in the era of capitalism, which provided the necessary conditions for the qualitative change of the social form. The primitive accumulation of capital resulted in the polarization between producers and owners of goods: on the one hand, there appeared a large number of workers who lost their means of production and were forced to sell their labor force; on the other hand, there was also the birth of capitalists who held a large amount of capital and means of production. In this context, commodity economy has become a subject economy, and the regulation and self-discipline of commodity structure have penetrated into all social fields. Commodities have bound the producers of commodities to form a universal and self-consistent world of things. How can the "ghost" of this world of things immerse the labouring man in it without knowing it? This is the focus of both Marx's commodity fetishism or alienation theory and Lukacs's materialization.

In this context, readers may mistakenly believe that Lukacs' theory of materialization and Marx's theory of alienation belong to the same category of language sequence, but in fact, there are obvious differences between them. First of all, we need to mention the concept of objectification to make a distinction between the two. Marx believed that in the same kind of labor process, the result of objectification is shown as the positive confirmation of the essential stipulation of human, while the

result of alienation is shown as the resistance and reaction to the essential stipulation of human. Marx believed that only under certain social conditions can objectification be transformed into alienation, and the focus of his criticism of alienation lies in the continuation of capitalism under the condition of commodity economy. Lukacs, on the other hand, started from the "second nature" to analyze the path of materialized phenomena, emphasizing the harm brought to human beings by the objective law of the materialized world, which is self-consistent and not subject to subjectivity and can act on the subject in turn. Secondly, Lukacs emphasized that the degradation of human consciousness to the materialized structure would lead to the isolation and atomization of human beings themselves, and human activities would be separated from themselves and become impersonal objective commodities subject to the objective laws of society. It can be seen that Lukacs took the negative impact of instrumental rationality and value rationality on the development of modern capitalist society as the starting point to discuss the materialization phenomenon, and attributed a large part of the causes of materialization to the deviation of cognitive methods. Marx's theory of alienation is based on the cornerstone of labor alienation. Self-alienation of consciousness is caused by division of labor. Alienated labor leads to the alienation of labor products, that is, the more abundant the material materials produced by workers, the more insignificant their own existence will be. The division of labor causes the alienation of human nature, which in turn causes the alienation of human social relations in production activities. According to the division of labor, the subjective form of man in the process of labor is abandoned and replaced by the complete mechanical form. As long as there is a form of division of labor in the production process, the social structure in the production process of things will always be superior to the producer, and the individual's personality behavior will become specific and defamiliarize, and at the same time, it will become a force independent of the individual. Of course, Lukacs believed that the materialization phenomenon under the commodity economy did not happen overnight, and its emergence and development also underwent a transformation from abstract to concrete. In the pre-capitalist period, there was no materialization, or this phenomenon was only insignificant. It was intensified with the continuous development of capitalist productive forces and the continuous prosperity of commodity economy. When commodity economy plays a more and more important role in human production activities, it becomes a general structural principle to control the metabolism of human society, and as an alien force, it realizes the control and utilization of producers. In this regard, Lukacs developed the provisions of materialization from the subjective and objective dimensions. In the subjective dimension, when laborers produce commodities in exchange for basic survival materials, laborers themselves become alienated from labor behavior and become commodities subject to exchange value. In the objective dimension, with the deepening of commodity economy, the commodity world itself is also inextricably linked. A kind of objective law of spontaneous operation has evolved, and people can only make use of this law to seek profits passively, but they lose their subjectivity. Capitalists, businessmen, and proletarians are all included in it. Lukacs made an analysis of the materialized form by digitizing, objectifying the subject and atomizing the person.

The digitization of human refers to the abstract and symbolic transformation of human nature in the development of commodity economy. Because developed commodity economies follow the "principle of rationalization based on being calculated and being able to be calculated". In this computable mechanistic system, which has acquired a superior degree of self-discipline according to its own nature, the worker is naturally integrated into it and carries out day-to-day specialization which is undoubtedly disconnected from the overall nature of the commodity. In this mechanical system, the laborer is reduced to abstract numbers without subjectivity and initiative, and the meaning and value of his labor are converted into fixed and average work quota after being quantified. This computability, ostensibly rationalized, may define not only the process of production but also the worker himself. In this process of rationalization, undisturbed by human consciousness, the subject gradually becomes the passive receiver and adherent of the mechanized system. Undoubtedly, people's subjective will is greatly limited, and every link in the production chain is broken one by one. What the subject can grasp is only a point or a tiny molecule. The positions of the subject and the

object are exchanged at the level of objectization, and the subject becomes the object, and the object controls the subject in the real sense. In this context, human subjective will, attitude, emotion and other perceptual factors are not recognized by this consistent process of production, or even excluded. The role played by man is only a part in the production chain and an abstract number that can be banned at any time. Man has lost his priority of subjectivity both subjectively and objectively and become a passive object in the production process. Finally, when the whole organic unity of the material production process is broken down, man himself is reduced to isolated atoms, the universal connection between man and man based on productive activities is completely concealed, and the character of man itself is absorbed by this alien law. Thus, not only does every individual become a passive being, but the relations between individuals become extremely passive. Their organizational relations are completely dependent on the organizational relations or principles of things, and man becomes an isolated atom. Thus, through the analysis of the three basic features of materialization, Lukacs very thoroughly revealed the existence dilemma driven by rationalism under the condition of developed commodity economy in capitalist society.

3. The Time Value Analysis of the Materialization Theory

Lukacs believed that the phenomenon of materialization has reached an unprecedented level in modern society, and the abolishment of materialization has become a very difficult task that modern people must face and have to solve. It is true that his materialization thought itself also has a certain degree of internal dilemma, which caused endless debates among the theorists after him. But as he adds in his foreword to the second edition of *History and Class Consciousness*, it is the parts of the book that are, unfortunately, the most influential. Under the background of *The Times* at that time, his solution to the materialization phenomenon was the dialectics of the principle of totality and the unity of subject and object, and he advocated the generation of the revolutionary concept with the proletarian class consciousness as the core. Although the materialization theory from the perspective of modernity criticism is in essence an investigation and criticism of capitalism under the guidance of rationalism, it is still of great significance to the exploration of China's socialist road, especially to the construction of my ideology and culture and the core value system. So that Marxism maintains its advanced nature, constantly broaden the theoretical eye, obtain new impetus for development, and solve practical problems.

First, we must put the people first. In the course of socialist modernization, we must not blindly develop the productive forces, increase the output of commodities, pay more attention to the improvement of material and cultural living standards, and promote the all-round development of the people. As the largest manufacturing country in the world, China's manufacturing industry has a large scale, complete industrial categories, and many fields have entered the forefront of the world. However, at the same time, there are also many problems that blindly pursue the rapid growth of GDP while ignoring the development of human beings. The high intensity of work pressure lead to the lack of humanistic care in some enterprises, the indifference of interpersonal relations in enterprises, and the alienation of interpersonal relations. The development of human beings has undergone "internalization". The so-called "internalization" refers to the fact that after a certain degree of development, something has neither abrupt development nor gradual growth, lacks the extension boundary caused by qualitative change, and stays at the same level of self-consumption and self-repetition for a long time. This is undoubtedly the survival dilemma caused by the excessive expansion of technical rationality and instrumental rationality. The aphasia of intrinsic value caused by external reason will inevitably aggravate the loss of human subjectivity and creativity. In this regard, we should adhere to the people-oriented principle, actively construct and carry forward socialist core values, vigorously promote socialist cultural construction, balance the balance between instrumental rationality and value rationality, and guard against the expansion and overstepping of instrumental rationality. We should build a people-oriented value system and create a favorable environment for people's development by combining social concepts, legal protection and institutional mechanisms.

Second, beware of the "worship of money" and "worship of things" under the socialist market economy. "Just as Marx discussed alienated labor in the context of capitalism, Lukacs also closely linked the phenomenon of materialization with the commodity economy." In the reform process of China's socialist market economy, has changed the "basic role" of the market in resource allocation to "decisive role", which is a new breakthrough in the understanding of the law of socialist construction with Chinese characteristics, marking the development of the socialist market economy has entered a new stage. This kind of reform has strengthened the key role of the market, which is conducive to the high-quality development of China's economy. However, it also has its negative effects: the breeding of "money worship" and "materialism". Some people blindly worship money and regard money and material things as the highest pursuit of life and the criterion for measuring everything. While pursuing personal interests, they abandon their sense of social responsibility, which leads to the unlimited pursuit of money or material things. It has also led to the prevalence of "hedonism", "extreme individualism" and "consumerism", resulting in the separation of economic and social benefits, ignoring social morality and tramping market norms. For example, at present, there are some phenomena such as black box operation, fraud and rampant counterfeit and shoddy products. Such worship of things leads to material domination and slavery of people, which is a great challenge for us to build a socialist market economic order and fair competition.

Third, we should advocate the concept of totality and uphold harmony between man and nature. Lukacs, when analyzing the domination and domination of materialized structure and consciousness, pointed out that the most negative influence of materialization on human existence and social and historical process lies in the fact that it makes human existence and historical process lose their intrinsic, organic and concrete totality both theoretically and practically. Therefore, the idea of restoring totality plays a crucial role in the sublation and abandonment of materialization. According to Lukacs' general point of view, society is an organic whole composed of interconnected elements, which requires us to deal with the relationship between various elements of this organism and realize the harmonious coexistence of man and nature. As the most basic relationship of human society, human beings produce, live and develop in their interaction with nature. As General Secretary Xi Jinping has pointed out, "Nature is the mother of life, and man and nature are part of a community of life. Humanity must respect, conform to and protect nature. To protect nature is to protect mankind, and to build an ecological civilization is to benefit mankind. A sound ecology is the most valuable public resource and the most effective way to ensure people's livelihood. In recent years, due to the acceleration of China's economic pace, the problem of environmental pollution is becoming more and more prominent, promoting the construction of ecological civilization has become an urgent task concerning the overall well-off society and the overall development. Clear water and green mountains are mountains of gold and silver. This is a scientific concept of development and a key method to promote socialist modernization. Only in a country full of blue sky and white clouds, people can get spiritual comfort, human society built humanistic care and ethics can give full play to their due value, human personality and subjectivity can be given full play, and the all-round development of people can be realized.

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