

MARXISM AND THE THOUGHT OF HUMAN LIBERATION AND DEVELOPMENT

Kien Thi Pham,

University of Economics Ho Chi Minh City Ho Chi Minh City, Vietnam; ORCID: 0000-0001-
8024-8679

Email: kienpt@ueh.edu.vn

Abstract:

Born and raised in a time when the movement for human and society liberation was growing and urging to have a scientific theory to lead the way, and certain material and thought arguments were also ripe for such theory at the same time, with the wisdom of a scientist and the political view of a revolutionary, K. Marx became the one to initiate and develop a scientific and revolutionary doctrine of human, liberation of human and society, and comprehensive human development. This doctrine of K. Marx created not only a revolutionary turning point in the concept of man and human nature, the relationship between human, nature and society, the position and role of human in the development of human history and the cause of human liberation and comprehensive human development, but also the long-lived vitality of Marxism in modern age.

Keywords: *Marxism, human liberation*

Before K. Marx, in Hegel's philosophy, "supreme notions" and "abstract regulations" were "transformed directly into human beings", and thus, the "supreme existence of human" was lowered to only the manifestation and reflection of "notion" and "supreme notion". Unlike Hegel, K. Marx believed that abstract speculation, "notion" and "supreme notion" are only products and manifestations of certain conditions of production and communication of human. According to K. Marx, all productive forces, capitalism and "social forms of communication" are the practical foundation of what considered by philosophers as "entity" and "human nature" [7, 55]ur, and the perception of human nature and human's social life must be created in the practical and specific life. Humans do not exist "in an isolated and imaginable state", but "in the process of development - a practical process that can be seen with experience under certain conditions" [7,

38]. Considering that the first prerequisite of all human existence is that human must be able to live before "*making history*", K. Marx said that the first historical behavior of human is "*producing the material life itself*". With this in mind, when criticizing Hegel's speculative view of human and human existence, K. Marx regarded human as a realistic biological-social entity and asserted that humans "*are not abstract creatures hiding somewhere outside the world*", but "*are the human world, the state, the society*" [8, 569]

By setting out a new way for perceiving the real social life of human, K. Marx also thoroughly criticized L. Feuerbach's view on human. And, in criticizing L. Feuerbach for "*dissolving the religious world into its mundane foundation*" and "*dissolving the nature of religion into human nature*", K. Marx asserted: "*The essence of man is no abstraction inherent in each single individual. In reality, it is the ensemble of the social relations*" [9, 11].

This is a very famous argument which represents Marxist philosophy of human nature. It has become the theoretical and scientific foundation for Marxism and other sciences to research and deal with human issues. Many well-known thinkers have acknowledged that in the history of human scientific perception, it is difficult to find a truth that at first glance is seemingly simple and clear, but in essence is as profound and fundamental as K. Marx's argument of human nature.

With the argument that "*Nature is man's inorganic body*", "*with which he must remain in continuous interchange if he is not to die*" and that man's physical and spiritual life is linked to nature, K. Marx affirmed: "*Man is a part of nature*" [14, 135]. However, according to K. Marx, life activity of man is "*conscious*", and thus, through labor, man transformed his nature and created his own social nature. Human not only lives in the natural environment but also in the social environment, thus nature and society are closely connected in each person; the biological factors in every human being do not exist separately from social factors, but they blend together and exist inside social factors; thus, nature is transferred into social nature and transformed in there. And, only in society can man express his natural and social nature; therefore, nature and society are united in human nature, making human existentially whole with both natural and social sides and forming a close relationship of Human - Nature - Society.

By affirming that "*human nature is the ensemble of the social relations*", K. Marx not only interpreted the relationship between human, nature and society, but also analyzed the role of human as the subject in the creation of history.

Considering the role of human in the development of human history, K. Marx came to the notion that the general tendency of the development of human history is regulated by the development of productive forces - "*a result of human realistic energy*". This practical activity, in turn, is regulated by the conditions for human survival, by "*a form of society that existed before those productive forces*". Every generation of man always receives productive forces created by the previous generation and uses them as a means of new production. Thanks to the transfer of productive forces, humans have "*formed a connection in history, and created the human history.*" As production forces and therefore both production relations and social relations of human grow more, "*that history becomes more and more human history*". With this concept, K. Marx concluded: "*Society... is the product of human interaction*" and "*man's social history is always just the history of man's individual development*" [13, 657-658]

This conclusion proves that in K. Marx's thought, humans are the subject of not only production activities, but also historical activities. Men make their own history. Through practical activities, men have imprinted the creativity of their hands and minds into the natural world, improved social life and thereby developed and perfected themselves. Men are both subject and object of historical development; men make their own history and thus, history is of human, by human and for human.

Affirming the social nature of human and the role of being the subject to make history, K. Marx also came to the notion that the level of social liberation is always expressed in the freedom of society; personal liberation creates the motivation for social liberation and, in turn, social liberation becomes an essential conditions for personal liberation; men liberate themselves and thereby liberate society and promote social progress. Humans are liberated and free to develop comprehensively - this is one of the basic characteristics of a new social regime, the socialist society where the proletariat - the modern class of workers and its political parties have the mission to build.

With such a way of posing question, K. Marx considered human liberation and comprehensive human development, "*development of the abundance of human nature*" as "*the purpose itself*" of social development and progress [12, 168]. Human liberation,

comprehensive human development along with the development of production forces and "*social production*" for the prosperity of society to create a better life for each member of the community and for the whole community is the "*only direction*" to not only "*increase social production*" , but also to "*produce fully developed people*". Moreover, it is also "one of the strongest measures" to transform the existing society and put the whole human community into the orbit of socialism[11, 88].

K. Marx's view on the direction of social development where human liberation and comprehensive human development are the targets, the means and the motivation has been proven in practice by human history. In the modern age, no matter which direction society develops in, all of its orientations must be towards building a harmonious society where economic growth is associated with the implementation of social progress and justice, towards humanitarian values and significance of liberating and developing human, thus creating the foundation for sustainable development - development not only for today's generation, but also for the survival and development opportunities of generations to come.

Thus, it can be affirmed that the Marxist doctrine of human and human liberation, together with K. Marx's own theory of the noble mission of philosophy - not only to "*explain the world*" but also to "*renovate the world*" by revolution and materialist notions of history with theory of socioeconomic formation as the core – brought along a great revolution in human's history of philosophical thought, and brought Marxist philosophy to the culmination of a radically revolutionary and truly scientific doctrine. For that reason, V.I. Lenin affirmed: K. Marx's doctrine is the "*universal*", "*accurate*", "*complete and steadfast*" doctrine which has provided us with "*a complete worldview*" to perceive and renovate the world; and that "*the philosophy of Marxism is materialism*" and the historical materialism of Marxism is "*the greatest achievement of scientific thoughts*". Today, in the time of transition to socialism, Marxist doctrine is the most revolutionary and scientific, and in that way, it provides progressive humanity and especially the working class worldwide with a great cognitive tool for renovating and building a new society - the socialist regime.

Creatively applying and developing Marxist doctrine of human, human liberation and comprehensive human development, right from the first days of building the new social regime in our country, the Communist Party of Vietnam has repeatedly affirmed that "*humans are the most precious capital, taking care of human happiness is the highest goal to*

strive for." Taking care of the happiness of everyone and every household has been put on top and considered a focus by the Party. Entering the period of national socialist-oriented renovation with the aim of human development for a prosper, free and happy life for everyone and every household, in the "*Credo to build the country in the transition to socialism*", the Party affirmed: "*The great direction of social policies is: promoting the human factor on the basis of ensuring justice and equality in terms of rights and obligations of citizens; well combining economic growth and social progress; balancing between material and mental life, between meeting immediate demands and taking care of long-term benefits, between the individual, the collective and the social community*" [21, 13]

So far, after over 30 years of renovation, Vietnam has just only departed from being an under-developed country to join the group of middle-income developing country. Therefore, for Vietnam today, there is no other way than "*promoting industrialization and modernization in association with the development of knowledge economy*" in a socialist direction. This is not only the inevitable path and the optimal way to reach the goal of rich people, strong country, equitable, democratic and civilized society, but also "*a comprehensive and profound revolution in all areas of social life*" - human revolution, for human and by human. Because, when talking about the advantages of socialism, it is affirmed that those advantages neither are brought to us by anyone nor come naturally. They must be the result of great and enduring efforts of the whole population, of people who develop both intellectually and physically in terms of working ability, sociopolitical positiveness, morality and noble lifestyle.

The direction of social development towards promoting industrialization and modernization in association with developing knowledge economy for the purpose of developing Vietnamese people is considered by the Party as a critical step in the new development period from now to 2020. Accordingly, that cause requires the concentration of lots of wisdom, manpower, material and all forces to take advantage of the opportunity, overcome challenges, boost the renovation in a comprehensive and synchronous manner, in order to continue to develop the socialist-oriented market economy. The general objectives and tasks of the 5-year national development strategy (2016-2020) adopted by the Party at the 12th Congress are: Comprehensively and synchronously promoting the renovation, quickly and sustainably developing the economy, striving to soon turn Vietnam into a basically modern industrial country; increasing human resources, emphasizing the leading role of education, training, science

and technology in national policies; infrastructure, potentials of economy, national defense and security are strengthened; the socialist-oriented market economy institution continue to be improved; the position of Vietnam in the international arena is enhanced; Vietnamese culture is built to be more advanced and rich in national identity, Vietnamese people are comprehensively developed to meet requirements for the sustainable development of the country, etc. [22, 76-79].

Those goals and missions show that, throughout the revolutionary cause, with Marxism - Leninism and Ho Chi Minh's thought, including Marxist doctrine of human and the cause of human liberation and development determined as the fundamental theoretical basis and guidelines for actions, the Communist Party of Vietnam always considers developing Vietnamese people to be "*intellectually developed, physically strong, mentally rich, morally transparent*" as both the motivation and the goal of building new society. Developing Vietnamese people is also the driving force, the goal, the long-term foundation to create momentum for the next development step in the cause of promoting industrialization and modernization associated with developing knowledge economy, which the Party is leading Vietnamese people to gradually implement.

Reality is further confirming the truth of K. Marx's view on the irreplaceable role of human in the development process of human history and society. Besides Vietnam, many countries in the region and around the world have succeeded in their strategy to improve human qualities, consider humans as an invaluable resource and make great investment in improving the quality of that resource and use it as a lever for economic development and social modernization. In the resolutions of the 10th, 11th and 12th Congress, the Communist Party of Vietnam has repeatedly affirmed: Improving people's knowledge, fostering and promoting the great resources of Vietnamese people, developing Vietnamese people comprehensively, and building and developing high-quality human resources are decisive factors for the success of socialist-oriented industrialization and modernization, as well as basic factors for social development, rapid and sustainable economic growth, and realization of the goal of rich people, strong country, equitable, democratic and civilized society.

In the current situation of Vietnam and international context, in order to develop Vietnamese people, foster and promote human factor and high-quality human resources as a foundation for social development, rapid and sustainable economic growth, Vietnam needs to and can shorten the time by both taking one step after another and having breakthroughs in the

promotion of industrialization and modernization, thus gradually modernize the country and social life. And, Vietnam can only increase human resources when developing science and technology together with education and training really become the "*top national policy*", the foundation and driving force to bring into play the intellectual resources and spiritual strength of Vietnamese people, especially when the modernization of education, culture, entertainment, health protection, population and family planning is closely linked to the inheritance and promotion of traditional values and national identities. That is why all plans for socioeconomic construction development must be put in an inseparable relationship with the investment plan for the development of personality, intelligence, emotion, joy and happiness of each person, each household and the entire people of Vietnam.

Staying loyal to the Marxist doctrine of human, human liberation and development, liberation and development of the human community, throughout its revolutionary cause, the Communist Party of Vietnam always considers taking care of people's happiness as the highest goal to strive for. The pivotal arguments in Ho Chi Minh's thought - "*To reap a return in ten years, plant trees; To reap a return in 100, cultivate the people*" and "*by all means do whatever is beneficial to the people and avoid whatever does harm to the people*" - have become the core value of all operations of the Party. As the ruling party, all policies and strategies of the Party are aimed at the goal of comprehensively developing Vietnamese people. The "Credo of national construction in the transition to socialism (supplemented and developed in 2011)" of the Party stated: "*A proper and fair social policy for human is the strong motivation to promote all creative capacity of the people in the cause of building and defending our Fatherland*" [23, 79]. Continuously in the years of conducting the comprehensive socialist-oriented renovation of the country, the Party has promulgated many resolutions on directions, objectives, conditions and solutions in many areas that are directly related to caring, fostering and promoting the human factor, human resources and high-quality personnel. Promoting industrialization and social modernization in association with developing knowledge economy is also for that noble cause.

Industrialization and modernization associated with development of knowledge economy, taking Marxist doctrine of human development as the foundation, do not mean that economic development is put after human development, but "*economic growth is associated with improving people's lives, developing culture and education, and ensuring social progress and justice.*" For a middle-income developing country like Vietnam, in order to quickly

get rid of the "middle income trap", economic development must be prioritized. In the past, Vietnam made mistake and fell into that trap due to relying on subjective thinking and voluntarism. Today, to avoid making the same mistake, economic development must come from practical humanism and profound humane spirit, and must be associated with the modernization of social life, because an important motivation for economic development is to create balance and harmony between economic growth and a safe and healthy social environment.

Conclusion

In developing the economy on the basis of market mechanism, we cannot ignore the warning of K. Marx about the risk of "*estrangement*" of human in a commodity economy. K. Marx reminded us that in developing the economy, "*the cause of human liberation*" must be attached to "*the struggle against the extreme practical manifestation of human estrangement*" [8, 561]. Today, as the economy is developing according to market mechanism, socialist-oriented industrialization and modernization must be associated with the root of the nation and traditional values. Only then can we avoid the risk of "*estrangement*", of losing national identity and losing ourselves. The strategy for comprehensive human development and high-quality human resources development in the context of socialist-oriented market economy must also be planned in that direction. In addition, it should come from K. Marx's conception of the necessity of harmoniously combining free development of individuals with the establishment of good relationship between people in a community. Because "*only in a community can an individual has the means to fully develop his aptitudes and thus, only in a community can there be individual freedom*", and "*only when a true community exists do individuals have freedom as they come together and depend on that union*"[9, 108]. Also, only in such a community, "the free development of each person" can become "the condition for the free development of everyone"[10, 628].

Conflict of Interest Statement

The authors declare no conflicts of interests.

About the Author

Bui Xuan Dung is a lecturer of Faculty for high quality training, Ho Chi Minh City University of Technology and Education, Ho Chi Minh City, Vietnam. He studies philosophy, human philosophy, human resources, culture and politics. He obtained his PhD in VNUHCM-University of Social Sciences and Humanities in 2016, with specialization Dialectical materialism and historical materialism.

References

1. Pham Van Duc, 2004, *Marxist philosophy and the era*, Su That Publisher, 2004.
2. Nguyen Trong Chuan, 2002, *Some issues about philosophy - human - society*, Social Sciences Publisher.
3. Cao Thu Hang, 2006, *The view of K. Marx and F. Engels on human and human liberation in The German Ideology and the application of our Party*, philosophy; Vol.3
4. Nguyen Minh Hoan, 2006, *Marxist philosophy's view on human estrangement - Theoretical basis for the perception of human development in the Fourth Industrial Revolution*, philosophy Journal; Vol. 1 (320).
5. Lai Quoc Khanh, 2005, *The humane nature of Ho Chi Minh's thought on human liberation*, Communist Journal; Vol.14
6. K. Marx and F Engels: Full collection, 1995, Su That Publisher, Hanoi
7. K. Marx and F Engels: Full collection, vol.1
8. K. Marx and F Engels: Full collection, vol.3
9. K. Marx and F Engels: Full collection, vol.4
10. K. Marx and F Engels: Full collection, vol.23
11. K. Marx and F Engels: Full collection, vol.26
12. K. Marx and F Engels: Full collection, vol.27
13. K. Marx and F Engels: Full collection, vol.42
14. Bui Ba Linh, 2003, *The view of K. Marx and F. Engels on human and the cause of human liberation*, Su That Publisher
15. Vu Cong Thuong, 2017, *Some philosophical issues about human*, Hanoi Publisher
16. Tran Duc Thao, 2004, *Human Formation, H: Vietnam National University*, Hanoi Publisher

17. Vu Quang Tao, 2008, *K. Marx and the cause of human liberation in modern age*, philosophy;
Vol.5
18. Metchnikoff, Elie, 1904, *Etudes sur la nature humaine: Essai de philosophie optimiste*, paris:
Masson & Cie