

# An Analysis of the Critical Essence of Marx's Dialectics

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**Abstract:** Through continuous inquiry and reflection on the roots of religion, Marx was able to understand the limits of political emancipation when the relationship between political emancipation and religion was correctly revealed. People were not only restricted by the metaphysics of ideas but in reality, they were also restricted by capital. Hegel used concepts while Feuerbach used sensibility as ways to rescue them, yet they were all still trapped in metaphysics. Marx proposed a way on the basis of sublating the two, not only in terms of metaphysics but also the capital by thoroughly criticizing reality. It is through the path of dialectics that Marx was able to introduce a higher-level communist society in the internal criticism and denial of capitalist society by profoundly revealing the theoretical dilemma and internal contradictions of the fusion of metaphysics and capital in the pursuit and realization of human freedom and liberation.

**Keywords:** Dialectics; Critical essence; Liberating interest

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## 1. Introduction

After its “sacred image” was exposed due to religious criticism, the focus of controversy gradually shifted from theology and secular, or theocratic and royal power, to the contest between the political states and the civil society. However, bourgeois political philosophers only regarded it as an object of scrutiny, inspection, and speech, rather than an object of transformation. They were only concerned in explaining the world and what they carried out was only incomplete political emancipation. Therefore, the emancipation purport of the critical essence of dialectics involving the struggle between the two dimensions of “the other shore” and “this shore” was placed on the agenda by Marx as the urgent task of philosophy in serving history.

## 2. Background of the Critical Essence of Marx's Dialectics

In the age of Marx's life, capitalism was in a period of rising freedom. It increased productivity and created huge wealth. However, in contrast to this, people were not only restricted by the metaphysics of ideas but also by reality, in the enslavement of capitals. This double restriction is deeply reflected in the limits of political emancipation. It is in the process of revealing and breaking this limit that the critical essence of Marx's dialectics in liberation is revealed. He believed that dialectics do not start from fixed forms but they are affirmed in the profound disclosure of things. Dialectics do not worship anything but by nature, they are critical and revolutionary. It was under the guidance of the critical and revolutionary dialectic of the theoretical dilemma and internal contradiction between the impression of the capitalist society-metaphysics

and the basic point of reality-capital that Marx was able to introduce a higher-level communist society in order to realize human freedom in the unremitting struggle for liberation.

While affirming the significance of great progress in political emancipation, Marx pointed out that political emancipation from religion is not a complete emancipation but a formal emancipation which has its own limits. Political emancipation formed a double alienation of man and civil society as well as man and the country when criticizing feudalism and exposing the alienation of the sacred image. In the human and civil society, due to the existence of private ownerships and interests, some people occupy the means of production in a certain way which separates the laborer from the object of labor. This inevitably leads to the workers having to sell themselves and their production in order to survive. However, for capital, the accumulated labor and all the materials of production do not provide the necessary foundation and support for the production of living labor. On the contrary, the existence of living labor is precisely the condition and supplement for the capital to realize its proliferation. In this way, capital has gained the dual performance of the rule of labor and its proliferation. Hence, capitalists and workers, the bourgeoisie and the proletariat, and even the people are in conflict with each other. The same applies to people and countries. The country's liberation from religion does not mean that people have been liberated from religion but it is just a transition of slavery from "belief in God" to "belief."

Marx affirmed the achievements of the young Hegelian religious criticism where they analyzed the harm of religion, revealed the humanistic roots of religion, and broke religious superstitions in restoring human dignity in which they used different theories and methods to understand the subject and the meaning of human beings. They provided a full and charming explanation with a profound theoretical basis for the criticism of the religious world and the real society. They also conducted in-depth research and exposition of subjectivity from different perspectives including the social, natural, and spiritual. Eventually, they concluded that the root and purpose of religion are "human." At the same time, Marx also pointed out that the people described by the young Hegelians are only "abstract people," hence it is not enough to simply attribute the roots of religion in this case but it is necessary to conduct research on real people. By considering the suffering of the other side of the world, it is not enough to restore the suffering of the real world itself. Therefore, dialectics criticize the essence of liberation in the struggle of the two dimensions of "the other shore" and "this shore." This urgent task of philosophy in serving history to establish the truth of the world on "this shore" and expose the self-alienation of non-sacred images was put on the agenda by Marx.

### **3. Object of Criticism in Regard to the Critical Essence of Marx's Dialectics**

Through the analysis of the relationship between political emancipation and religion, Marx realized that political emancipation had an incomplete but formal emancipation, and finally attributed the problem to such an absolute order which was, "must be overthrown and make people be insulted, enslaved, abandoned, and despised things <sup>[1]</sup>." This relationship is not only embodied as a metaphysical ideological limitation but in reality, it is embodied as a capital enslavement.

Metaphysical thought has a long history in the Western philosophy. It played an important role in the development of human thinking and the improvement of the philosophical system. However, why did it become a limitation of thought in the age of Marx's life? Capital had a great civilization and social productivity effect. The promotion of human rights as well as the free and comprehensive development of people played important roles but why did it become an enslavement in the age of Marx's life? Why does the dual restriction of capital and metaphysics makes political emancipation a form of emancipation, so that the two blend? To become the object of criticism in Marx's dialectics, the crux of all this lies in the characteristics of capital and metaphysics themselves. First of all, metaphysics has the characteristics of abstraction and identity. Its premise is based on the dichotomy of the perceptual world and the super-

perceptual world. Such a division will always encounter controversial problems and dilemma of oppositions relating to one and many, common and special, abstract thinking and reality, as well as the gap between the subject and the object. Secondly, the sole purpose of capital is to proliferate but in the pursuit of proliferation, capital “transforms into a spiritual monster.” It has gained the right to control labor and its products whereas laborers are subjected to it in terms of enslavement, loss of ownership of the products, and even loss of oneself.

All in all, political emancipation is conceptually restricted by metaphysical thoughts which confuses “actual emancipation” with “formal emancipation.” The belief that as long as one gives up religious beliefs, one can gain emancipation of oneself is not the case. Political emancipation separates the political state from the civil society. As a result, people live “double lives.” Not only do they have to endure the restrictions of the ideological and legal system, they are now also restricted by the “secular god” which is money. In fact, thought and reality are mingled with each other. Metaphysics is capitalized so that the identity of metaphysical thought can be realized through the proliferation of capital to achieve the domination in real life. In the same way, capital has metaphysics, so that the proliferation of capital is based on metaphysics. Identity thus makes individuals now governed by abstraction. In simpler terms, the combination of the two makes thought and reality as well as the subject and object always in an inverted relationship, hence this is the reason that Marx’s dialectics vigorously criticize capital and metaphysical thoughts.

#### **4. True Meaning of the Critical Essence of Marx’s Dialectics**

Being aware of the limits of political emancipation in the face of the fusion of capital and metaphysical thoughts, Hegel tried to use “concept” whereas Feuerbach used “sensibility” to eliminate this dual limitation of thought and reality, but they were still confined in the thinking of metaphysics in the end. However, it is on the basis of “concept” and “sensibility” that Marx was able to see the essence of this double restriction and introduced the “critical” essence of dialectics.

The first step in the critique of Marx’s dialectics is to clarify the premise, that is, the bourgeois society created by capital in which classical economists have tried to argue that it is not an eternal existence and capital itself is also an abstract existence. The second step of criticism is to delineate boundaries whereby Marx sublates Hegel’s dialectics and Feuerbach’s philosophy of materialism, and then points out the difference between the two. This provided a new path for the realization of human freedom and liberation on the basis of a new foothold. Marx once pointed out the difference between his dialectics and Hegel’s conceptual dialectics, “In Hegel’s view, the thinking process is the creator of real things, and real things are only the external manifestations of the thinking process. On the contrary, my view is that conceptual things are nothing more than material things that have moved into and reformed in people’s minds <sup>[2]</sup>.” The greatness of Marx is that he did not only see the abstraction of Hegel’s conceptual dialectics which formed the self-denial movement of the concept but more profoundly, on the basis of materialism, Marx rescued all the elements of criticism hidden in the most conservative philosophes by inverting it so as to criticize the essence of dialectics. “Discover the reality behind this abstract form – human society or socialized human beings.” It is on the basis of this realistic foothold that Marx did not continue in the path of “interpreting the world” alike previous political philosophers. On the contrary, he embarked on the path of “transforming the world” through the “real society” which is the bourgeois society. It required realism, internal criticism, and denial. As Marx pointed out, “The advantage of the new trend of thought is precisely that we do not want to dogmatically anticipate the future but only want to discover the new world by criticizing the old world <sup>[3]</sup>.” Clarifying the difference between the bourgeois society and communism society, their relations, revealing and discovering the self-contradictions and malpractices of bourgeois society, as well as “creating new” in “criticizing the old” are the true intentions of the critical essence of

Marx's dialectics.

### **5. Liberating Interest of the Critical Essence of Marx's Dialectics**

With the continuous development over time, capitalism has also developed from the initial "state of freedom" and the "state of monopoly" to the current "state of globalization." Although capitalism has many characteristics that are different from the era in which Marx lived, the essence of capitalism has not changed. It still involves the expansion and domination of capital. During the era of Marx's life, the domination of capital mainly involved the economic field which symbolized an "individual's abstract domination." However, in the modern-day, the domination of capital does not only involves the economic field but it also regards politics, cultures, and technologies which symbolizes a type of "global abstraction." It is on this substantive issue that points out that Marxism is not outdated but Marx's dialectics still possess magnificent vigor and vitality in the contemporary era. In reality, they are not used dogmatically but require theoretical thinking. They penetrate into capitalism in a more flexible, open, specific, and in-depth manner, not only superficially but also explain and analyze the kernel. From this, a conclusion can be drawn where, as capitalism continues to develop, the extent of its rule would continue to expand and the reality of performance continues to diversify without a change in the essence of capitalism. This is because of the "birthplace" and criticism of the critical essence of Marx's dialectics. Therefore, Marxist dialectics have not been obsolete with the changes of time and capitalist forms. On the contrary, the critical essence of Marxist dialectics has gained a broader scope with the continuous development of capitalism. It is still a "methodological time bomb" in revealing and criticizing capitalism as well as striving for the realization of human freedom and liberation.

### **Disclosure statement**

The author declares no conflict of interest.

### **References**

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