

On Marx's idea of community from 'On the Jewish Question'

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Abstract

Marx's concept of community is a theoretical embodiment of the free and comprehensive development of individuals, which has theoretical significance for the contemporary construction of a community with a shared future for humanity and a community of life between humans and nature. Marx elaborated on the idea of 'community' as early as in 'On the Jewish Question.' In-depth study of the theoretical logic of Marx's early concept of 'community' can provide a theoretical and correct perspective to understand today's community ideologies, which is of great importance for the realization of communism and the liberation of all humanity.

Keywords

Community; Marx; On the Jewish Question.

1. The logical connotation of community

Marx's idea of community is a theory in the process of practice, which has undergone an evolution from the lower to the higher stages, and it is an important theoretical thought for critiquing capitalism. Marx's idea of community reveals the historical position of the masses, who are the creators of history, and it is an important part of historical materialism.

1.1. Community

The connotation of community can be analyzed from multiple perspectives and disciplines. There may be different definitions of it, but in the final analysis, community is about human thought, and the only element is human.

In ancient Chinese, the term "common" refers to "everyone together," and "community" refers to a public group where there are mutual connections and interactions among its members. For example, a family is a small community, a country is a larger one, and even the entire world belongs to the community. In Marx's critique of Bauer's views on the 'methods of emancipating the Jews' in his work 'On the Jewish Question,' it is mentioned that, 'As a believer in a particular religion, the individual experiences a conflict with their citizenship and with others as members of the community...,' emphasizing that the subject of a community is people. In other words, regardless of how a community is interconnected, the most important aspect is the connections between people, the interdependent relationships between individuals.

1.2. Political Community

The 'political community' mentioned in 'On the Jewish Question' is a form of community, an existence of individuals as members of society, and it is the premise for Marx's final proposal of the 'true community'.

The political community refers to the existence of individuals within a political state, where each person, as a citizen, possesses civil rights and fulfills national obligations. So what is a 'political state'? Marx defines the political state by comparing how different countries approach religion in his essay 'On the Jewish Question'. In the political state, it is like 'in the North American states that implement a republican system — at least in some of them — the Jewish

question loses its theological significance and becomes a truly secular issue.' Therefore, a political state is one that is politically liberated, meaning a state that practices a republican system. In a political state, every person exists as a social citizen, is a social being, and their rights and responsibilities as citizens are not obstructed by religious doctrines, which constitutes the political community.

1.3. Truly Community

In "On the Jewish Question," Marx criticizes the hypocrisy of the bourgeoisie under capitalism and private property from the perspective of the religious liberation of Jews, ultimately seeking to achieve the true liberation of humanity, that is, to establish a genuine community.

Based on the political state, Marx further argues that political emancipation is not the same as religious emancipation, nor does it equal true human emancipation. In the political state, the rights that individuals obtain, recognized as 'human rights,' pertain to the material properties of man. These 'so-called human rights,' distinct from civic rights, are merely the rights of members of civil society, that is, merely the rights of self-interested individuals, who are separated from others and from the community. In society, individuals are viewed as limitations on the freedom of others; individuals are mutually segregated and divided, which results in the alienation of human natural properties and social properties. True human emancipation is 'to return the world of man and the various relations to man himself,' meaning that true human emancipation occurs when individuals, as human beings, exist as species beings, developing freely and comprehensively. At this point, individuals embody the combination of material and social properties; they are concrete individuals, embodying the essence of humanity, becoming individuals who develop freely and comprehensively – this is the true community.

2. The development logic of Marx's community thought

The October Revolution in Russia brought Marxism to China, and to this day, Marxism remains our fundamental guiding ideology. The idea of the Marxist community provides valuable theoretical wealth for China and the world today. In the new era, the idea of community keeps pace with the times to achieve the free and comprehensive development of individuals.

2.1. Community of Shared Future for Mankind

The community of shared future for mankind is an important concept proposed by General Secretary Jinping Xi at the 18th National Congress of the Communist Party, and under the unprecedented major changes in the world and the overall strategy for the great rejuvenation of the Chinese nation (hereinafter referred to as the 'two major situations'), it has become a global consensus on values.

Since the Industrial Revolution, especially with the rapid development of information technology, we have entered an era of economic globalization and information diversity. The people of the world have become an interconnected and inseparable community. Living on one planet, countries share the same interests, and no country can exist independently of society. In this context, countries and their people have become a community of shared destiny, interdependent and closely linked.

2.2. Community of Life between Humans and Nature

Nature is the basis for human existence and development. Human production and practice can actively change and utilize the state of natural laws to create the human world. The relationship between humans and nature is a dialectical unity, forming a life community of harmonious coexistence between humans and nature.

The ecological view of Marxism analyzes the relationship between humans and nature based on their formation, advocating the idea of harmonious coexistence between humans and nature. Since ancient times, the Chinese nation has held the concepts of 'unity of heaven and humanity' and 'governing through non-action,' which emphasize respect for nature and alignment with natural laws, maintaining a balance between humanity and nature, and having a sense of moderation and reverence towards nature. However, the current tension in the relationship between humans and nature, and the deterioration of the ecological environment remind us to continuously strengthen ecological protection and uphold the concept of a life community where humans and nature coexist harmoniously.

2.3. The Community of The Chinese Nation

The Chinese nation is a "blood community", "geographical community" and "spiritual community" all in one. Through historical development, the Chinese nation has formed a community that shares the same boat and shares weal and woe.

In modern China, due to the exploitation and oppression of the 'three great mountains', the concept of the 'Chinese nation' emerged. At that time, the main contradiction was between imperialism and the Chinese nation, as well as between feudalism and the masses of the people. It was through the courageous resistance of the Chinese nation that eventual victory was achieved, leading to the establishment of the new China. During the period of reform and opening up and socialist construction, the Chinese nation worked together to build the homeland, forming a community of shared destiny. In the new era, under the context of the 'two overall situations', characterized by economic globalization, ideological pluralism, and information diversity, the Chinese nation needs to accelerate the construction of a sense of community for the Chinese nation, be full of confidence in the Chinese nation, and adhere to the path of socialism with Chinese characteristics.

3. The value logic of Marx's community thought

Marx's idea of community reflects his highest pursuit for the liberation of all humanity, representing the interests of the proletariat, and is a manifestation of the social evolution from the lower to the higher. Therefore, Marx's idea of community highlights its value and significance even more today, and it holds great importance for the future liberation of the proletariat and the comprehensive development of human freedom.

3.1. Theoretical Value

The idea of a community as envisioned by Marx has significant importance in contemporary times. Theoretically, Marx's concept of community provides guidance for the enrichment, perfection, and development of the community of shared human destiny, the community of life between humans and nature, and the community of the Chinese nation.

Marxist community thought centers on concrete individuals, defining true collectivism as "a union of free people" with the ultimate goal of human liberation and the comprehensive development of human freedom. As the cornerstone of historical materialism, this ideology provides a theoretical foundation for proletarian emancipation. In an era of advanced productive forces, human liberation should progress alongside material ownership by the proletariat. People can freely choose their preferred occupations—whether manual or intellectual work—while enjoying leisure time for self-improvement activities. Contemporary initiatives like the Human Community with a Shared Future, the Life Community between Humans and Nature, and the Chinese National Community all advance this vision. Marxist community thought offers the theoretical framework to accelerate the realization of human freedom and all-round development.

3.2. Practical Value

Marx's idea of community is an ideology formed and developed in historical practice. It still holds significant practical value in contemporary times, as it can promote the progress of the community of shared human destiny, the community of life between humans and nature, and the awareness of the community of the Chinese nation, addressing new issues that arise in society.

The concept of a community with a shared future for mankind concerns the vital interests of people worldwide, the development of relations among nations, and major issues such as international economy and ecology, which holds significant value in shaping the new international landscape. The "Belt and Road" initiative proposed by China embodies the practice of building a community with a shared future for mankind. It aligns with the historical trend of economic globalization and responds to the demands of reforming the global governance system, representing a correct choice for the future. The concept of a community of life for humanity and nature, proposed against the backdrop of severe environmental pollution, resource scarcity, and declining biodiversity, emphasizes respecting, adapting to, and protecting nature. The goals of "carbon peaking" and "carbon neutrality" outlined by President Jinping Xi in the report to the 20th National Congress of the Communist Party of China reflect this vision. By implementing these goals effectively and achieving each stage's objectives step by step, we will ultimately realize harmonious coexistence between humans and nature. During the period of competition between socialism and capitalism, China must further strengthen the sense of community among the Chinese nation, enhance national cohesion and centripetal force, which is conducive to maintaining social stability and national security.

4. Conclusion

Marxist philosophy takes the comprehensive development of human liberation and freedom as its historical mission, and the thought of the Marxist community is the foundational theoretical concept for this pursuit, aligned with the current of history, and is a true community. Our country adheres to the thought of the Marxist community as its guiding ideology, and based on the process of world history, expands the ideas of a community with a shared future for mankind, a community of life between humans and nature, and the community of the Chinese nation, providing Chinese wisdom and solutions for the realization of comprehensive human development. However, currently, to achieve true human liberation and to realize the 'community of free individuals,' a long historical period is still needed, continuously advancing towards the goal in the reform of the proletariat.

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