

The Association between Marxism and Post-Modernism in the Perspective of Jacques Derrida

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Abstract: *Marxism and postmodernism is a difficult problem. Friedrich Jameson once said with some helplessness that the attempt or effort to connect the two would be regarded as a strange combination without a solid foundation and full of paradoxes. It often presented the strange landscape and weird effect produced by the combination of the old yellow photos of the Soviet revolution and the colorful neon luxury hotel. There are two main views on the understanding of Marxism and postmodernism. One view is that the vigorous development of postmodernist cultural thoughts not only means that Marxism is out of date, but also declares the end of Marxism. Another point of view is that postmodernism, as a cultural representation of the increasingly fashionable, fragmented and flat life of contemporary society, is an ideological mode with relativism and nihilism, and a language and cultural game that rejects depth and loftiness. No matter from the historical point of view, or from the reality, there are intricate connections between Marxism and postmodernism. Therefore, how to understand the complex relationship between Marxism and postmodernism has become a major theoretical problem to be solved in the contemporary cultural and ideological circles.*

Keywords: *Marxism, Postmodernism, Derrida, Divergence*

1. Introduction

Distinguishing Marxism and postmodernism is a difficult and difficult problem. F. Jameson once said with some helplessness that the attempt or effort to connect the two would be regarded as a strange combination without a solid foundation and full of paradoxes. It often presented the strange landscape and weird effect produced by the combination of the old yellow photos of the Soviet revolution and the colorful neon luxury hotel. Indeed, in many people's ideas, a postmodernist cannot be a Marxist in any sense and there is no wonder why Marxism and postmodernism have always been two things that are totally different.

There are two main views on the understanding of Marxism and postmodernism. One view is that the vigorous development of postmodernist cultural thoughts not only means that Marxism is out of date, but also declares the end of Marxism. In the post-industrial era or the late capitalist era, fundamental changes have taken place in the politics, economy, culture and daily life of contemporary society. Marxism has lost its effectiveness in explaining the current reality. Another point of view is that postmodernism, as a cultural representation of the increasingly fashionable, fragmented and flat life of contemporary society, is an ideological mode with relativism and nihilism, and a language and cultural game that rejects depth and loftiness. Therefore, there is not only nothing in common between postmodernism and Marxism, which has lofty revolutionary ideals and pursues human freedom and liberation, but also two ideological systems which are antagonistic and incompatible. Although the above two views express fundamentally different theoretical positions, the former declares the end of Marxism from the standpoint of postmodernism, while the latter criticizes postmodernism from the standpoint of Marxism. However, they both believe that there is a huge gap between Marxism and postmodernism that cannot be communicated.

However, the fact is not so simple. No matter from the historical point of view, or from the reality, there are intricate connections between Marxism and postmodernism. Therefore, how to understand the complex relationship between Marxism and postmodernism has become a major theoretical problem to be solved in the contemporary cultural and ideological regions.

2. The Foundation of Marxist and Postmodernist Research from Jacques Derrida

In the 1950s and 1960s, structuralism was once popular in Europe and America. After the "Mai 68" in 1968 in France, structuralism declined gradually, and post structuralism or deconstruction emerged, which constituted the important theoretical basis of postmodernism. With the rise of deconstruction, post-structuralism, postcolonialism, neo-Marxism, postmodern Marxism, Post Marxism, postmodern feminism and so on, the debate between Marxism and postmodernism has gradually aroused widespread concern in western academic circles. Michael Ryan, an American scholar, discussed the relationship between deconstruction and Marxism in his book *The Critical Combination of Marxism and Deconstruction*. In this "powerful and challenging" work, Ryan boldly tries to combine Marxism with deconstruction, making this issue a hot topic in the contemporary cultural academic region.

It is worth mentioning that Ryan once participated in the GREPH presided by Jacques Derrida, which shows that Ryan knows a lot about Derrida's research work. Undoubtedly, this experience helps him to understand the relationship between Marx's theory and deconstruction thought. According to Ryan, to explore the relationship between Marxism and deconstruction, we should not stay in the comparative study of simple analogy, but should combine the different and common spiritual temperament of the two. Therefore, Ryan distinguished two different kinds of Marxism, one is orthodox scientific Marxism, the other is open and critical Marxism. The former is only the product of an official ideology, while the latter truly embodies the spiritual essence of Marxism. In Ryan's view, the critical Marxism is not so much a school or a theoretical system as an open ideological spirit. It is this open critical spirit and deconstruction that have reached a certain similarity. Marx's critical theory and postmodern deconstruction strategies embody both common and different ethos. Therefore, "some aspects of Derrida's theory can be applied in the framework of critical Marxism."^[1] There are similarities between methodology and Marxism. Deconstruction can be used as a means of Marxist political criticism. According to Ryan, deconstruction is of great significance to the subversion of metaphysics, which is not only philosophical, but also political, because philosophy is not free from politics, and politics often takes philosophical concepts as theoretical presupposition.

The combination of Marxism and deconstruction helps to clean up the metaphysical basis of scientific Marxist theory and provides theoretical support for Marxist political criticism. While discussing the common relationship between them, Ryan also points out their differences. Marxism is a practical philosophy that appeals to political revolution, while deconstruction is mainly a theoretical discourse focusing on text deconstruction. Because of this, "millions of people were killed because they were Marxists, but no one lost their lives because he was a deconstructionist".^[2] Indeed, as Ryan said, deconstruction is not the practical philosophy of political revolution. Its deconstruction theory object is text, just as subverting classical text is one of Derrida's main deconstruction strategies and constitutes an important content of his early philosophical work. Derrida is good at wielding the knife of deconstruction, exploring the cracks and crevices of classic texts, and forcing it to collapse finally. The classics of Plato, Rousseau, Hegel, Saussure, Nietzsche, Husserl, Heidegger and other thought masters cannot be separated from deconstruction.

3. Derrida's Association with Marxism and Deconstruction

Derrida's early writings are often parasitic in various theoretical texts, which is difficult to understand. It seems that Derrida's radical political stance is vague and difficult to distinguish. However, Derrida pays more and more attention to justice, ethics, law, state and other political and ethical issues in the late period, and his radical political stance is obvious.

However, Derrida intentionally or unintentionally avoided the topic of Marxism and deconstruction for a long time. In an interview as early as the early 1970s, when the interviewer intentionally led the topic to the issue of the relationship between deconstruction and Marxism, Derrida was very cautious. He believed that if he answered this question rashly, "It can only lead to dogmatism, confusion or opportunism. If we want to prevent this consequence, we must take seriously the difficulties and heterogeneity of Marxist texts and its extremely important historical interest relations." Derrida said that the interpretation of Marx's text inevitably means change, but he has not found a satisfactory way of interpretation, "a decisive interpretation has not been completed."^[3] Before the 1990s, Derrida was cautious when he talked about the relationship between Marxism and deconstruction. Ten years after the publication of *The Critical Combination of Marxism and Deconstruction*, Derrida publicly declared in the specter of Marx, which caused widespread controversy, that Marx's spirit is the spiritual heritage of this era, and we are all the inheritors of Marx's heritage. Derrida repeatedly stressed, "do not read,

and repeatedly read and discuss Marx It will always be a mistake, and more and more, a mistake in terms of theoretical, philosophical and political responsibility. " Perhaps, we can take Derrida's radical political attitude towards Marxism as a response to Ryan's criticism.

Derrida made a special speech in 1993 on the Ghost of Marx at the large international conference entitled "where Marxism is going". It should be said that Marxism is not over, the spirit of Marx will not die, and the ghost of Marx will forever linger in the time and space of history, and become the most precious spiritual legacy of our times.

Derrida's view can be seen as his positive response to the "where Marxism is going" put forward after the drastic changes in the Soviet Union and Eastern Europe. It is in this special historical period, at the important historical juncture of where Marxism is going, Derrida put forward clearly and firmly that "it is time to safeguard the ghosts of Marx". In Derrida's view, due to various reasons, he had been cautious and reticent on Marx's issue before, which may be understood as a strategy. Now, it is time to make a decisive interpretation and a critical historical moment to maintain the Marxist spirit.

It is still a top priority to resort to a certain Marxist critical spirit, and it will certainly be necessary 'heart' indefinitely. Derrida frankly said that we "must accept the heritage of Marxism, we are the inheritors of Marx's spiritual heritage, and we can't do without Marx, without Marx, without Marx's memory, without Marx's heritage, there will be no future."

The publication of "the Ghost of Marx" not only marks that Derrida begins to answer the questions of Marxism and deconstruction, but also elevates this topic field to a new theoretical height. The fierce debate around the ghost of Marx proves this point.

What is worth pondering is why Derrida was so cautious and careful on the issues of Marxism and Deconstruction in the early stage, and why Derrida in the later stage spoke so clearly about the internal relationship between himself and Marx. Derrida chose this special historical period to pay homage to Marx and asserted that the ghost of Marx would never die and declare that he is the successor of Marx's spiritual heritage, is it a late Memorial, or a timely or untimely salute?

It has been 20 years since the 1970s when interviewers asked about Derrida's relationship with Marxism. It has been more than 10 years since Ryan's study of Marxism and deconstruction. Why hasn't Derrida come forward to answer this question positively? Is it an unintentional negligence, a deliberate evasion or avoidance, a helpless choice, a narrative of ghost like memory complex, or a smart strategy? Derrida explained in "the specter of Marx" that "perhaps we should emphasize the fact that the relationship between Marxism and deconstruction theory has aroused various discussions in all aspects since the beginning of the S. These discussions are often antithetical and irreducible, but they are also numerous. For me, it is so much that I can no longer treat them fairly and discern what I owe them." Derrida said that the ghost of Marx can be seen as a response to many studies on Marxism and deconstruction. Therefore, Derrida knows a lot about this topic, which shows that his delay in responding positively is not an unintentional negligence.

So, why hasn't Derrida responded positively to this question? Is he really avoiding or avoiding something, or is it a question that Derrida needs to explain or answer. It is no wonder that Terry Eagleton, the British Marxist critic, after the publication of the specter of Marx, has always been puzzled: "we can't help asking, in the long night of the Reagan Thatcher era, where is Jacques Derrida when we need him?" In Eagleton's view, Derrida pays tribute to Marx's deconstruction, However, it is a kind of opportunistic deconstruction. Therefore, "as soon as Marxism reaches the edge, Derrida wants to get close to it, so that it is more in line with his post structuralist plan" ^[4]. For Derrida, the Eagleton style of attack should be expected. In the ghost of Marx, Derrida has realized that in such a special "this moment and not some other moment". Derrida "emphasizes the spirit of Marxism in a deconstructive way, especially if we allow people to understand this as we intend to understand it in the sense of plural number and ghosts, in the sense of inappropriate ghosts To understand those spirits, it is not hard to imagine why we will not please Marxists, let alone all others.

We can roughly understand his basic position and deep intention, that is, the reason why he chose to pay homage to Marx and call for the ghost of Marx at this time rather than at that time is a strategic consideration. The deep motivation of this strategy comes from the political demand to provide proof for justice, and it places itself in an inappropriate and timely period Therefore, it is also a kind of adventurous posture or strategy. For a long time, Marx's thought, which has been misread, distorted or used for a long time, has obtained the opportunity to restore its true spirit and inner meaning, and to release the multi-dimensional and heterogeneous deconstruction spirit and critical nature, so as to make it the most effective theoretical resource for analyzing and criticizing contemporary capitalist society.

In Derrida's view, this kind of risk-taking posture or strategy is the key to understand the timeliness and theme of the ghost of Marx.

4. The Consequence of Derrida's Postmodernism-- Divergence of Marxist Research and Derrida's Defence

As Derrida expected, the publication of "the ghost of Marx" has aroused doubts and debates from all walks of life. American scholar Michael Sprinker edited and published a collection of essays on this debate, the boundary of the ghost and the debate on Derrida. This collection collects the criticism of Marx's ghost by contemporary Marxist theorists and Derrida's response to these criticisms, Marx and his sons. Among them, it collects the different views of the supporters represented by Jameson, Negri, Montag and Macherey, and the opposition represented by Eagleton, Lewis and Ahmed.

The opposition holds that deconstructive Marxism revises and supplements Marxism, deconstructs and replaces Marxism, stitches and grafts Marxism in the form of text games, and turns Marxism into a tool suitable for the operation of deconstruction. It is radical and pioneer on the surface, but empty in essence. In particular, abandoning the traditional classical concepts such as class politics will inevitably lead to the deconstruction of "Depoliticization" of Marx, which makes Marx of ghost study far away from the main idea of Marxism. Eagleton thinks that the essence of Derrida's Marxism is a kind of Marxism without Marxism, which deviates from Marxism. In other words, Derrida just borrows or misappropriates the name of Marx to make it a convenient tool for the operation of deconstruction.

In "Marxism without Marxism", Eagleton criticizes Derrida in a sarcastic tone. "Deconstruction is not radical Marxism in practice, but a substitute form of text politics. If deconstruction surpasses some common revisionism with Marxism or the annoying leftist liberalism, it can only make the argument against metaphysics, anti-system and anti-rationalism become a kind of manifesting and disorderly declaration. It may be very smart and fashionable, but its theoretical reliability will suffer a serious loss." Lewis and Ahmed believe that Derrida's interpretation and writing of Marx's ghost has an obvious "Depoliticization" tendency, and the ghost Marx is actually "depoliticized" Marx, which is bound to deviate from the theme of Marxist political practice. In his article "the spectre of Marx in the politics of ghostly studies, Lewis thinks that the essence of Derrida's so-called deconstruction of Marxism determines all the core concepts of Marxist theory, especially the concept of "class" as an analytical tool and subject, which inevitably holds" pessimism "to the political practice of social revolution".

In his paper the reconciling Derrida "the specter of Marx" and the politics of deconstruction, Ahmad thinks that Derrida turns to Marxism and expresses a posture of deconstruction trying to reconcile with Marxism, although Marxists should recognize and understand this attitude of reconciliation, but we must see that Derrida's Marxism is very different from Marxism. Ahmad criticizes Derrida's rejection of class politics and believes that the ghost of Marx is permeated with a kind of messianic "quasi-religious" atmosphere. In short, in the view of these critics, Derrida's deconstructive Marxism is nothing more than a non-Marxist Marxism or even an anti-Marxist Marxism.

Jameson, Negri, Montag and Macherey expressed his approval and support for Derrida, and put forward his shortcomings and problems to be further discussed and considered. They generally agree with the basic point of view in the ghost of Marx. They think that the combination of deconstruction and Marxism will help to reinterpret Marxism in the contemporary context and deepen the contemporary understanding of Marx. Meanwhile, Derrida further elaborated his position and viewpoint. Derrida believes that those who claim to be Marxist critics have misread and misunderstood his thoughts. First of all, he criticized the so-called legal Marxists who thought that they had the exclusive right of Marx. He thought that no one had the right to claim that he was the only inheritor of Marxism. He once again reiterated the diversity and openness of Marx's thought and its interpretation.

Aiming at Eagleton's satirical criticism of Marxism without Marxism, Derrida pointed out that Marxism without Marxism may be closer to and faithful to Marx, because Marx's own Marxism is a kind of Marxism without Marxism. Here, Derrida once again mentioned Marx's famous saying "I am not a Marxist". In addition, Derrida refuted the criticisms of Spivak, Lewis and Ahmed one by one, and further defended and affirmed such issues as "class politics", "Depoliticization", "re politicization", "justice ethics", "new international", "messianism". After the mortality of Derrida, Vincent B. Leitch wrote "the politics of late Derrida's sovereignty", which made a retrospective summary of his late thoughts. In Leitch's view, the theme highlighted by Derrida's thought in the late period is undoubtedly the concern and questioning of contemporary political issues. This ideological theme has been intensively expressed in the ghost of Marx, and has become a haunting ghost issue, Derrida's most

famous political discourse is still his condemnation of the ten abuses of the new world order in the post-Cold War era in his book *the ghost of Marx*. He insisted on such a comprehensive complaint from beginning to end.

“Leitch put the ghost of Marx in the overall background of Derrida's late ideological transformation and described the overall continuity of this political transformation.”^[5] His retrospective summary of Derrida's thought shows that many criticisms misunderstand or misinterpret Derrida. Derrida paid homage to Marx, summoned the ghost of Marx, and expressed the ideal vision of deconstruction of political science, which was not a sudden whim, nor opportunistic speculation, nor a deconstruction strategy of "Depoliticization", but a reflection of contemporary political philosophy throughout. There is no doubt that this deconstructive vision of political philosophy will provide challenging ideological resources for the deconstruction and subversion of global political hegemony after the Cold War era.

5. Conclusion

What needs to be emphasized is that to explore the complex relationship between Marxism and postmodernism is not to make Marxism fashionable, trendy or alternative, nor to put a postmodern fashionable coat on Marx who is sitting in danger, so that he can be added to the noisy post-modern chorus. The important issue it concerns is how the ability of Marxism to interpret and speak contemporary problems is possible. Here, the problem that needs to be faced and solved is how Marxism should interpret the reality, that is, how the ability of Marxism to interpret and speak contemporary problems is possible. Obviously, if we want to stimulate the ability of Marxism to explain and speak contemporary problems, it is difficult to simply go back to the original classics to find the theoretical basis for the counterpoint with reality. Because, we must see that there is a historical gap and difference between Marx and the current reality. How to close this distance becomes the key to solve the problem. In other words, in order to activate Marx's ability to interpret contemporary problems, we need to rely on some connected theoretical medium. From the theoretical level, postmodernism, especially the philosophical thinking mode of critical postmodernism, can be used as the theoretical medium to connect Marx with the contemporary reality. Perhaps, only with the postmodern theory discourse full of subversive and critical spirit as the intermediary, can Marxism regain the ability to interpret and speak the contemporary, and, together with postmodernism, stimulate To criticize and deconstruct the culture and politics of contemporary capitalist society. The above analysis shows that Marxism and postmodernism are inextricably linked.

Obviously, in the face of such a close and complex relationship between the two, it is not enough to merely describe it on the surface, and it should not be regarded as an evidence of the eternal truth that Marxism is still "universal and accurate". It should be clear that the complex relationship between Marxism and postmodernism has raised many sharp and complex new problems to us. To explore the complex relationship between Marxism and postmodernism and to carry out extensive and profound intertextual dialogue between them will not only help us understand postmodernism and critically analyze and question it, but also help us to re understand Marx's theme in the contemporary context, so as to activate its theoretical vitality in interpreting contemporary issues. Therefore, how to understand the complex relationship between Marxism and postmodernism is related to how to re understand Marxism in the contemporary context and the fate and future trend of Marxism, which has become an important theoretical problem to be solved in the contemporary cultural and ideological regions.

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