Study on the dissolution of the Third Estate and the Discovery of Man - Take Brecht's "The Three-Cent Opera" as an Example

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Abstract: Since the beginning of Western culture in the ancient Greek period, there have been numerous propositions about the "ultimate meaning" of the human self and the value of life. Western culture, rooted in the question of human beings, has been permeated with the anxiety of various definitions of "self" and the hope of falsifying the definitions through a certain "third force" in a specific era, in which the subjective consciousness and the embodiment of human nature are more important than ever. The subjective consciousness and the embodiment of humanity are even more important. However, if we trace this proposition back to its origin, does the "third force" have an unshakeable authority? Can its authority truly define what human beings are? If the "third force" is dissolved, will mankind make new discoveries about its own life? This project aims to discuss the relationship between the "third force" and the ultimate meaning sought by human beings by taking the example of "The Three-penny Opera" written by the German writer Bertolt Brecht. At the same time, literature has always been called "anthropology", and with the deepening of global multicultural exchanges, China will be more influenced by Western culture, in the contemporary era of materialism and money worship, it is increasingly important to think about the survival of human beings, the meaning of human beings, and the value of human beings. Today, when humanistic feelings are generally in trouble, the study of anthropology is invaluable. This shows that the in-depth study of anthropology also has essential practical significance for the development of our country. This research topic takes Brecht's Three-Cent Opera as the analysed text, and draws on the original language version, the Chinese translation version, as well as the adapted film version and the opera version, in order to analyze this topic in depth. At the same time, this project adheres to the basic theory of Marxism as a guide, while absorbing modern critical methods such as archetypal criticism and discourse narrative, making obvious innovations to previous research methods and concepts.

Keywords: Brecht, Three-Cent Opera, German Literature, Western Culture, "Third Force", A Human Meaning

1. Introduction

Western literature is diverse. Different literary works have different definitions and understandings of the "third force. Literary works reflect the diversity and complexity of the hidden cores of humanity. The materials and cultural realms that humanity follows in different times are different. Therefore, there are different interpretations of the "third force".

1.1. The Original Use of "Third Force- the "Deus ex Machina" in Medea

M.H. Abrams 'Dictionary of Literary Terms mentions:

Deus ex Machina means "god from the machine" in Latin. It describes a stage technique used by some Greek playwrights (especially Euripides) at the end of a play to bring a god onto the stage with the help of mechanical devices. Through his judgment and will, he solves the dilemma of the characters on stage. Nowadays, this term refers to obsessive and unrealistic methods of representation as a birthmark that reveals a secret, an unexpected inheritance, a recovered will, or a secret letter that the author uses to resolve a plot. The German playwright Brecht parodied the overuse of this technique by later writers in the frivolous final scene of his The Three-penny Opera [1-3].
No doubt, by interpreting a variety of Western dramas, Abrams has discovered a technique used independently by playwrights. He has also explained this. From this definition, we can derive the following meanings:

(1) Deus ex machina is a creative technique that has negative effects. Its widespread use shows the immature state of human reason and autonomy. In particular, when the protagonist gets into trouble, he is always rescued by a powerful person to solve the dilemma with the help of authorities beyond his own powers to achieve the logical coherence of the dramatic story. I.e., "third force".

(2) Deus ex machina is often used at the end. This is a performance strategy. In stage machine, gods are brought onto the stage. For example, in the ancient Greek drama "Medea," described as the first feminist work, Medea flies on a dragon. In ancient Greek society, which was dominated by the ideas of fate, this method precisely shows Western mankind's desire for supernatural powers to fulfill their desires.

(3) Brecht achieved the state described by Kant: rational autonomy. He emphasized the independence of literature in the "Three-penny Opera". He used rhetorical figures such as irony and alienation effects to oppose the power of the gaze. The characters evolved from heroic figures to villains.

We can borrow the thirteenth scene of the classical drama "Medea" by Euripides: ... Medea appears from the air on the bodies of her two children on a dragon chariot.

Medea: Your (meaning Jason's) hand must not touch me, for my grandfather, Helios gave me this dragon chariot so that I could escape the hands of my enemies.

Medea flies out of the air on her dragon chariot.

Chorus (singing): Zeus sits high on Olympus and determines the fate of everything. The gods often do things we don't expect, and what we expect often doesn't happen. But the gods have their way. That's how this story ends.

There is no doubt that Medea's solution to the problem is not a scientific method. However, it contains a primitive idea of deus ex machina to solve conflicts. As Berdyaev said in "The Philosophy of Freedom": "Myths always contain a part of the truth. Behind it there is something real." In "Medea" we can see the origin of this "partial truth". The Sun God does not appear in person, but he gives Medea a dragon chariot as a miraculous curse. This supernatural and illogical plot was frequently used by later writers. Even masters like Shakespeare could not hide the traces in their dramas.

1.2. The Hope for Supernatural Forces and the Psychological Mechanisms of the Western Culture of Man

Currently, "Medea" is called the first feminist play. The strong matriarchal society colors may still be difficult to explain the cultural psychological mechanisms of Western humanity behind the pursuit of the "third force". As a typical example, the Book of Genesis of the Old Testament of the Law is mentioned:

What God created, the serpent is smarter than any other animal in the field. The serpent said to the woman, "Did God really say that you cannot eat of all the fruit on the trees in the garden?" The woman said to the serpent, "We can eat of the fruit of the trees in the garden; only of the tree in the middle of the garden God said, 'You must not eat or touch, or you will die.'" The serpent said to the woman, "You will not necessarily die, for God knows that on the day you eat, your eyes will be opened and you, like God, will know what is good and evil." ... God said, "Man has become like us and knows what is good and evil. Now I fear that he will stretch out his hands and eat of the tree of life and live forever." God sent him out of the Garden of Eden and made him work the land from which he came.

This mythology, of course, cannot give an explanation of the origin and nature of man from a scientific point of view, but it contains a kind of early Western "original sin-penance" psychology mechanism. This myth contains a kind of paradox:

(1) Adam and Eve do not doubt the authority of God's warning, but at the same time are easily seduced by the serpent.

(2) Adam and Eve were both cursed by God and expelled from the Garden of Eden to walk on the path of human civilization. In the Bible, God created heaven and earth and knew everything. God is by nature good and evil, rational and shameful. When Adam and Eve broke the prohibition and felt shame,
this was a step from a natural man to a civilized man. However, the image of "God" was created by human beings. Adam and Eve's escape from the Garden of Eden was humankind's first step toward civilization, which means that humankind is approaching God. Humankind atones in this world and transforms according to God's will. It eventually becomes a divine being like "God." This also confirms what God said, "Humankind has become like us and can distinguish good from evil." Therefore, God should have allowed Adam and Eve to eat the forbidden fruit. Since the ancestors of humankind possessed divine attributes, this further shows that God's anger was not directed toward Adam and Eve's actions. Mankind's path to civilization marks, for the first time, the complete freedom of control over one's own subject. However, humanity is burdened by reason, as it cannot guarantee that every decision made to create civilization will have positive effects. It can be said that Adam and Eve's eating of the forbidden fruit was a choice and that the excessive desire for good will inevitably lead to evil consequences. Medea killed her son. This was seen as revenge for Jason's betrayal, which clearly led from good to evil. Therefore, eating the Tree of Knowledge is the original sin. Mankind at ones in this world. They return to paradise only through the recognition of God. Mankind continues to make decisions and leaves the judgment of the results to God. Therefore, the function of God is the function of a letter of indulgence. When humanity cannot be responsible for its decisions, it often asks for God's intervention and judgment, like Medea flying on the dragon chariot to prove her innocence. Only when we understand this psychological mechanism and its cultural roots can we talk about Brecht.

1.3. Characteristics and Definition of the "Third Force"

Although the West's search for the "Third Force" in literary terms has been different in different times, we can still discover and summarize its common features. From the application of the "Deus ex Machina" in ancient Greece, we can see that the "Third Force" originated in humankind and was meant to serve human civilization. However, since humanity is not able to judge the correctness of the current decisions, it will ask for help from a stronger force as an authority standard to support its decisions or directly indicate the development of a certain thing (such as human civilization, storylines, certain desires, conditions, etc.). Based on this function, the "Third Force" is an authority substance that emerges from humanity and transcends human power. It does not contain any positive or negative effects itself but exists only as a phenomenon.

However, although humankind has gained its reason through the creation of civilizations, the development of civilization is not always in harmony with humankind because, when making decisions, humankind does not know whether the development of civilization meets its needs and cannot see what results this cultural progress can bring. Therefore, humanity constantly strives for a type of divine inspiration to know whether its decisions are right or wrong. However, some of humanity's decisions may result in civilization not having a positive impact on human development. For example, religion itself came into being to have a spiritual hold and give meaning to people's lives to guide the development of human society in an orderly way. However, some extreme developments of religion have produced a kind of religious terror that suppresses human nature and freedom through strict religious beliefs. There is also the deliberate elevation of violence through religious myths, symbolism, totems, and rituals to give them a sacred meaning, such as the cruel martyrdom in Islam, the development of weapons through extreme technology used in times of war, or like the romantic slogan "The Romanticization of the World" by Novalis, who strove to dissolve his thoughts to dissolve into a pure infinity that was eventually engulfed by a totally destructive feeling. The "morbid" aesthetics sought by the early Romantics eventually led completely in the opposite direction of "normality". Therefore, the "Third Force" leads to a negative influence due to its impact on human civilization, and this topic focuses only on the discussion of the bad "Third Force.

2. Rebellion of the Flock: The Lost Kingship

2.1. The Shepherd and the Sheep: Metaphorical Worship of Kingship

In the "Bible - Gospel of John", there is a story called "The Lamb of God":

The next day John saw Jesus coming to him and said, "Behold the Lamb of God who takes away (or 'bears') the sin of the world. This is what I said: 'After me one has become He who was before me, for he was before me.' I did not know him before, but now I have come to baptize with water, that He might be revealed to the children of Israel."

John testified again, "I have seen the Holy Spirit descend from heaven like a dove, and whoever
delves on the body of the Holy Spirit is baptized with the Holy Spirit." When I saw it, I proved that this is the Son of God [4-5].

And "Revelation" also has a story called the Song of 144,000 People;

I looked again and saw the Lamb standing on Mount Zion and with him were 10,044,000 men, all of whom had his name and his Father's name written on their foreheads... These men were not defiled by a woman, they were virgins. Wherever the lamb went, they followed him. They were bought by men as firstfruits for God and the Lamb. There is no lie in their mouths, they are without blemishes.

These two stories show that since Jesus was preached and tortured, the difference between the New Testament and the Old Testament in the Bible is the separation of Christianity and Judaism. The appearance of Jesus as a "preacher" shows that the function of "shepherd" has changed from God to man. If we say that Judaism in the Old Testament still considers "shepherd sheep" as the relationship between man and God. And Jesus in the New Testament shows that there is already a perfect image of a man approaching God. He replaces "God" and takes the role of the "shepherd". There is no doubt that Jesus was the first "shepherd" in the history of human society, but he was by no means the only "shepherd." Foucault once put forward the occupational theory of self-technology and mentioned in his book "Subjectivity and Truth" that the form of verbal narration of the Christian confession has been preserved in the West until modern times. However, this is not an emptying of the self or abandonment, but a new construction of the self. In addition to its focus on the individual, however, Western culture has also paid much attention to "the other." The technology of the self-proclaimed by Foucault therefore includes not only the self-transformation of the individual but also the self-transformation of the individual with the help of others. It is represented religiously morally by the priests and in terms of social responsibility by the holders of royal power.

Where does this power over the Other come from? Foucault found a variety of metaphors in Hebrew literature about the shepherd and the flock: The Metaphor of Shepherds and Flocks. He meticulously cares for the flock, and everything he judges is beneficial to the flock. Therefore, this "shepherd-flock" relationship replaced the "city-state-citizen" relationship in Greece and was accepted by Christianity. A considerable revision was made: "shepherd flocks" gradually evolved into "God-citizens". In terms of human bonds, responsibility, obedience, understanding, and behavior towards the "divine power" it has evolved to:

The shepherd is responsible for everything in the flock.

The shepherd and the sheep have a personal relationship of obedience.

(1) The shepherd knows each sheep thoroughly.

(2) The behavior of the shepherd and the sheep is permeated in practice by supervising, guiding, repenting, and obedient behavior.

Foucault believes that this power culture comes from Hebrew culture and complements the political-legal power developed from Greek culture. The former refers to the soul of the individual, the latter to the behavior of the individual; the former is solution-oriented, the latter is oppressive; the former refers to ethics, the latter to institutions. Therefore, the individualization of humanity in the Middle Ages was severely limited because of the moral orientation of religious reason toward God. After the Renaissance, the entire Christian value system was nearing collapse, and humanity was in dire need of a "new God" to ensure the orderly development of society. Since then, people have turned their gaze from the distant world beyond to the real world. But after the 18th century, the two types of power were combined, forming what Foucault called a "seamlessly controlled demon state." The 18th century was the Victorian era in Britain.

The story in "The Three-penny Opera" is set in the Victorian era in Great Britain. He astutely realized that in order to achieve liberation, one must fight not only against the totalitarian power of thought but also against individualized power. In the scripted series of the film "The Three-penny Opera," there is a hidden trace of the coronation of the queen, which eventually comes to a frivolous end due to the uprising of the beggars. In the original version of "The Threepenny Opera," the new queen pardons the evil Macheath and promotes him. In Abrams' definition, Brecht jokingly resolves the worship of the third force in the original version, while the film adaptation is even more thorough. The author will discuss the two different texts and different endings of the original version and the film series [6-8].
2.2. The Demystification of the Cult of the King

ALL (singing with the organ, walking forward):
Do not pursue injustice too much in the near future.
Does it freeze already by itself, because it is cold?
Consider the darkness and severe cold.

In this [Tale resounding with lamentation]. Machiavelli emphasized that the king's power must be strongly centralized and the king must have the characteristics of both a fox and a lion. He must learn how to use the resources of both animals and men to rule. Thomas Hobbes, on the other hand, believed that the king's power is unsurpassed, and all citizens must obey the king absolutely. Therefore, in the 18th century, during the Victorian era, although a constitutional monarchy was established in Britain, Queen Victoria had unprecedented power. As a representative of a nation and a country, the queen had absolute authority, and therefore her decisions were absolutely correct.

The extreme expansion of royal power can often have negative effects, such as in the Victorian era, where the rapidly growing economy masked an enormous gap between the rich and poor. People often trusted that a wise monarch would emerge to solve social problems. This desire was more of obedience to royal power than a reverence for the king. In fact, this "worship of royal power" was just a mythologization of people made possible by people's belief in power and subjugation. If "deus ex machina" gods are born from mechanical devices, then "worshippers of royal power" are kings born from worship. Through cultural demarcation, the individuality and personality of people disappear, which means a dulling of human characteristics.

In the previous section, it was mentioned that Macheath is an evil image whose evil is due to both his own evil soul and the bad effects of society. However, the newly elected queen did not judge and condemn him fairly, even though he was to be executed for his crimes. The queen forgives his wealth and title, which in itself is an "amnesty for the world." The queen's political grace allows criminals to escape punishment and encourages the growth of evil. This contradicts the function of the "shepherd" who leads the flock.

In the history of Western theater, there are also masters who focus on royal power, such as Shakespeare. But in all his historical dramas, he examines the problem of "royal power" only from an idealistic and realistic point of view, discussing whether a benevolent or a warlike ruler is needed. It stays on moral ideals and not on political systems. In "The Threepenny Opera," Brecht does not directly describe the coronation of the queen, but often shows it on wooden signs or in the characters' actions and dialogue. The queen's pardon for criminals represents Brecht's doubts about the omniscience and omnipotence of the "shepherd" and calls for the rational consideration of the individual. This shows the difference between Brecht and Shakespeare. Brecht rejects authoritarian political power and "dwarfs" in political ideology.

At the same time, there are differences between the original and the adapted ending. In Gay's "The Beggars Opera" it traditionally ends with a happy ending, which aims to criticize the clichés and absurdities of comedy aimed only at the taste of the audience. Brecht keeps the tragic ending, but the criticism is not limited to only one form of theater, but through the words of Peachum, the fact that the oppressed are always oppressed, while the royal messengers rarely come, is emphasized. Through the happy ending, the cruelty of reality is reflected and the general existence of human tragedy is confirmed. Brecht wanted to show that there are no absolutely right people in human society. The people who have power are not divine. Brecht calls for the demystification of the "worship of royal power," which goes beyond the general criticism of Gay's theatrical form and exposes the inadequacy of the whole social reality. His goal is to inspire the audience to reform society.

2.3. The Revolt and the View of the Flock of Sheep

Next, we analyze the adaptation of the film series:

Scene 77: A dark, narrow alley:

From a high perspective, the slow movement of beggars is shown. Increasingly people - countless embodiments of poverty - come from all corners and streets. They are embodiments of the real miserable life, among them are also some emaciated women with children. They enter the beggars and quickly turn the neat formation into a disorderly crowd, slowly moving forward.
Scene 83: A dark, narrow alley:

The camera pans from above onto this alley. The wretched crowd streams past and disappears under the camera. The street is full of people, a chaos in which the beggars are absorbed in the real waves of poverty and suffering. From the direction in which the people are going, there is a shout of jubilation.

Compared to the script of "The Three-penny Opera", the film was considerably compressed. Here is a quote from the note:

Scene 84: Then we see the beggars meet the coronation and rush into the parade. A dramatic conflict ensues when they meet the queen's carriage face to face. The queen cannot withstand the gaze of the beggars and finally covers her face with a fan as the carriage continues [9].

Unlike the original, the film's script arranges a direct conflict between the queen and the beggars during the coronation ceremony. However, this conflict is not a violent uprising or physical conflict, but a look from the subordinate at the superior. Let us first understand the concept of the gaze:

"Gaze" is a term in contemporary visual culture that originally means "to look at for a long time" and is a kind of viewing mode that carries desire or power. The concept of "gaze" is a product of visual centrism. The viewer establishes his own subjectivity through "observation", while the viewer becomes the "object of observation" and becomes an object of the viewer's self-realization through the power of seeing itself. Therefore, the behavior of the gaze is often aggressive and unequal [10].

When one has the power of the "shepherd," all things are brought together due to the gaze of the superior, and the superior becomes the center of the world. However, at that moment, if one person is in the line of sight of the superior, looking at each other, the system of the "superior" becomes fragmented, because although that person is also an object of observation of the superior, he also has the function of "gaze," and all things are naturally brought together to him as well. The more persons look at the superior, the more their power is divided, and the center of the world slides from the center of power to the center of power distribution. This vision also applies to the punishment of criminals who hold "demonstrations." Therefore, Brecht has dispersed the authority of the monarchy by the accumulation of sheep through the gaze of the subordinates [11].

At the same time, we notice that there is a scene in the adaptation where the queen covers her face with a fan. The author believes that there could be two reasons for this movement:

1. The queen, by her veiling action, eludes the shaping of the subject.
2. The queen feels shame because of her reflected consciousness.

One of the reasons is that once a ruling person has no control over everything, he becomes the object of others' gaze like everyone else. Others will judge the object's appearance by their own values, everyone has a different yardstick, completely dissolving the one-sidedness of authority. The "shepherd" function of the ruling person is challenged. It no longer has any value in transmitting prophecy. The queen tries to escape the dissolution of power through her veiling actions, but the function of ruling is, as Sartre said, "in a world turned towards others, a self that is relative to others [12]."

The second reason is different from the first reason because it is not caused by the constraint of deprivation of power, but by an ethical value that results from the metaphor of social morality condemned by the beggars experienced by the queen. The queen is the premise of the "shepherd" that everything she does benefits the flock of sheep, but the fact that "beggars are merged in this true wave of poverty and suffering" proves that her function has failed. Therefore, this sense of shame arises in the face of social pressure among beggars, and the source of this sense of shame includes self-consciousness, the disclosure of shortcomings, and the presence of the "other" [13].

Of course, any reason can explain why the queen fled. At the same time, in each version of "The Three-penny Opera," Brecht has jokingly dissolved another negative "third force" - domination. Thus, countless people in the theater and outside have thrown off their shackles and gone into the infinite civilized wilderness [14].

3. Conclusion

"The Three-penny Opera" is a great work by Brecht and at the same time a work that has been neglected for a long time. An analysis of the text should therefore receive attention.
In this paper, the meaning of the "third force" is first defined. Through the analysis of the drama "Medea" and the history of the Bible, the basic characteristics of the "third force" are examined, and the psychological and cultural mechanisms of the Western world are explored. Then, the original version, film series, film, and opera of "The Three-penny Opera" will be analyzed to validate the theme from various perspectives such as dramaturgy, character settings, and plot development. Finally, it examines how Brecht resolves the malignant "third force" and discovers new characteristics of human beings. The research results are as follows:

(1) Through the systematic compilation of literature materials, the research of Brecht's "The Three-penny Opera" is receiving increasing attention from domestic and foreign scholars, the number of publications is increasing, and the speed of development and research is increasing.

(2) The innovative aspect of this work is that Brecht's "The Threepenny Opera" questions the authority of the "third force" and shows that human nature does not have to be defined by a particular authority. The development of human civilization occurs through man's rational decisions and choices. After the dissolution of the "third force," the man discovers a new right to his own life.

(3) Brecht, as an important writer in Western literary history, has mainly focused on his rebellion against the characteristics of Aristotelian drama, the historical context of the effect of separation, and the comparison between "others" and "subjects" between East and West. However, his concepts of humanity have been less explored. At the same time, Brecht, as the creator of "epic theater", is a significant master of the literary industry, but academic research on "The Three-penny Opera" has been rather stagnant. Therefore, this paper attempts to combine the latest discoveries in East and West, and combine the theory of art with Brecht's concept of humanity to examine "The Three-penny Opera". Along with the progress of Western human themes, literary research is brought to a new level of cultural anthropology and attempts to provide new views on human themes in Western literature.

This paper analyzes only a part of the malicious "third force" in the text of "The Three-penny Opera" and cannot provide a comprehensive and systematic overview and analysis of the different types of "third force". If there are new views on the definition presented in this paper, corrections and additions are welcome.

References