Difference Between Marxism and Radicalism: Radicalism in Contemporary Western Society:

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Some critics believe that radicalism no longer has the ambition to demand radical social change. Other critics believe that the possibility of global change leading to crises has decreased, and radical politics is mainly focused on the micro level. Based on the above analysis, the author's evaluation of radical thought is as follows.

First, the radical thought trend is reflective and progressive.

Politically speaking, the radical trend is progressive, and it has an intersecting relationship with the Frankfurt School, postmodernism, and structuralism, with overlaps and intersections.

Radical thinkers oppose universal values ​​and universalism, and emphasize special, exceptional, and local values. Therefore, radicalism is often combined with partial, regional and local interests in politics, questioning and reinterpreting the mainstream values ​​of the West and things that are advocated as beyond doubt.

Radical thinkers see the willful hegemony of Western culture behind the concepts of science, democracy, rationality, and freedom, and the pervasive penetration and influence of Western political, cultural, and military forces on non-Western regions. They stand in opposition to contemporary Western mainstream culture, but they are not anti-civilization or anti-human. They try to reveal the intrinsic value of multiculturalism and the possibility of the existence of other civilizations that are different from the mainstream Western civilization. Because contemporary Western mainstream culture or mainstream values ​​are not impeccable, the radical trend of thought has not only emerged in the core areas of ideology and thought in major Western countries, but has also received positive responses and achieved new developments around the world.

Second, there are differences and close connections between radicalism as a trend of thought and radicalism as a movement. Domestic theoretical circles sometimes confuse radicalism as a trend of thought with radicalism as a movement, but in fact the two are different. Radical movements are temporary, while radical trends of thought are more permanent. Radical trends of thought are theories associated with social movements, and under certain circumstances may lead to large-scale radical movements. "In the late 1960s and early 1970s, under the stubborn intransigence of conservatives in power and restrictions on large-scale mass movements, some ideological tendencies directly transferred the power and ideals of radicalism in the 1960s to the emerging rights movement - the broader feminist, anti-sexism and gay 'identity' movements." We affirm the reasonable elements of radical trends of thought, but we must oppose and prevent radical movements.

Third, the radical trend of thought is different from Marxist doctrine. The radical trend of thought is critical of modern society, but this criticism is different from Marxist doctrine. The core proposition of Marxist doctrine is proletarian revolution to overthrow the old social system. Its form of struggle is very clear, that is, resorting to violent revolution. Although the radical trend of thought also hopes to complete the criticism, reform or change of society, it does not rely on violent revolution, but on student movements on university campuses. In the eyes of radicals, the working class has become conservative and revolution is no longer possible. When the overall social revolution or the working class revolution is no longer possible, it hopes that young college students or new social forces will lead various social movements through student movements or campus movements, change social reality, and promote the progress of human civilization. Therefore, the radical trend of thought has a clear judgment on the change of the main force of social change: the main force of social change is no longer the proletariat that Marx said back then. Radicalism is not a revolutionary theory. It does not fundamentally deny the rationality of capitalist modern civilization. It just believes that modern civilization has certain limitations and needs to be constantly criticized, revised and improved. It does not want to replace capitalism with socialism. Radical thought belongs to social reformism, although some radicals advocate revolution.

Fourth, radicalism often reflects the voices of the weak, ethnic minorities or marginal groups in society, which needs to arouse our vigilance. Radicalism is linked to social extremes, radical behavior, class poverty, social violence or atrocities, and they often influence and interact with each other. It is obvious that poverty and atrocities are not caused by the upper class, but often by the lower class or marginal areas. Generally speaking, except for some special cases, the upper class will not go to extremes, but often the lower class will go to extremes and rebel from the bottom up. Therefore, radicalism reflects the voices and hopes of the grassroots, and expresses the power or demands of the marginal areas of society. As a trend of thought, radicalism wants to express not personal thoughts and demands, but the reflection of the social power at the bottom. Therefore, it is a challenge from the margins to the center, a rebellion from the bottom to the upper class, or a struggle of the weak against the strong. Therefore, in radicalism, some keywords - struggle, resistance, rebellion, violence, etc. - always appear frequently. It can be said that, unlike liberalism or any other kind of isms, radicalism is the social thought that is most closely integrated with various social movements and social struggles. It is also the social thought that is closest to social reality and resonates most directly with the needs and demands of the general public in all aspects of politics, economy and culture. Ordinary people, marginal social groups, and various excluded and oppressed social forces are most likely to find their own ideological sources and spiritual mentors in the radical thought. Therefore, it often forms a very broad alliance with anti-capitalism, anti-modern society, anti-centralization, anti-government violence, and anti-bureaucratic system, and has a very wide influence. As long as there is oppression, exploitation, and unfairness in society, we can see the figures of radicals and hear the voices of radicals. On the contrary, we can also regard radicalism as a reverse indicator of the degree of modern civilization of a country or a region. Wherever radicalism has a large market, it means that the social problems in this place are relatively serious. From this perspective, the more radicalism develops, the better it is, because radicalism can easily come together with anti-government and anti-social forces and become their neighbors or friends, thereby undermining the unity of the country, destroying the peace of people's lives, and even coming together with various extreme forces. In this sense, we need to be vigilant against radicalism.

Finally, radicalism often represents the oppressed classes, groups or social forces in society, and they need to resort to radicalism to resist and fight. This shows their negative and pessimistic attitude towards the future. From this perspective, radicalism does not really want to overthrow the modern social system or deny Western mainstream values. To a greater extent, it wants to seek space for its own survival and development. However, this space for survival and development is limited to the local and local levels. They do not seek to universalize such local things, but seek the desire of "I am the master of my own territory". From this perspective, radicalism will have a certain impact on the current world order in a large sense - the existing Western unipolar world represented by the United States - but it cannot fundamentally subvert or change the overall pattern of the world today. Because looking at the world and the whole world, the power of radicalism is weak. Therefore, there are only two ways out for radicalism in the future. One is that it may be slowly bought, disintegrated, absorbed and divided by Western mainstream values. In other words, in the long run, this revolutionary, destructive and confrontational tendency and trend of Western mainstream values ​​is unsustainable. This is a basic judgment we make on radicalism. Second, radicalism may undergo a self-transformation, which is to reduce its fighting edge, gradually become moderate, reconcile with various local social forces, and move from destruction to construction. Of course, radicalism cannot be eliminated, because there are still significant differences and ugly social phenomena such as inequality, unfreedom, and unfairness in the world today, such as racial segregation, racial discrimination, and differential treatment. As long as the ugly phenomena continue, as long as local famines, natural disasters, and man-made disasters, especially human tragedies caused by institutional injustice and social injustice, continue to occur, then radicalism will always find its followers, will always have its own space, and will always continue to make voices against this unfair world.

In short, radicalism is not an independent trend of thought. It is more of a manifestation of radical thinkers’ value orientation, attitude towards society and propositions towards different civilizations. In fact, most of these thinkers are beneficiaries of modern civilization. Although they are rebellious against tradition, verbally reject modern society and criticize modern civilization, they have not fundamentally denied the validity of the current civilization. They only express the emotions and attitudes of certain social classes, social groups or interest groups. Of course, such emotions and attitudes cannot be ignored, but should be taken seriously.

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