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On Marcuse's Study of the Negative Erotic Subject -- the Suppressed Subject in the Positive Culture

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Abstract

In the real society where qualitative culture prevails, people's psychological level is gradually losing their demand for freedom and liberation after being controlled. It seems to be a Utopia to expect some top-down political or economic liberation. In this regard, Marcuse shifted the starting point of liberation from the state and society to the individual. He wanted to launch a bottom-up sexual liberation movement to find the hope of individual liberation from human psychological instinct. The core of the theory of Eros liberation is the liberation of the subject of Eros, that is, the liberation of human beings through the liberation of eros as human instinct, and then the liberation of the whole society from bottom to top. Marcuse reconstructed his subject philosophy in the theory of sexual liberation. He constructed a radical theory of sexual subject based on the sexual instinct in Freud's instinct theory. Marcuse's construction of the erotic subject is neither a romantic Utopian movement nor an irrational Nuss spirit against the western traditional logocentrism. The core attribute of the erotic subject is a negative spirit, which is the inheritance of Hegel's negative thought to a certain extent. Even the whole structure of the erotic subject can be seen as Marcuse's negation of technical rationality and the recovery of critical rationality in order to resist the positive culture of the dominant reality.

Thus, we can connect the break between Hegel's rationalism and Freud's irrationalism in Marcuse's ideological career. In short, his theory of erotic subject has both theoretical and practical significance. It not only provides rich theoretical resources for human liberation theory, but also provides a new research perspective for the liberation of alienated and suppressed people in modern society.

Key words: marcuse;eros;subject;negativity

1. Introduction

In 1933, Marcuse joined the Frankfurt Institute of social studies and was committed to systematically criticizing fascism and monopoly capitalism. Throughout the 1930s, his main work was to criticize the ideology of bourgeois categories such as authority, rationality and happiness, and to try to build his own radical social theoretical model. In 1937, Marcuse published the long article "positive characteristics of culture", which pointed out the abstraction and falseness of capitalist social culture. The so-called positive culture is "to respond to the needs of isolated individuals with universal human nature, to respond to the suffering of the body with the beauty of the soul, to respond to external constraints with internal freedom, and to respond to cruel egoism with the responsibility in the field of virtue". This culture divides reality and ideal into two worlds, and hopes to replace all kinds of injustices in real life with the freedom and beauty available in the ideal world, so as to suppress people's dissatisfaction with the real world and achieve a positive totalitarian society. Under this cultural background, the subject suffered from division and alienation, discipline and control, and finally became a "one-way person" in a totalitarian society. Therefore, in order to save the subject, we must deeply analyze the ideological source and specific performance of positive culture.

2. Repressed subject in positive culture

Hegel's negative thought, negation is self negation, which is the negation of negation. As the most important thought that Marcuse inherited from Hegel, negativity is reflected in two aspects: one is the critical rationality that criticizes the technical rationality, and the other is the Eros itself that negates the positive cultural reality. Therefore, the erotic subject actually

follows the idea of whether it is qualitative or not, which serves to criticize rationality, rather than the so-called irrational Nuss tradition.

2.1 Philosophical repression: a critique of idealism and positivism

Marcuse analyzed the ideological source of positive culture from the philosophical level, namely idealism and positivism. In his unpublished paper idealism and positivism, he analyzed the basic characteristics and corresponding social functions of these two main philosophical thinking.

Marcuse's positivism is a series of philosophical thinking traditions with similar propositions, including empiricism, positivism, pragmatism and analytical philosophy. Since Saint Simon, positivism has emphasized: "the validity of facts and experience for cognition; the importance of physical scientific models for cognition; and the direction of knowledge progress is empirical. Their common characteristics are that they only study the facts within the scope of experience, state the relationship between things in a neutral and objective way in the way of natural science to form knowledge, and do not make value judgments, and do not ask metaphysical things such as the so-called essential causes. Specifically, first, they limit the research object to the facts within the scope of experience, that is, positivism only studies the existing reality, and does not consider those normative models constructed by concepts that transcend the reality. Second, they maintain value neutrality and do not make value judgments, that is, they are obedient to reality and acquiesce to it. All the legitimacy of the real world; Third, it does not ask why, but what it is, that is, it pursues the practicality of knowledge, emphasizes the authority of knowledge itself, and requires people's behavior to obey knowledge. No wonder Husserl criticized: "empirical science says nothing to us about the fundamental issue of whether life is meaningful or not. Science that sees only the facts creates people who see only the facts. But in fact, Marcuse's view of positivism is not arbitrary. He not only traces back to the early empiricism, but also takes into account the latest logical positivism, and sees not only the critical nature of positivism, but also its conservative nature. In his view, early positivism, in order to combat a lot of empty metaphysics and given potential in medieval theology, required attention to empirical materials and observations. For example, during the French Enlightenment, the encyclopedia school used materialist sensory theory to fight against Catholic theology, so as to oppose the autocratic rule of feudalism and become the promoter of social progress. However, "this positivism is not dominated by physics at all. It is essentially a kind of social philosophy. It only requires to discuss the metaphysical issues of freedom and rationality from the living experience level rather than the

dead metaphysical level, but in the final analysis, it is still discussing these topics, and it still makes value judgments on these categories from the perspective of what should be and based on rationality. However, positivism, which was more and more influenced by natural science, gradually gave up the transcendence and became addicted to the empirical world itself. Natural science does not doubt the legitimacy of the natural world itself. Instead, it takes this as the premise. Therefore, when positivism uses the precise principles and methods of natural science to study social problems, it will only get a scientific model based on the current reality, not the legitimacy of the established society itself. In addition, the positivism of natural science has lost the ideal of changing the real world, and even attacked this ideal as Utopia, becoming a kind of cultural totalitarianism.

As for idealism, Marcuse quoted Hegel's description in the introduction to *Philosophy*: "consciousness itself sets the world and, through its own intermediary activities, gives and modifies the provisions of the same world in whole or in part". We can simply think that consciousness, as a subject, is something independent of reality and has some control and regulation on the real world. This stratification of matter and consciousness reflects that idealist subjects always look at the reality through the consciousness level. The former is an idealized and rational universal rule, while the latter is an inert material world formed by stacking and combining materials according to this universal rule. Therefore, Marcuse believes that the common feature of idealist subjects is to assume that there are differences between essence and phenomenon. Just as the beautiful things only have the concept of beauty and can not reach the level of concept, there is always a gap between the reality level and the consciousness level, which needs to be improved. Marcuse believes that this inconsistency between consciousness and reality (essence and phenomenon) contains all the radicalism and conservatism of idealism.

Marcuse believes that "reality" does not mean everything that actually exists (all that actually exists should be called phenomena), but only everything that exists in accordance with the principle of rationality in form. "Reality" is not all reasonable, but only reasonable is reality. The gap between essence and phenomenon makes idealism reflect on the relationship between reality and potential. While the subject insists that the potential (essence) of human beings and other things is not completely exhausted, and the reality (phenomenon) still needs to be improved and realized. Therefore, the subject must stipulate them in a supreme form - rationality, in order to realize their potential to the greatest extent. In this way, the legitimacy of the existing reality has been denied, and only what has been judged rationally can have real

legitimacy. For the development of subjectivity, it is necessary to examine the rationality of the actual organization form by maximizing the potential of the subject. This rational negation of reality makes idealism present a strong critical spirit: on the one hand, idealism is dissatisfied with the existing reality, showing its pursuit of the transcendental conceptual world; On the other hand, the purpose of idealism is always to change the real world, hoping to guide reality with concepts, rather than indulging in concepts and falling into fantasy. Therefore, the real basic requirement of "idealism" is to transform and improve the material world according to the truth generated by "idea" knowledge. Only when we truly grasp the dialectical relationship between reality and concept can we truly be idealism. However, some idealists only stay at the epistemological level, only focus on the construction of the conceptual world, and forget the historical situation of the real world, that is, they may indulge in some kind of beautiful fantasy or the pursuit of essence, and consider the difficulties of reality as compromisable, and further consider some kind of metaphysical dogmatism as eternal. The religion that used "afterlife" or "the other world" to comfort people suffering in reality is a typical example in history. Hegel believed that this was an incomplete false idealism, and the real idealism believed that consciousness as a subject was not only a subject in the sense of epistemology, but a subject in the practical sense that gave consideration to both cognition and action. That is to say, the subject requires to transform the world according to his own will, and only through this transformation can the world obtain its own form and content. We must point out that the disaster caused by incomplete false idealism in history does not affect the internal critical spirit and dialectical attitude of idealism, and the former is only a negative link in the development of idealism.

Positivism and idealism were originally radical ways of thinking that required criticizing and transforming society, but both of them gradually lost their criticality in the development of history, or directly or indirectly became obedient and defender of the existing reality. Positive culture is the product of the cooperation between positivism and idealism: positivism rules the reality and makes people no longer think about anything beyond it; Idealism dominates people's spirit and makes people indulge in fantasy and concepts while ignoring reality. The bourgeoisie has created a positive culture by doing both. Therefore, to dispel this positive culture, we need to restore the critical spirit of positivism and idealism, and combine the two. Marcuse found some essential connections between the two. "All real philosophy should include both idealism and positivism. The former introduces the dimension of transcendence for the latter, while the latter avoids all kinds of dogmatism for the former. Therefore, real

philosophy requires understanding empirical materials from a transcendental perspective, and constantly understanding and interpreting these empirical materials according to historical conditions and scientific requirements. In view of the popularity of positivism, Marcuse especially emphasizes the transcendence of this philosophy, and believes that this is the unique essence of philosophy. The core feature of this transcendence is Hegel's negative thought, which denies not only the established reality, but also the established abstract concepts, so as to deny all existing things.

2.2 Realistic repression: freedom moves towards authority

In the past, when facing the conflict between the external world and the internal world, individuals generally chose to preserve the internal world and give up the external world, which objectively affirmed the legitimacy of the external world, and thus regarded it as a positive whole. But this dichotomy of compromise will lead to the invasion of the external world to the internal world, and the internal world will eventually collapse and be integrated into the external world. The internal world thus lost its independence and became the same positive world as the external world. The individual also lost freedom and dignity here and became a replicable atom in the public, and the totalitarian world was formed. On this point, the evolution of the freedom category in the history of German authoritarianism described in his "on authority" published in 1936 gives a powerful proof.

Freedom is the basis for the purity and firmness of Christian faith, but the existence of God determines that people cannot have complete freedom, which is the betrayal of God as a creature. In Luther's view, this conflict is understandable. He said: "first, Christians are completely free masters of all people, and are not subject to anyone's jurisdiction. Second, Christians are completely obedient servants of all people, and are subject to everyone's jurisdiction. He stressed that the freedom of Christians is an internal freedom, that is, a freedom that is not bound by secular forces, adheres to the pure faith in God in the heart and maintains absolute will power. Under this premise, it is completely understandable that individuals are dominated by external secular forces, because external non freedom can not damage the internal freedom of a Christian. Luther emphasizes the transcendence of individual rational autonomy over the secular world, but this transcendence is not a positive overcoming of the secular world, but a disregard and escape based on contempt for the secular world, that is, no matter how oppressed and controlled by external authority, a person still retains absolute freedom in his heart. Therefore, no matter how Luther subjectively belittled the rationality of the external world, the internal freedom still objectively acknowledged the

external non freedom.

Luther's dualism of internal and external freedom was inherited by Kant and became the dichotomy of public rationality and private rationality. Luther's belittlement of the external world has been constantly corrected, which has become Kant's maintenance of social order to a certain extent. Kant believes that when a person is a free rational thinker, what he has is a universal public rationality, that is, every free rational person will think like this, which is necessary for enlightenment; However, when people are in a specific social order, the situation becomes "you can argue for as much as you like, whatever you like, but you should be obedient". What he has is only a kind of private rationality, that is, under the premise of obeying this specific social requirement, he uses a limited rationality, which is to prevent people from falling into endless debate and making some public affairs collapse. Kant's reconciliation of freedom and chaos is to unify the contradiction between individual freedom and national cause. In Marcuse's view, Kant's "knowledge world" is endowed with the appearance of public and freedom, but it is separated from public and free action and real social practice. That is to say, Kant's freedom only stays in the application of public rationality in theoretical knowledge, but when it comes to the authority faced in any specific social practice, he retreats. This so-called reconciliation highlights the secularization of Luther's view of freedom, but the secular authority is endowed by Kant with a rationality that Luther does not have.

Since the 1930s, exploring the origin of Nazism has become a hot issue in western academic circles. Positivism believes that Nazism originated from the German philosophical tradition, especially Hegel's state theory. They believe that Hegel advocated the individual's attachment to the state, and that the individual's reality and freedom can be realized only when he is a member of the state, which is a typical totalitarian thought of collective devouring the individual. It should be said that although Hegel's state theory is very controversial, it is not so superficial. His view has at least two considerations: on the one hand, although Rousseau's social contract theory denies the sanctity of the state and returns power to the people, it ignores the social historicity of the people, and regards it as an atomic contract between individuals, and does not recognize the congenital provisions of the state on individuals. In short, the state established by the social contract theory is too abstract, and the people have the risk of going to individualism; On the other hand, in Hegel's time, the lessons of the French Revolution from freedom to autocracy and the fragmented social reality of Germany made him demand the existence of a unified state power. However, Hegel also stressed:

"when talking about the idea of the state, there should not be only a special state or a special institution in front of us. On the contrary, we must examine the idea, the God of reality, for ourselves. That is to say, Hegel's call for the state is a universal state that conforms to the ethical spirit and should exist, rather than an uncritical affirmation of the current reality of the state. In any case, Hegel canceled the internal freedom and moved freedom to the external public sphere. He asked people to play the role of rationality and realized that individual freedom must be based on obedience to the national government, but he obviously overestimated people's rational ability.

Hegel emphasized the individual's obedience to the state, but this was all under certain historical conditions. However, Ganz, Starr and others in the period of German reactionary restoration abandoned this historical condition and made the individual's obedience to the state, the government and God absolute, requiring the individual to absolutely obey the authority, thus reversing Hegel's rational spirit into irrational spirit. Later Sorrell and Pareto developed this irrational authoritarianism from the other extreme, namely elitism. Sorrell supported the violent revolution, but he opposed the dictatorship of the proletariat because he was afraid that the proletariat would become a new violent group, and demanded that the social elite rather than the mob should be the main body of the revolution, thus showing an extremely free anarchism. Pareto depicts a picture of elite success: everyone can become an elite useful to society through efforts. This so-called "successful freedom" and "rising space" have in fact recognized the external authority and the established value system of society. Since then, the so-called freedom has completely become the toy of authority.

Since Luther began to emphasize the dichotomy of internal and external freedom, it was doomed to the fate of authoritarianism from the very beginning. To understand this, we must first think about how freedom is divided, that is, how to become an internal freedom? Hegel provided the answer to this question. The control of the state over the individual and the dependence of the individual on the state have their own historical reasons, but when this point is eternal, Hegel's answer appears to be both correct and wrong. What is correct is that Hegel used a negative dialectical perspective to demand the abandonment of internal freedom, on the one hand, because non freedom is a necessary step to obtain freedom, just as alienation and the sublation of alienation follow the same path, on the other hand, because the so-called internal freedom is an expedient from the beginning, and individuals cannot compete with the whole country, and internal freedom cannot maintain its independence in the non freedom of society. The wrong thing is that Hegel's negative thought is too profound and can only be

misunderstood as a kind of irrationalism. During World War II, the fascist countries' control of individuals and persecution of subjects reached the extreme, and freedom was impossible to talk about. As a new totalitarian society, the developed industrial society after the war abandoned this violent way and chose a more covert way to rule individuals with the rationalization of technology and social organization of modern society, forming the so-called positive culture, allowing people to recognize the legitimacy of reality and become defenders of reality. In addition, Marcuse and Popper had a debate on the theme of "revolution or improvement?" in 1972. Popper believed that we should not give up the achievements of civilization and emphasize the recognition of objective reality, while Marcuse demanded a thorough revolution and let reality move towards concept. The debate between the two did not draw any substantive conclusion, but the failure of the internal and external dichotomy of freedom explained the failure of reformism to a certain extent. When we do not doubt the legitimacy of the external reality, do not shake the external social reality and destroy the existing ruling order as a whole, then the internal freedom will yield to the external authority, and liberalism will move towards authoritarianism.

3. Conclusion

Marcuse's theory of the liberation of Eros is a theory of history, reality and future. Based on the basic situation of the development of social productive forces, it transformed Freud's static civilization theory and provided the necessary material basis for liberation. It examines the specific situation of the real society, and has insight into the harm of the positive society to human development and freedom, especially the obliteration of the negative spirit of human beings, which provides the necessary motivation for liberation. It focuses on the development of the future society, outlines a blueprint for human liberation with an optimistic spirit, and provides the necessary goal for liberation.

Marcuse's construction of the erotic subject is neither a romantic Utopian movement nor an irrational Nuss spirit against the western traditional logocentrism. The core attribute of the erotic subject is a negative spirit, which is the inheritance of Hegel's negative thought to a certain extent. Even the whole structure of the erotic subject can be seen as Marcuse's negation of technical rationality and the recovery of critical rationality in order to resist the positive culture of the dominant reality. Thus, we can connect the break between Hegel's rationalism and Freud's spirit in Marcuse's ideological career.

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