**Western Marxism and Its Development**

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The concept of Western Marxism needs to be traced back to the 1920s. After the First World War , the Russian Revolution was victorious, but the revolutions in Central and Western Europe failed. In summarizing the reasons for the failure of the revolution and exploring the revolutionary path, Lukacs , Korsch and others pointed out that the reason for the failure of the revolution was the loss of class consciousness of the proletariat , which was caused by the economic determinism of the Second International. At the same time, this also proved that the Russian path was not feasible in Central and Western Europe. By 1923, Lukacs and Korsch had written books respectively, interpreting Marxism from a humanistic perspective and emphasizing the continuity of Marx's thought with Hegel's thought.

**Its Concepts and Its Strong Anti-totalitarian Tone**

Currently there is a Marxist trend in modern Western countries that opposes totalitarianism .

This anti-totalitarianism thought trend had first emerged in the 1920s and was initially a "left" trend within the Communist International.

After being criticized by the Communist International, it developed outside the communist party. This trend did not call itself or be called "Western Marxism" at the beginning.

In 1955, Merleau-Ponty emphasized the opposition between Marxism and totalitarianism in his book The Adventures of the Dialectic, and traced the tradition of the former back to History and Class Consciousness published by G. Lukacs in 1923. Since then, people have widely used this concept to refer to this trend of thought.

In the New Left movement in the West in the late 1960s, especially in the French " May Storm " in 1968 , this trend of thought was regarded by radical young students and workers as an ideological weapon against the hierarchical alienation system of developed capitalist society. Western Marxism scientifically combines Marxism with some schools of modern philosophy, and puts forward views that are opposite to totalitarianism in the analysis of modern society, the outlook for socialism, and the strategy and tactics of revolution.

**Two Different Trends of Western Marxism**

Within Western Marxist thought, there are two different tendencies: First trend: Interpreting and developing Marxism in accordance with the spirit of Hegelianism , Freudianism , and existentialism , which is called "Hegelian Marxism", "Freudian Marxism" and "Existentialist Marxism".

Second trend: interpreting and developing Marxism in accordance with the spirit of neopositivism and structuralism , which is called "neopositivist Marxism" and "structuralist Marxism".

Freudian Marxism, represented by German philosophers Reich , H. Marcuse , and E. Fromm , pointed out that sexual impulse is one of the material needs of human beings, just like hunger, thirst, and labor.

Based on this, they advocated the development of a "psychoanalysis guided by dialectics and humanism" as a branch of dialectical materialism , using it to explain the psychological process of human oppression and incorporate socialist revolution into the channel of repression and liberation of sexual instinct.

Existentialist Marxism, represented by French philosophers J.-P. Sartre and Merleau-Ponty, points out that the main essence of man lies in his self-creative practice. For this reason, personal practice should become the basic starting point of the dialectical method, and personal autonomy and free will should become the source of the future class struggle that Marxism aspires to. It advocates using existentialism to understand the subjective life experience of individuals within the framework of Marxism's understanding of the objective aspects of history from the perspective of the results of human activities.

Neo -positivist Marxism, represented by Italian philosophers Della Volpe and Colletti , politically opposes the policy of replacing science with vague humanism and Hegelian rhetoric, and has an incorrect understanding of modern capitalism; theoretically, it categorically denies any continuity between Marxism and Hegel, and advocates defining the dialectics of science as the materialist logic of modern experimental science marked by the "concrete-abstract-concrete cycle."

"Structuralist Marxism" represented by French philosopher L. Althusser interprets Marxism in a dehumanized way, removing all anti-scientific ideological categories attached to it. To this end, L. Althusser divides the development of Marx's thought into an early non-scientific ideological period and a later scientific period, interpretes Marxism as anti-empiricism, anti-historicism, and theoretically anti-humanism.

**Western Marxism advocates rediscovering and re-creating Marxism**

Western Marxism advocateds that Marxism gradually became incompatible with the historical movement and rejected the achievements of non-Marxism: **“as a result, Marxism was often in danger of not understanding the experience of the changes and development of the working class and other classes. In order to prevent and overcome this problem, Western Marxism opposes dogmatism and advocates that each generation of Marxists should rediscover and recreate Marxism”.**

In the process of rediscovering and recreating Marxism, different tendencies and schools of Western Marxism generally emphasizes one aspect of Marxism and criticized and denied another aspect; they all opposed Marx to Engels and Lenin and refuted some of Engels and Lenin's views according to their own ideas.

Different tendencies and schools of Marxism unanimously emphasized borrowing the achievements of modern bourgoise philosophy. They either systematically borrowed concepts, terms and categories from certain schools of modern bourgoise philosophy, or uses certain philosophical ideas to supplement and innovate Marxism, thus forming a scientific and organic combination of Marxism and modern bourgoise philosophical schools.

Based on the analysis and study of new situations and new phenomena emerging in developed capitalist societes, different tendencies and schools of Marxism have profoundly exposed the chronic diseases and problems of the capitalist system, explored the path of revolution in Western countires, and criticized the shortcomings and defects of the Soviet socialism model.

In 1923, Lukacs and Korsch wrote books respectively, interpreting Marxism as a kind of humanism, and emphasizing the continuity of Marx's thought with Hegel's thought. This was fundamentally different from the scientific interpretation of the Second International and the Leninist interpretation of the Third International , and was fiercely criticized. Lukacs was forced to make self-criticism and announced that he would withdraw his views; but Korsch refused to make self-criticism, and instead published an article in 1930 to counter-criticize the Third International. Here, Korsch first proposed the concept of Western Marxism and emphasized its opposition to orthodox Marxism, especially Leninism. But after the 1970s, the concept of Western Marxism has been widely spread around the world. Of course, various different understandings have emerged in the process of such spread. In summary, there are four main different understanding of the concept of Western Marxism:

1.

As purely a regional concept: Western Marxism is Marxism in the West, which includes both the independent Marxist theories of Western countries and the theories of the Communist Parties of Western countries.

2.

Under the premise of regional concepts, Western Marxism emphasizes the specific ideological connotation and highlights its opposition to Leninism : Western Marxism is a philosophical theoretical system that challenges the Leninist political system.

3.

Under the premise of regional concept, the reserach themes transformation is emphasized: Western Marxism shifts its reserach themes from political and economic issues to cultural and ideological issues, and it is argued that Western Marxism includes both humanistic Marxism and scientific Marxism.

4.

Non-regional ideological concept: Any new Marxist theory that transcends the scientific socialism of the Second International, the Leninism of the Third International, and the Trotskyism of the Fourth International , whether in the East or the West, can be called Western Marxism. So why is there so much different understanding of the concept of Western Marxism? The reason lies in Marxism itself.

**Later development of Western Marxism**

Western Marxism has gone through three periods in its 90-year development process. In different eras, many schools of thought with different tendencies and emphases have emerged in response to different issues.

1. The 1920s and 1930s were the period of the formation of Western Marxism. In the process of searching for the reasons for the failure of the proletarian revolution and exploring the revolutionary path, Lukacs and others formed Hegelian Marxism. At that time, Western Marxism was only an unorthodox Marxist view within the international communist movement and had not yet become an independent social thought.

2**. The 1930s to the late 1960s was the heyday of Western Marxism.**

During this period, the Frankfurt School , existentialist Marxism, Freudian Marxism, structuralist Marxism , and neo-positivist Marxism emerged . They focused on discovering the "philosopher Marx" in the "Economic and Philosophical Manuscripts of 1844". And they analyzed the psychological roots of the rise of fascism; reflecting on the spirit of enlightenment, instrumental rationality, science and technology, and popular culture, and committed to criticizing developed industrial civilization; building the philosophical foundation of critical theory, and using various Western social thoughts to explain, supplement, and reconstruct Marxism.

At this time, Western Marxism gradually evolved from the unorthodox Marxist viewpoints within the international communist movement to a social trend of thought that combined unorthodox Marxism with non-Marxism and had gained an international influence.

3. After the 1970s, Western Marxism entered a period of transition.

At this time, Western Marxism developed towards diversification, and the Frankfurt School, existentialist Marxism, Freudian Marxism, and structuralist Marxism split, and analytical Marxism, ecological Marxism, and postmodern Marxism emerged. They focused on the social effects of science and technology , ecological crises , and other issues. In the process of research, they turned from non-orthodox Marxism to non-Marxism.

Since the early 1990s, the research topics of Western Marxism have shifted from philosophy and cultural issues to political, economic and other practical issues; the research focus has shifted from criticizing capitalism to studying market socialism; anti-totalitarian Eastern European orthodox Marxism, neo-Marxism and Western Marxism have merged.

In short, Western Marxism has different focuses and different ideological viewpoints, and they have not formed a unified ideological system. Not only is there a lack of real communication between thinkers of different schools, but even thinkers of the same school have inner debates. Although Western Marxism has different ideological tendencies and different viewpoints, they also have some common characteristics, such as: non-orthodoxy, modernization; openness, diversity; transcendence, academicization; variability, one-sidedness; regionality, Westernization.

However, these are only the main aspects of the basic characteristics of Western Marxism, and cannot include all of them.

Western Marxism is the product of a group of intellectuals who, under the historical and cultural background of the 20th century, took root in the changes of the times and reinterpreted Marxism and analyzed social reality from the perspective of Western philosophy.

Their interpretation of Marxism and Leninism made by Western Marxism is different from both the Second International and the Third International ; their attitude towards capitalism and socialism is different from both non-Marxist thinkers and traditional Marxism. Therefore, Western Marxism has both regional limitations - it originated and developed in the West; and also has specific ideological connotations - it is different from orthodox Marxism and neo-Marxism; as new Marxists, they advocate the openness and diversity of Marxism, and advocate the use of various social thoughts to explain, supplement and rebuild Marxism in order to realize the modernization of Marxism. They criticize both industrial civilization and the real society. On the whole, Western Marxism is one of the Western social thoughts with international influence in the 20th century, and it is also a kind of "unorthodox" Marxism.

**Main Figures and Trends of Western Marxism**

* Early Western Marxism: [Lukacs](https://baike.baidu.com/item/%E5%8D%A2%E5%8D%A1%E5%A5%87/2104037?fromModule=lemma_inlink) , [Korsch](https://baike.baidu.com/item/%E6%9F%AF%E5%B0%94%E6%96%BD/10527160?fromModule=lemma_inlink) , [Gramsci](https://baike.baidu.com/item/%E8%91%9B%E5%85%B0%E8%A5%BF/1508324?fromModule=lemma_inlink) , [Bloch](https://baike.baidu.com/item/%E5%B8%83%E6%B4%9B%E8%B5%AB/2109806?fromModule=lemma_inlink)
* [Frankfurt School](https://baike.baidu.com/item/%E6%B3%95%E5%85%B0%E5%85%8B%E7%A6%8F%E5%AD%A6%E6%B4%BE/828637?fromModule=lemma_inlink) : [Horkheimer](https://baike.baidu.com/item/%E9%9C%8D%E5%85%8B%E6%B5%B7%E9%BB%98/8760935?fromModule=lemma_inlink) , [Adorno](https://baike.baidu.com/item/%E9%98%BF%E5%A4%9A%E8%AF%BA/1545027?fromModule=lemma_inlink) , [Benjamin](https://baike.baidu.com/item/%E6%9C%AC%E9%9B%85%E6%98%8E/1544866?fromModule=lemma_inlink) , [Marcuse](https://baike.baidu.com/item/%E9%A9%AC%E5%B0%94%E5%BA%93%E5%A1%9E/1544933?fromModule=lemma_inlink) , [Habermas](https://baike.baidu.com/item/%E5%93%88%E8%B4%9D%E9%A9%AC%E6%96%AF/2710?fromModule=lemma_inlink) , Schmitt
* Freudian Marxism: Reich, [Marcuse](https://baike.baidu.com/item/%E9%A9%AC%E5%B0%94%E5%BA%93%E5%A1%9E/1544933?fromModule=lemma_inlink) , [Fromm](https://baike.baidu.com/item/%E5%BC%97%E7%BD%97%E5%A7%86/7756147?fromModule=lemma_inlink)
* [Neo-positivist Marxism](https://baike.baidu.com/item/%E6%96%B0%E5%AE%9E%E8%AF%81%E4%B8%BB%E4%B9%89%E9%A9%AC%E5%85%8B%E6%80%9D%E4%B8%BB%E4%B9%89/1594556?fromModule=lemma_inlink) : Colletti, Della Volpe
* [Existentialist Marxism](https://baike.baidu.com/item/%E5%AD%98%E5%9C%A8%E4%B8%BB%E4%B9%89%E7%9A%84%E9%A9%AC%E5%85%8B%E6%80%9D%E4%B8%BB%E4%B9%89/7276958?fromModule=lemma_inlink) : [Lefebvre](https://baike.baidu.com/item/%E5%88%97%E6%96%90%E4%BC%8F%E5%B0%94/9132774?fromModule=lemma_inlink) , [Merleau-Ponty](https://baike.baidu.com/item/%E6%A2%85%E6%B4%9B-%E5%BA%9E%E8%92%82/935456?fromModule=lemma_inlink) , [Sartre](https://baike.baidu.com/item/%E8%90%A8%E7%89%B9/13003103?fromModule=lemma_inlink)
* [Structuralist Marxism](https://baike.baidu.com/item/%E7%BB%93%E6%9E%84%E4%B8%BB%E4%B9%89%E9%A9%AC%E5%85%8B%E6%80%9D%E4%B8%BB%E4%B9%89/10888367?fromModule=lemma_inlink) : [Althusser](https://baike.baidu.com/item/%E9%98%BF%E5%B0%94%E9%83%BD%E5%A1%9E/2249142?fromModule=lemma_inlink)
* [Analytical Marxism](https://baike.baidu.com/item/%E5%88%86%E6%9E%90%E9%A9%AC%E5%85%8B%E6%80%9D%E4%B8%BB%E4%B9%89/54574458?fromModule=lemma_inlink) : Cohen, Romer, J. Elster
* [Ecological Marxism](https://baike.baidu.com/item/%E7%94%9F%E6%80%81%E9%A9%AC%E5%85%8B%E6%80%9D%E4%B8%BB%E4%B9%89/16245577?fromModule=lemma_inlink) : Gorz, Ben Agger, Lewis, Pepper
* [Post-Marxism](https://baike.baidu.com/item/%E5%90%8E%E9%A9%AC%E5%85%8B%E6%80%9D%E4%B8%BB%E4%B9%89/873187?fromModule=lemma_inlink) : Elst Laclau, Gentor Mouffroy, [Jacques Derrida](https://baike.baidu.com/item/%E9%9B%85%E5%85%8B%C2%B7%E5%BE%B7%E9%87%8C%E8%BE%BE/2630076?fromModule=lemma_inlink)
* Postmodern Marxism: [Fredric](https://baike.baidu.com/item/%E5%BC%97%E9%9B%B7%E5%BE%B7%E9%87%8C%E5%85%8B%C2%B7%E8%A9%B9%E5%A7%86%E9%80%8A/15110529?fromModule=lemma_inlink) Jameson