

A Preliminary Study of Marx and Engels' Literary and Artistic Thoughts

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Received: 22 August 2021; **Accepted:** 31 August 2021; **Published:** 10 September 2021

Abstract:

Marx and Engels were mainly engaged in the creation of scientific socialism and communism theory system and the practice of proletarian revolution. Although there is no literary work that indicates that they specialize in literature, aesthetics, literature and art, but in the huge articles, treatises, letters and other documents left in their lives, the complete literary thought system of Marx and Engels' system will be found. Before intensively reading the literature of Marx and Engels' literary thought, it is necessary to study the background, development stage and theoretical source of Marx and Engels' literary thought. This article will start from these three directions, as a preliminary exploration of the study of Marx and Engels' literary thoughts.

Keywords:

Marx and Engels' Literary Thought, Literary Thought, Literary Theory, Marxist Literary Theory

1. Marx and Engels Thought Literary Background

1.1. Influenced by Critical Realism Literature

In the 1830s, it was the embryonic stage of the formation of Marx and Engels' literary thoughts. At this time, critical and critical realist literature began to appear in the European literary world. This literary genre has flourished in Europe for a century. In the works of critical realist writers, they broadly and profoundly reflected social customs, human sentiments, national character and social contradictions, and criticized the capitalist society. At this time, romanticism and classicism were gradually marginalized. This is because since the industrial revolution began in Western Europe, the capitalist economy has developed rapidly, and the inherent contradictions and drawbacks of the capitalist system have gradually revealed, truly reflecting real life, revealing and exposing the darkness of society, praised by people and gradually developed into a literature Mainstream.

The most prominent feature of critical literature is its reality. It is different from romantic literature. Romantic literature has a great tendency to be subjective fantasy and empty and unrealistic, just like illusory clouds and mists; Criticism Doctrine literature is based on the analysis of real life. Unlike classical literature, where the

protagonists are emperors, generals, nobles, men and women, they are legendary. Li Yisun said in his article *Marx and Engels' Literary Thoughts*: As long as a strict description of reality, a writer can always become a faithful, successful, patient or courageous painter who portrays typical human beings and tells drama about private life to some extent. [1] Archaeologists of people, social movables, compilers of professional rosters, registrars of good and evil. At the time, this change of the protagonist's identity was a huge change, and the significance was quite profound. In the writings of literary writers, the most common, common and extensive things in life can be most truly represented. The truth and substance of society have become the objects that writers strive to describe. Therefore, critical literary works can reveal deeper levels and corners of society with unprecedented depth and breadth.

The second characteristic of critical realism literature is that it has a tendency. This tendency is embodied in the first. His criticism is mainly aimed at class rule, and the second is that its criticism is due to the conscious pursuit of life. It is the basis of the reflection and analysis, so it has great power to hit the point and break the essence.

This literary school was highly praised by Marx and Engels. In their literary thoughts, they believed that art should reflect art and reveal the essential laws and characteristics of life. Critical realism literature has all done this. However, Marx and Engels did not fully affirm the works of this period, but treated them as an artistic phenomenon with reservations.

1.2. The Development of Proletarian Literature

At the same time as the birth of the bourgeoisie, proletarian literature also fell to the ground. The emergence of the steam engine and the unprecedented development of productivity further destroyed the old feudal relations of production and established the capitalist mode of production. However, there are still a group of people who create the most wealth, but However, they suffered the most. They were squeezed out of surplus value by capitalists, and gradually adapted to capitalism. They evolved a proletarian team that was opposed to capitalism. The labor movement flourished and gradually pointed the spear of struggle to the occupation of the means of production. Bourgeoisie.

Literature and art are a reflection of life. The literary works of the time were a powerful weapon for social criticism. This just shows that the proletariat already has a mature self-awareness and a revolutionary consciousness that can clearly express itself. This did not develop by accident. Marx and Engels were witnesses of the Charter Movement to the Paris Commune uprising. Although there was no such high-level work as Gorky's *Mother* in the early days of proletarian literature, there have been some budding works; Marx and Engels encouraged and affirmed these works with the budding proletarian literature. In the large number of literary commentary letters of Marx and Engels, it was these encouragements that gave a huge impetus to the development of proletarian literature.

Marx and Engels actively expressed their views on literary and artistic issues in many letters and treatises, not only because of their love for literature and art, but also because during this period, the task of building a new proletarian literature needs someone to learn from. At the same time as summing up successful experience, it is necessary to have a very high level of artistic thought, which is used to guide the gradual and healthy development of proletarian literature and art and tend to be perfected.

1.3. The Development of German Petty Bourgeois Literature

In the first half of the nineteenth century, among most Western European powers, Germany at this time was still a relatively backward country. The aristocratic landlord class still ruled the society. Although capitalism appeared, there was still no large-scale industrial production; the country split into States, large and small, are in a state of feudal separatism in their respective politics. The extremely conservative political situation has made Germany's economic development slow, lifeless and without vitality.

Since the 16th century, there has been a small bourgeoisie in Germany. This class is extremely dual-faced. It represents the local commerce and handicrafts economically, but it is politically eager to receive noble landlords. Waiting for the protection of feudal forces, they look down on the working people of the proletariat, thinking that they are shabby, poor, dirty and humble, and afraid of becoming a proletariat, but they don't expect capitalism to grow in Germany because of the development of capitalism. It will only make most of the members bankrupt due to the pressure of the bourgeoisie to merge; only in Germany's current lifeless economic situation, the petty bourgeoisie can survive triumphantly.

The Tendency literature that represents the Utopian ideals of the German petty bourgeoisie and promotes reforms and compromises matured during this period. In terms of writing, this type of literary works is full of progressive and revolutionary rhetoric, but its essence is still the feudalism. The beautification of the lives of ordinary citizens under the rule is a compromise with the current reality.

The young Engels was also interested in this literary genre at first, but some scholars stated that Engels was only interested in this way of advocating the use of literature and art to promote the ideals of political and social reform, opposing passive romanticism, and requiring literary creation to directly attack social problems. Tang Zhengdong stated in *The Hypocrisy of Pietist Society and the Contradiction in Biblical Interpretation: Engels and the Young Germans*: The young Engels did not completely agree with the young German school's views and expressions. He was interested in the fighting of ideas based on the spirit of freedom. This is not only reflected in his revealing of the appearance of Pietism and its hypocrisy in his hometown. It is also reflected in his analysis of the internal contradictions in the interpretation of religious doctrines. The interpretive characteristics of the young Engels that face the internal contradictions in the early stages of ideological development are the first for him to take the lead on the road of materialism. A solid step has played a positive role in promoting. [2]

Following the Youth German School, a true socialist petty-bourgeois literary school appeared. At this moment, it has abandoned the only progressive resistance against feudal despotism as the continuation of the Youth German School literature. Turned into a kind of reactionary literature. At this time, Marx and Engels wrote a series of works such as *German Revolution and Counter-revolution*, *German Ideology*, *Communist Manifesto*, *Feuerbach and the End of German Classical Philosophy*, in these works, *True socialism* and literary works have been deeply analyzed. Although this literary school is seriously reactionary, it is still helpful to the formation of Marx and Engels' literary thoughts.

1.4. The Emergence of Naturalistic Literature

In the second half of the nineteenth century, realist literature was too saturated and developed to the extreme, and began to degenerate into naturalistic literature; it first appeared in France during the reign of the Second Empire. Naturalism had a huge impact on Europe at that time. It was a period when the sharp contradictions of capitalist society were intense and prominent, and it was also a period when realist literature was at its peak and declined. Critical realism literature cannot explain social phenomena due to its limitations. Unable to find a correct way to solve social contradictions, a kind of escapism, art supremacy, and a literary trend of thought with strong mysticism and subjective idealism emerged; but naturalism is obviously different from this. A trend of thought, it has inherited the responsibility of critical realism literature to interfere with real life, trying to integrate the research of natural science into literature to explain the current situation of society.

The Western European bourgeoisie, which ended the ideological rule of feudal theocracy, knew that science and humanitarianism were important ideological weapons against feudalism. Introducing the results of natural scientific research into the field of literature and using science to create literary works can better adapt to social development. Marx said in *Das Kapital*: The question is no longer whether this or which principle is correct, the second is whether it is beneficial to capital or not. Harmful, convenient or inconvenient, whether to violate the police regulations or not to violate the police regulations. Unbiased research is in the struggle of the hacktivating hack, and fair and unselfish scientific discussion gives way to the bad faith of the apologists. [3] Naturalism came into being relatively late. When the most representative Zola's last work was published, Marx had passed away ten years. Although Marx had not directly written on naturalistic literature, Engels was in Marx. In the fifth year after his death, the letter *To Mar. Hacknes mentions the literary works of Balzac and Zola*; and the letter *To Kautsky mentions Zola* in 1891. Judging from the few available materials, it easy to see that Marx and Engels rarely involved in naturalistic literature, but Marx and Engels always attached importance to the meaning and power of science, and regarded literature as a mirror that concentratedly reflected the conditions of social life. Therefore, naturalistic literature is still helpful to the study of Marx and Engels' literary thoughts.

2. Three Stages of Intellectual Development of Marx and Engels Arts

2.1. Budding Stage

Marx and Engels initiation stage of literary thought in 19 century 30's to 40 between the years, Marx and Engels during this period, are at a young age, this period of Marx and Engels in philosophical thinking has gone from materialism to idealism, Confucianism has undergone a transformation from revolutionaryism to communism in social and political thinking.

At this time, Marx was just a romantic poetry lover. In Marx's letter to his father, he mentioned that: when I left you, a new world was unfolded in front of me, a world of love, and A world full of passion but hopeless love at first. Even a trip to Berlin made me indifferent, but at other times, it would make me ecstatic, would encourage me to observe nature, and burn my love, the desire to live. This trip even made me very uncomfortable, because the presentation I saw was not more stubborn and proud than my feelings, the vast city was not more vibrant than my blood, and the hotel's meals were not more than what I embraced. A pair of fantasy is richer and more difficult to digest. In the end, art is not as beautiful as Yanni. After arriving in Berlin, I cut off all

the previous Jia Wang, and sometimes it is reluctant to visit others, just to concentrate on science and art. Yes. In my state of mind at the time, lyric poetry should be the first topic, at least the most pleasant and intimate topic. Marx 1835 entered the University of Bonn to 1836 period the year before transferred to the University of Berlin, he created a lot of lyrics, which is almost to the time of Jenny's love poetry lovers, in college, he joined a poetry Small group, study and select many books on aesthetics and art history.[4] But as soon as he entered Berlin, he gave up romanticism and plunged into the study of German classical philosophy. Under the influence of Hegel and others, he began to pour into realism. During this period, he joined the doctoral club and presided over the work of the Rhein newspaper. The world outlook continued. At the same time, the concept of literature and art has also undergone tremendous changes.

Engels surpassed Marx in artistic talent, and spent more energy in literary creation and literary criticism, and his unique insights on music and poetry and aesthetics. In the early 1830s , Engels seemed to be also a romantic lover and had opinions on anti-romanticists. In Engels' letter to the Glebe brothers, because his own piece of Spanish love story was not published successfully. He believed that the newspaper worker was an anti-romantic person, but was spurned by him. He was fluent in 25 languages and wrote a large number of book reviews and poetry reviews from 1838 to 1839 , just with the Greber brothers There are as many as 19 letters, and the contents of the letters all involve the evaluation of books, newspapers, poetry and literary exchanges. Engels, as a young man eager to devote himself to the torrent of the times, regarded the Youth German Movement as the only progressive movement, used to resist the shackles of tradition, and composed many poems, but in less than two years, in the second half of 1839 , Engels turned to the young Hegelian school and revealed his criticism of the young German school.

2.2. Formation Stage

19 century, 40 years is the formation stage of literary thought of Marx and Engels, Marx and Engels at this time of the completion of the transition from the philosophy of idealism to materialism, and completed the transition from Revolution Democratic Socialism thought to Communism, and began The construction of Scientific Socialism was also the period when realistic literary and artistic thoughts were formed. There are many important works of this period, such as Marx's *Economic and Philosophic Manuscripts of 1844*, Marx and Engels' *Die heilige Familie*, Marx's *Theses On Feuerbach*, Marx and Engels' *German Ideology*, Engels' *German Socialism in Poetry and Prose*.

The above works are based on dialectical materialism and historical materialism, expressing Marx and Engels' views on the essence of beauty, the origin of art, and the laws of artistic creation and other basic literary and artistic issues.

2.3. Establishment Stage

19 Century 50's to the 19 century, 80 years is to establish the stage of literary ideas of Marx and Engels, but this time in Europe during the realism literary criticism from the prevalence of steering decline. Before this period, there were a large number of outstanding artists and writers who criticized reality and had immortal achievements in the literary world and art. They accumulated material and provided abundant materials for the in-depth study of realism literature and art by Marx and Engels. The

discussions of Marx and Engels on literary and artistic issues in this period were more profound and extensive than those in the previous period.

During this period, Marx wrote *Introduction to Critique of Political Economy* in 1857 and *Foreword to Critique of Political Economy* in 1859. For the controversy in the historical drama *Franz von Sickingen*, Marx and Engels wrote Letters. After the death of Marx in 1883, Engels made continuous efforts in this field alone, and made great contributions to the formation of Marxist literary thought and the establishment of the Marxist literary theory system. For example, Engels wrote to Min Kautsky, the letters written to Hanex in 1888 all focused on the realism in literature and art; in addition, Engels also wrote *Der Ursprung der Familie, des Privateigentums und des Staats*, *Ludwig Feuerbach and the Outcome of Classical German Philosophy* are of great significance to the further development of Marxist theory of literature and art.

3. The Theoretical Source of Literary Thought of Marx and Engels

3.1. Ancient Greek Culture

As we all know, the ancient Greek culture is the beginning of the history of westerly aesthetics and has a huge and far-reaching influence on the development of the entire Western culture. In his youth, Marx once praised Lucretius as a vigorous and world-wide bold poet. It can be seen that the culture of ancient Greece is closely related to the formation of Marx's cultural outlook.

Before Plato, more consciously aesthetic discussions had not yet appeared, and most of the literary and artistic thoughts at that time originated from philosophical thinking about nature and society. Marx contrasted humans with animals such as bees in *Economic and Philosophic Manuscripts of 1844* and *Das Kapital*, referring to Democritus art from the imitation of animals such as swans and yellow oriole singing. Marx also followed this tradition to clarify the essence of beauty.

Many works of Marx are interspersed with a large number of ancient Greek and Roman myths, epics, dramas and other literary works. When the *The Eighteenth Brumaire of Louis Bonaparte* contradicted the constitution of the bourgeois republic, the ancient Greek myth Achilles' Zhong was used to describe its fatal weakness.

Engels' *The Origin of Family, Private Ownership, and State* also uses Homer's epic to analyze the productivity of Greek society and the organization of the entire society at that time. And he used a lot of ancient Greek works such as Euripides, Aristophanes, Theocritus and other ancient Greek drama works to study the world historical process of the demise of the matriarchy of primitive society.

3.2. German Classical Aesthetics

Hegel's philosophy and Feuerbach's human studies were deeply influenced by German classical aesthetics from the end of the 18th century to the beginning of the 19th century. This aesthetic was a transitional bridge between mechanical materialism and Marxist aesthetics in the 18th century, and constituted Marxist aesthetics. Important source of thought.

German classical aesthetics before Marx were mostly idealistic. Kant, in particular, became the source of idealism. His judgment, criticism, and dualism led to a gap between human knowledge and human will, splitting objective laws and practice.

Kant's *Critique of Judgment* created German classical aesthetics, drew on and criticized British empiricism and continental rationalist aesthetics, and laid the foundation for the emergence of Marxist aesthetics.

Schiller highly praised Kant and had a great influence on Marx's aesthetic thought. In the history of aesthetics, Schiller was the first to closely integrate aesthetics with politics and human progress from the height of the development of the entire human history. Marx is pointing out that Communism is the active sublation of private property, that is, the self-alienation of human beings, and therefore it is the true possession of human nature through and for humans; therefore, it is human to oneself and to society (that is human) The return of human beings. This return is completely, consciously and preserves all the wealth of the past development. She is the real contradiction between man and nature, between man and man. The solution is the real solution of the struggle between existence and essence, objectification and self-confirmation, freedom and necessity, individual and kind. This kind of contradiction between man and nature, between man and man is exactly what Kant, Schiller, etc. The fundamental contradiction of philosophy is the key concern and exploration of Marx's aesthetics, which shows the connection between Marx's and Schiller's aesthetics.

Hegel, who is different from Kant and Schiller, believes that beauty is reality, not set. Marx inherited Hegel's thoughts on the dialectical relationship of the externalization of human beings and praised Hegel's *The Phenomenology of spirit* as: he regarded labor as the essence of human beings and the essence of self-confirmation of human beings. Marx saw the two-way creation of the subjective spirit of the objective material by labor, but he opposed Hegel's starting from the *spirit* alone, and he could not see clearly the relationship between labor and social history. It was a kind of "top-heavy objective idealism.

Post-Hegel Feuerbach and Marx share the same thread in their humanistic pursuits and human-oriented practical activities, but they also have huge differences. Marx criticized and discarded Feuerbach's mechanical materialism and humanism, emphasizing that human sensibility develops in events, and that human beings are concrete, historical, and realistic, rather than Feuerbach's humanism. An abstract, emotional, and natural person. In the development of his own aesthetics, Marx removed Feuerbach's mysticism, and restored the aesthetic perceptual experience into a practical establishment process.

3.3. British Classical Political Economy

Different from other aesthetics or literary thoughts, Marxist literary aesthetics is based on Marx's research on political economy. Marxism believes that politics, science, art, religion and other spiritual ideologies are all determined by the economic foundation. In this regard, Professor Blawell pointed out: The reason why Marx "*used the terms mainly used in economics and academics in the history of literature and other arts, such as production, etc.*", is because he seemed to "put art in In the cabinet of other social relations." The formation of this line of thought is not unrelated to the study of British classical economists.

Adam Smith pointed out the dual effects of alienated labor on art and aesthetics in *An Inquiry into the Nature and Causes of the Wealth of Nations*, especially the artistic distortion caused by social division of labor. This research result inspired Marx in many ways, and prompted Marx to come to the conclusion that capitalist production is

hostile to certain spiritual production departments such as art and poetry. But Smith's research also has the limitations of classical political economy. He only distinguishes productive labor from the perspective of capitalists, not from the perspective of labor practitioners. Therefore, he believes that writers are writing works that are published as commodities, and authors are selling. When he makes a fortune by publishing a book, he is only productive, and simply writing out ideas is not producing. It can be seen that a series of reflections on classical economics and politics has prompted Marx to conduct multi-angle research on art and aesthetics, which has won a unique depth for Marx's literary and artistic thought.

3.4. Utopian Socialism

In the early days, utopian socialists often used utopian stories such as travel notes or novels to express and expose the essence of the capitalist system and make ideas about the future society.

The late utopian socialism is represented by Fourier, Owen, Saint Simon and others. In these people's ideas, people's happiness is that social organizations will use science, art and handicraft to satisfy people's material and spiritual needs. These concepts have a positive impact on the formation of Marx's literary and artistic thought. When criticizing and transforming utopian socialism, Marx and Engels discussed the historical mission, tendencies and party spirit of art and literature, and Marx criticized the theory of improvement of utopian socialism, dreaming of realizing social utopia by means of improvement and experimentation.

Engels asked the proletariat to propose theoretical tasks in the historical mission of the proletariat in *Development of Socialism from Utopia to Science*, as well as the theoretical tasks of literary history and aesthetics. He advocated, like Marx, that art and aesthetics are not only closely related to human emancipation, but also a realistic and practical important means of political and social struggle. The utopian ideas of Utopian socialists are indeed genius, especially they themselves are mostly circulated based on literary works, and they have a certain artistic aesthetic color, which has also profoundly affected the aesthetics of Marxist literary theory.

3.5. European Christian Culture

Christian culture and ancient Greek culture, as important foundations of Western civilization, have a profound and extensive influence on Western society.

There are three main aspects of Christian culture in the works of Marx and Engels. One is that allusions from the *Bible* are used when writing articles; the other is that Marx criticized the source of German romanticism by comparing it with the prevailing ones at the time. The source of medieval culture said. The third is that Marx mentioned some situations of Christian culture when searching for history. In the preface of Marx's doctoral dissertation, he already talked about his challenge to religious theology. He wrote: I oppose all gods in heaven and on earth. These gods do not recognize that human self-consciousness has the highest divinity. [5] Early Engels also in a letter to the brothers Graber also said he transition from a mystic is a supernatural doctrine.

Both Marx and Engels talked about the culture of the Middle Ages. The culture of the Middle Ages is bound to be closely related to the Christian culture. It is bound to have a more or less influence on Marx and Engels' literary and artistic thoughts, and has certain help for the formation of Marx and Engels' literary and artistic thoughts.

Conflicts of Interest

The authors declare that there is no conflict of interest regarding the publication of this article.

Funding

This work was supported by the School-level Scientific Research Project of the School of Marxism, Yangtze University under research grant number 2021MY32.

Acknowledgments

The authors would like to acknowledge the tutor, Professor Wang Jinzhou, for his help during the writing of this thesis, and the support of the teachers from the School of Marxism.

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