

The Core Content and Contemporary Enlightenment of Family Thought in "The Origin of Family, Private Ownership and the Origin of the State"

Ruiqi Liu, Xiaohong Wang^{a,*}

Cangzhou Jiaotong College, Cangzhou, Hebei, China

^axhwang@czjtu.edu.cn

*Corresponding author

Abstract: "The Origin of the Family, Private Property and the State", as an important sociological work of Engels, mainly reveals the internal relations and historical evolution laws among the family, private ownership and the state. This paper is mainly based on the text of Origin of the Family and Private Property and the State, summarizes the theoretical basis and core content of family thought of Origin of the Family and Private Property and the State, and deeply expounds its practical enlightenment to the contemporary society.

Keywords: "The Origin of the Family, Private Property and the State"; family thought; core content; contemporary revelation

1. Introduction

"The Origin of the Family, Private Property and the State" is a classic work written by Engels on the basis of organizing Marx's research materials and combined with his own anthropological research results. The book systematically expounds the origin and development process of the family, private ownership and the country, and also deeply reveals the internal connection and historical laws between them. In the contemporary social background, with the rapid development of economy and the profound change of social structure, the family as the basic unit of the society is facing many challenges and opportunities. Therefore, it is of great significance to review Engels' family thoughts to understand the contemporary family problems and promote the harmonious development of society.

2. An Overview of "The Origin of the Family, Private Property, and the State"

"The Origin of the Family, Private Property, and the State" is a masterpiece of Engels' late-year theoretical exploration, deeply carrying out Marx's will on the law of social development, using the sharp analytical tools of historical materialism, and thoroughly analyzing the complex process of human society transitioning from primitive commune system to private ownership and then to the state form. This book is a profound revelation of the internal logic of the evolution of family structures and the rise of private property ownership, as well as an inevitable explanation of the state as the inevitable product of class contradictions. It provides a solid theoretical foundation for understanding the alternation of social forms and the interaction between economic basis and superstructure and greatly enriches the treasury of Marxist social and historical theory.^[1]

3. The Theoretical Foundation and Core Ideas of "The Origin of the Family, Private Property and the State"

3.1. The Theoretical Foundation of "The Origin of the Family, Private Property and the State"

Engels's masterpiece "The Origin of the Family, Private Property, and the State" firmly establishes his profound theoretical foundation on historical materialism, particularly through his profound interpretation of the theory of "two production," which offers a unique perspective on the historical development process of human society. Engels profoundly pointed out that the production of means of life and the production of human beings themselves, as the two major foundations of social existence,

develop independently and also interweave and interact in the current of history, forming the core driving force to promote the continuous evolution of social forms. The production of the means of life, as the material basis of human survival, directly determines the level of social productivity and then affects the change of production relations and even the whole social structure. Through the production of human beings themselves, the evolution of social systems, such as marriage relationships, family structure, and sexual relationships, profoundly shapes the social culture, ethics, and ideology and provides a sustainable population power and social relationship network for social development.^[2]

In this book, Engels skillfully integrated the methodology of dialectical materialism into the analysis of the family, private ownership, and the origin of the state. Through extensive and in-depth historical investigation and anthropological research results, he showed the complex evolution process of these social phenomena from primitive society to class society. He stressed that the interaction between the economic foundation and the superstructure constitutes the internal logic of social change. The rise of private ownership, as a direct consequence of the development of productive forces, leads to the intensification of class differentiation and also promotes the birth of the country as a new form of social organization to safeguard the interests of the ruling class. These emerging social systems, in turn, act on the economic foundation, regulate the social relations of production through legal, political, and religious means, and promote or hinder the development of social productive forces, thus writing a new chapter in the long river of social history.

3.2. "The Origins of the Family, Private Property, and the State": The Family Concept's Core Ideas

In Engels' classic "The Origin of the Family, Private Property, and the State," he employs a profound historical materialism perspective to explore the origins of the family, its evolution, nature, function, and the complex relationship between private ownership and countries. His comprehensive and profound analysis provides a valuable theoretical framework for understanding the law of human social development.

Firstly, Engels sheds light on the origin and evolution of the family, revealing its profound history and social nature. He pointed out that in the ancient, ignorant times, there existed a primitive, chaotic sexual relationship in the early stages of human society, resulting in a chaotic state of family form. As productivity levels gradually improved, particularly with the rise of agriculture and animal husbandry, the social division of labor underwent refinement, leading to the transition from primitive sexual relationships to more stable family forms. This process went through a long journey from the blood family to the Punalaya family, then to the dual family, and finally to the dual family (monogamous family). At each stage, the family form profoundly reflects the development level of social productivity at the time, the emergence of surplus products, the accumulation of wealth, and the adaptive adjustment of the sexual relationship to the social changes.

Further, Engels elaborated on the nature and function of the family. In his opinion, the family, as the basic cell of society, is the basic unit of material production, which carries the responsibility of distributing and using the means of production. Especially in the era of small-scale peasant economies, the family is the core link of social reproduction. At the same time, the family plays a crucial role in human reproduction, ensuring the continuation of race and the renewal of society through its reproductive function. Moreover, the family plays a crucial role in emotional communication and support, serving as a safe haven for its members, fostering emotional bonding and psychological fulfillment among them, thereby bolstering the cohesion and stability of the social structure.

When discussing the ethics and morality of family relations, Engels emphasized the importance of family as a micro-embodiment of social ethics. He believes that healthy and harmonious family relationships are an important basis for social stability and progress. We should advocate for the ethical principle of equality, respect, and care within the family, as it directly impacts each family member's well-being and shapes the moral fashion and civilization of the entire society. He severely criticized domestic violence, gender discrimination, and other immoral behaviors, and he called on society to promote family ethics through education, law, and other means.^[3]

Finally, Engels deeply analyzed the complex relationship between the family, private ownership, and the state. The emergence and development of private ownership significantly influences the evolution of the family form, altering the property relationship within the family and fostering the formation and differentiation of social classes. As class contradictions intensify, the state emerges as an irreconcilable product of these contradictions. In the class society, the family usually becomes the epitome of the class interest struggle, and the families of different classes have significant differences

in resource allocation and children's education. At the same time, the state intervenes and adjusts family relations by formulating laws and policies to maintain social order and promote class interests. In this process, the family, private ownership, and the state interweave and influence each other, together constituting a complex picture of the development of human society.

4. The Contemporary Implications of Family Ideas in "The Origin of the Family, Private Property, and the State"

4.1. Provide a basis for the cognition of family problems

Engels' "The Origin of the Family and Private Property and the State" is a treasure. His profound historical materialism analysis effectively reveals the internal logic of the change in family form, providing valuable theoretical perspective and analytical tools that help us understand the essence and root of contemporary family problems. Through a detailed investigation of the evolution of social structure from the prehistoric period to the early stage of civilized society, especially the formation and development process of the family as the basic unit of society, the book reveals how the contradictory movement of productive forces and production relations drives the reform of family form and then affects the reorganization of the whole social structure.^[4]

In contemporary society, the diversity and complexity of family problems are far ahead of the generation, among which domestic violence, divorce rate, and the plight of the elderly are particularly prominent. According to Engels' theory, these problems do not exist in isolation but are deeply rooted in the deep contradictions of the social and economic structure. Using domestic violence as an example, we can see that it is not only a direct manifestation of moral decline or individual behavioral anomie but also a result of gender inequality and the unequal distribution of economic power. In the patriarchal system as the dominant family, although modern society at the legal level generally established the principle of gender equality, the uneven distribution of economic resources, the social concept of inertia, and men in family decision-making put women usually in a weak position, vulnerable to physical, psychological, and economic multiple violations.

Therefore, in order to effectively solve contemporary family problems such as domestic violence, it is necessary to go beyond the superficial legal regulation and moral condemnation, deeply explore the social and economic roots behind it, and formulate comprehensive governance strategies accordingly. This involves, among other things, the promotion of gender equality in the economy. Ensure that women have equal rights to men in employment, pay, career promotion, etc. Secondly, they should strive to lessen their reliance on men for financial support, while also enhancing social and cultural development. We need to break down gender stereotypes and advocate for the family concept of gender equality, respect, and cooperation. Third, we need to improve the legal system by increasing the crackdown on domestic violence and, at the same time, establish a better social support network. Ensure prompt assistance and protection for the victims; additionally, foster intergenerational communication to fortify the emotional bond and familial responsibilities. We are working together to address the challenges posed by an aging society, such as enhancing the support system for the elderly. We must guarantee the financial security and well-being of the elderly.

4.2. Provide guidance for the solution of marriage problems

Engels's thoughts on family and marriage profoundly revealed the profound influence of social and institutional changes on interpersonal relationships, especially the nature of marriage relationships, and provided a solid theoretical basis and practical guide for us to build a more harmonious and equal family relationship. In "The Origin of the Family, Private Property, and the State" and other works, Engels deeply analyzed how private ownership gradually eroded marriage as a love bond purity, making the alienation into a kind of institutional arrangement based on economic interests and prospectively foreseeing the public ownership society form, in marriage may return to its essence—is based on mutual love, respect, and a common ideal emotional connection.

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prospectively foreseeing the public ownership society form, in marriage may return to its essence—is based on mutual love, respect, and a common ideal emotional connection.

Facing the complexity of the marriage problem in contemporary society, Engels' family thought is particularly important. In the context of globalization and information technology, the stability of marriage is faced with unprecedented challenges, such as the utilitarian tendency of marriage caused by increasing economic pressure and the impact of individualism values on family responsibility. All these problems echo the alienation of marriage relationships under the background of a private ownership society. Therefore, the deep study and understanding of Engels's thoughts on marriage are of immeasurable value for guiding society to establish correct marriage concepts and promote family harmony.

Specifically, we should actively advocate the concept of marriage based on love and also further emphasize the emotional communication and spiritual resonance in marriage rather than the consideration of economic interests. Relevant personnel should also constantly strengthen social education, effectively enhance the public's awareness of family responsibility, and encourage both husband and wife to participate in family decision-making together in order to achieve gender equality and power balance within the family.

4.3. Provide guidance for the correct view of love and marriage

In contemporary society, with the rapid development of the economy and the arrival of the information age, people's concepts of love and marriage have also undergone profound changes. Some people blindly pursue material interests in love and marriage, disregarding the foundations of love and personal independence. This wrong view of love and marriage will usually lead to emotional loss and life difficulties. Learning and understanding Engels' perspectives on love and marriage allows us to clearly understand the fundamental role of love in these relationships, as well as the significance of preserving personal independence and autonomy. Establishing a correct perspective on love and marriage necessitates the pursuit of genuine happiness and satisfaction.

As an indispensable link in the Marxist theoretical system, Engels family thought will have a far-reaching influence across the era, provide a theoretical basis for us to deeply understand the nature of family structure and marriage relationships, and also provide an ideological guide for contemporary society to establish a correct view of love and marriage. According to Engels, love and marriage, as important parts of human social life, should transcend the bondage of material interests and return to the natural and pure state with love as the core. He profoundly pointed out that although the economic foundation is the decisive factor in social relations, in the field of personal emotion, especially in the relationship between love and marriage, the sincerity of emotion and the freedom and equality of both sides should become the primary principles.^[5]

Under the complex and changeable background of today's society, Engels believed that love and marriage could provide guidance to modern people, lead us through the fog of materialism, and return us to the purity and authenticity of emotion. With the deepening of globalization and the revolutionary breakthrough of information technology, the diversification trend of social structure is irreversible. While individuals experience unprecedented freedom and opportunities, they also encounter unprecedented challenges and confusion. This change is particularly striking in the field of love and marriage. On the one hand, the awakening of individual consciousness promotes people's deep exploration of self-value and encourages people to pay more attention to the spiritual fit and the resonance of the soul in the choice of partners and to pursue the truth and depth of emotion. On the other hand, the wave of consumerism is quietly eroding the emotional purity of the land, leading some individuals to view marriage as a platform for material exchange, disregarding the emotional purity and the value of deep communication. The utilitarian tendency distorts the nature of love, and the stability of marriage relationships and happiness also poses a very serious threat.

In this context, it is particularly urgent to reexplore and deeply explain Engels theory about love and marriage. Engels stressed that true love should be based on mutual respect, equality, and freedom, beyond material bondage and the pursuit of spiritual communication and resonance. This view provides valuable enlightenment for modern people: in the construction of the relationship between love and marriage, we should pay attention to the cultivation and deepening of internal emotions rather than the accumulation and comparison of external conditions; we should adhere to individual independence and autonomy and learn to support and grow in the relationship; and we should take equality, respect, and understanding as the cornerstones to create a stable and warm emotional harbor. By making such

efforts, we can not only achieve personal happiness and growth, but also contribute to societal harmony and stability.

5. Conclusions

To sum up, the family thought in *Origin of the Family and Private Property and the State* deeply reveals the historical law in the development of human society and also brings good theoretical guidance for us to understand and solve the contemporary family problems. Under the background of the new era, we should deeply study Engels family thought, effectively combine it with contemporary social practice, and then contribute wisdom and strength to the promotion of family harmony and social progress.

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