

Reconsider Marx's Democracy Theory

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Abstract

Marx's democratic theories are also the unity of both universal and particular; moreover, the aspects of democratic universal have been ignored in the modern academic research. Marx's democratic theories have his general conception, universal value and its common formations. Marx's democratic thoughts have not departed from the historical development of human democracy and democracy practice, but have absorbed the outstanding achievement of the democratic politics.

Key words: Democratic theory; General conception; Universal value; Common formation

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INTRODUCTION

These years, Marx's theory of democracy has been explained from three aspects, one is its feature of classes, one is the feature of its destination, and another one is the feature of its discrepancy. Marx has emphasized the fundamental position of the economy, and concludes that there is no democracy which can surpass the classes. He believes that the democracy system is the formation and the means of the ruling class to carry out their political plan. The existence of the democracy system is to preserve more interests of the ruling class, and make the state steadier; however, Marx holds that, in different

social formations, the structure of the democracy can be changed, and this is what Marx called the discrepancy. However, besides these characteristics, there still exist several aspects that can manifest the general features of Marx's democracy theory. This is the aspects of democratic unity.

1. FIVE CONCLUSIONS MADE FROM MARX'S DEMOCRATIC THEORIES

There are five conclusions about Marx's democratic theories which cannot be denied. Firstly, Marx believes, democracy as a state institution must be established on the basis of economy, and ultimately, it serves to the economical basis. According to the general logic of historical materialism, any formation of county including the democratic county must adapt itself to a certain productive relationship and serve to this relationship. Marx considers the productive relationship or the civil society as the natural basis of all the state formation from ancient slavery system to the modern democratic state system. He argues:

The modern state acknowledges the humanity is similar to the acknowledgement of slavery system by the ancient country which means just like the natural basis of the ancient country is the slavery system, the natural basis of the modern state is the civil society and the human in the civil society...., however, modern state acknowledges the natural basis through the way it acknowledges the general humanity, but it doesn't create this basis. (Marx & Engels, 1975, p.35)

Secondly, Marx emphasizes on the significance of democratic classic nature. Marx believes in the classic society, democracy is nothing but the political formation to achieve the classic benefits, and essentially, democracy is a means of rule between the classes. Marx considers that any kind of state formation, including democratic politics is affiliated to the ruling class in which each individual try to obtain their private or common benefits. So Marx argues that:

The entire interior struggles including the struggles between democratic regime, aristocratic regime, and monarchy regime are all belong to the illusive formation which is an illusion formation of community; under these formations, there are various real struggles between different classes. (Marx & Engels, 1975, p.77)

To disclose the classic feature of democracy is the most distinctive characteristics of Marx's democratic theories.

Thirdly, Marx believes democracy cannot be separated from dictatorship, actually they are the two aspects of one thing; some persons' democracy is the other persons' dictatorship. Since democracy becomes the ruling method for the ruling class, it can be consequently concluded that democracy must protect the political benefits of the ruling class, once the political benefits of the ruling class has been threatened, the governing authority must deprive the political rights of the ruled class without any hesitation, until the benefits of the ruling class can be maintained. Marx makes an example with "fraternity". So called "fraternity" is the love between the classes including one depriving, and the other be deprived, it is the same meaning of civil war which essential characteristic is the struggle between labour and capital. Once the benefits of the ruling class have been threatened, they would replace the slogan of "Freedom, Equality, Fraternity" with "cavalry, Infantry, Artillery" (Marx & Engels, 1975, p.136).

Fourthly, the main contents of Marx's democracy theories are the criticism on the capitalism. Though Marx recognizes the magnificent progress from the feudal autocratic system to the modern capitalism, he has a clear picture of the limitation of capitalism, and pays a lot of effort to criticize the capital democratic hypocrisy. Marx believes the capitalism democratic politics always compatible with capitalism private ownership; it is the best political mask essentially protects capitalists' benefits. For most mass, this kind of democracy is not only hypocrisy but also a kind of exploitation and oppression. For instance,

For each paragraph of the Constitution contains its own antithesis, its own Upper and Lower House, namely, freedom in the general phrase, abrogation of freedom in the marginal note. Thus, so long as the name of freedom was respected and only its actual realisation prevented, of course in a legal way, the constitutional existence of freedom remained intact, inviolate, however mortal the blows dealt to its existence in actual life. (Marx & Engels, 1975, p.115)

Fifthly, Marx believes democracy is a history category, it is a product of the long development of human society and eventually, it would perish together with the state. One of the basic principles of Marx's democratic theory emphasizes that the state is the product of private ownership and the class society; with the development of productivity. Both private ownership and class would be vanished; and so does the state. Since the state is a history category, the democracy of a state should also affiliate

to the history, consequently, it can be figured that one day, and the political democracy will perish in the human society development either.

These five characteristics distinctively distinguish Marx's democratic theory with other democratic theories in the history, and these characteristics are also to be discussed by recent research, however, there are still many other characteristics can be found in Marx's democratic theories.

2. GENERAL DEMOCRACY

The term "democracy" can be derived from the early 15BC of the ancient Greece. But in the long period of history, the democratic politics is not always being prevalent as recent years; no matter Aristotle, or many politicians and researchers, who live in Marx's time, does not pay more attention on the political term. Just like what Colin Mercer has said: "Before 1850, the term 'democracy' has the same meaning of 'blood political event' or 'violent ruling'." (Hunt, 1980 p.45) Until the beginning of modern society, the term "democracy" has been accepted by most states and politicians. As a conception of describing political life, "democracy" initially comes from "demos" and "kratia" which are the ancient Greek words. The former "demos" means "mass", the letter "kratia" means "ruling", and the whole meaning of this world is "government by the people". However, how to define the term "people", "mass", "ruling" or "govern" is still a complicated issue; consequently, the definition of "democracy" is also controversial. But no matter what definitions have been made, the essential meanings of the term "democracy" which means "ruled by mass" or "mass govern sovereignty" never changed. Marx opposes to analyse "democracy" abstractly, and emphasises its classic and economical characteristics, however, he does not deny the general interpretation of "democracy" and considers that the term "democracy" is a conception of category which possesses general features. In Marx's Critique of Hegel's Philosophy of Right, Marx elaborately discusses the general conception of the democracy. According to his explanation, the general meaning of democracy is the "people's self-determination". Marx holds that:

In democracy the constitution of the people. Democracy is the resolved mystery of all constitutions...only the specific difference of democracy is that here the constitution is in general only one moment of the people's existence, that is to say the political constitution does not form the state for itself. (Marx & Engels, 1975, p.29)

State constitution consists of political constitution, economic constitution and social constitution. State constitution determines the subject of state government, political structure, power distribution, dominate model and administrative courses, it is the essential part of the whole political life. It can be easily discover the nature of a state or its regime by analysing its constitutor of the

state constitution, the fraction or the individual for whom it provides benefits. If a state law and its constitution eventually determined by the monarch, and it represent the will of the monarch, this kind of state constitution can be called monarchy constitution. If a state constitution is determined by minority political elites, this kind of state can be called as aristocratic constitution. If a state constitution is determined by the people, and represents the will of the mass, the state terminal power is belonging to the entire people, and this constitution can be called democracy. Therefore, the democratic politics is the state constitution that determined by its people, and the people are the crucial part of the state democratic political life.

Concern with the general conception of democracy, another three aspects must be considered. Firstly, the standpoint and the destination of democracy constitution are the general person, at least in the aspects of law formation or constitutional determination, the subject of the state democracy is the entire people. Secondly, in some way of the relation between the constitution and the individual, human is the destination of the constitution not the reverse. Thirdly, during the course of the political or democracy process, all the decisions are determined by people. Marx holds that in the state of non-democratic constitution, the basis of the state is not the people in the reality, however, in the democratic state; the basis of the state is the mass in the real life. Marx argues:

Here not merely implicitly and in essence but existing in reality, the constitution is constantly brought back to its actual basis, the actual human being, the actual people, and established as the people's own work. The constitution appears as what it is, a free product of man. (Marx & Engels, 1975, p.29)

The premise of democracy is the real individual in the society; however, it is far from forming a democratic state. The significance of democratic politics exists in its functions. In respect of function, under the condition of democratic politics, the will of a state can be enhanced to be the common will of the mass; all the regulations should be determined by people and serve to people. This means in a state of democracy, the state itself is not the destination, but the people who consist of the state and take the real social practice are the destination of political constitution and life. Marx considers this principle as the basic regulation of democratic politics. He argues:

Just as it is not religion which creates man but man who creates religion, so it is not the constitution which creates the people but the people who create the constitution... Man does not exist for the law but the law for man; it is a human manifestation; that is the fundamental distinction of democracy. (Marx & Engels, 1975, p.29)

Through the aspects of the procedure, the democratic politics must possess an organism system which can guarantee the efficient exercise of civil rights. Without this administrative system, no matter how comprehensive the constitution or the law is, the people's democracy can never be realised in the real social life. That is why the

significances of both democratic subjects and democratic procedure are emphasised by the politician. In order to guarantee the democracy in people's social life, each single part of the political procedure must reflect people's will, and controlled by the people; in the condition of the democratic politics, the individuals are not passive waiting and enjoying the democratic rights given by the government, but to positively participate the political life, and decide the political process by themselves.

After 30 years, in Marx's Critic of the Gotha Program, he definitely uses the term "people's sovereignty" to explain the general conception and the contents of the democratic politics. In response to the view of "universal suffrage, direct legislation, people's right, national militiaman" and many other political proposals, Marx asserts that, the German labour party has chosen the wrong subjects of their political demands. These subjects of the political demands should not be the German empire of Prussia who openly opposes "human sovereignty" but the democratic republic state who at least acknowledges the "human sovereignty" to some extent of the formation. He argues:

Since the German workers' party expressly declares that it acts within "the present-day national state", hence within its own state, the Prusso-German Empire whose demands would indeed otherwise be largely meaningless, since one only demands what one has not yet got; it should not have forgotten the chief thing, namely that all those pretty little gewgaws rest on the recognition of what is called sovereignty of the people and hence are appropriate only in a democratic republic. (Marx & Engels, 1975, p.95)

Obviously, Marx has regarded the "human sovereignty" as the essential characteristics of "democratic republic state".

In the western thoughts history, the first theorist to use "human sovereignty" to define the term "democracy" is Rousseau. In Rousseau's opinion, under the condition of the political democracy, the will of the entire people can consist of a kind of common will or public will. The high authority of the state which means the state sovereignty is only a representative of this public will, therefore the sovereignty belongs to the entire people, and this is the basic meaning of the democracy. To some extent, Marx has inherited this people sovereignty thought and with his analysis of the class struggle, Marx has created new democratic political thought. The modern researchers who study Marx's political thought have also discovered these resources of Marx's democracy theories, such as the American researcher Phipip J. Kain who points out that:

Similar to Rousseau, Marx is a radical democrat. Marx believes that the constitutional system is produced by its people, that's mean people in the state determine their own constitutional system. In the democratic system Marx has conceived, the individual in the society is no longer separated from political state, public field and community. The social political system is the product by the people; it is the expression and the determination of the entire people. (Phiplip, 1942, p.151)

3. THE DEMOCRACY AS A GENERAL VALUE

Marx has his own methodology when he analyses the history question, which is to unite not only the logic and history, but also the universality and the particular. Marx holds that: "all other state forms are definite, distinct, particular forms of state. In democracy the formal principle is at the same time the material principle. Only democracy, therefore, is the true unity of the general and the particular." (Marx & Engels, 1975, p.30) No matter according to the real nature or the methodology as well as his interference of the political democracy, it cannot be denied that Marx acknowledges the universality of the democracy. To some extent it seem confused that at the time of Marx and Engels, they both bitterly criticize their theoretical rivals and concludes them as the idealist to use the universality of the democracy to hide the particular of the democracy, however, no matter how bitterly Marx has criticized the defects of the universal democracy, Marx in face, never denies the true democracy as the people's general value in his criticism of the capitalists' hypocrisy and exploitation. Marx considers that the democratic politics is the destination of all the country formation; since the state come into being, there are various constitutional systems, such as aristocratic republic, autocratic monarchy and representative democracy. In all these state systems, only democracy can be considered as the terminal formation of the state system. The democracy possesses the typical characteristics of all the state formation. The relationship between the democracy and other state systems is just like the relationship between species and classes. Marx points out that:

In a certain respect the relation of democracy to all other forms of state is like the relation of Christianity to all other religions. Christianity is the religion deified man as a particular religion. Similarly, democracy is the essence of all state constitutions that socialised man as a particular state constitution. (Marx & Engels, 1975, p.30)

Moreover, the democracy is the most advanced formation of the state system. According to Marx's state extinction theory, the democracy is the last formation of the state system; in this system, all the political powers return to the society, and there is no necessity for the state to continue to exist. This means in order to carry out the communist society, the democracy is the necessary and the last system of the state.

Marx believes as long as human obtain the true democracy, can people grasp the true liberation. The ultimate goal of Marx is to eliminate the exploitation on the economy and politics of human history, to eliminate the social constitutions which can generate the exploitations and finally to liberate the entire human. In the Manifesto of the Communist Party, Marx proposes a kind of association; "In place of the old bourgeois society, with its classes and class antagonisms, we shall have an

association, in which the free development of each is the condition for the free development of all." (Marx & Engels, 1975, p.506) And in the Capital, Marx explains again that the communist society

force the development of the productive powers of society, and creates those material conditions, which alone can form the real basis of a higher form of society, a society in which the full and free development of every individual forms the ruling principle. (Marx & Engels, 1975, p.588)

Marx considers the full and free development of each individual as the criterion of "human liberation" and not only that, Marx has a further explanation that the "free development" is the most important democratic value of a state. Only in the way of true democratic centralism can be this terminal, general value be realised by the individual who has a full and free development; so to obtain the democratic right becomes the goal for the proletariat. In Marx's opinion, democracy is the unity of both the destination and the measurements; radically speaking, the democracy is a kind of state system; it is a kind of superstructure which is established on the basis of the economy, therefore, the democracy is the measure to carry out human liberation. Engels has concluded that: "Democracy would be quite useless to the proletariat if it were not immediately used as a means of carrying through further measures directly attacking private ownership and securing the means of subsistence of the proletariat." (Marx & Engels, 1975, p.350) Therefore, the democracy is a kind of value, it is an aim that human wants to achieve, and even to those labours, it is also a desirable value to struggle for. Marx has argued the aims that the proletariat strives for through two aspects.

Firstly, before the proletariats obtain their leader position, and still live under the domination of the bourgeoisie, the labours should strive for their democratic right in all kind of legal formation. Marx clearly considers that, in the system of bourgeoisie, the democracy is nothing but a false formation, and the essence of the democracy is the ruling of the capitalist. Marx considers that the capitalist always verbally boast of their democracy, however, they only admit the validity of the democratic principles but never put them into practices. He firmly points out that the proletariat should adopt the democratic formation of the capitalist to strive for their own democratic rights. In the Manifesto of the Communist Party, Marx and Engels have explicitly pointed out that: "The first step in the revolution by the working class is to raise the proletariat to the position of ruling class, to win the battle of democracy." (Karl, 1975, p.504) In Introduction to K. Marx's The Class Struggles in France Engels has pointed out:

The communist manifesto had already proclaimed the winning of universal suffrage, of democracy as one of the first and most important tasks of the militant proletariat.... With this successful utilisation of universal suffrage, however, an entirely new method of proletarian struggle came into operation, and this

method quickly took on a more tangible form. (Marx & Engels, 1975, p.515)

Secondly, after the proletariats successfully obtain their regime, the political value of the labour mass is to carry out the true democracy. Marx bitterly criticizes the democracy of the capitalism, however, this doesn't mean Marx has denied the value of democracy itself, Marx has discovered the limitation of the capitalism democracy. The democracy of capitalism is the democracy of the minority; the mass labour can obtain their social status and enjoy their rights of the state master only after they destroy the political and economic system of the capitalism and build socialism. So it is clearly that Marx's socialism is not a system without democracy, but an association which possesses the true democracy. The democracy is much more important to the proletariats after they have successfully obtained the regime because the proletariats' socialist system can provide the political and economic basis. Just like Engels has said:

Democracy nowadays is communism. Any other democracy can only still exist in the heads of theoretical visionaries who are not concerned with real events, in whose view it is not the men and the circumstances that develop the principles but the principles develop themselves. Democracy has become the proletarian principle, the principle of the masses. (Marx & Engels, 1975, p.5)

4. COMMON DEMOCRATIC FORMATION

Marx opposes to discuss the democratic issue in an abstract way, as the founder of the historic materialism, Marx points out that in an ultimate sense; the democracy is the political system which established on the basis of the economy, it is determined by a certain economic relations and it must serve to a special economic profit; therefore, the democracy possesses a special content of the class. The democracy should be built on the condition of the reality, but those conditions in the concrete history period are variable; consequently, the concrete content of the democracy can be changed with their history conditions and this can be concluded that the democracy possesses a special meaning of the era. Marx lives in the capitalist country for all his life, and never lives in a state of socialism as he strived for. Coincidentally, all his democratic theory is particularly refers to the analysis and criticism of the capitalist democratic politics. However, Marx has witnessed the Paris Commune which has an essential difference to the capitalist state. Paris commune is not guided by Marx, but Marx has paid a highly intention and positively affirms its political system. Marx considers the Paris Commune as the political basis of the liberation of the social mass. So it can be clearly concluded that Marx's detailed discussion is the represents his basic assumption for the socialist democratic politics in the future. And in Marx's theory about Paris Commune, there are many explanations about the common democratic formation.

The first is the democracy needs representative system. The original meaning of democracy is the ruling by the people, however, under the condition of the social reality, in order to preserve the public order of a society, the ruling of the people is always indirect, which means the representative member of the people will manage the state and social affairs for the people. Rousseau who is the founder of the capitalist political system has said that when people entrust their representatives to manage their state affairs, people do not transmit or give up their sovereignty, and the state public power organization must be people's representative organization or representative institution. Under the democratic politics, these representatives are the government officials and the representative organization should be the parliament. Because the parliament is composed of the representatives of people, and it is also the representative of people's public will. To manage the state and the social affairs through the formation of this kind of representative organization and government organization is positively affirmed by Marx. For an example, in the 1950s, the England workers formed their own labour parliament as a political government organization that controlled by the workers themselves. As the representative of this labour parliament, Marx wrote a letter to express his congratulations. He said: "The mere assembling of such a parliament marks a new epoch in the history of the world." (Marx & Engels, 1975, p.5) After Marx knew Paris Commune does not adopt the system of the three separated power, and the legislation and the administration had been integrated by the city council; Marx had made a high assessment of this kind of integration, he said: "The Commune was to be a working, not a parliamentary, body, executive and legislative at the same time." (Marx & Engels, 1975, p.331) It is clearly that Marx is opposed to the separation of the three powers and he also advocates the Commune which is a representative organization voted by people.

The second is the political democracy needs universal suffrage. Under the indirection system, whether the representative organization and the government organization can really represent the will of the people becomes the criterion to define a true value of the democracy. How to ensure the government and the officers can fully represent the will of the people is a serious problem need to be deal with. Until now the most efficient method is to encourage the people to choose their own representatives in an occasion of free and fair election; if not the state power will be lack of the basis of the mass and there is nothing to do with the "ruling by people". In The Festival of Nations in London, Marx has thought highly of the general selection of Paris Commune, he believes:

The commune was formed of the municipal councillors, chosen by universal suffrage in the various wards of the town,

responsible and revocable at short terms. The majority of its members were naturally working men, of acknowledged representatives of the working class. (Marx & Engels, 1975, p.331)

Through Marx's imagination of Paris Commune, it can be concluded four characteristics of Marx's election system of the socialist state. Firstly, each adult has his right of selection and being selected expect for those who have been deprived of their political rights due to their social crime. Secondly, the majority of the state managers should be the representatives of the mass worker. Thirdly, the function of the universal suffrage is no longer to determine who will be the manager to control the social life of the state but to guarantee the social affairs can be managed directly by the people. Fourthly, the range of the universal suffrage should be enlarged, the entire government officer, the police and the judge should be chosen by the mass.

The third is the political democracy needs the social autonomy. Democracy is the self-government by the social members, with the development of the democracy. The degree of the autonomy should be improved. In Marx's opinion, when there is a true and thorough autonomy, the democracy begins to diminish. There are two basic modes of the social autonomy; one is the autonomy of the vocation. The other is the autonomy of the region; and it is clearly that Marx holds the positive view of the Paris Commune. Essentially, Paris Commune is the autonomy of the workers, because the organizers of this system are all workers. If this new mode of political regime could be improved, the autonomy of the regions would be required necessary. In the modern capitalist state, in order to separate the state power from the central regime, the system of local autonomy has been adopted in different patterns. Marx thinks that the existence of the Paris Community: "The very existence of the Commune involved, as a matter of course, local municipal liberty, but no longer as a check upon the, now superseded." (Marx & Engels, 1975, p.334) In another words, in Marx's imagination of the democratic formation, the local autonomy is no longer the opposition of the current state regime, it is the new formation of the citizen to realize themselves.

CONCLUSION

Marx considers the social democracy as the essential context of the modern economic society, he finds the relationship between the social democracy and social stability which is influenced by the social order made by the government. And he also argues that the theory

of social democracy can transform into the personality of an individual, because it is a kind of social spirit or a kind of social ideology; and a good social order needs social democracy to conduct and educated all the social members.

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