

How to understand “communism” isn’t the “destination of human development”?

——analysis of the two paragraphs of translations in *Economic and Philosophical manuscripts* of 1844 by Marx

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Marx, the founder of Marxism, completed his transformation from radical democratism to communism and from the world outlook of idealism to that of materialism and started establishing basic principles of Marxism and criticizing politics and economy of Bourgeoisie totally in the 1840s. He wrote down systematically for the first time his understanding about “communism” in the 2nd section

However, disputes arose among scholars around the world about “communism” elaborated in the *manuscripts* after it was found and published in 1932. One of the most obvious wrong viewpoints was to put so-called “young Marx” against Marxism

at Marx's maturing period and to describe Marx when he was young as a pure humanitarian and humanist, and with which to object all the theory and practices of communism. In China, with more than 20 years of the reform and opening up, similar arguments and tendency appear sometimes because of the abuse of the thoughts of bourgeois liberalization. But viewed in another way, even among people believing in Marxism, there are also different understandings about the translations of *manuscripts*.

Accordingly, I would make some preliminary analyses about two paragraphs of translations in the opening part and ending parts of this section.

This section of the *manuscripts* is developed just following the last section "the essence of private property reflected in the national economics". Marx pointed out that communism is a positive way to both annulled the private property. *zunächst das allgemeine Privateigentum.* ⁴⁰。

In which "positive Ausdruck" just means "positive way". There is no problem in translations. Why to say "communism" is "a positive way" is obviously a contrast to "a negative way of annulled the private property". That is, communism is not just to "criticize" and "eliminate" the "private property" with the form of "capital" and "labour" in the time of capitalism, but also to replace it with other new things. Thus, from the very beginning Marx drew a boundary line between "communism" and those which only simply "deny" private property and destructively "" with the form of "smashing the old world" and therefore confirm the great sense in "communism" as a kind of "movement" in pushing human development and advancement. I believe that "communism" here includes all kinds of "communist" movements and theories Marx has known and come into contact with till that time. therefore, it not only includes "coarse and crude Marxism" ,but also "political or country abolished Marxism". The criticism made by Marx on all kinds of non-scientific "socialism" and "communism" was in the big scope and frame of "communism". However, from the very beginning, Marx positively differentiated it with those movements and theories

⁴⁰ KARL MARX FRIEDRICH ENGLS WERKE , BAND 40. DIETZ VERLAG BELIN, 1985. P534.

denying private property. That is, the difference between the movement “communism”, whether it is “scientific” or “utopian” and those movements and theories before is that it would not only destroy the old world, but also establish a new world. And from the fight between the movement of “communism” and those movements and theories of “anti-communism”, Marx firmly stood at the side of “communism”. It can be seen clearly that Marx completed his transformation from doubting “communism” to being a real “communist”.

Question 2: what does communism use to “扬弃” and “取代” the private property?

Replacing it with “general private property“ or with common private property“

The question lies in the translation for the word “*allgemeine*” because in Chinese the word has many translations which however can mean different things. But since Marx believes that scientific communism is to eliminate private system with certain ways or methods. Therefore it would be practically meaningful to translate the word “*allgemeine*” as “common”, not “universal”.

Question 3: how to translate the word “*zunächst*”? Does it mean “at the beginning” or “firstly”?

I believe communism requires replacing private property with common private property only at the time of coarse and crude communism, not at the beginning of the communist movement. So the word should be translated as firstly not at the beginning.

The translation of the sentence in Russian is

“И, наконец, *коммунизм* есть *положительное* выражение упразднения частной собственности; на первых порах он выступает как *всеобщая* частная собственность.”

in which the word is translated as “на первых порах” or “at the beginning” in English. So we can say that the Chinese translation is influenced by the Russian translation.

In the English edition, the translation is :

“Finally, *communism* is the *positive* expression of annulled private property - at

first as *universal* private property. ”

The word “*universal*” has the meaning of “general” and the word “at first” can both mean “at the beginning” or “firstly”. So compared with the Russian edition, it offers no good reference.

The key problem here also lies in the translation of the word “generality”. Because the communism here includes not just the coarse and crude one, but all kinds of communism, it is not appropriate to translate the sentence as the above without some limit.

In the German edition, the sentence is:

“Indem er dies Verhältnis in seiner *Allgemeinheit* faßt, ist er”

In which the word “Indem” means “when” or “in ... way”. And “dies Verhältnis” means “the relationship” or “at the situation”, but what is the relationship and what kind of situation is it? We can not know directly. Also I think that the word “*Allgemeinheit*” should be translated as “common”, not “general”.

And there may be another kind of translation if the word “dies Verhältnis” refers not “private property”, but the matter of “turning private property into common private property”. The matter thus becomes the common quality of all communism.

In the Russian edition, the sentence is :

“Беря отношение частной собственности в его *всеобщности*, коммунизм”(P114)

In which “частная собственность” means “private property” and “*всеобщности*” also means “common”. Therefore, the Russian translation is a little better than the Chinese one.

In the English edition, the sentence is

“By embracing this relation as a *whole*, communism is”

In which it translates the German word “in seiner *Allgemeinheit*” as “as a *whole*”. In fact, the right translation should not be “as a *whole*”, but “generality” or “common quality”.

In the Japanese edition, the sentence is

“そればこの私的所有のあり方をその普遍性においてとらえるのであるから、それば”

Since I am not good at Japanese, so I guess it may have the similar translation as the Chinese one.

3. How to understand “communism is not the destination of human development”

From the 3rd paragraph of the section of *the manuscripts*, Marx made a study of the content from 5 aspects, they are:

1) The initial form of communism is a preliminary positive expression of annulled private property. i.e. the coarse and crude communism.

2) Politically communism is still influence by the human alienation

3) The completed communism as a positive expression of annulled private property which is a human alienation.

4) Materials and bases can be surely found for communism among the movement of private property and how to find them, etc.

5) creative activities and full development of human kind on the basis of communism

In the German edition, the sentence is

“Der *Kommunismus* ist die notwendige Gestalt und energische Prinzip der nächsten Zukunft, aber der Kommunismus ist nicht als solcher das Ziel der menschlichen Entwicklung - die Gestalt der menschlichen Gesellschaft.” (P547)

From which we can say that:

Firstly, there is only one sentence here, not two. But in the Chinese edition period “。 ” is used after the word “principle”. Thus the sentence is difficult to understand now.

Secondly, the word “Gestalt” should be translated as “state or pattern”, not “form”. As a term of Marxism, The former is used to describe things from the comparative static aspects, whereas the latter is connected with content and both of

them can be mutually transformed to each other. However, in Chinese form is just form which doesn't include anything connected with the content. Therefore, In Chinese "state or pattern" and "form" can not be mixed up.

Thirdly, the word "als" is translated as "as" or "be so". Though it do make the sentence more simple, I think the meaning should be expressed in more detailed way. And especially the word "solcher" immediately following "als" means "this", but when combined with the word "als", it will function as an adverbial, and not an attribute. The word "nicht" is not to deny "ist", but the word "als solcher". So the latter part of the paragraph "aber der Kommunismus ist nicht als solcher" should be translated as

but communism would not become ... as this kind of pattern and principles

Fourthly, also in the sentence, "Ziel" could mean both "objective" or "destination". And its attribute isn't "der menschlichen Entwicklung" but "der menschlichen Entwicklung - die Gestalt der menschlichen Gesellschaft" in which "-" means "and", not just a pause or transition.

From the viewpoint of scientific socialism or communism, we can see that it actually includes the thoughts of "theory of continual revolution" and "theory of the development stages of revolutionary". And from Marx and Engels' other books, we can decide that communism as the necessary form and dynamic principle of the immediate future by Marx has two kinds of implications.

Firstly, the objective of immediate future of communism is to thoroughly eliminate private system and replace it with positive citizens' common property. Not only the coarse and crude communism but also the completed communism will have to do so. The difference is that the former has to destroy all the fruits of civilization and culture of human being which are not equally distributed among all the people whereas the latter is a kind of self-development and self-improvement for the human being itself and a kind of conscious "creative" activity of people and could keep all the wealth before.

I believe that the "communism" mentioned here by Marx refers the "socialist revolutionary movements" which aims to establish socialist economic system with the

public ownership of the means of production as its main characteristics by overthrowing capitalist economic system. According to Marx, it is called “the period of transition” between “capitalism” and “communism”. In the academic circle of China, the period is referred to as the “the period of big transition”. Lenin called the second half of the period “the socialist society” and Chairman Mao said that “the socialist society” would take a very long time in which struggles between bourgeoisie and proletariat would exist all the time. Chairman Mao also divided the socialist society to 2 stages: the underdeveloped period and the developed one. And also there is “the period of small transition” which means the period after the success of new democratic revolution in China and till the completion of socialist transformation of public ownership of the means of production, etc.

I believe that all these have just actually enriched and proved and developed further the thought of “communism” of the immediate future as the necessary form and dynamic principles.

Secondly, those socialist and communist movements are not the “the destination of human development”, not “the ultimate objective” of human society. The communists’ objective is to improve the socialist productivity and develop socialist education, science and democracy and advance towards the higher objective of human development. That is, the lowest creed and the highest creed. Therefore, the “communist society” as our “highest creed” is not the communism of the immediate future mentioned in the *manuscripts*.

From the above analyses we can see that, those who attempted to deny the basis of the socialist revolution and construction by picking words from *the manuscripts* are in vain.

In the Russian edition, the sentence is:

“Коммунизм есть необходимая форма и энергический принцип ближайшего будщго, но как таковой коммунизм не есть цель человеческого развимия, форма человеческого общесмва.”

In which the word “таковой” also means “this”. But the Russian translation is better because it uses a certain express to make the meaning more clear and accurate, thus it

is much closer its German meaning.

In the English edition, the sentence is

“*Communism* is the necessary form and the dynamic principle of the immediate future, but communism as such is not the goal of human development, the form of human society.”(p306)

In which “as such is not” works as the attributive of “communism” and “-” is translated as a pause “ , ”. These do not conform to its German meaning either. But I believe that the end note in the book is right which read:

“This statement is interpreted differently by researchers. Many of them maintain that Marx here meant crude equalitarian communism, such as that propounded by Babeuf and followers. While recognizing the historic role of that communism, he thought it impossible to ignore its weak points. It seems more justifiable, however, to interpret this passage proceeding from the peculiarity of terms used in the manuscript (see Note 85). Marx here used the term “communism” to mean not the higher phase of classless society (which he at the time denoted as “socialism” or “communism equaling humanism”) but movement (in various forms, including primitive forms of equalitarian communism at the early stage) directed at its achievement, a revolutionary transformation process of transition to it. Marx emphasized that this process should not be considered as an end in itself, but that it is a necessary, though a transitional, stage in attaining the future social system, which will be characterized by new features distinct from those proper to this stage.” (p603)

That is, what Marx referred in the manuscripts is a kind of “movement” or “process” or the “period of transition”. Thus the “communism” here is not the destination of “human development” and “human society”. And in the note of the English edition, the word “end” just expresses the German meaning “Ziel” accurately which completely conform to my understanding.

In the Japanese edition, the sentence is

“共産主義は次の未来の必然的形態と力動的原理であるが、しかし共産主

義はそれ自体が人間の発展の目標——人間の社会の形態——たのではない。”

I think that the Japanese translation's advantages lie at:

Firstly, it doesn't mistranslate the one sentence into two which does in the Chinese translation.

Secondly, the word “Gestalt” is translated as “state or pattern” not “form”.

Its disadvantages are:

Firstly, “共産主義はそれ自体が” just means the “communism itself” which is not as accurate as the English edition.

Secondly, “-” is treated as a note, which is not right.

In a word, there exist some words in the Japanese translation which is not well translated.

I will appreciate very much any correction on my analysis.

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