**Hegel’s Dialectics and Marx’s Dialectics: The Dialectics of Social History**

**October 2021**

**Author: Liu Bingjing**

**The article is from the Journal of "Chronicles of Social Critical Theory (Volume 8)"**

 In the study of Marxist dialectics, the relationship between Hegel's dialectics and Marx's dialectics has always been the focus of many scholars. Most traditional studies believe that Marx discovered the rational core in the mysterious shell of Hegel's dialectics and turned it upside down, thus completing the transformation of Hegel's objective idealism dialectics and forming the scientific dialectics of historical materialism.

The first volume of Marx's Capital successfully borrowed the conceptual framework of Hegel's dialectics to express his dialectical method. This judgment is of course correct, but such an abstract understanding often makes dialectics and Marx's revolutionary transformation of Hegel's dialectics an abstract formula far from reality. Accordingly, we rarely pay attention to how Marx could accurately understand and successfully reverse Hegel's dialectics. This secret is deeply hidden in Hegel and Marx's research on the dialectical movement of social history. This article starts from this perspective and tries to show in detail how Marx could understand and reverse Hegel's dialectics, and reflect on the relationship between Hegel and Marx's dialectics.

**Part 1**

**In Hegel's view, dialectics is the principle of movement of concepts.** Concepts transcend themselves in the progress of their own internal contradictions and achieve new unity. However, dialectics is not an abstract form separated from content. It is a universal principle generated based on objective historical reality, revealing the objective internal connection between the movement and development of things. It was in the political economics research of social reality that Hegel gradually developed the dialectics of social history to grasp the changes of the times. This is also an important premise for Marx to understand Hegel's dialectics later. Therefore, by reviewing the political economics research on which Hegel's dialectics is based, we can understand more specifically how Hegel's dialectics emerged, developed and matured based on social and historical reality. Here, we will grasp Hegel's dialectics from the three stages of Hegel's research on political economy: the Frankfurt period, the Jena period and the mature period.

First, during the Frankfurt period (1797-1801), from the perspective of social history, this was also the period when the British Industrial Revolution was completed. Hegel began to pay attention to modern industrial society and political economics from the perspective of religious thought. In 1799, Hegel had already carefully read the works of John Stuart Mill and wrote a long review (later lost) on the German translation of Stuart's Principles of Political Economy, which was mainly about the increase of individual freedom in commercial society, the development of new integrity and community, etc. [1] Therefore, even in Hegel's early religious research, he had already recognized the objective and abstract role of ownership and property in political economy in the unity of opposites between subject and object, particularity and universality, and regarded them as necessary links in his dialectics of life.

Since Kant, the relationship between subject and object has been troubling German philosophers. The contradiction between human intellectual ability to grasp experience and moral imperatives beyond experience, which Kant put forward in his three critical works, truly reflects the modern contradiction between human practical activities and moral activities after the rise of modern civil society. Fichte, Schelling and Hegel all followed this clue. In articles such as The Spirit and Fate of Christianity, German Legal System and Fragments of the System of 1800, Hegel recorded the reality of universal alienation of people in modern society. Specifically, Hegel has seen that ownership and property are the objectification of life, the necessary link for life to rise from finiteness to infinity, and have an objective and abstract role in social life. However, under the legal system of the real country, people are incomplete and divided only in terms of ownership. Hegel believes that this reality is opposed to the complete human state in the real church. “State law deals entirely with specific rights, and does not treat people as individuals with property. On the contrary, in the church, people are indeed a whole. The church, as a visible church that acts and creates facilities, aims to provide and maintain this sense of wholeness.”[2] At this time, Hegel realized that ownership and property rights are the medium of universal relations between people, and are also the source of the internal contradictions of modern society. He has not yet discovered the important role of socialized labor and exchange behind ownership.

It is worth noting that Hegel did not completely deny the rationality of reality, but gradually realized the universal role of ownership and its legal rights in individual life. "The affirmation of existing things is a negation of natural nature. Its truth, that is, it can be legal rights, can be retained... Now one way is to start from the truth that existing things can also recognize, and then understand the various local concepts included in the concept of the whole state as local concepts of universality in thought, and put the universality or particularity of these concepts on a par with these concepts in reality." [3] On this basis, Hegel found a way of dialectical fusion of subject and object in the "1800 System Fragments" from the unity of opposites between the overall development of human nature and the reality of the division of modern society - life. As a finite life, man does not enter the infinity of religion on the basis of abandoning all objective things, but "life will be liberated from objective things, and let the suppressed things have their own life or be reborn." [4] In Hegel’s abstract philosophical terms, life is the dialectical unity of subjectivity and objectivity, individuality and universality, matter and spirit, finite and infinite. This is also the actual prototype of Hegel’s thought of negation and negation of negation.

Of course, at this time Hegel only extracted simple dialectical ideas of the unity of opposites between subjectivity and objectivity, particularity and universality, and negation of negation from social, economic and political activities. His focus was still on religious thought, and he had not yet reached dialectical thinking on the nature of bourgeois society. Therefore, the dialectical content of social history was relatively small and unsystematic.

Second, the Jena period (1801-1807) was the period when Hegel focused on studying classical political economy. During the Frankfurt period, Hegel had already incorporated the ownership issue in capitalist economic life into his dialectical thinking on social development, and around 1800, Hegel had begun to come into contact with the political economics of Adam Smith and others. In 1803-1804, after carefully studying Adam Smith's The Wealth of Nations, Hegel made comments in his Jena Notes. On the basis of these studies on political economy, Hegel described the social dialectics based on modern labor in his works such as System of Ethics and Philosophy of Nature and Spirit (1803-1805, 1805-1806), and described how individuals rose from individuality to universality through the education of labor, and then formed a universal personality characterized by ownership and property rights, and formed universal connections in economic activities. At this time, Hegel had consciously extracted the dialectics of social history based on the real movement of civil society to realize his ethical conception of modern society.

First, from the perspective of labor in general, Hegel pointed out that labor is a process of subject-object unity achieved by individuals under the guidance of ideas. "Labor makes itself a thing." [5] Labor is a process of subject-object unity achieved by individuals under the guidance of purposeful ideas, which frees people from animal intuition. Through the mediation of labor and tools, individuals can achieve the unity of spirit and nature. However, this is only the abstract role of non-historical labor. Hegel then emphasized the dialectical movement of social labor. In the commodity economy, individuals no longer work to meet their own needs. "The content of his labor exceeds his needs. He works for the needs of the majority, and everyone is like this... There is no concrete labor. His power lies in analysis and abstraction, splitting the concrete world into many abstract aspects." [6] Not only is social labor abstract, but the subject of labor has also become a universal personality in the market economy. In addition, the universal establishment of social labor and division of labor system, the surplus and exchange of labor products, have established universal ownership and made mutual recognition (contract and law) between subjects possible.

The universality that Hegel describes here, which spontaneously forms in civil society, is exactly what Adam Smith called the "invisible hand". But Hegel is not satisfied with this. He believes that the universal connection based on commodity economy is still external, abstract, and unified. The contracts and laws based on it are also abstract and formal. In this regard, he objectively describes the various contradictions existing in civil society. At the beginning, he mentions the negative role of the social labor system. Hegel admits that socialized labor and production make people universally connected through exchange and greatly expand people's universal needs. But on the other hand, "he becomes - through the abstraction of labor - more mechanical, more dull, and spiritless... His boring work limits him to an isolated point, and the more perfect his work is, the more one-sided it is." [7] Specialized and socialized labor inevitably reduces people to abstract and one-sided social existence, becoming an accidental link in social relations. Moreover, when abstract labor reaches its peak, a huge contradiction is formed between social wealth and poverty. "The highest degree of abstraction of labor permeates more individual modes and thus constantly expands its scope. The inequality between wealth and poverty, a necessity and necessity, turns into an extremely divided will, inner anger and hatred."[8] Correspondingly, the legal system built on it is both a manifestation of the universal will and has the shortcomings of intellectual abstraction. Therefore, Hegel proposed that the role of the state must be brought into play and that the new ethical unity must be reconnected on the basis of the unity of the individual and the whole in order to get out of the predicament of modern society.

It is worth noting that Hegel has organically linked labor and self-consciousness together, and the spiritual essence of man is realized in labor. The establishment of self-consciousness and spiritual philosophy as the internal driving force of dialectics reflects that Hegel has realized that the reality of civil society provides objective abstraction and its contradictory movement for dialectics, and the objective law of absolute spirit constantly realizing itself can only be realized on the basis of economic activities. At this time, Hegel initially organically unified the objective activities of reality and the abstract categories of dialectics, which was more systematically elaborated in his mature works.

Third, Hegel in his mature period (1807-1831) accurately pointed out the essential characteristics of civil society in his works such as "Small Logic" and "Principles of Right Philosophy". During the Jena period, Hegel's social and historical dialectical thought was mainly based on labor, and these ideas were eventually integrated into Hegel's dialectics of civil society. Most importantly, in his understanding of the dialectical laws of civil society, Hegel achieved the dialectical unity of logic and history, and organically integrated the dialectical movement of social and historical reality into the conceptual system of dialectics.

In the Philosophy of Right, Hegel describes in detail the nature of civil society and regards this historical stage as a necessary link in the ethical entity. The historical significance of civil society lies in that it is a limited stage "formed in the modern world". It is constantly developing towards an ethical entity in the internal contradictory movement of mutual dependence, mutual transformation and mutual separation between particularity and universality. Because everyone in civil society is essentially a special existence, all his needs and preferences are satisfied and expanded, and the realization of this particularity is constrained by the universality. "The particular person is essentially related to other such particularities, so each particular person affirms himself and is satisfied through the mediation of others and unconditionally through the mediation of the form of universality. This universal form is another principle of civil society." [9] However, in essence, "when my particularity is still a determinant, that is, when it is still an end for me, I also serve the universality because of this. It is this universality that ultimately controls me." [10] Therefore, in Hegel's view, civil society is ultimately just the phenomenal world of ethical entities, and it will inevitably overcome division in the contradictory movement between particularity and universality. In other words, the dialectic of civil society is the ethical entity constantly realizing its own development.

It is not difficult to see that Hegel's description here reflects the objective abstraction in the economic structure unique to civil society. Everyone pursues his own special purpose in labor and exchange, but instead forms an objective social relationship that is not subject to personal will. Everyone must realize himself in objective social relations through abstract intermediaries such as commodities and money, and eventually become a link under the rule of social relations. This objective social relationship is invisible and colorless, and only occurs in people's practical activities such as production and exchange, but it becomes the universal intermediary for everyone to realize themselves and structures people's entire lives. This is both the "invisible hand" spontaneously formed in Adam Smith's market economy and the real realization of Hegel's absolute spirit. Hegel has seen that although civil society has great historical rationality, the identity structure spontaneously formed in the commodity economy has become an abstract force that dominates individuals. However, Hegel said that this is just a realistic intermediary for the cunning of reason to realize itself. The historical limitations of civil society will be negated in the objective movement of absolute spirit and return to the identity of state and law. Therefore, the dialectical movement of the particularity and universality formed by civil society itself has become the objective intermediary for the absolute spirit to realize itself, and the alienation of absolute spirit in reality is the economic identity of civil society. Abstract logic and real history are organically unified, becoming the objective premise for the establishment of Hegel's dialectics. In this regard, Hegel wrote: Dialectics "is not only about producing the determination of boundaries and opposites, but also about producing and grasping the positive content and results of such determinations. Only in this way can dialectics be development and internal progress. Secondly, this dialectic is not an external activity of subjective thinking, but an inherent soul of the content, which organically grows its branches and fruits." [11] Therefore, Hegel's dialectics is not a product of subjective thinking. The process of modern economic movement itself is objective and abstract, and it unfolds dialectically. The dialectical activity of social history provides a realistic basis for the inherent and inevitable laws of dialectics.

From the perspective of Hegel's research on political economy, Hegel’s dialectical thought, especially the dialectics of social history, benefited from Hegel's thorough observation of the real activities of bourgeois society. Hegel unified the dialectical movement of social history with the logical operation of dialectics, and provided a unique philosophical method to solve the reality of the internal division of modern society with the dialectical movement of concepts. Therefore, even if Hegel's dialectical thought is ultimately an objective idealist structure of the development of absolute spirit, it still presents Hegel's in-depth understanding and thinking of bourgeois real life. This is also an important premise for Marx to finally understand Hegel's dialectics.

Part 2

Marx's understanding of dialectics went through a tortuous process: from regarding dialectics as a synonym for Hegel's speculative philosophy, to remaining silent on dialectics, and finally to clarifying the dialectical connotation of historical materialism. This change in attitude was accompanied by the development of Marx's research on political economy. Traditional research believes that Marx had already realized the criticism of Hegel's dialectics in "Critique of Hegel's Philosophy of Right" and "Economic and Philosophical Manuscripts of 1844". However, this is only a general materialist criticism of Hegel's dialectics. Marx did not deeply understand the reality behind the abstract concept system of Hegel's dialectics, but only introduced his criticism of Hegel's dialectics and political economy from an external ethical perspective. It was in the independent study of political economy and the creation and development of historical materialism that Marx understood the revolutionary power of Hegel's dialectics to self-criticize and self-transcend in the real movement.

In the 1843 Critique of Hegel's Philosophy of Right, Marx first made a general materialist critique of Hegel's dialectical relationship between civil society and the state, arguing that the separation of civil society and political life was generated from the real development of history, and that in real life, civil society determines the state. However, since the young Marx had not yet systematically studied and criticized political economy, he mainly understood the dialectical issues of civil society from the perspective of political ethics rather than economic reality. In his view, civil society (bürgerliche Gesell-schaft) is a German-style society, which is not linked together by individuals mediated by exchange, but is dominated by individuals with special political power. "In civil society, class differences are no longer differences between independent entities such as needs and labor. The only general, superficial and formal difference here is that between town and country. But within society itself, this difference develops into various mobile and unstable groups based on arbitrary principles. Money and education are the main criteria here. However, we do not intend to discuss this issue here, but will leave it for a critique of Hegel's views on civil society. For now, we only point out that the classes in civil society are based neither on needs, that is, natural factors, nor on politics. Here are divided masses, they are hastily formed, their formation itself is arbitrary and unorganized." [12]

Therefore, at this time, Marx believed that civil society was just a loose group of people established on arbitrary and unstable principles, and private property in civil society was the decisive factor that influenced the modern political state. In other words, Marx pointed out that in real life, it is not the state that determines civil society as Hegel said, but civil society that determines the state. However, from the review of the different stages of the development of Hegel's dialectical thought, we have seen that Hegel understands modern civil society from the standpoint of Adam Smith, believing that it is an economic entity established on the basis of isolated individuals as a system of human needs. Moreover, in Hegel's dialectical philosophy system, although the objective order of the "invisible hand" of civil society is only the incarnation of absolute spirit in the social and historical process, on the one hand, this occurs in the objective dialectical movement of the special and universal nature of civil society itself, and on the other hand, the real movement itself is the carrier of the realization of essence or truth, which inherently contains the power of self-criticism and self-transcendence. The state of ethical unity will objectively overcome the internal contradictions of civil society in history. Therefore, although Marx pointed out the objective facts of social history from the standpoint of materialism, his understanding of civil society at this time was still quite one-sided. On the one hand, he could not explain the historical development process of civil society clearly, and on the other hand, he naturally could not understand the objective dialectical relationship between civil society and the state mentioned by Hegel.

Later, in the Economic and Philosophical Manuscripts of 1844, Marx began to systematically study and criticize political economy, revealing the alienated private nature of political economy from a humanistic philosophical perspective, and declared that he would conduct a thorough and necessary criticism of Hegel's dialectics and the entire philosophy. Although Marx's plan at this time was to completely jump out of the various premises of national economics to identify its alienated nature, it is worth noting that after the first round of political economics research, Marx began to realize the rationality of the labor dialectics in Hegel's dialectics. Although this is wrapped in humanistic discourse, it also shows how Marx began to partially understand dialectics in his economic research on social reality.

As we all know, in the Economic and Philosophical Manuscripts of 1844, Marx made a philosophical treatment of labor in economics, regarding it as the realization of human nature. Accordingly, Marx believed that under capitalist private ownership, human labor always exists in an alienated and inhuman form, so it is imperative to eliminate private ownership, eliminate labor alienation, and restore human nature. Under such humanistic thinking, Marx believed that "national economics is not concerned with national interests or people at all, but only with net income, profit, rent... human life itself has no value" [13], "human nature is outside national economics, and inhumanity is within national economics." [14] For Marx, political economics at this time was just a shameless doctrine that despised human values, so at this time Marx still jumped out of the framework of national economics and introduced the dimension of ethical value criticism from outside of real activities. As for the dialectical movement of social and historical reality revealed in Hegel's philosophical system that we have seen before, it was still a blind spot in Marx's political economics research.

It is in this peripheral position that Marx easily interpreted and criticized Hegel's dialectics. In Marx's view, the self-consciousness established in modern labor and its externalization, transcendence and return to itself of affirmation, negation and negation of negation in Hegel's dialectics are essentially abstract and contentless forms. It is precisely because they are separated from the concrete and sensual content of self-objectification that they have universal applicability. "Therefore, in Hegel, the negation of negation does not determine the true essence by negating the false essence, but confirms the false essence or the essence alienated from itself by negating the false essence." [15] Marx believed that Hegel's dialectics was nothing more than the process of the mysterious subject's self-generation, self-setting, self-externalization and return to the divinity of absolute knowledge. It exists in abstract thinking and does not touch the sensual reality. Hegel did not realize that the essence of dialectics is the universal alienation of human nature. "He only found an abstract, logical, and speculative expression for the movement of history. This history is not yet the real history of man as a subject, but only the history of the activity of man's birth, the history of man's formation."[16] In this way, Marx exposed the abstract nature of Hegel's dialectics that was divorced from the essence of man. However, Marx did not completely deny the objective existence of dialectical movement. On the basis of his preliminary understanding and criticism of political economy, Marx boldly pointed out that there was a reasonable factor in Hegel's dialectics - the labor dialectics. The dialectical movement characterized by self-negation does exist in the process of objectification of the realization of human nature.

"The greatness of Hegel's Phenomenology and its final result - dialectics, as the negation of the driving principle and creative principle - lies first in the fact that Hegel regards the self-production of man as a process, objectification as de-objectification, as externalization and the transcendence of this externalization; it can be seen that he grasped the essence of labor and understood the objective man, the real man, as the result of his own labor." [17] For Hegel, labor was the core concept of his social dialectics as early as in the Jena Notebooks. At this time, in the Phenomenology of Spirit that Marx targeted, labor and the relationship with others and the world formed on it are both the basis of the master-slave dialectic and the key to the absolute idea in the self-consciousness stage. Marx believed that the positive content of Hegel's dialectics lies in that he showed the process of man's transcendence from externalization to returning to himself in an alienated way. He saw that through the real active activity of labor, man not only realized his own species essence, but also established a real and active relationship between man and nature and between man and man. Hegel only showed the species essence of man in an alienated form. Undoubtedly, Marx's understanding of Hegel's labor dialectics at this time was clearly based on humanistic thinking, but his analysis of labor showed Marx's preliminary research on real activities. In general, although Marx used the moral banner of humanism to fight against national economics and labor value theory at this time, in his continuous study of political economy, he had unconsciously realized that the objective activities of people in social reality have a dialectical nature.

After the Economic and Philosophical Manuscripts of 1844, Marx did not write about dialectics in a systematic way, but this does not mean that Marx was far away from dialectics. When understanding dialectics from the perspective of general materialism and humanism, Marx was the farthest away from dialectics; and after 1845, Marx gradually approached dialectics in his historical materialist research on social reality.

In The German Ideology, under the guidance of historical, realistic and concrete methodology, Marx showed the general laws of social and historical development and the internal contradictions of bourgeois society from the dialectical relationship between productive forces and mode of production (form of communication), thereby revealing the inevitable dialectical relationship behind empirical reality. At this time, the dialectical laws described by Marx have coincided with the dialectical movement of the particularity and universality of the formation of civil society itself as described by Hegel. For example, Marx described that in a private ownership society, on the one hand, individual producers are increasingly dependent on the social market system, which makes production have the nature of social production, and the system of exchange and free competition has greatly promoted the development of productive forces; on the other hand, although people are connected through exchange, fundamentally, the interests of each person are mutually opposed, and social production makes individual producers abstract individuals. Moreover, the rapidly developing capitalist production has also become a blind, alien force that does not depend on individuals to rule them. In fact, Marx has realized in his historical materialist study of real movement that the real activities of capitalist society themselves show a dialectical nature, and Marx has gradually changed his attitude towards Hegel's dialectics. This change is directly reflected in Marx's criticism of Proudhon's abuse of Hegel's dialectics.

As we all know, in response to Proudhon's metaphysical economic system in order to transform reality, Marx proposed the social historical dialectics of historical materialism from the perspective of the dialectical relationship between productive forces and production relations: studying how capitalism brings about objective revolutionary movement through the contradictory movement of productive forces and production relations, and truly moves towards freedom and equality. It was in the concrete and historical study of social reality that Marx realized the unity of intuition and abstraction in capitalist society, which was also the premise for his understanding of Hegel's dialectics.

Proudhon mechanically applied Hegel's classic syllogism formula, thesis, antithesis, synthesis, and synthesis to his economic theory and social history theory to provide an ideal method to resolve social contradictions. According to the abstract formula of Hegel's dialectics, he regarded use value as the thesis and exchange value as the antithesis, and sought the constituent value of the synthesis from the two as the unity of use value and exchange value to resolve contradictions. As for the dialectical method of historical development, in his view, communism is the initial form of social development and the thesis, private ownership, which is opposite to communism, is the antithesis, and the synthesis is a combination of the good aspects of private ownership and communism, minus the bad aspects, and is based on equality and law.

Marx believed that this crude imitation revealed that Proudhon had no understanding of the process of real economic development. "Once the process of dialectical movement is reduced to such a simple process, that is, to contrast the good with the bad, to raise the question of eliminating the bad, and to use one category as a disinfectant for another, then the categories no longer have spontaneous movement, the ideas 'no longer work', no longer have inner life. Ideas can no longer set themselves up as categories, nor can they decompose themselves into categories. The order of categories becomes a scaffolding. Dialectics is no longer the movement of absolute reason. Dialectics is gone, at most, the purest morality remains." [18] Marx believed that in order to realize human freedom and equality, Proudhon arbitrarily filled the categories into the "thesis, antithesis, synthesis" formula, severed the internal objective connection between the categories of dialectics, and rigidified Hegel's dialectics into a metaphysics of morality. Here, Marx conducted a historical materialist analysis of logical categories and pointed out that Proudhon's mistake was that he did not understand that logical categories were not the product of the game of thinking, but the reflection of objective reality. "He fails to see that economic categories are only abstractions of these real relations, that they are real only when these relations exist. He thus falls into the error of the bourgeois economists, who regard these economic categories as eternal laws, and not as historical laws, laws applicable only to a certain stage of historical development, to a certain stage of development of productive forces."[19] Marx particularly emphasized that abstract categories and economic laws are only objective abstractions of real relations at a certain stage of historical development, and that Hegel's dialectics is also the rational expression of this objective real activity. Separated from the productive forces and production relations under specific social and historical conditions, and from the objective material activities of social reality, these objective categories become only isolated concepts, and dialectics is no longer an expression of absolute rationality. From the side, we can see that Marx has realized in the study of specific historical materialism that the logical categories in political economy are the objective reflection of social reality, and the relationship between categories must be studied specifically under specific social and historical conditions. Moreover, Marx has subtly changed his attitude towards Hegel's dialectics. He no longer believes that dialectics is just a mysterious speculative activity, but a rational expression of dialectical reality. Obviously, Marx's understanding of Hegel's dialectics is directly related to his level of historical materialism research on social reality, which is more consciously expressed in the "1857-1958 Manuscripts of Economics" and "Capital".

Part 3

As we all know, in the postscript to the second edition of Capital, Marx openly admitted that he was a student of Hegel, the great thinker, and pointed out that the rationality of dialectics lies in its objective revelation of the inevitable laws of social movement. Marx even successfully borrowed the conceptual framework of Hegel's dialectics to express his dialectical method in the first volume of Capital. Indeed, in the Economic Manuscripts of 1857-1858 and Capital, Marx showed us how he re-understood dialectics in his independent political economics research, and he successfully reversed Hegel's dialectics. Only at this time did Marx truly understand dialectics as the way truth presents itself, and how it inherently negates and transcends itself in the contradictory movement of social history.

First, after criticizing Proudhon, Marx elaborated in detail in the Economic Manuscripts of 1857-1858 on the scientific cognition of studying social reality, and objectively demonstrated how dialectics, as a way of truth's self-manifestation, is unified with the historical abstraction of social life from many to one. At this point, Marx thoroughly clarified the rationality and limitations of Hegel's dialectics and the premise of dialectical criticism of historical materialism. In the Economic Manuscripts of 1857-1858, when discussing the method of political economy, Marx proposed the epistemological methodology of reproduction from concrete to abstract and from abstract to concrete, and thoroughly explained the secret of Hegel's dialectics and the truth of dialectics itself. Marx believed that economists historically followed the provisions of the evaporation of concrete appearances into abstractions, and then defined important abstract concepts such as division of labor, currency, and value, in order to establish a scientific economic system. The Hegelian scientific method of rising from the abstract to the concrete is actually a method for thinking to grasp the concrete and reproduce it concretely in cognitive activities. In this way, Marx used concise language to point out Hegel’s secret: “The concrete is concrete because it is the synthesis of many determinations and therefore the unity of diversity. Therefore, it appears in thought as a process of synthesis, as a result, and not as a starting point, although it is the starting point of reality and therefore also the starting point of intuition and representation... Hegel fell into an illusion and understood reality as the result of self-synthesis, self-deepening and self-movement of thinking. In fact, the method of rising from the abstract to the concrete is only the way for thinking to grasp the concrete and regard it as a spiritual concrete reproduction. But it is by no means the process of producing the concrete itself.”[20] Thus, Marx sorted out the problem of dialectics from two levels. First, he revealed that dialectics is not a product of subjective idealism. With the help of dialectics, truth can self-manifest and self-transcend in the real activities of social history. Second, the fatal flaw of Hegel’s dialectics is that it confuses concrete reproduction in cognitive activities with concrete production in real activities. The real criticism does not come from Hegel’s conceptual movement, nor from the political or ethical power of the young Marx. Historical materialism not only reproduces the reality of real movement with the help of dialectics, but also objectively reproduces the revolutionary nature contained in real movement. Therefore, we should be clear that the problem of thinking and cognition discussed by Marx in the Economic Manuscripts of 1857-1858 is not simply a problem of cognitive activity, but it completely clears up the myths about dialectics and opens up the scientific space for the dialectical criticism of political economics of historical materialism.

Later, Marx clearly pointed out in the Critique of Political Economy that the simple categories of thinking that grasp reality are concrete historical existences in real life. It is the development process of social history that provides the unity of intuition and abstraction. Therefore, the seemingly most general categories are the result of the operation of a complex social system. This is not only the premise for Marx to call himself a student of Hegel and understand Hegel's dialectics, but also the basis for Marx's critical theory of the dialectical movement of capital. Take labor as an example. It seems to be a simple category that runs through ancient and modern times, but it is a modern abstraction that exists in capitalist society. "The same treatment of all kinds of labour is suitable for a social form in which individuals can easily pass from one kind of labour to another, in which certain kinds of labour are accidental and therefore indifferent to them. Here, labour becomes not only a general means of creating wealth in terms of category but also in reality, and is no longer a determination associated with a particular individual. This is most developed in the most modern form of existence of bourgeois society, the United States. Here, therefore, the abstraction of the category 'labour', 'labour in general', labour in its purest form, the starting point of modern economics, becomes a practical reality. Therefore, this simplest abstraction, which is brought to the fore by modern economics and expresses an ancient relationship applicable to all forms of society, only appears as a practical reality in this abstraction as a category of the most modern society."[21] In other words, the abstract concept of labour can only exist in modern human practice. In the concrete practice of this form of production, labor becomes an undifferentiated, exchangeable general means of creating wealth in reality, and thus it can be elevated to the most universal abstraction by modern economics. In the practical activities of production, circulation, and exchange in bourgeois society, the concepts of commodities, currency, and capital are also like this. From Marx's analysis of the abstract to the concrete in grasping categories, we can see that it is through the study of the various social and historical regulations of abstract concepts that Marx understands the unity of intuition and abstraction that objectively occurs in real activities. Therefore, it was when Marx thoroughly implemented the methodology of historical materialism that he truly understood the rationality of the unity of history and logic in Hegel's dialectics and its social and historical basis.

Fourth, Marx wrote in the postscript to Capital that “the dialectic was mystified in Hegel’s hands, but this in no way prevented him from being the first to fully and consciously describe the general form of the dialectic.”[22] Marx had realized that although Hegel’s dialectics idealistically understood reality as the result of the self-movement of thought, this did not prevent him from presenting the objective economic structure and dialectical laws of civil society through the dialectical logic of concepts. Hegel’s dialectics was mainly based on the identity structure of modern commodity economy, and the so-called absolute spirit’s self-recognition and self-realization process was also mainly a reflection and transcendence of the economic structure of Smith’s so-called “invisible hand”. At this time, Marx not only recognized the objective laws of the “invisible hand” of civil society, but also, by describing the real movement of economic categories such as commodities, money, and capital, he profoundly revealed that the capital relationship is the essence of the abstract rule of bourgeois society. Marx established his dialectics on the content of the internal contradictory movement of capital logic and its historical objective trend of self-negation and self-transcendence, truly transcending Hegel’s dialectics of social history.

In Capital, Marx pointed out that the fundamental contradiction of the capitalist mode of production lies in the dialectical logic of capital itself. On the one hand, the development of capital has promoted large-scale socialized production based on wage labor, which contains the objective trend of absolute development of productive forces and greatly promotes large-scale social production and social wealth. On the other hand, the inherent nature of capital is to increase its value without limit by constantly occupying surplus value. The secret of capital appreciation lies in the fact that capital, as dead labor, occupies the living labor of workers. Capital itself does not create value, and only the latter is the production activity that truly creates value. This capital exploitation relationship hidden under the free and equal exchange relationship allows capital to increase its value without limit. However, it is precisely because of the contradiction between the living labor of bourgeois society and the dead labor of capital, the objective contradiction between capitalist large-scale production and private appropriation, that the capitalist production relations based on the production of surplus value encounter their own limits in socialized large-scale production. “The real limit of capitalist production is capital itself, that is to say: capital and its self-reproduction appear as the starting point and end point of production, as the motive and purpose of production; production is only for capital, and not vice versa. The means of production are only the means of expanding the life process of the producer society. The preservation and increase of the value of capital, based on the deprivation and impoverishment of the broad masses of producers, can only move within certain limits...”[23] At this point, dialectics, as Marx himself said, truly revealed the inevitable objective laws between the changes in social and historical phenomena through the political and economic critique of the logic of capital.

Therefore, we can clearly see from the above that, first of all, the so-called transformation of Hegel's dialectics by Marx into materialism is not simply replacing the idealist basis of dialectics with materialism. The reason why Marx was able to understand the rationality of Hegel's dialectics in the end is that Hegel's and Marx's dialectics both share the reality of civil society and are based on the real movement of capitalist society.

From the origin and development of Hegel's dialectics, how to overcome the divisions in modern society, including the contradiction between individual will and objective laws, and the contradiction between ethics and universal egoism, has always been an important premise and purpose for Hegel to discuss dialectics. Lukacs clearly pointed out in The Young Hegel that "in classical economics, the specific problems of bourgeois society are manifested as specific economic laws, while in Hegel's philosophy they are only abstract (idealistic) reflections of their general principles; but on the other hand, Hegel is the only one who understands the dialectical nature of this movement and thus develops a universal dialectic." [24] If Kant's philosophy is a philosophical expression of the objective reality of this contradiction, then Hegel starts from the dialectical nature of the bourgeois social movement and tries to overcome the contradictions and contradictions therein. Hegel cleverly wrapped his analysis and thinking of social history in the shell of his objective idealism, and ultimately presented the movement, connection and development of social life in the form of concepts. On the one hand, in the face of the dialectical movement of social reality itself, Hegel integrated it into his dialectical philosophical discourse; on the other hand, Hegel expressed his critical thinking about reality through the dialectical movement of concepts, transcending the objective and abstract rule of the invisible hand of civil society and establishing a new ethical community. Therefore, Hegel's dialectics is by no means a mysticism divorced from reality as criticized by early Marx. In Marx's era, political economy became the crown of science both in theoretical research and in social reality, and the influence of religious theology was gradually replaced. Therefore, it is not difficult to understand that Marx started his study of the dialectical movement of capitalism from the independent study of political economy. Marx, based on social practice, explained the social relationship basis and social and historical nature of abstract categories from the development process of social reality. It is precisely because of this that Marx gradually realized that the general materialist criticism of Hegel's dialectics in the early days was correct but superficial, and Hegel's dialectics contained profound thinking about modern society. Therefore, Marx's dialectics is not simply the result of a materialistic transformation of Hegel's dialectics. Marx and Hegel grasped the dialectical movement of bourgeois social reality through different research paths.

However, it is worth noting that from the works of the young Hegel, religious issues have always been related to his understanding of reality. Even in his mature dialectical thought, Hegel still introduced the early religious ethical appeals into his conceptual system, expecting to solve the problems of reality with absolute spirit and rational state, while Marx was completely different. Through the study of historical materialism, Marx not only discovered the true unity of logic and history in social history, but also discovered a new dialectical paradigm with capital logic as the core from the perspective of political economics criticism. Therefore, the way to transcend the dilemma of modernity is not in the ethical kingdom outside of reality, but within the operation of capital, which truly transcends Hegel's ethical kingdom.

Notes:

[1] Plant, “The Economic and Social Holism in Hegel’s Political Philosophy”, New Essays on Hegel’s Philosophy Abroad, Beijing: China Social Sciences Press, 1982, p. 277.

[2] Hegel, Selected Political Writings, translated by Xue Hua, Beijing: China Legal System Publishing House, 2008, p. 17.

[3] Ibid., pp. 116-117.

[4] Ibid., p. 406.

[5] Hegel, Hegel and the Human Spirit, a translation of the Jena Lectures on the Philosophy of Spirit (1805-6), translated by Leo Rauch, Michigan: Wayne State University Press, 1983, P.103. The original text is "Labor is one's making oneself into a thing (isichzumDingema-chen). ”

[6] Same as above, p121, the original text is "the content of his labor goes beyond his need; he labors for the needs of many, and so does everyone... having no concrete labor, his power consists in analyzing, in abstracting, dissecting the concrete world into Its' many abstract aspects. ”

[7] Ibid , p139, the original text is "he becomes through the abstractness of labor—more mechani-cal, duller, spiritless... His dull work constricts him to a single point, and his work becomes more consummate the more one- sided it becomes.”

[8] Ibid., p140, the original text is "the highest abstraction of labor pervades that many more individual modes and thereby takes on a never-widening scope. This inequality between wealth and poverty, this need and necessity, lead to the utmost dismemberment of the will, to inner indig- nation and hatred.”

[9] Hegel, The Philosophy of Right, translated by Fan Yang and Zhang Qita, Beijing: The Commercial Press, 1979, p. 197.

[10] Ibid., p. 196.

[11] Ibid., p. 38.

[12] Karl Marx, Critique of Hegel’s Philosophy of Law, Volume 3 of The Collected Works of Marx and Engels, Beijing: People’s Publishing House, 2002, p. 100.

[13] Karl Marx, Selected Translations of the Paris Notebooks, translated by Wang Fumin, Reference Materials for Marxist Studies, No. 34 (1980), p. 39.

[14] Ibid., p. 40.

[15] Karl Marx, Critique of Hegel’s Philosophy of Law, Volume 3 of The Collected Works of Marx and Engels, Beijing: People’s Publishing House, 2002, p. 329.

[16] Ibid., p. 316.

[17] Ibid., pp. 319-320.

[18] Karl Marx, The Poverty of Philosophy (Excerpt), Selected Works of Marx and Engels, Volume 1, Beijing: People’s Publishing House, 1995, p. 145.

[19] Karl Marx, “Marx to Pavel Annenkov (December 28, 1846)”, Selected Works of Marx and Engels, Volume 4, Beijing: People’s Publishing House, 1995, pp. 536-537. For the French version, see Karl Marx, Karl Marx Friedrich Engels Gesamtausgabe Mai 1846 bis Dezember 1848, MEGA 2, III/2, Berlin: Dietz Verlag, 1979, S.75.

[20] Karl Marx, Economic Manuscripts of 1857-1858, Volume 30 of The Collected Works of Marx and Engels, Beijing: People’s Publishing House, 1995, p. 42.

[21] Ibid., pp. 45-46. For the German version, see Karl Marx, Ökonomische Manuskripte 1857/58, MEGA2, II/1, Berlin: Akademie Verlag, 2006, S.39.

[22] Karl Marx, Capital, Volume 1, Volume 44 of the Collected Works of Marx and Engels, People’s Publishing House, 2004, p. 22.

[23] Karl Marx, Capital, Volume 3, The Collected Works of Marx and Engels, Volume 46, People’s Publishing House, 2003, pp. 278-279.

[24] Lukacs, The Young Hegel, translated by Wang Jiuxing, Commercial Press, 1963, pp. 24-25.

The article is from "Chronicles of Social Critical Theory (Volume 8)"