

Defense for Marx. a New Interpretation of Marxist Philosophy

by Yang Geng (Author), Walterio Barra Cabello (Editor), Zhou Cheng (Translator)

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Defense for Marx-- English A New Interpretation of Marxist Philosophy Third Edition

By Yang Geng

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English Third Edition mutlaka kitap kapağında olsun isim gibi

English version of Defense Marx : A New Interpretation of Marxist Philosophy (third edition) is another meticulous work by Yang Geng. The third Chinese edition of this thought provoking work was published by Renmin University Press in 2011, he also made some revision for the English edition.

I can easily say this book brings a brand new interpretation of Marxist philosophy. His work is part of recent ontology debates and researches in China, which underlines the significance of practice view in Marx's philosophy. According to Yang, when Marx turned his eyes to human world, he started to seek the basis for comprehending and interpreting such a world, and finally he found it, that is, the practical activity of mankind. Practice, as the real noumenon of human world, is the foundation for the existence and development of human world, and this is a dynamic noumenon in continuous evolution and generation; the human world is therefore made an open system with larger and larger scale and more and more tiers.

Marx reveals that men maintain their survival in the process of actively transforming nature by utilizing instruments, and practice is the foundation for their living, and constitutes the special life form of mankind, namely the mode of being and living noumenon of man. The existence of human beings, including the alienation of their living condition and its sublation, happens and finishes in the process of practical activity. Yang, believes Marx clearly affirms practice is the noumenon of human world, and also confirms that practice is the base for the

sensuous existence of man, and human beings create their existence through practice, so practice is the noumenon of the existence of man. In this sense, Marxist philosophy is the ontology of existentialism, i.e. practical ontology.

Marx's practice view is for long being debated in philosophical researches, and some researchers and schools have been calling themselves praxis philosophers in the West and East. It is not surprising that this debate has also reached China, to this land which is one of the main cradles of practical philosophy. Therefore readers who search the true status of practice in Marx's philosophy, and explore its relation with Marx's materialist dialectics and historical materialism may have an exciting philosophical journey throughout Yang's book. I am sure this book will be a new bridge among Marxist philosophical researchers and readers in China and other parts of the world.

Yang, carefully expounds the basic opinions of Marxist philosophy that are ignored or forgotten by the current textbook version, and probes deeply into those opinions that Marx has ever discussed but not sufficiently developed. He chooses such issues of Marxist philosophy which coincide with major contemporary issues and tries to upgrade them into the basic opinions of Marxist philosophy. Thus the book demonstrates the vitality, the modernity and the contemporary significance of Marxist philosophy.

The book consists of two parts and the second part studies, the schools of French materialism, social philosophy of French socialism, the relation between Hegel, Feuerbach and Marx, ontology thoughts of Soviet school and Lukacs, philosophical turn of Husserl forward life-world idea, significance of Derrida's Specters of Marx, the relations between postmodern philosophy and Marxist philosophy. In the last two chapters, Yang studies post-colonialist thought and Post-Marxism thoughts and their theoretical logics.

I am proud of presenting this book of Canut from an innovative philosopher in mainland China, who "rereads Marx" tries to provide a new train of thought to "integrate" Marxist philosophy with practical materialism, dialectical materialism and historical materialism.

Finally, I would like to thank Renmin University Press and her editors, for their efforts in realizing this book. I also thank Mr for his tireless translation work.

About the Author

Yang Geng is a native of Anhui Province born in 1956. He holds a Ph.D. in Philosophy. He is a Professor and Doctoral Supervisor. Yang graduated from the Department of Philosophy of Anhui University with a Bachelor's degree in Philosophy in 1982, and from the Department of Philosophy of Renmin University of China in 1991 with a Master's degree and a doctorate in Philosophy. From 1988 to 2003, Yang served as Professor and Doctoral Supervisor in the Department of Philosophy of Renmin University of China and as Editor-In-Chief of Teaching and Research and Editor-In-Chief of Renmin University of China Press.

He has worked for Beijing Normal University since 2003, Vice Chairperson of the Dialectical Materialism Society of China and Vice Chairperson of the China Society for the History of Marxist Philosophy. Yang has been a Beijing Outstanding Teacher and listed among the Candidates of the Cross-century Training Program Supported by the Ministry of Education. Yang has published more than two hundred papers in journals, including China Social Science and Philosophy Research, and has published twelve books and monographs, including: He co-authored Marxist Philosophy with Chen Xianda in 2012, Defense for Marx: A New Interpretation of Marxism Philosophy; Reconstruction in Crisis: A Modern Interpretation of the Materialist Historical View; and Orient Rising: A Philosophical Reflection on China-style Modernization. Introduction to Marxist Philosophy. Collected Works of Yang Geng, He co-authored Yang has also won several national awards, including the National Teaching Achievement Award.

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Author's Notes for the Third Edition

In 2002, the first edition of my academic monograph A Defense for Marx was published by Heilongjiang People's Press. During the ten months from January to October in 2002, "the first edition" was successively printed for three times; in 2004, the second edition of A Defense for Marx was published by Beijing Normal University Publishing House, and unexpectedly, "the second edition" was also printed for three times in succession. For a philosophical monograph, it is really not easy to be printed for six times successively and sold by more than 20 thousand copies. I am deeply touched by the great kindness of readers. As the year of 2010 just arrives, China Renmin University Press is planning to publish the third edition of A Defense for Marx, thus I cannot help thinking of my years in China Renmin University.

I was introduced by Professor Wang Yongxiang into China Renmin University to study for my master's degree in 1986, and then, I really entered "the gate of philosophy" under the academic guidance of Professor Wang; in 1988, I graduated in advance and stayed at the university for teaching, and at the same time, I studied for my doctor's degree under the instruction of Professor Chen Xianda, and then, I went deep into philosophy under the

thinking guidance of him; besides, the ability of “grand narrative” of my best friend Professor Chen Zhiliang guided me to the large stage of philosophical research. I deeply appreciate my two tutors – Professor Wang Yongxiang and Professor Chen Xianda – and my best friend Professor Chen Zhiliang. From them, I not only appreciate the literary talent of philosophers but also their elegant demeanor, not only learn the literary quality of philosophers but also their moral quality, and have learnt not only how to “write” but also how to “behave”. Thus, I think of a praise said by Candide to the erudite old man Pangloss in Voltaire’s Candide, “Without you, here means nothing to me.”

I entered China Renmin University reading and learning the textbooks published by China Renmin University Press, and then became an author and the chief editor of the press. In was in China Renmin University that I naturally finished my transition from “being independent at thirty” to “beginning to be immune from perplexities at forty” and grew up into a mature person; it was also in China Renmin University that my “identity” changed dramatically: exceptionally being recommended to study for a doctor’s degree in advance without examination, exceptionally being rated as associate professor, professor, doctoral tutor ... China Renmin University teaches me how to learn, how to think, how to work, and even how to live. So, I am very grateful to China Renmin University Press for publishing the third edition of A Defense for Marx when I “know the Decree of Heaven” and step into my life stage when “sunset is magnificent, but it is almost dusk”. China Renmin University, the place where I never want to leave, is and will be always on my mind.

Compared with “the second edition”, “the third edition” changes a lot: nine chapters, namely “The Historical Morphologies of Materialism and the Theoretical Space of Historical Materialism”, “The Relationship between Society and Nature: A New Interpretation”, “Essence of Society and Particularity of its Development Process: A New Interpretation”, “Marx’s Method of Social Organism”, “Marx’s ‘Method of Thinking Post Festum’: Principle, Content and Significance”, “Marx’s Scientific Abstract Method: A New Interpretation”, “Historical Process and Thinking Logic of Marx in Founding Historical Materialism”, “Modern Turn of Western Philosophy of History and the Enlightenment thereof”, and “Generation, Paradigm and Historical Transformation of the Methods of Social Science – Features and Modernity of Marx’s Methods for Social Research”, and appendix “‘Integration’ of Dialectical Materialism and Historical Materialism: Connotation, Foundation and Problems” are deleted; five chapters are added, namely “The Significance of World Outlook of Practice: A New Interpretation of Marxist World Outlook”, “Dialectical Negation and Negative Dialectics: A New Interpretation of Marxist Dialectics”, “Genesis, Essence and Process: A New Interpretation of Marxist Epistemology (I)”, “The Realm of Necessity and The Realm of Freedom: A New Interpretation”, and “Post-Marxism: Historical Context and Multiple Logics — From Marx’s Point of View”. Besides, the chapter “Natural, Derivative and Transcending Formations in Social Development” is condensed and merged

with “‘Natural Historical Process’ of Social Development: A New Interpretation” into one chapter.

The purpose of such an adjustment is still for striving to expound the basic opinions of Marxist philosophy, which have become “common sense”, by virtue of new research achievements of science and philosophy, reveal the basic opinions of Marxist philosophy that are ignored or forgotten by the current textbook of Marxist philosophy, and probe deep into and systematically demonstrate the opinions that Marx has ever expounded but not sufficiently developed and meanwhile coincide with major contemporary issues in order to upgrade them into the basic opinions of Marxist philosophy and thereby highlight the modernity and contemporary significance of Marxist philosophy.

After the publication of the second edition of *A Defense for Marx*, my thoughts and opinions were also changing greatly, but I don’t want to alter the general logic and basic opinions of *A Defense for Marx*. As a result, I select an academic self-account, an interview, and four articles as the appendices of the book, so that readers can know the changes in my thoughts and opinions during 2005 – 2009. With them, readers can “know by a handful the whole sack”.

Professor He Yaomin, President of China Renmin University Press, chief editor Professor Zhou Weihua, and Li Yanhui, Director of Academic Publishing Center list the book, despite of its deficiencies, into the “Major Humanistic System of Contemporary China”; Ma Xiaowei of Beijing Normal University Publishing House and Yang Zongyuan of China Renmin University Press have made pain efforts respectively in proofreading and editing the manuscript. Here, I want to express my sincere and deep thanks to all of them.

I remember Wittgenstein had said that “a man dealing with philosophy is eager for the peace in thought”. After the publication of the third edition of *A Defense for Marx*, I look forward to “the peace in thought”.

Yang Geng

Jan. 24, 2010

Shiyu Garden, Century Town, Beijing

Author's Notes for the Second Edition

The book in front of readers is the second edition of my book *A Defense for Marx* published by Heilongjiang People's Press in 2001.

I published my first paper collection – *Collected Works of Yang Geng* – in 1998 under the encouragement my upperclassman Professor Yu Wujin; and in 2002, four years later, I published my second paper collection – *A Defense for Marx*, under the promotion of my student Doctor Li Yili. Unexpectedly, during the ten months from January to October in 2002, *A Defense for Marx* was printed for three times. Maybe that was because my persistence touched the readers, but more importantly, I am deeply touched by the great kindness of readers. So on the occasion that the second edition of *A Defense for Marx* is going to be published, I cannot help thinking of my teachers, friends and my family members, because I cannot grow up without their family affection and friendship; at the same time, I also think of those people who have ever misunderstood, prejudiced against and even been “hostile” to me, because I cannot become mature without their misunderstandings and censures. As soon as man “learns to walk, he learns also to fall, and only by falling does he learn to walk” (Marx) As to me, family affection and friendship, as well as grievance and hardship, are all a fortune, a fortune that is indispensable.

My research area is Marxist philosophy. I notice that the “image” of Marx is constantly changing after his death, and the longer he leaves us, the more the cognitions on him are diverged, just as the farther a man goes away, the more vague his image is. The drastic changes in Soviet Union and East Europe made Marx the “defendant” rather than the “plaintiff” in the debates of ideology and culture at the turn of the century, and his “image” was smeared by the “plaintiff” at will. As a Marxist, I must defend “absent” Marx; I am a researcher of Marxist philosophy, so all my works is the result of my rereading of Marx, or a new interpretation of Marxist philosophy. So I name the second edition as *A Defense for Marx – A New Interpretation of Marxist Philosophy*.

Compared with the first edition, the second edition changes a lot: first, the preface “The Road of Glory is Narrow” is changed into “Marxist Philosophy: The Truth and Conscience of Our Times”; second, the four volumes are changed into Part One and Part Two, and the original Volume IV is completely omitted; third, the article structure is adjusted, and besides Volume IV, eight chapters are deleted, namely “The Meeting of Marxist Philosophy and Postmodernism in Contemporary Era”, “Theoretical Defense for Marx”, “Material, Practice,

World: Rethinking of the Three Basic Categories of Marxist Philosophy”, “Subject Design, Material Analysis and Model Interpretation: Basic Links in Social Scientific Research”, “Marxist Philosophy and Textbook of Marxist Philosophy”, “Study on Historical Materialism: Problems, Opinions and Train of Thought”, “Historical Meditation on the Theoretical Basis of Historical Materialism”, and “Rethinking of the Theoretical Source of Historical Materialism”, and ten chapters are added, namely “Postmodern Connotation of Marxist Philosophy”, “Marxist Practical Ontology: A New Interpretation”, “The Relationship between Society and Nature: A New Interpretation”, “‘Natural Historical Process’ of Social Development: A New Interpretation”, “Marx’s View of Historical Necessity: A New Interpretation”, “Marx’s Theory of Practical Reflection: Connotation, Features and Significance”, “The Ontology Thoughts of Stalin and Lukacs: A Comparative Study”, “Husserl: Turning from Transcendental Ego to Life-world”, “Postmodernism: Background, Essence and Significance”, and “Post-colonialism: Essence, Features and Limitations”.

The second edition is apparently a collection of papers, but in fact it is an academic monograph edited revolving around Marxist philosophy and its contemporary significance; there are internal connections between the papers in each part, and all of the papers constitute a theoretical whole. In the book, Part One, focusing on the studies of the basic features and opinions of Marxist philosophy, puts Marxist philosophy into the grand theoretical backgrounds of history of western philosophy and modern western philosophy, including postmodernism, to explore anew its theme, system features and contemporary significance, and strives to expound the basic opinions of Marxist philosophy, which have become “common sense”, by virtue of new research achievements of science and philosophy, reveal the basic opinions of Marxist philosophy that are ignored or forgotten by the current textbook of Marxist philosophy, and probe deep into and systematically demonstrate the opinions that Marx has ever expounded but not sufficiently developed and meanwhile coincide with major contemporary issues in order to upgrade them into the basic opinions of Marxist philosophy. With emphasis laid on the studies of the history of Marxist philosophy, history of western philosophy, and modern western philosophy, Part Two reinvestigates the historical process and thinking logic of Marx in founding historical materialism, explores the evolution of the ontology of Marxist philosophy after Marx, and analyzes, from Marx’s point of view, the western philosophy of history, methods of western social science, postmodernism, post-colonialism, and the thought changes of Husserl and Derrida, with a view to highlighting the contemporary significance of Marxist philosophy.

I try hard to rebuild the “image” of Marx in such a way and show the realistic concern and ultimate concern of Marxist philosophy about the existence and value of man and the unity between the two concerns, thereby defending Marx on this ground. Meanwhile, I know very well that Marxist philosophy is both broad and profound, and this book is just “the tip of the iceberg” with respect to the interpretation of it. For me, my thinking should advance

continuously towards the deep of the theoretical treasury of Marxist philosophy. “People often have a chance to give a great lesson, namely admitting their deficiencies.” (Diderot) I don’t deny my deficiencies in life experience, intellectual structure and thinking mode, and I am also aware of all the defects in this book. In the words of Wittgenstein, this book “is just a mirror, with which a reader can see all defects in his thought and thereby correct his train of thought by this way”.

The papers included in this book span a time period of twenty years, i.e. from 1984 – 2004. During that period, my thoughts and opinions were changing fiercely; therefore the opinions herein are not consistent. But I don’t want to make any modification to uniform the opinions in the book, because these papers reflect different issues I focused on in different stages, record my mental journey of rereading Marx, and embody my past and present philosophical studies and corresponding levels. “Only being fully aware of the past can we see the present clearly; only by deeply meditating the significance of the past can we find the significance of the future.” (Herzen)

Yang Geng

July 31, 2004

Beijing Normal University

Author’s Preface for the Third Edition

Marxist Philosophy: The Truth and Conscience of Our Times

This is a record of the interview of journalist Xin Wen from Academic Monthly with me, and it reflects my academic viewpoints in a relatively accurate way, therefore I use it as the preface of the book. The original of this interview record was carried in Academic Monthly, 2005 (First Issue)

(Preface)

Xin Wen (hereinafter referred to as “Xin”): Professor Yang, you are a famous Marxist philosopher and theorist in China. I notice that an article in Theory Front, Issue 1, 2000 mentions that your interpretation paradigm of Marxist philosophy “provides a new way for comprehending Marxist philosophy, breaks through the traditional theoretical framework of Marxist philosophy, builds a new Marxist philosophy system, and has a groundbreaking significance for the reform and construction of Chinese philosophy system”.

Yang Geng (hereinafter referred to as “Yang”): I think I am overrated, and I really don’t deserve this, but I do have my own opinions on Marxist philosophy. From my point of view, Marxist philosophy has an epoch-making significance in the history of philosophy in that it realizes the fundamental theme transformation of philosophy – from the universe to human world, and pays attention to human living condition and the elimination of alienation, as well as the proletariat and the emancipation of mankind. When Marx turned his eyes to human world, he started to seek the basis for comprehending and interpreting such a world, and finally he found it, that is, the practical activity of mankind. Practice, as the real noumenon of human world, is the foundation for the existence and development of human world, and this is a dynamic noumenon in continuous evolution and generation; the human world is therefore made an open system with larger and larger scale and more and more tiers.

Xin: First of all, I would like to request you to briefly summarize your interpretation paradigm of Marxist philosophy. How do you understand Marxist philosophy?

Yang: Marx reveals that men maintain their survival in the process of actively transforming nature by utilizing instruments, and practice is the foundation for their living, and constitutes the special life form of mankind, namely the mode of being and living noumenon of man. The existence of human beings, including the alienation of their living condition and its sublation, happens and finishes in the process of practical activity. When confirming practice is the noumenon of human world, Marx also confirms that practice is the base for the sensuous existence of man, and human beings create their existence through practice, so practice is the noumenon of the existence of man. In this sense, Marxist philosophy is the ontology of existentialism, i.e. practical ontology.

Xin: That’s right. The drawback of traditional ontology is that the universe noumenon it pursues is an “unmoved mover” – the so-called “ultimate being” behind all the real things. Actually no matter whether such noumenon is “abstract spirit” or “abstract substance”, it is an abstract noumenon disconnected with the real society, real mankind and their activities. It is impossible to perceive reality based on such abstract being or noumenon. So, what do you think features the practical ontology of Marx?

Yang: The practical ontology of Marx sets the existence of man as the goal embraced by philosophy. What is pursued by such ontology is not the so-called “ultimate being”, but what makes the existence of “thing, reality and sensuousness” what it is, namely the significance of their existence. The significance lies in the living practice of mankind; in other words, “thing, reality and sensuousness” are linked with human beings and their living practice, and the ontology is closely related to the living practice of mankind. That’s why Marx believed that “thing, reality and sensuousness” should not be conceived only in the form of object, but “as practice, the human sensuous activity” “subjectively”, and expressly pointed out that “for the practical materialist, i.e. the communist, it is a question of revolutionizing the existing world, of practically attacking and changing existing things.” In this way, Marxist practical ontology opens up a path of conceiving the reality through ontology.

Xin: Your interpretation paradigm provides a new approach to conceiving Marxist philosophy, and breaks through the traditional theoretical framework of Marxist philosophy.

Yang: The traditional theoretical framework of Marxist philosophy is the textbook system of Marxist philosophy. In the aspect of mode, such textbook system was formed in the Second Section “Dialectical and Historical Materialism”, Chapter Four of Soviet Union Communist Party (Bolshevik) Party Concise Guide. Dialectical materialism in this textbook system is a kind of method and theory which study and interpret nature respectively, and historical materialism is just the extension and application of dialectical materialism – a kind of view of nature – to the domain of social history. In such dialectical materialism, nature is separated from real mankind and their activity and abstracted from history. After such separation and abstraction, “abstract substance” becomes the cornerstone of traditional Marxist textbook system, and the ontology based on nature is formed. This is the fundamental defect; it actually interprets the new materialism of Marx with the logic of early modern materialism, and ignores to a quite large extent the epoch-making contribution of Marxist philosophy. The critique and finalization of metaphysics by Marx, basically speaking, is initiated and carried out at the level of ontology, and the essential feature is that Marx doesn’t conceive and grasp the issue of beings in an abstract sur-real manner, but comprehends and grasps the existence of human beings from the starting point of practice, interprets the significance of beings based on the existence of human beings, and also highlights the fundamental feature of beings – historicity. So, confirming Marxist philosophy as practical ontology breaks through the traditional textbook system of Marxist philosophy radically, and lays theoretical foundation for rebuilding Marxist philosophy.

Xin: Ontology is closely related to “metaphysics”. I remember you pointed out in an article published in Guangming Daily in 1989 that “rejecting metaphysics is the basic principle of

Marxist philosophy”, which had caused lots of disputes. More than a decade has passed. Have you abandoned or still insist on this point of view?

Yang: I still insist on this point of view, and even have more profound cognition of it. In my opinion, seen from the angle of history, “metaphysics” had established a strict logical rule for exploring the essence of beings and the ultimate being of the world, that is, starting from axiom and theorem to reach an inevitable conclusion following the inference rule. That undeniably was of positive significance, marking the formation of philosophy as a theoretical form. However, the beings in “metaphysics” were gradually deviated by the philosophers after Aristotle into the beings separated from the real things and beyond mankind, i.e. into a completely abstract “thing-in-itself”. Hence, till the mid-nineteenth century, when natural sciences “marked out their independent fields”, and the development of society made “real beings and earthly things the center of all interest”, the western philosophy started a new tide of opposing metaphysics again. Comte and Marx raised the banner of “rejecting metaphysics” at the same era. The former criticized metaphysics in the principle of verification of natural sciences, while the latter’s critique was from the point of practical activity – the mode of being of man. Though Marx’s rejection of metaphysics overlaps with that of Comte with respect to the times – both are the critique by modern spirit on early modern and ancient spirits, the two are essentially different in the aspect of directionality: Comte thought that through rejection of metaphysics, philosophy should tend to natural science, be limited within the scope of phenomenon, knowledge and verifiability, and pursue to transform and transcend traditional philosophy with the spirit of positive science; Marx, however, brought forward another train of thought – after “the rejection of metaphysics”, philosophy should scrutinize the existence of human beings, deeply criticize the alienated living condition of man, and pay close attention to the value, emancipation and all-around development of man. In the eyes of Marx, from then on, metaphysics would be defeated forever by materialism, which has now been perfected by the work of speculation itself and coincides with humanism.

Xin: You have also mentioned the concept of materialism. It is generally thought that naive materialism, metaphysical materialism and dialectical materialism are three historical morphologies of materialism, which seems to have become a final conclusion. However, you put forward in the article *A New Look at the Historical Morphologies of Materialism and the Theoretical Space of Historical Materialism* published in *Academic Research*, Issue 1, 2001 that the three historical morphologies of materialism are natural materialism, humanistic materialism and historical materialism. Such a classification is quite novel. What is your basis and meaning for the classification?

Yang: Classifying the basic morphologies of materialism into naive materialism, metaphysical materialism and dialectical materialism has its reasonable factors, but the

reasonable factors are dissolved into unreasonable understanding. According to this classification, the theoretical themes of the three morphologies of materialism, namely naive materialism, metaphysical materialism and dialectical materialism, don't take fundamental change – the three all take “the whole world” as study object, and the only difference is that naive materialism regards the world as a chaotic whole, metaphysical materialism conceives the world as a static and isolated thing, and dialectical materialism understands the world as a system of substances with universal connections and in eternal development and defines historical materialism as the extension and application of dialectical materialism to the domain of social history. The gravest drawback of this classification rests with its ignorance of such an essential issue as the transformation of theoretical theme in the development course of materialism, and its obliteration of the epoch-making contribution of historical materialism to a quite large extent. Evaluated based on the essential issue of theoretical theme's historical transformation, the development of materialism goes through three historical stages, forming three historical morphologies, i.e. natural materialism, humanistic materialism and historical materialism. With its origin traced back to ancient Greek philosophy, natural materialism becomes systematic in the theory of Hobbes, and extends to the mechanical materialism in French materialism. In general, it restores the whole world to a natural substance with the principle of “time priority”, and conceives man as a manifestation of natural substances and substance as the subject of all changes. Humanistic materialism originated from the other school of French materialism, namely “real humanism”, and obtained its typical form from Feuerbach. Feuerbach pursued to comprehend the world and construct a philosophical system in the basic principle of “real man”, but he ignored that practice is the mode of being of man, the essence of social life, and the noumenon of sensuous world. For this reason, he finally ended up with abstract man, while ignoring the initiative and historicity of man. In humanistic materialism, nature and history are in antithetical position, thus materialism and history are diverged from each other completely. Transcendence over humanistic materialism and establishment of materialism amalgamated with history, namely historical materialism, were the dual requirement of both theory and history. In other words, historical materialism was the third historical morphology of materialism.

Xin: But it is usually believed that historical materialism is rather a kind of conception or philosophy of history than a complete philosophical morphology. You also hold the point of view that historical materialism is the philosophy of history unifying historical ontology and historical epistemology. But you mentioned in the article *A New Look at the Historical Morphologies of Materialism and the Theoretical Space of Historical Materialism* published in *Academic Research* that historical materialism is a complete morphology of Marxist philosophy, and Marxist philosophy belongs to historical materialism. And you have restated and further elaborated this opinion in the article *Historical Materialism: A Re-thinking* published in *Hebei Journal*, Issue 6, 2003.

Yang: I had been puzzled by two problems while studying Marxist philosophy: one was the relationship between historical materialism and dialectical materialism, and the other was the relationship between historical materialism and practical materialism. According to the article Principle of Constructing the Modern Morphology of Historical Materialism I published in your journal in 1990, historical materialism was the unification of historical ontology with historical epistemology; that conclusion was based on an unconscious theoretical precondition – dialectical materialism was the theoretical foundation of historical materialism. In my article Practical Materialism: the Banner of Philosophy in Our Times published in Jianghai Academic Journal in 1989, I put forward that Marxist philosophy fell under practical materialism, as well as practical ontology, but I intentionally avoided mentioning the relationship between practical materialism and historical materialism. It seemed that the “integration” of Marxist philosophy was impossible to be completely realized as long as the two problems were not resolved. Hence, I started to review the theoretical space of historical materialism again.

Along with the deepening of research, I gradually realize that seen from the angle of form, historical materialism merely studies human society or human history, seemingly unrelated with nature, but the problem is that society is formed and developed in the process of material exchange between man and nature, and for the purpose of the material exchange between man and nature, men must exchange their activities with each other. In order words, the living practical activity and actual daily life of man always involve, and are embodied by, the relationships or contradictions respectively between man and nature and between man and man. The basic issue focused on and to be solved by historical materialism is such relationship. Social life is essentially practical, and history is just the development of practical activity of man in time. History, in Marx’s words, is nothing but the activity of man who is pursuing his own objectives. As a result, “history” in the concept of historical materialism refers to the sphere where human activity and inner contradictions thereof, namely the contradictions between man and nature and between man and man, are developed. A new theoretical space, i.e. a self-contained and complete, materialistic and dialectical picture of world, is shown by historical materialism by discussing the relationships between man and nature and between man and man, with real man and their development as thinking coordinates and practice as starting point and constructing principle. This means that historical materialism isn’t only a conception of history, but more importantly, a materialistic world outlook. Because historical materialism connotes “negative dialectics”, it is called by Marx “actually a critical view of the world”.

As far as I’m concerned, Marxist philosophy belongs to historical materialism, and dialectical materialism is just the pronoun of historical materialism. Practice is the essence of all social life, and practical activity itself is a kind of “negative dialectics”. For this reason, historical materialism itself, as the philosophical reflection of all social life, implies “negative dialectics”, and therefore is the unification of materialism with dialectics. Dialectics is critical

and revolutionary essentially. Regarding it as the pronoun of historical materialism is for the purpose of highlighting the dimension of dialectics implied by historical materialism and its critical and revolutionary properties, while deeming practical materialism as another pronoun of historical materialism is for highlighting its dimension of practice and its primacy and fundamentality.

Xin: So, in Marxist philosophy, there isn't an independent dialectical materialism as theoretical foundation, or an independent historical materialism with the nature of application. Your opinion mentioned above basically resolves the issue of "integration" of Marxist philosophy, and highlights and deepens the understanding on the viewpoint that "historical materialism is the first great discovery of Marx".

Yang: I should say that I haven't resolved the issue of "integration" of Marxist philosophy in a fundamental manner, and I just provide a new train of thought for resolving the issue concerning the relationships between the "integration" of Marxist philosophy and dialectical materialism, historical materialism and practical materialism.

Xin: As far as I know, you explicitly proposed to "reread Marx" in Chinese Reader's Weekly in 1995, and thought that all of your theoretical researches could be summarized in that way. I'm really curious about what reasons have propelled you to reread Marx.

Yang: In the history of thoughts, "rereading" is a common phenomenon. Hegel reread Plato, Peirce reread Kant, and Goethe reread Raphael ... The history of thoughts is, to a certain extent, the history during which the descendants unceasingly "reread" the predecessors, so the history of thoughts and the history of philosophy are "rewritten" or changed constantly. Masters have been "rereading" one after another, so should I, such an unknown. Rereading Marx is by no means "groaning without pain" or "making trouble out of nothing", but is the need of developments of contemporary practice, science and philosophy itself. There is an interesting phenomenon frequently happening in history – a viewpoint, theory or even the whole doctrine of a great ideologist always tends to show its real spirit and intrinsic value and catch the attention of people again after the ideologist's death and a relatively long historical movement, so is the historical destiny of Marxist philosophy. The historical movements in the twentieth century and the development predicament of contemporary philosophy make some important viewpoints in Marxist philosophy and the intrinsic value of his theories highlighted, such as theory of world history, theory of social interaction, theory of reflection on practice, etc., thereby revealing the real spirit and contemporary significance of Marxist philosophy. As a result, rereading and reevaluating Marxist philosophy becomes an inevitable trend. On a personal note, it is the painful tragedy of Chinese nation caused by "the Great Cultural Revolution" and the reform and opening-up of contemporary China,

especially the practice of socialist market-oriented economy, that propel me to reread Marx. Marxist philosophy itself is generated against the background of market-oriented economy. Along with establishment of the system of socialist market-oriented economy, Marx is walking towards us, closer and closer to us, rather than farther and farther. In a word, Marxist philosophy still has a “shocking sense of space”.

Xin: Please briefly introduce how you reread Marx.

Yang: During “rereading”, I have gone through an exploring process from Marxist philosophy to the history respectively of Marxist philosophy and western philosophy, to modern western philosophy and contemporary social development theory, and then back to Marxist philosophy, aiming at studying Marxist philosophy against a broad historical background and theoretical space. In my opinion, the study on Marxist philosophy cannot be separated from the study on the history of Marxist philosophy, and only when grasping the mental journey of Marx and the evolution course of Marxist philosophy after Marx can one really understand the true essence of Marxist philosophy, and when and to what extent it had been misread; only by placing Marxist philosophy into the historical evolvement of western philosophy for study can one really grasp the substantial significance of Marxist philosophy on the transformation of old philosophy, and really realize its epoch-making contribution; only by comparing Marxist philosophy with modern western philosophy and contemporary social development theory for study can one really know the limitation of Marxist philosophy, and meanwhile further understand the greatness of Marxist philosophy, and why it is “the untranscendable semantic horizon” of our times.

In such a process of rereading Marx, a huge statue of heroes appeared in front of my eyes. I deeply feel the solemn beauty of ideologists pursuing truth and faith, and realize that Marxist philosophy is still the truth and conscience of our times. Philosophy is both my job and career, so I specially paid attention to studying the philosophy of Marx while rereading him, but I also “made up my lessons” of scientific socialism and theoretical economics. Marxist philosophy doesn’t belong to “academism”, and its basic principle is generated in the process of expounding scientific socialism, whose basic principle is embodied in Marxist philosophy in turn; therefore the two are closely associated with each other, and even fuse with each other. Marxist philosophy was generated from the critiques both on classical German philosophy and classical British economics. The economics of Marx isn’t only a theory about capital, but the theoretical critique or critical theory related to capital; the social attribute of man covered by the natural attribute of material and the interpersonal relationship covered by the relationship between materials revealed by Marx’s economics are of great philosophical significance. Spiritual production is different from material production of flesh, since race continuation based on gene as genetic material is congeneric, whereas philosophical thinking can, and should, lead to new philosophical form through absorbing,

digesting and recreating the fruits of different disciplines. Just as related breeding is prejudicial to species development, the research on philosophy should also break through the limitation from one to another.

Xin: Seen from the papers you have published, another outstanding feature of your study on philosophy is the combination of theory with reality. I would like to ask you to talk about your opinions in respect of this.

Yang: First of all, this involves the function of philosophy. What is it? Or what should philosophy do? This is the question mostly concerning philosophers. Different philosophers from different countries in different times have different opinions on it. It is demonstrated by the human history of thoughts that in the development course of any discipline, besides new issues concerned, such issues as its object, properties and function that belong to the directional and fundamental theoretical problems for the development of discipline often need re-discussing, so it is for philosophy. Fundamentally speaking, we should judge the position and function of philosophy based on the demand of times, knowledge level of human beings, and knowledge structure formed on that basis. Philosophy should, anyway, provide a critical spirit and a reflection method for men to cognize and transform the real world, and mould and lead to new spirits of times by virtue of its attributes of reflection, critique and ideality.

As far as I'm concerned, the unity of philosophy and times is realized by its real political effect. Only with philosophical consciousness and keen political vision can a philosopher understand and grasp the demand of times. This actually involves the relationship between philosophy and reality. On the one hand, philosophy cannot be separated from reality, and it must face realistic issues directly when resolving the subject of times, otherwise it will become rootless duckweed; on the other hand, philosophy has to enter the field of abstract conception movement, and reflects the movement of reality with conception movement, otherwise it can hardly be called philosophy. Philosophy must be linked with reality in a philosophical way to solve the subject of times. I always believe that the research on philosophy should not become the "conversation" between philosophers or the "soliloquy" of an individual philosopher, and instead, philosophy must "have conversation with" reality.

As far as I'm concerned, philosophy should not only go deep into but also surpass reality. It is impossible for a philosophy that only adapts to reality to look far ahead. The most essential reality of China at present is reform and opening-up and modernization. The most prominent feature and most significant meaning of such a social practice is that it concentrates three major social transformations, namely modernization, marketization and socialist reform, into the same era and space, forming an extremely special, complex, difficult, magnificent and

great social transition. It will inevitably give rise to a series of significant and profound philosophical problems, and provide an extensive social space for the philosophical thinking of men. It is the obligatory mission of contemporary Chinese philosophy to focus on such reality, discuss and grasp its regularities, and set up contemporary spiritual pillar for the Chinese nation. It is the conscience and mission that contemporary Chinese philosophers should assume to, by generally grasping the reform and opening-up and modernization of contemporary China, arouse philosophical thinking on the nation's modes of thinking, living and working, as well as social development, and in turn to guide the movement of reality with philosophical concepts oriented to the 21st century.

Xin: What are the theoretical goal and state you are pursuing in the research on philosophy?

Yang: The theoretical goal I'm pursuing is the unity of innovation seeking and truth seeking; as for theoretical form what I'm pursuing is poetic language and rigorous logic; as for the theoretical state what I'm pursuing is constructing the space of philosophy, and molding the individuality of thinking. I really hope that my research on philosophy is ploughing and weeding "in the fields of hope", and sincerely expect that my research can make contribution to the rise of Chinese nation again; however, I know well that I am "more than willing but lacking the power" to realize this, so, hard work is my sole choice.

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Part One

Chapter I The Theme and System of Marxist Philosophy: A New Interpretation

The foundation of Marxist philosophy is like a splendid sunrise in the human history of thoughts, fundamentally transforming the theme, function and thinking mode of philosophy; however, it has also been facing distortions, criticisms and challenges from different aspects. It is demonstrated by the human history of thoughts that in the development course of any science, besides new issues concerned, such issues as its theme and function that belong to the directional and fundamental theoretical problems for the development of discipline often need re-discussing, so it is for philosophy and Marxist philosophy. “Well knowing doesn’t mean truly knowing”, therefore accurately and comprehensively understanding Marxist philosophy is still a major theoretical subject.

I. Philosophical Interpretation of the Subject of Times

A philosophical system is always named after a philosopher, but it is never exclusive to any individual philosopher. As Hegel ever said, philosophy is “the times concentratedly expressed by thoughts”. Marx took this point of view a further step – “a real philosophy is the essence of the spirit of its own times”. Despite the abstract extent of mode or the “individuality”, the philosophical systems created by philosophers are all associated closely with the times of philosophers. Leaving their own times, the straightforward and fiery character of French enlightenment philosophy and the intricate and obscure feature of classical German philosophy are both incomprehensible.

The occurrence of any philosophical system, fundamentally, is related to the times that it is in, and it is the product of a certain times. The generation of Marxist philosophy was exactly the inevitable outcome of social development in the mid-nineteenth century. The British Industrial Revolution and its consequence, the French political revolution and its consequence, and the formation of world history and its significance were three main fruits of the historic creative activities by the bourgeoisie, and these fruits and the social contradictions of great scale and modern form resulting from them were the primary cause promoting Marx to create the “new materialism”, and it was them that constituted the times background against which Marxist philosophy was generated.

The British Industrial Revolution initiated in the 1760s had won its decisive victory till the 1840s, when the production had been mechanized and socialized. The French Revolution started in 1789 also obtained historic victory after overthrowing the restoration dynasty in 1830, establishing and consolidating the capitalist system. The victory of the British Industrial Revolution and the French Revolution marked the human history had developed

from the feudal era into the era of capitalism, meanwhile from the times when “natural connection is dominant” into the times when “factors created by society and history predominate over others”, and from the times of “personal dependence” into the times of “personal independence founded on objective dependence” (Karl Marx and Frederick Engels. Beijing: People’s Publishing House, 1979: 1st Chinese Ed., Vol. 46 (I), pp. 45 and 104.). While winning great victory, the bourgeoisie also brought a huge social problem for themselves – the irreconcilable contradiction between production socialization and private ownership of the means of production, resulting in alienations of man and the human world. In other words, the living condition of men is alienated in capitalist society, and under such an alienated condition, the individuality of man is dissolved, and people become “one-dimensional men”.

Chapter I The Theme and System of Marxist Philosophy: A New Interpretation A Defense for Marx (Third Edition)

The characteristics and inner contradictions of times will be reflected in theories inevitably.

The classical political economics of England reflects the victory of the bourgeoisie in the economic field. Adam Smith et al. turned the source of social wealth to the “activity of subject” from object, and formed the concept of “labor in general” and created the labor theory of value based on abstraction. The formation of the concept of “labor in general” marked human beings entered “modern society”, because only in modern society, labor “isn’t a rule associated with individuals on the basis of a particularity any longer”, and “an individual is prone to shift from one labor type to another, and certain labor types are occasional for them, thus being indistinctive” (Ibid., p. 42.).

The historiography during the French Restoration period was formed based upon the summary of the French Revolution and its historical course. According to Thierry et al., history is being created by the masses of people; European history since the Middle Ages is actually the history of class struggle, and the class struggle based on different interests forms the power driving historical development; property relationship constitutes the foundation of political system. Engels rated these views highly, and believed that the historiography during the French Restoration period shook “the whole conception of history up to the present” and strove to discover the materialistic conception of history. (Selected Works of Karl Marx and Frederick Engels. Beijing: People’s Publishing House, 1995: 2nd Ed., Vol. 4, p. 733.)

The “critical-utopian socialism” of England and France reflects the inner contradictions in capitalist society. Among the critiques of capitalist system, Saint-Simon et al. found that ownership was the “cornerstone for the edifice of society”, and thought that historical movement had its inherent laws, that was to say, capitalism would be doomed inevitably like those social systems in the past, and give place to new type of society in which everyone was entitled to free and all-around development. Although the critical-utopian socialism belongs to non-scientific form on the whole, it differs from previous utopianism qualitatively – it, generated in new times, reflects the inner contradictions of such times. Despite its failure to solve the problem, the critical-utopian socialism put forward a question, i.e. where the human history should go, which became the subject of times in the mid-nineteenth century. New era was calling for new theory.

Marxist philosophy doesn't belong to “academism”, nor it is the product extended from the themes of philosophies before. The foundation of Marxist philosophy was closely associated and integrated with the resolution to the subject of times. At the same time, while solving the subject of times and founding the new materialism, Marx critically studied and philosophically reviewed the classical British political economics, the historiography during the French Restoration period and the critical-utopian socialism of England and France, which, together with the classical German philosophy, constituted the theoretical source of Marxist philosophy. Spiritual production is different from material production of flesh, since human race continuation based on physical heredity is congeneric, whereas philosophical thinking can lead to new philosophical form through absorbing, digesting and recreating the fruits of different disciplines. The new materialism of Marx doubtlessly belongs to philosophy, but its theoretical source wasn't limited to philosophy. Just like related breeding is prejudicial to species development, a creative philosophical theory will certainly break through the limitation from one philosophy to another.

Marx also attached great importance to philosophical thinking, and critique of philosophy run through his resolution to the subject of times. “Germany is a philosophical nation”, where any social change will be firstly shown by theoretical and philosophical activities. “Even historically, theoretical emancipation has specific practical significance for Germany. For Germany's revolutionary past is theoretical, it is the Reformation. As the revolution then began in the brain of the monk, so now it begins in the brain of the philosopher.” (Selected Works of Karl Marx and Frederick Engels. Beijing: People's Publishing House, 1995: 2nd Ed., Vol. 1, p. 10.) The way Marx had taken was a typical way of German.

I learn through profoundly rethinking the history of Marxism that Marx solved the subject of times not directly starting out from reality, but through critique and transformation of philosophy before returning to reality. Every step forward by Marx, as to speak, was achieved through critiques on philosophy – “critique on Hegel's philosophy of right”, “critique on

Hegel's dialectics and entire philosophy", "critique on critical criticism", "critique on French materialism", "critique on philosophical forms after Hegel", etc. This series of critiques strictly armed Marx theoretically, and enabled him to understand modern philosophy, philosophy itself and other various theories more thoroughly and cognize the realistic social contradictions more deeply, thereby creating his new materialism. The creation of new materialism, in turn, made Marx think at a higher position and in a more incisive manner than his contemporaries, and gave him forward-looking profound wisdom to scientifically resolve the subject of times.

Prior to the generation of Marxist philosophy, philosophy was mainly featured by nationality. The philosophies of Confucius, Lao-tse, Kant and Hegel had exerted influence on other nations, but the influence was still confined to cultural exchange and communication, and didn't change the nationality of philosophy – the Lao-Zhuang philosophy was still Chinese philosophy, Hegelian philosophy belonged to German philosophy, and so forth. Marxist philosophy is different for it is a world theory. Though Germany is the hometown of Marx, Marxist philosophy is a "world philosophy" instead of being exclusive to Germany. Marx had ever foreseen that such an era would come inevitably: "philosophy then ceases to be a particular system in relation to other particular systems; it becomes philosophy in general in relation to the world, i.e. the philosophy of the contemporary world." (Karl Marx and Frederick Engels. Beijing: People's Publishing House, 1956: 1st Chinese Ed., Vol. 1, p. 121.) Marxist philosophy itself is such a world philosophy, the product of world history.

The world history mentioned here isn't in the ordinary sense of historiography, namely the whole human history, but refers to the history since world "integration" resulting from mutual influence, restriction and penetration of various nations and countries in a comprehensive way. As an experienced fact today, the world history took its form in the nineteenth century. Marx noticed this historical trend depending on his extraordinary insight, and represented such a trend with the proposition of "transformation of history into world history"; besides, he also pointed out clearly that the bourgeoisie "produced world history for the first time, insofar as it made all civilized nations and every individual member of them dependent for the satisfaction of their wants on the whole world, thus destroying the former natural exclusiveness of separate nations." (Selected Works of Karl Marx and Frederick Engels. 2nd Ed., Vol. 1, p. 114.)

As a result of the formation of world history, the previous state of exclusiveness and self-sufficiency is replaced by the interaction and interdependence between various nations in all aspects, continuously eliminating national one-sidedness and limitation. It is true with regard to both material and spiritual productions. There is not only world market but "a kind of world literature", i.e. a spiritual product of world. Marxist philosophy is such a spiritual product of world, as well as a world philosophy generated against the grand times background

of world history. It is because Marxist philosophy is a world philosophy that it “has found representatives far beyond the boundaries of Germany and Europe and in all the literary languages of the world.” (Selected Works of Karl Marx and Frederick Engels. 2nd Ed., Vol. 4, p. 212.), thereby being able to take root, grow and bear fruit in different nations and become a part of various national cultures.

II. Fundamental Transformation of the Theme of Philosophy

It is undoubted that Marxist philosophy is a kind of materialistic philosophy, but the theme of materialistic philosophy changes along with the development of times. Marxist philosophy, as new materialism, is by no means the extension and solution to the original theme of the old materialism and even the whole traditional philosophy. Contrarily, it realized the theme transformation and object change of philosophy, and constructed a new philosophical field based on that. Engels even described the characteristics of new materialism in such a way, “It is no longer a philosophy at all, but simply a world outlook.” (Selected Works of Karl Marx and Frederick Engels. Beijing: People’s Publishing House, 1995: 2nd Ed., Vol. 3, p. 481.) This, of course, doesn’t mean that the new materialism doesn’t belong to philosophy, but that it isn’t the philosophy in traditional sense. Fundamentally speaking, Marxist philosophy falls under in the category of modern philosophy and belongs to modern materialism.

To really comprehend this viewpoint of Engels, it needs to understand fully the nature of traditional philosophy and Marx’s concept of world.

Relative to “modern philosophy”, “traditional philosophy” refers to the philosophical form during the historical period from ancient Greece to the mid-nineteenth century, including ancient philosophy and early modern philosophy. The traditional philosophy aims to trace the principle or essentials of the whole world and constitutes a common theme for different schools it covers. It basically belongs to “metaphysics”, namely a theory concerning the nature of transcendent being, which tries to understand and grasp the nature of things, as well as the essence and behavior basis of man, based on “ultimate being” or “prime principle”.

Early modern materialism had a tendency of rejecting “metaphysics” at the very beginning. According to Bacon, materialism “holds back within itself in a naive way the germs of a many-sided development”. However, “in its further evolution, materialism becomes one-sided” and “takes to misanthropy” (Karl Marx and Frederick Engels. Beijing: People’s Publishing House, 1959: 1st Chinese Ed., Vol. 2, pp. 163 and 164.). That “abstract substance” and “abstract entity” became the subject of all changes and formed “the causa efficiens of the natures and existences of things.” In Descartes’ opinion, what philosophy pursues is to

grasp this “primary cause and true principle” and deduce the natures and causes of all things accordingly. The early modern materialism started from the critique on “metaphysics” but returned to “metaphysics” in the end.

By combining “metaphysics” with German idealistic dialectics, Hegel built a realm of “metaphysics”, thereby realizing “the victorious and substantial restoration” of “metaphysics” in the classical German philosophy. The problem is that Hegel restored everything into “absolute reason”, which had become a new superstitious belief towering overhead and receiving the worship of men; men themselves become the tool for self-realization of such “absolute reason”. Hegelian philosophy recognizes human initiative merely in form, and actually, it deprives man of initiative, creativity and subjectivity thoroughly for it only takes man as a “tool”. Thus, a large cycle of “metaphysics” had been completed till Hegel since Aristotle specified “the Beings of beings” as the theme of “the first philosophy”.

This means that no matter whether in the philosophical system of early modern materialism or early modern idealism, not only the “thing-in-itself” but “mankind” is taken as an abstract being, and human beings and human subjectivity are lost. As a result, after its tragic “restoration” in the classical German philosophy, “metaphysics” “lost all credit in the domain of theory” and “in practice”. Marx had ever asserted, “Metaphysics will be defeated forever by materialism, which has now been perfected by the work of speculation itself and coincides with humanism.” (Karl Marx and Frederick Engels. 1st Chinese Ed., Vol. 2, pp. 159 – 160.) It was Marx who fulfilled such a task of times. In other words, making materialism “coincident with” human subjectivity is what Marxist philosophy focuses on, and opposing or rejecting “metaphysics” is its basic principle.

In the history of philosophy, Marx and Comte raised the banner of “rejecting metaphysics” at the same time. Marx even believed that the new philosophy he founded was the “real positive science”. Marx’s “rejection of metaphysics” is consistent with that of Comte with respect to the times, but the two are essentially different in the aspect of directionality. Comte just limited “the rejection of metaphysics” to the scope of experience, knowledge and “verifiability”; Marx, however, brought forward another train of thought – after “the rejection of metaphysics”, philosophy should pay attention to “the real world of its times”, “existing world”, “sensuous world”, and “human world”, as well as “making real beings and earthly things the center of all interest” (ibid., pp. 161 – 162.).

The “existing world” referred to by Marx certainly includes nature, but this nature is not the untouched ecological nature but “the natural world of anthropology”. According to Marx, there is a “priority” of nature, but “nature that preceded human history”, or nature beyond

the range of human activity, means “nothing” or “non-existent nature” to human beings. The reason is that only through exploration and discovery of human beings can the untouched ecological nature acquire the realistic feature for man; only after the practice and transformation by human beings can it constitute the “sensuous world” where men live; through practice, men don’t only transform natural beings, but fuse with them and give a new dimension to them – sociality. It is apparent that the “existing world” mentioned by Marx doesn’t refer to the universe embracing nature, society and thought, namely “the whole world”, but means human world. Natural history and human history are closely linked with each other; as long as men exist, the both are dependent on each other. In this existing world, due to interaction and inter-infiltration, what appears before men is social nature and natural society, or “historical nature and natural history”. Human world is a “two-in-one” world of nature and society.

The traditional philosophy concentrates its attention on the universe noumenon and the “absolute” or “abstract substance” of God, but just forgets to pay attention to human world; Marx, on the contrary, attached importance to human world and mankind in reality and their development. For Marxist philosophy, “all the issues are for the purpose of revolutionizing the existing world”, i.e. remolding the world in coordination with human development, thereby returning “human world and human relation to men themselves” (Karl Marx and Frederick Engels. 1st Chinese Ed., Vol. 1, p. 443.). In this way, Marx shifted the focus of philosophy from the whole world to the existing world, from the universe noumenon to human world, thus accomplishing the fundamental transformation of the theme of philosophy.

The fundamental transformation of the theme of philosophy was completed along with the object change.

Historically, philosophies at different times and even different philosophical schools of the same epoch have their particular study objects. Fichte pointed out, “We want to call the foundation put forward by every philosophy for experience interpretation the object of such philosophy, because this object seems to exist only through and for such philosophy.” (German Philosophy during Late 1700s – Early 1800s, compiled by the Department of Philosophy, Peking University. Beijing: The Commercial Press, 1975: p. 187.) This is a quite insightful opinion. Throughout the entire span of the history of philosophy, the basis used by every philosophy to interpret the world and build its theoretical system is its object. Feuerbach’s philosophy has tried to interpret the world and construct its system in the basic principle of “real man”, taking “man, together with nature as the basis of man, the exclusive, universal, and highest object of philosophy” (Selected Philosophical Works of Feuerbach. Beijing: The Commercial Press, 1984: 1st New Chinese Ed., Vol. I, p. 184.). Hegelian philosophy interprets the world and builds its system on the basis of abstract human

rationality – absolute rationality; as a matter of fact, it regards human rationality as study object, so he thought that “philosophy is to explore rational things” ([Germany] Hegel, *Principles of the Philosophy of Right*. Beijing: The Commercial Press, 1961: p. 10.). It was based on such cognition that Hegel built a philosophical system of “a science of sciences”. “In the sense that philosophy was regarded as a special science standing above the other sciences, Hegel’s system was the final thorough form of philosophy. The entire philosophy declined along with this system.” (Selected Works of Karl Marx and Frederick Engels. 2nd Ed., Vol. 3, p. 362.)

As soon as Marx turned his eyes to human world, he started to seek the basis for comprehending, interpreting and grasping such a world and take it as the study object of new philosophy. At last, this basis was discovered, that is, practical activity of human beings.

As far as Marx is concerned, nature and society in human world integrate with each other in human practice, which plays the role as a converter. Through practice, society infuses its objective into nature, making it the social nature; meanwhile, nature enters society and converts into a constant factor in society, making society the natural society. Human world, of course, cannot be resolved into the consciousness of man, nor should it be restored to the untouched ecological nature. The practical activity of human beings is the foundation and base for the existence of human world or existing world, and plays a guiding role in the movement of human world, that is to say, men “set the mind for Heaven and Earth” by means of their practical activity, and rebuild the world on the basis of their material practice activities. In other words, practice is the real noumenon of human world, a dynamic noumenon in continuous evolution and generation; the human world is therefore made an open system with larger and larger scale and more and more tiers.

For this reason, Marx set the practical activity of human beings as the object of philosophy, and the resolutions to the relationships between man and world, subject and object, and subjectivity and objectivity as the task of philosophy, thereby providing methodology for changing the world. Marxist philosophy was founded aiming to change the practical activity in the existing world, and the contents of practice are its theoretical contents. Marxist philosophy itself is a kind of theoretical reflection on all kinds of contradictory relations in the practical activity of human beings; that’s why Marx believed that the new materialism is “the real positive science, the representation of the practical activity, of the practical process of development of men” (Selected Works of Karl Marx and Frederick Engels. 2nd Ed., Vol. 1, p. 73.), and its basic content is from “the study of the actual life-process and the activity of the individuals of each epoch” (ibid., p. 74.). In this way, Marx found the point directly bonding philosophy with the change of world.

The theme transformation and object change of philosophy realized by Marxist philosophy are coincident with the development of modern science. “As soon as each special science is bound to make clear its position in the great totality of things and of our knowledge of things, a special science dealing with this totality is superfluous.” (Selected Works of Karl Marx and Frederick Engels. 2nd Ed., Vol. 3, p. 364.) Marx didn’t grant the new materialism, at anytime and anywhere, such a privilege, i.e. constructing a comprehensive prospect of whole world relying on the achievements in natural science and social science. As Engels accurately pointed out, along with the generation of modern science, “that which still survives, independently, of all earlier philosophy is the science of thought and its laws – formal logic and dialectics. Everything else is subsumed in the positive science of nature and history”. (Selected Works of Karl Marx and Frederick Engels. 2nd Ed., Vol. 3, p. 364.) By the twentieth century, the study on thought had been split from philosophy, and become an independent science. It can be said that up to now, nature, society and even thought itself haven’t belong to the study domain of philosophy any longer. It has been demonstrated by modern science that any attempt to reconstruct a world outlook concerning the “universal relation” of the whole world upon science is really “superfluous”, and its essence is nothing but the “restoration” of “metaphysics” under modern conditions.

The theme transformation of philosophy realized by Marxist philosophy marks the transition of philosophy – from traditional to modern. What the modern philosophy emphasizes, in general, is the living world and existence of human beings. In Jaspers’ words, “the objective of philosophy is striving to comprehend the reality of man in the practical situation”. Even the “linguistic turn” achieved by analytic philosophy essentially reflects the search for the connecting point or intermediate link between man and world, and shows the general understanding of modern philosophy on the relationships between thought, language and world, that is, the world is beyond the thought of men, but men can understand the world and express their understanding of the world only through language, so “the boundary of language is the boundary of world”, and we can only talk about “my world”.

This opinion of analytic philosophy is quite reasonable. “Language is the immediate actuality of thought”, “the manifestation of real life” and “the language of actual world”. The fruits of human cognition of world are accumulated in and expressed by language. Studying the significance of world in the sense of language is actually to understand and grasp the world based on the relationship with man. Of course, the analytic philosophy goes too far after all, where language becomes an independent realm. It seemed that Marx had foreseen such a “linguistic turn”, because he pointed out that “just as philosophers have given thought an independent existence, they were bound to make language into an independent realm.” (Karl Marx and Frederick Engels. Beijing: People’s Publishing House, 1960: 1st Chinese Ed., Vol. 3, p. 525.) As far as I am concerned, the analytic philosophy, in effect, boosts the study on the relationship between man and world in a regressive way.

In respect of content but not manifestation mode, the operation of entire modern western philosophy takes, generally but not individually, the theme transformation realized by Marxist philosophy as its fundamental content. No matter whether other schools of modern western philosophy have realized or acknowledged, Marx is, indeed, the pathfinder and founder of modern western philosophy. Thus, Marxist philosophy falls under “modern materialism”.

III. Characteristics of Marxist Philosophy

As “modern materialism”, Marxist philosophy achieved its development through critique of traditional philosophy; therefore, in order to really understand the substantive characteristics of Marxist philosophy, we need to know the major defects of old materialism and idealism first of all.

The old materialism consists of natural materialism and humanistic materialism.

With origin traced back to ancient philosophy, natural materialism becomes systematic in the theory of Hobbes, and extends to the mechanical materialism in French materialism. It restores the whole world to a natural substance in the principle of “time priority”, and makes man a kind of manifestation of natural substance. In natural materialism, substance is considered as “the subject of all changes”, and “both man and nature follow the same rules”. It acknowledges material unity of the world, but totally negates the initiative, creativity and subjectivity of man; it studies “the whole world”, but doesn’t find a practical standing point for man – the real subject. To put it another way, there is “a vacant land of humanism” in natural materialism. It is because of this that Marx thinks natural materialism is a kind of “pure materialism”, and Hobbes had made “materialism takes to misanthropy” (Karl Marx and Frederick Engels. 1st Chinese Ed., Vol. 2, p. 164.).

Humanistic materialism originated from the other school of French materialism, namely “real humanism” (ibid., pp. 167 – 168.), and obtained its typical form from Feuerbach. “Feuerbach has a great advantage over the ‘pure’ materialists in that he realizes how man too is an ‘object of the senses’.” (Selected Works of Karl Marx and Frederick Engels. 2nd Ed., Vol. 1, p. 77.) Concretely speaking, Feuerbach regarded man as the foundation for the unity of thought and nature, and tried to comprehend the world in the basic principle of “real man”. He, however, didn’t realize that practice is the mode of being of man, and could “never manage to conceive the sensuous world as the total living sensuous activity of the individuals composing it” (ibid., p. 78.). Feuerbach, for this reason, stopped at abstract man, and still ignored the initiative, creativity and subjectivity of man. The same as natural materialism, humanistic

materialism also understands “thing, reality and sensuousness” “only in the form of the object”, but not “subjectively”. It is in this sense that Marx “included” the materialism of Feuerbach into the category of “old materialism”, and held that the chief defect of old materialism was that it didn’t acknowledge practical activity and its significance.

On the contrary, idealism acknowledges the initiative of subject consciousness, and demonstrates that in the cognitive activity, men grasp external objects relying on their own properties and conditions. The results of such cognition are embodied largely in critical philosophy of Kant and negative dialectics of Hegel. The problem is that both Kant’s critical philosophy and Hegel’s negative dialectics repudiated the materialistic foundation of active conscious activity, but only “abstractly developed” the “active side” of man. The primary cause for this is that idealism also doesn’t know practical activity and its significance.

Thus, it is clear that the common chief defect of old materialism and idealism is that both don’t understand the practical activity of man and its significance. It was this chief defect that resulted in the separation of materialism and dialectics in early modern philosophy, and the condition that “materialism and history diverged completely” in old materialistic philosophy, viz., forming materialistic view of nature and idealistic conception of history.

On account of the astonishingly consistent major defect of old materialism and idealism, Marx was impelled to investigate the practical activity of human beings and its significance in a deep and comprehensive manner, and defined Marxist philosophy as “practical materialism”. In my opinion, this is a global fundamental definition, and what it intends to manifest isn’t only a philosophical attitude of putting theory into action, but more importantly, that the view of practice is the primary and fundamental view in Marxist philosophy, and the principle of practice is the principle for construction of Marxist philosophy. Practical materialism constitutes the substantive characteristic of Marxist philosophy, in other words.

In the view of Marx, practice, above all, is the process in which men cause, regulate and control the material exchange between man and nature through their own activity; in this process, it is necessary for individuals to establish definite relations with each other for they exchange their activities. At the same time, the result that will be obtained at the completion of practice already exists there at the commencement of the process, as the purpose, in the mind of the practitioner in the form of idea, and such purpose is realized, which gives the law to *modus operandi*” of the practitioner. This means that practice inherently encompasses those relationships between man and nature, man and society, and man and his consciousness, and the integration of these relationships constitutes the fundamental relation in the existing world. Practice, implying all secrets of the existing world, can be described as

an epitome reflecting the existing world, as well as the total origin of all real contradictions confronting human beings. That's why Marxist philosophy rethinks, probes into and comprehends the existing world based on practice, and "conceives thing, reality and sensuousness" "as practice".

The basic point for understanding the existing world based on practice is to grasp the existing world from the starting point of material practice, and regard the material exchange between man and nature caused by material production as the foundation of existing world. According to Marx, the integration of existing world is realized through the normalization of various relations and structures of the existing world by the material exchange between man and nature, which always is the deep structure in the existing world, fundamentally determining social structure, political structure, conceptual structure, etc. "Definite individuals who are productively active in a definite way enter into definite social and political relations. Empirical observation must in each separate instance bring out empirically, and without any mystification and speculation, the connection of the social and political structure with production." (Selected Works of Karl Marx and Frederick Engels. 2nd Ed., Vol. 1, p. 71.)

This means the "priority" of natural substance is recognized; this, however, is merely the common character of new materialism and old materialism, and isn't the exclusive characteristic of new materialism. The material exchange between man and nature caused by human practical activity forms the foundation of existing world, which is the "novelty" of new materialism, or the "materialistic character" of Marx's materialism.

Practice is the mode of being and the essential activity of man. The existing world is "conceived as practice", or "subjectively" in fact, in Marxist philosophy. It is also in Marxist philosophy that both practice principle and subjectivity principle are inherently consistent, thereby providing a new way of thinking for understanding the human essence and the relationship between man and world.

As far as Marx is concerned, man comes from nature originally; and "in the same way the existence of the human race is the result of an earlier process which organic life passed through. Man comes into existence only when a certain point is reached. But once man has emerged, he becomes the permanent pre-condition of human history, likewise its permanent product and result, and he is pre-condition only as his own product and result." (Karl Marx and Frederick Engels. Beijing: People's Publishing House, 1974: 1st Chinese Ed., Vol. 26 III, p. 545.), that is to say, man is the result of self-creation and self-shaping through his own activity.

This is exactly true. Animals realize unity with nature and maintain their survival depending on their negative adaption to surroundings, so they are only a part of nature. Men, differently, achieve unity with nature, maintain their survival and continuously develop themselves through transformation and creation of circumstances by themselves; that's why men are sui generis as the unique human beings. Human evolution isn't only biological heredity and variation but also historiographical continuation and innovation, and the unification of the two is accomplished exactly in the practical activity. Practice is the mode of being and the essential activity of man. According to Marx, the substantive characteristics of man are formed in his survival activity, and the secrets of man are also hidden in his practical activity. "As individuals express their life, so they are. What they are, therefore, coincides with their production, both with what they produce and with how they produce." (Selected Works of Karl Marx and Frederick Engels. 2nd Ed., Vol. 1, pp. 67 – 68.) As a result, to judge what mankind is, the first thing is to know how man exists and acts. This doubtlessly provides a way of thinking for comprehending and grasping the human essence based on man's own activity.

Man does activity and enters into relation with nature in the mode of substance during practice, and what he obtains is the existence of nature or substance in the mode of human being, thereby making man the subject and nature the object. "The entire so-called history of the world is nothing but the creation of man through human labor, nothing but the emergence of nature for man." (Karl Marx and Frederick Engels. Beijing: People's Publishing House, 1979: 1st Chinese Ed., Vol. 42, p. 131.) It indicates that practice makes the relationship between man and nature a relationship that "exists for me" (Selected Works of Karl Marx and Frederick Engels. 2nd Ed., Vol. 1, p. 81.), which is a negative contradictory relation. Marx believed that with the aim to maintain his existence – affirming himself, man must take negative actions towards nature, i.e. changing the original ecology of nature, and making it "humanized nature" and "thing-for-me".

Unlike animals, men are always realizing the unification with nature by constantly establishing opposite relations with nature – negation against nature as object is just the affirmation of subject. The dialectical relationship between affirmation and negation puts subject and object into a bidirectional movement. While continuously transforming and creating the existing world, practice is also transforming and creating mankind constantly. "The coincidence of the changing of circumstances with human activity or self-changing can be conceived and rationally understood only as revolutionary practice." (Ibid., p. 55.) As the mode of being and the essential activity of man, practice certainly embodies the inherent measure of man and the criticalness on the existing world, and also involves self-development of man.

It can be observed that the negative relationship that “exists for me” between man and nature is the most profound and complicated contradictory relation, which is like the “Waterloo” for many master philosophers before Marx, making materialism “powerless and frustrated” with respect to the subjectivity of man, and separating materialism far from dialectics. The wisdom of Marx lies in his unity of materialism and human subjectivity, and his integration of materialism and dialectics consequently, through deep and comprehensive analysis on the practical activity of man and its significance. In other words, dialectical materialism is another important characteristic of Marxist philosophy.

When materialism and human subjectivity, as well as materialism and dialectics, is organically integrated by Marx on the basis of scientific view of practice, the unity of materialistic view of nature and conception of history is realized, which are the two aspects of a same process.

It is generally thought that the materialistic conception of history is the extension or application of general materialism to social history, but this is not true. Helvetius had long since “envisaged materialism in relation to social life” (Karl Marx and Frederick Engels. 1st Chinese Ed., Vol. 2, p. 165.), but he arrived at historical idealism. The particularity of social life is like a “dropleaf” between nature and society. Prior to Marx, even when the firm materialists turned their eyes from nature to society, and started to study social history, almost all of them were pushed to the abyss of idealism by this dropleaf. From the angle of epistemology, the fundamental cause of such a condition is still that previous philosophers didn’t realize practical activity and its significance, and didn’t perceive that social life was practical in essence. The genius of Marx is that he comprehended society and the relationship between society and nature based on practice, and thereby founded the materialistic conception of history. The view of practice serves as the primary and fundamental view both of Marxist epistemology and Marxist philosophy.

In the opinion of Marx, men must be able to live for creating history, and must conduct material practice and accomplish the material exchange between man and nature for living; with the purpose of accomplishing the said material exchange, men must exchange their activities, and enter into definite social relations necessarily. Such social relations “are nothing but the necessary forms in which man’s material and individual activity is realized” (Selected Works of Karl Marx and Frederick Engels. 2nd Ed., Vol. 4, p. 532.), and even social productivity is, in essence, formed in the human practical activity of nature transformation. Practice really is the cradle of all social relations and the essence of all social life. Fundamentally speaking, it is during the material exchange between man and nature that society takes its shape and receives its development. The material exchange between man and nature becomes the “eternal natural necessity” for the existence and development of society.

It is because of this that previous philosophers, including old materialists, could do nothing but stepped towards historical idealism after excluding the practical relationship of man to nature from history; but Marx interpreted idea, historical process and its rules based on “material practice” – “the foundation of real history”, and created the materialistic conception of history, thereby shattering the myth of the opposition between material nature and spiritual history, and accomplishing the unity of materialistic view of nature and conception of history. “After history was also subjected to materialistic treatment, a new avenue of development had opened.” (Ibid., p. 228.) It is true that the creation of the materialistic conception of history had opened up a new path for the development of philosophy, and without it, the generation of Marxist dialectical materialism was impossible. Historical materialism, therefore, also constitutes another important characteristic of Marxist philosophy.

Hence, we can see that the view of practice is exactly the primary and fundamental view of Marxist philosophy, and its two important characteristics – historical materialism and dialectical materialism – are derived from the substantive characteristic of practical materialism as the inherent logic and theoretical representation necessarily developed by the substantive characteristic.

By promoting practice to the fundamental principle for the first time in the history of philosophy, and transforming the philosophical way of thinking, Marx founded a kind of practical, dialectical and historical materialism. Thus, the traditional philosophy was ended by Marxist philosophy, and modern philosophy was initiated, which is superior to other schools of modern western philosophy on the whole. According to my understanding, other schools of modern western philosophy all view the human world based on a certain aspect, link or relation, and reduce the human world to such an aspect, link or relation, thus failing to grasp the human world generally and the human being fundamentally; Marxist philosophy, on the contrary, grasps the foundation of human being and human world – practice, and radiates this foundation to all the aspects, links and relations in the human world, thus forming a “holistic vision of society”. I have a deeper understanding on the well-known saying of Sartre than Sartre himself – Marxist philosophy is the sole unsurpassable philosophy of our times, in that I have grasped the substantive characteristic of Marxist philosophy, that is, practical materialism.