

On the State View in *The Origin of the Family, Private Property and the State*

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Abstract

The concept of state is the core problem of political philosophy. What kind of concept of state we adhere to must be in accordance with what kind of value principles for the distribution of political interests. The view of the state has distinct class nature and ideological color. The concept of state is not only the theoretical problem of thinking about political phenomena and exploring political activities from a certain historical condition, but also the important practice of participating in political practice, realizing political rights, and promoting the development of democratic politics. A complete, accurate, in-depth understanding of the view of the state in *The Origin of the Family, Private Property and the State* has special importance to learn to understand Marxist state theory, to adhere to the principle of unifying the history and ethics reform world, to realize the abundance of material and spiritual civilization, to realize the liberation of people and understanding the theory of communism.

Key words: The view of the state; Origin; Disappearance; Meaning

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The Theory of a Country Originate is an important viewpoint of the Marxist theory of country. The problems that restrict the development of all countries can be attributed to time and the internal society developments. Marx and Engels had always paid a lot of attention to

the problems of countries, especially on *The Origin of the Family, Private Property and the State* (Hereafter referred to as “Origins”). In this classical book, Engels gave incisive, circumstantial, and scientific proof on the origins of states. Besides, according to the viewpoint of materialism, based on the historical determinant factors, starting from the production and reproduction of life, comprehensively and profoundly analyzing the disintegration of the primitive society system, he revealed and illustrated the forming process of essential class society based on private property, and found the vague key to understand the development of class society. At the same time, Engels investigated the history of the family by starting from the point of the viewpoint of materialism which the labor restricts the society development. In this way, he clarified the relationship between the different families under various social forms, further demonstrated the production of the private property and the origin of the states. He also illustrated the social and historical conditions of state emergence, the main forms of state emergence, the nature of the state, the economical characteristics of the civilization, slavery form, several aspects of the problems of state extinctions, and clarified the Marxist state view.

TRACING THE EXPLORATION OF STATE

As Engels pointed out, the state did not exist when there were human beings. There was no state at all in the primitive society, not to mention the concept of the state. The root of a state is the economy; its essence is class relations, and its core is political power. A state is a phase that occurs when the economical society develops at a certain point. It is an inevitable outcome of controlling class opposition and realizing political interests based on political practice with the core of political power.

Political practice is a way of social activities. All political activities are the realistic portrayal of the social

characteristics of all kinds of people. Political practice must be focused on humans' social characteristics. Man is a political animal by nature, and his political interests have to be confirmed through his political practice. However, due to different political phenomena, class positions, value principles, it is destined to be difficult, tortuous and complicated to answer and explore the origin of a state, the evolution of a state, the nature of the state, the fundamental political phenomenon, and the state power. As Lenin pointed out, the discussion of "state" has been one of the most discussed issues by scholars since ancient times, and also one of the most confusing issues discussed by scholars before the emergence of the Marxist concept of state.

The discussion of "state" can be traced back to the ancient Greek period. Plato divided the soul into the heart (reason), chest (emotion), and belly (greed and lust) according to the city-state's righteous theory of human nature hypothesis. Accordingly, the state is divided into three grades: ruler, warrior, and labor (Ye and Wang, 2011, p.645). In his work *The Republic*, Plato deconstructed the state with a fixed division of labor and the hierarchy produced by division of labor, tried to explain the natural rationality of a slave-owning state with the theory of hierarchical division of labor. One of his students, Aristotle, expounded the origins of the Greek city-states by relating partial histories in his book *Politics*. Later, Epicurus came up with a primitive and unpretentious theory of the social contract about the origin of the state.

In the middle Ages in Europe, the feudal ruling class attributed the creation of a state to the will of the god and propagated the "divine right of Kings." Such "theory" almost imprisoned the rational mind of man in the dark middle Ages. With the progress of society and the emergence and development of capitalist society, bourgeois enlightenment scholars began to think about the "state" and explore the nature of a state, trying to form a kind of knowledge in the middle of the 19th century. To sum up, the influential views include social contract, violence theory and rational realism theory.

The typical representative of social contract theory is Rousseau, whose viewpoints have the greatest influence. Rousseau believed that human beings were originally in a state of natural balance and were born with natural freedom. Later, due to the emergence and development of human intelligence, private ownership came into being along with the inequality of labor. Thus, it resulted in material inequality. Then there were the poor and the rich, and the poor gave up their natural freedom in exchange for the freedom of citizens, which became a social contract. On this basis, states and laws were established to recognize the inequality of property and power. Many scholars who hold the theory of social contract almost agreed with Rousseau, but they differed even greatly from each other in specific views and judgments. For instance, Locke advocated constitutional monarchy, while Hobbes

advocated absolute monarchy and etc. The theory of social contract played a significant role in the struggle against feudal society and had a certain historical significance.

The theory of violence held that states were originated from conquest and domination by violence. The typical representative is Mr Engen Duhring of Germany. Duhring believed that "the shape of political relations is something fundamental in history", and that "in fact, the rule of the nature can only be carried out through the rule of man anyhow", and that the rule of man "must be found in political violence" (*Selected Works of Marx and Engels: Volume 3*, 2012, p.554). Such a view exaggerated the opposite side of the contradiction and pushed it to the extremes, which is essentially unscientific.

The theory of rational realism was founded by the German philosopher Hegel. Hegel's view of the state is a speculative model integrated with ethics and the concentrated embodiment of human freedom and rationality. Hegel asserted that the state, the family and the civil society are the three stages of development of the ethical concept. The civil society and the political state are the products of the absolute spirit and certain things developed as an idea. "The realistic idea, that is, the spirit, divides itself into the two ideal fields of its concept, the family and the civil society" (Yang and Zhang, 2016, p.300). To Hegel, the state decides the family and the civil society. The family and the civil society are limited and belong to the state sectors. "What constitutes the individual himself is the existence of the spirit" (Yang and Zhang, 2016, p.301). The will of the state and the law for the regulations of the family and the civil society are inevitable. The interests of the family and the civil society must be subordinated to the interests of the state. In Hegel's philosophy, "absolute idea" is the origin and the essence of the world, and all things in the world are created by it. Meanwhile, the development and change of all things are the reflections of the development and change of "absolute idea". Among them, "moral concept" and "rationality" are the highest stage of the development of "absolute concept". Therefore, Hegel thinks that a state is an entity, that is to reconcile the contradictions among members of civil society. A state is the highest form of the unity of reason and moral concept, that is, a state is the reality of the moral concept.

THE VIEW OF THE STATE IN ORIGINS

In *Origins*, on one hand, Engels believes that the state has "public power" which means the establishment of the state and the function of maintaining the public order. On the other hand, he believes that it is important to insist on the class nature of the state because he thinks that the nature of the state is a tool to suppress and exploit the oppressed class, and it is an irreconcilable product of class contradictions. At the same time, the state is the dialectical unity of these two aspects.

[The origins of the state] the state is the unity of historical category and class category. The state is not an externally imposed social force, but a self-contradiction of irreconcilable opposites from which society is divided and unable to get rid of; it is a differentiating power that keeps economic interests prominent within the scope of “order”. Engels pointed out that the emergence of a state is due to the division of labor and the exchange of material among people. With the development of productivity, private property and exploitation emerged one after another. Therefore, it is necessary to set special personnel and institutions to coordinate the relationship from all aspects. Engels said that “the state did not exist from the nature. There was a time that there was not a state at all, or a society without knowing what state power was. When the economic development has reached a certain stage and it is inevitable to divide the society into classes, a state becomes necessary because of this division” (*Selected Works of Marx and Engels: Volume 4*, 2012, p.190). Engels also said “the state is by no means a force imposed on society from the outside”, “the state is the product of society at a certain stage of development” (*Selected Works of Marx and Engels: Volume 4*, 2012, p.186). In short, we clearly see Engels’s discussion on the emergence of the state -- the origin of the state is the result of the research method of historical materialism. The state is a historical phenomenon and historical product; it is the construction of materials in time. Before society is divided into class societies, it is impossible for the differentiating power of the state to exist. With the development of the social division of labor, the pastoral tribes, the separation of handicraft industry, and especially the appearance of the parasitic class businessman along with the rest of the products, social surplus products are increasingly concentrated in the minority, such “a decisive division of labor” is based on the standard of wealth, and the freemen are divided into the rich who exploit and the poor who are exploited, thus, two irreconcilable classes with sharp contractions between poverty and wealth appear. Duhring this phase, “all that was lacking was an institution which would not only secure the newly acquired wealth of an individual against the communist tradition of the gentry system; sanctify the formerly despised private property, and declare this sanctification as the highest end of all human society, but also add new forms that allow the successive development of acquisitions, and thereby ever-accelerating accumulation of wealth. All that was missing was an institution that would perpetuate not only the beginning of the division of society into classes but also the exploitation by the property-class of the rights of the proletarian class and the domination of the former over the latter. And such institutions appeared, and the state was invented” (*Selected Works of Marx and Engels: Volume 4*, 2012, pp.122-123). As we can see, the state is a class category, and its emergence is the inevitable result of the development of internal contradictions in society, closely

related to the degree of social and economic development. Economic and social development is the catalyst for the emergence of social differentiating power.

[The characteristics of the state] the state differs from clan organization. On the one hand, it is divided geographically rather than by kinship, and on the other hand, it requires public power rather than free armed forces. A country is characterized by “regional division” and “public power”. Because of the development of social production, large-scale population flow, the country is no longer formed by blood ties and links as the old clan commune, but by the regional division. “Thus, the division by district was taken as a starting point and allowed citizens to realize their public rights and duties wherever they lived, regardless of which clan or tribe they belonged to” (*Selected Works of Marx and Engels: Volume 4*, 2012, p.187). At the same time, Engels pointed out that a state’s “public power” must be set up because it is not possible to set the freedom of the armed forces. It includes the special armed forces, namely the standing army, gendarme, police, and its material appendages, such as prisons, courts, and other coercive institutions, in order to rule and suppress the majority of the population of the ruled, to maintain the stability of the state. Engels pointed out in His *Anti-Duhring* that all political rights are at first based on certain economic and social functions, and political rules are everywhere based on the performance of certain social functions, and political rules can only last if they perform such functions. Taxation is the lifeblood of the whole apparatus of executive power. Therefore, the state had to collect taxes from its citizens. When taxes were insufficient, it issued bonds to finance the running of this vast apparatus. As Engels said, “With the expansion of neighboring states and the increase of their population, public power is increasingly strengthened” (*Selected Works of Marx and Engels: Volume 4*, 2012, p.188). It can be seen that the state also plays the role of safeguarding the common interests of all members and maintaining the internal and external security of the state.

[The nature of the state] Engels believed that the nature of the state was a violent tool used by the economically dominant class to suppress and exploit the oppressed class. From the perspective of historical materialism, Engels demonstrated that the state was a tool used by the economically dominant class to exploit the oppressed class, and the economically dominant class also became the politically dominant class with the help of state power. “As the state arises out of the need to control class antagonism, and as it arises at the same time out of the conflict between these classes, the state is thereby the most powerful with economically dominant class. The class is also politically dominant with the help of the state. Thus new means were acquired to suppress and exploit the oppressed class” (*Selected Works of Marx and Engels: Volume 4*, 2012, p.188). On this basis, Engels demonstrated that from the ancient Greek and

Roman times to the feudal state, as well as the modern representative system of the state are economically dominant class oppression of the other class tools. For example, in ancient Greece and Rome, slave owners repressed slaves in the country, and the feudal country was used by the landlord class to repress farmers. Especially when revealing the bourgeois-democratic republic, it was pointed out that “this democratic republic no longer officially talks about property differences. In such a state, wealth exercises its power indirectly but more reliably” (*Selected Works of Marx and Engels: Volume 4*, 2012, p.189). Obviously, Engels has explained the nature of the class nature in a state. Engels first clarified that the state is “the irreconcilable product of class contradictions”. After the emergence of private ownership and classes, the society fell into an irresolvable self-contradiction. These classes with conflicting economic interests urgently needed a force seemingly above the society to ease the conflict and keep the conflict within an orderly atmosphere. This force was the state. In addition, Engels believed that the state was a tool for the ruling class to exploit the oppressed. The state arises out of the need to control class antagonism, and it is always the most powerful and economically dominant class, which, by means of the state, must also be politically dominant. Therefore, Engels pointed out that a state is the generalization of civilized society, which is a state of the ruling class without exception in all typical periods and is essentially a machine to suppress the oppressed and exploited classes on all occasions.

[The disappearance of the state.] Engels pointed out: “Classes inevitably disappear, just as they inevitably came into being. With the disappearance of classes, the disappearance of the state was inevitable. The society which organizes production in a new way based on a free and equal association of producers will put the whole machinery of the state in its place, where it belongs, in the antiquities gallery, alongside the spinning wheel and the bronze ax” (*Selected Works of Marx and Engels: Volume 4*, 2012, p.190). It is not difficult to see that the extinction of states is conditioned on the elimination of classes. To be specific, it means the elimination of all classes and class differences, not merely the elimination of the exploiting classes, but the complete elimination of all social roots from which classes arise, and the level of social economy that can achieve such conditions must be a society with extremely rich social materials, that is, communist society with highly developed productive forces. Because if we only eliminate the exploiting class and still adopt the “distribution accords to work” approach, there will inevitably be factual inequality, which requires the mandatory state and law to guarantee and regulate the relationship between people. The economic foundation of the country’s demise is the high development of communist society.

THE SIGNIFICANCE OF THE CONCEPT OF STATE IN *ORIGIN*

[An important discussion about the state in the theory of the *Origin*] In *Origin*, Engels comprehensively and systematically illustrated the problems related to the state with historical information for the first time. With the specific example of the state form, the paper systematically expounds on the movement process of the state. At the same time, he uses Iroquois data to clarify the emergence of the state and power. He illustrates that it is a combination of the model of materialism theory and methods and historical data. Engels’s view of the state enriched the theoretical Treasury of the Marxist view of the state to a certain extent.

The theoretical significance of the concept of the state in *Origin* lies in that it combines historical materials in a solid and scientific way to explain the origin, development and extinction of a state from a macro perspective, and illustrates that the law of the development of human history and the development of human society is an objective process from low level to high level. It fully explains that the state came into being based on the disintegration of the clan system and the development of social productive forces in the primitive society, and clarifies the relationship among the state and family, class and private ownership. It defines the origin and essence of the state, replaces the simple and one-sided view that “private ownership is the root of all evils” with scientific explanation and demonstration, and criticizes the wrong theoretical understanding of anarchists that negates all states unilaterally.

The realistic significance of the concept of state in *Origin* lies in guiding us to correctly understand the socialist state and its functions, scientifically understand the political phenomenon of the dictatorship of the proletariat, constantly transform the material world, develop the social economy and firm the ideal of communism. The theory of the origin of the state makes us fully realize that the state is the dialectical unity of “class nature” and “public power”, and that the socialist country also has a class nature. But it is a new state established based on eliminating backward production relations and productive forces, which conforms to the law of historical development. It is a state in which the proletariat and the working people are in power, and a state which protects the interests of the people. Therefore, we insist on grasping Engels’ view of the state as a whole. On the one hand, we can not only realize that a state is a tool of class rule, but also firmly believe in socialism and grasp the class attribute of the state. On the other hand, it is more conducive to improve socialist democratic politics and promoting the modernization of the national governance system and capacity by making us realize the characteristics of “public power”.

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