

## On the Great Transformation of the Dialectic Theory: From the Transcendence of the Practical Mode of Thinking Over the Speculative Mode of Thinking

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### Abstract

The significance of the philosophical methodology consists in providing the mode of thinking for people to understand, grasp, and evaluate the relevant knowledge. The transformation of the dialectic theory commonly known is the transformation of the philosophical mode of thinking. One of the main reasons why people emphasizes that Marxist philosophy is a great achievement and contribution with the regular development of western philosophy is that the practical mode of thinking of Marxist philosophy is reform and innovation of the mode of thinking in the traditional western philosophy, especially the idealistic mode of thinking of Hegelian philosophy. In this paper I intend to analyze the advantages and disadvantages of the speculative mode of thinking and the criticism and reconstruction of the practical mode of thinking on the speculative mode of thinking. This contributes to show the superiority of the practical mode of thinking and its normativity for Marxist philosophy.

**Key words:** Speculative mode of thinking; Practical mode of thinking; The transformation of the mode of thinking

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### INTRODUCTION

Marxist philosophy is the regularity of the historical development of western philosophy, and the significance of the philosophical methodology lies in the way of people understanding, grasping and evaluating the relevant philosophical problems, namely philosophical thinking mode. Hegel once said “philosophy is the concentrated expression of age”, therefore, philosophy always embodies philosophers’ deep feeling and understanding of the world, and it contains the philosopher’s mode of thinking. As the modes of thinking are different, so are the philosophical theories that provide the way for people to understand, grasp and evaluate the relevant philosophical problems. For the qualities and spiritual essences of various philosophical theories are concerned, they are based on their respective basic mode of thinking understanding existence. Therefore, only if grasping the fundamental thinking mode of philosophy, we can know the theoretical nature and spiritual essence of this philosophy, and understand the essence of spirit of the times this philosophy existing in. The basic philosophical mode of thinking has experienced about six stages of transformation. The first stage is the simple dialectical thought represented by Heraclitus’ philosophy. The Second is the metaphysical mode of thinking represented by Aristotle’s philosophy. The third is the transcendental mode of thinking represented by Kant’s philosophy. The forth is the speculative mode of thinking of Hegelian philosophy. The fifth is the humanistic mode of thinking of Feuerbach’s philosophy. Finally is the practical mode of thinking of Marxist philosophy. The reformation and innovation of the practical mode of thinking of Marxist philosophy is a thorough change to all old philosophical modes of thinking especially the speculative mode of thinking of Hegelian philosophy, from which a new vision, a new realm and a new era are created. The transformation of the dialectic theory as we often say is just the transformation of the mode of thinking. The

transformation about the mode of thinking in history mainly refers to the speculative mode of thinking of Hegelian philosophy and the practical mode of thinking of Marxist philosophy. Firstly, this article will analyze the advantages and disadvantages of the speculative mode of thinking through comparing the differences between the other old mode of thinking and itself. And then I will discuss the criticism and reconstruction of the practical mode of thinking on the speculative mode of thinking, thus further show the superiority of the practical mode of thinking and its significance of regulation concerning the Marxist philosophy.

## 1. THE RATIONALITY AND THE DEFICIENCY OF THE SPECULATIVE MODE OF THINKING

Before Hegelian philosophy, there have been several modes of thinking—the simple dialectical thought, the metaphysical mode of thinking and the transcendental mode of thinking. Accordingly, “the way” or “the truth” that these philosophical modes of thinking followed was developing then, and the logic of existence, formal logic and transcendental logic was formed. As a master of dialectic, Hegel was

neither satisfied with the simple dialectical mode of thinking for its intuition, externality and illogicality, nor satisfied with the metaphysical mode of thinking for its no contradiction, abstract identity and either this or that, nor satisfied with the shallow ignorance of Kant who modify the traditional logic without deep consideration. (Ni, 2007, p.57).

The reason why he was not satisfied with the metaphysical mode of thinking was that the logic which it followed was based on separation of the content of knowledge from its form. But in human thinking, form is a form of content and they are related with each other and cannot be separated. The pure logic cannot exist that doesn't depend on the content. To aim at the total renovation of the history of logic, Hegel tried to strictly distinguish his logic from logic of existence, formal logic and transcendental logic and thus create a new logic—speculative logic of an organic unity of content and form, based on the organic unity of world view, methodology, epistemology and logic.

“The characteristic of human's rational thinking, is not perception, but know well existence conceptually” (Ni, 2007, p.66). Aristotle's metaphysical mode of thinking is his own philosophical mode of thinking to know well existence conceptually. It takes substance or cognition as the thinking perspective and the ontology or epistemology as the starting point and end point of thinking accordingly. He rejects the contradiction of things when thinking and understanding, and pursues the absolute supremacy of thinking knowing well and understanding the existence. And he thinks “existence of variant is not

contradictory itself”, “existence of variant changing in intuitive experience is the illusion and not true”, “people can know well the ultimate truth at once”. As a result, the metaphysical mode of thinking has choked and closed the development path to truth. The development dilemma of truth it has caused is also a predicament for thinking to understand and know well the existence. On the one hand, the dilemma stems from the properties that no contradiction, abstract identity and either this or that between the concept and judgment. On the other hand it is because the formal logic absolutizes properties of the concept and judgment. In addition, the study of the logic on thinking put the specific content of things aside, which is a certain degree of mechanical. Hegel's speculative mode of thinking that speculative logic knows well the existence conceptually is different from Aristotle's metaphysical mode of thinking and metaphysical logic. He thought form of thinking is a form with its own content and the form and content are inextricably linked with each other. In his opinion, the fundamental defect of the logic when do research on the form of thinking, is that it fails to combine generality with specificity, abstractness with concreteness, and form with content, put the content of thinking aside and views the form of thinking as a hollow form without content. Of course, Hegel's speculative mode of thinking and the principle and truth it follows are different from Kant's mode of thinking that the transcendental logic know well the existence conceptually. Kant was not satisfied with Aristotle's metaphysical mode of thinking because he thought the principle and truth the metaphysical mode of thinking follows was not related to the content of thinking and didn't have the necessary form of cognition, so it cannot guarantee the necessity, universality and objective validity of knowledge. So he tried to create a kind of “new logic” to “regulate the source, scope and objective validity of the knowledge”, that is the “transcendental logic”. In fact, Kant's transcendental logic is only the combination of the form and appearance of the content but not essence of the content. Hegel severely criticized Kant's transcendental logic, and thought of it that Kant modified the traditional logic without deep consideration as the shallow ignorance. He insisted on that thing-in-itself is an organic unity of essence and phenomenon. In his own words, that is “pure concept is the core and the lifeblood of the object as it is the core and the lifeblood of the subjective thinking itself” (Cheng, 1987, p.45). Such as time, space, reason, result and so on, all above are the essence and core of object. Hegel's criticism of Kant is reasonable. Though Kant just seized the disadvantages and problems of the previous philosophical modes of thinking, he didn't really solve these problems. Hegel completed the task put forward by Kant in his *Critique of Pure Reason* but failed to solve. Hegel combined epistemology with logic, and created a new logic—speculative logic about how to know the truth. However, because of his idealism

standpoint, he cannot really solve this problem.

Through making analysis of the difference between Hegel's speculative mode of thinking and other old philosophical mode of thinking, we can summarize the basic characteristics of Hegel's mode of thinking. Characteristic one is consider the contradictions the problem owns. In Hegel's view, dialectics is a kind of theory and method that discover and reveal its own contradictions in the nature of the object. And the mission of speculative mode of thinking is also revealing the internal contradictions of objective things. Characteristic two is to understand the concrete identity of the problem. The speculative mode of thinking rules out the abstract identity of the metaphysical mode of thinking, and insists that thinking and existence reach the concrete identity by reciprocal transformation. Thus, he also put forward the famous proposition "Whatever is rational is actual, whatever is actual is rational"(Hegel, 1989, p.45). Characteristic three is about the connection and transformation between thinking and understanding. Hegel "understand all the concepts about objects as is not only connected with each other, but also the inner connection; not only transform reciprocally, but also transform to opposite side and unify the opposite sides" (Ni, 2007, p.69). In addition, Hegel also put forward "the absolute spirit" and "the universal reason" as the basic concept of philosophy, and hold the view that the concept absolute thought is "in the first" and all the world and things are generated by the "divine thought" (Hegel, 1989, p.177). Visibly, though Hegel's speculative mode of thinking overcomes the advantages of the previous metaphysical mode of thinking, it gets into a mire of subjective speculation and human invention. Its defect is out of the people's practice activity and its historical development displays the people's initiative function of thinking abstractly and the so-called "absolute spirit" is abstract and divorced from human beings. As Marx's brilliant exposition on Hegel's speculative logic in his classic work "Economic and Philosophical Manuscripts of 1844" says: "Because of Hegel's

Encyclopedia of Philosophy" starting from the beginning of pure speculative thought and ending with the absolute knowledge and abstract spirit of self-awareness, self-understanding and absolute, the whole book is only the essence of philosophical spirit and is the philosophical spirit of self-objectification. (Marx, 2000, p.69).

Therefore, the world view of speculative philosophy is not a scientific methodology, so is the metaphysical philosophy. "Because of its defects, and also the deep-rooted metaphysical mode of thinking, people can abandon it by questioning the foundations of science of the idealistic mode of thinking, as Feuerbach did"(Ni, 2003). Feuerbach attempted to use the humanistic mode of thinking to eliminate the opposition between thinking and existence and abandon the defects that subjective

speculation and human invention of idealistic mode of thinking. However, because Feuerbach did not understand man's practical essence, he can only become a transition from Hegel to Marx in the middle of the link "in vain".

## 2. THE TRANSCENDENCE OF THE PRACTICAL MODE OF THINKING OVER THE SPECULATIVE MODE OF THINKING

The mission of philosophy is "to eliminate the opposition between thinking and existence and achieve the unity of the thinking and existence", which was revealed by Hegel. But, as mentioned above, both Hegel and Feuerbach have failed to really find the general root of the problem that "there has opposition between thinking and existence". Of course, they cannot find the right way to achieve "the unity of the thinking and existence". Since the task of philosophy has not been completed, the steps of human philosophy exploration will continue and philosophical mode of thinking will also continue to reform and develop. At this time, a star arrived. Marxist philosophy, a practical, materialistic and unique mode of thinking understanding all related issues of philosophy with a practical mode, was created explicitly in his first file "Theses on Feuerbach" containing his new world view as a budding genius, namely "practical mode of thinking". The establishment of the practical mode of thinking is the key to make Marxist philosophy transcend all the previous philosophy including the Hegelian idealistic philosophy.

For Marxist philosophy, the reason why it is able to transcend the Hegelian idealistic philosophy and the fundamental difference from Hegelian idealistic philosophy is not about their dialectical thinking but dialectical thinking and how they do to think dialectically. The logical basis of the practical mode of thinking is the "dialectical logic" called by Engels. It hold the view that human's mode of thinking is determined by the way of practice. So, the starting point of the practical mode of thinking should also be the practice. Therefore, understanding and grasping the opposition and unity of thinking and existence in practical mode of thinking, it is human practical activity that causes the opposition between thinking and existence. To eliminate the opposition between thinking and existence and achieve the unity of the thinking and existence and complete the mission, the general root and the right way is the human practical activity.

According to the related thoughts of Marx and Engels and through an in-depth study on them, through comparing the basic characteristics of the practical mode of thinking with the simple dialectical thought, the metaphysical mode of thinking, the transcendental mode

of thinking and the speculative mode of thinking, we can summarize the basic characteristics of it as follows. The first is viewing the practice of subject as the perspective, the breakthrough point, the starting point and the destination point of thinking. Through above introduction to the speculative mode of thinking, we can conclude that the concept is the perspective and breakthrough point of the speculative mode of thinking and view the ills coming from eliminating metaphysics and knowing well the existence conceptually as the starting point and exploring the unity of thinking and existence as the destination point. Not understanding the people and human world as subject from a practical point of view and misunderstanding the world as a world of spirit and absolute, it cannot find the right way to eliminate the opposition between thinking and existence of course. While Marxist philosophy views the practice of subject as the perspective, the breakthrough point, the starting point and the destination point of thinking. It views people of which is the subject as the people generating and developing in the practice, and views world as the world related to mankind generating and developing in the practice accordingly. Both of the starting and the destination point are practice, which will certainly provide the theoretical and practical possibility for achieving the thorough liberation and all-round free development of communism. This transformation of philosophical thinking in practice which is superior to the speculative mode of thinking opens up a new space for the development of human philosophy. The second is viewing the inner nature and law of the practice of subject as the rules, ways and methods to understand related philosophical matters. The speculative mode of thinking doesn't know and understand the individual as subject from practice, so it doesn't know understanding the human existences such as world, society according to practice, and it also cannot find the right law, ways, and methods to understand related philosophical matters. Unlike speculative thinking method, the existence that the practice mode of thinking grasps is the human existence and practice of individual as subject owns a certain internal nature and law. What's more, the practical mode of thinking can consciously transform these nature and law into the rules, ways and methods to think, understand and evaluate related philosophical matters. Consequently, the existence knew by Marxist philosophy is different from existences knew by all previous philosophy including Hegelian philosophy, which describe the property of science and superiority of the practical mode of thinking to all the other philosophical modes of thinking. The third is that it embodies the unification of materialistic and dialectical, subject and object and the unity of regularity and purposefulness. Practical mode of thinking, as a fundamental characteristic of practical materialism of Marxist practical philosophy, emphasizes the priority of natural world to the world related to mankind, the attribute of real person is the integration

of the naturalness and sociality and people's social activity is the unity of regularity and purposefulness. That makes it beyond speculative mode of thinking. Not only overcome intuition and speculation of the old materialistic mode of thinking and ills of metaphysics, but also deny and transform the deficiencies of the idealistic mode of thinking based on the criticism of idealism at the same time. Finally, the great transformation of the dialectic theory has been realized.

As we can know from this, the practical mode of thinking is innovation and transcendence to the traditional western traditional philosophical mode of thinking including speculative mode of thinking. On the basis of inheriting and criticizing the traditional philosophical mode of thinking, it clarifies the ontological position and status of subject of people in the development of history of society, and makes the relationship between human and world realize the unification in the opposite. It is the innovation and transcendence of practical mode of thinking that makes it possible to complete the mission that "to eliminate the opposition between thinking and existence and achieve the unity of the thinking and existence".

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### **3. THE SIGNIFICANCE OF NORMATIVITY OF THE PRACTICAL MODE OF THINKING MODE FOR MARXIST PHILOSOPHY**

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As the fundamental mode of thinking of Marxist philosophy, "the practical mode of thinking contains all the secrets of Marxist philosophy thinking about related philosophical matters and understanding, knowing well, evaluating, expressing, explaining, and interpreting the existence"(Ni, 2007, p.72), and it is a great achievement of people's philosophical thinking knowing well the existence and of regular development. Therefore, we should conscientiously carry out the practical mode of thinking when we construct the theory of Marxist philosophy. Only when we know well it and learn to use it to deal with related philosophical matters, we can find the essential characteristic and spiritual essence of Marxist philosophy and can understand why it is said that the establishment of the practical mode of thinking is the greatest transformation of the dialectic theory, opening up a new space for the development of human philosophy. Since the practical mode of thinking "contains all the secrets of the Marxist philosophy of science" as mentioned above, so we should explore the significance of practical mode of thinking to Marxist philosophy from its significance of normativity.

We should understand the existence from the aspects of the existence of practice, and the human existence, activities, world, society and its philosophical thinking. From their laws of generation and development and the superiority to other old philosophical modes of thinking



we can find out the rationality of the practical mode of thinking as the most advanced and most scientific philosophical mode of thinking. Absolutely, correct analysis of the significance of normativity of the practical mode of thinking for Marxist philosophy has the effect of icing on the cake on carrying out the knowledge of rationality and necessity of the practical mode of thinking for us.

First of all, through understanding, grasping and evaluating all related matters about Marxist philosophy with the practical mode of thinking, it is easy to find that it is because of the practicality that the fundamental characteristic that the whole world view of Marxist philosophy regulates itself and distinguishes itself from other old philosophical world view. Marxist philosophy is generated, tested and developing in practice and then serves practice. As a result, the materialism is the materialism of practice, dialectic is the dialectic of practice, epistemology is the epistemology of practice, and axiology is the axiology of practice. In this sense, as the mode of thinking and evaluation principle of Marxist new philosophy knowing well and evaluating all related philosophical matters, it has the nature of constructing the whole world view of Marxist new philosophy.

Secondly, Marx and Engels as the founders of Marxist philosophy, they didn't make the new world view they have found systematic. So, when later generations interpret classic texts of Marxist philosophy, and explain the theoretical nature and spiritual essence of Marxist philosophy as well as regulate the development of Marxist philosophy, if you want to avoid the subjective errors and detours, you must learn how to think like Marx and Engels do to understand, know well and evaluate all related philosophical matters with practical mode of thinking. Hence we say that the practical mode of thinking has the property of interpreting, evaluating and regulating Marxist philosophy.

Finally, the several failures occurred in the history of philosophy show a truth. The simple dialectical mode of thinking become the mob view because of its lack of own concept of logic. The metaphysical mode of thinking got bogged into the opposition between thinking and existence and was unable to extricate itself. And the speculative mode of thinking made mistakes caused it unable to complete the philosophical mission of achieving the unity of the thinking and existence. They indicate that if you want to avoid these failures, you must surpass the former and create the practical mode of thinking of science and rationality. Based on it the old logic is abandoned and the new logic, namely the logic of practice, is reconstructed. In this sense, the practical mode of thinking also has the property of reconstructing the logic basis of Marxist

philosophy, which plays an important role to promote the development of human knowledge and science. So, in summary, we say that the practical mode of thinking of Marxist philosophy regulate fundamental change of its implication, appeal and value orientation, and "it marks the transcendence of Marxist philosophy to the traditional philosophy, values and spirit" (Ni, 2003).

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## CONCLUSION

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In a word, the essence of the great transformation of the dialectic theory is the transformation of the philosophical mode of thinking in the final analysis. The speculative mode of thinking has realized to change the previous philosophical mode of thinking which is of great significance to the progress of philosophy. But it failed to complete the mission of philosophy that "to eliminate the opposition between thinking and existence and achieve the unity of the thinking and existence" and also failed to really reflect the requirement of that age about the development of the politics and economy of the capitalist society, not to mention the demand of the advanced stage of human social development-the socialist society and even the communist society. The transcendence and transformation of the practical mode of thinking over the speculative mode of thinking, make up for the deficiency of the speculative mode of thinking, which let it become the most advanced and most scientific mode of philosophical thinking. The Marxist philosophy cannot become the great achievement and contribution of the regular development of western philosophy without the normativity of the practical mode of thinking. We should conscientiously implement the practical mode of thinking, begin to think like Marx and Engels, and consolidate the basis of theory and practice to promote the Marxist philosophy in the future.

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