

Original Research Article

The scientific nature of Marxism: An analysis based on “The eighteenth brumaire of Louis Bonaparte”*Jiixin Guo**Sun Yat - sen University, Guangzhou, Guangdong, 510275, China*

Abstract: Marxist theory is a scientific theory that transcends previous class limitations and speaks for the happiness of all humanity. “The Eighteenth Brumaire of Louis Bonaparte” is Marx’s important work analyzing historical facts. In this text, Marx fully demonstrates the comprehensiveness of Marxism’s understanding of facts, the developmental nature of theory, and its revolutionary character, thus revealing the scientific nature of Marxist theory.

Keywords: Marxism; Scientific nature; “The eighteenth brumaire of Louis Bonaparte”; Revolutionary character

Foreword: The scientific nature of Marxism stems from its comprehensive grasp of objective facts and points toward the continuous scientific development of theory.

1. Source: Comprehensiveness of understanding

Understanding originates from practical reality. A complete grasp of practice facilitates the formation of correct understanding and relatively scientific theory.

In “The Eighteenth Brumaire of Louis Bonaparte”, Marx revealed the “naturalness” and “inevitability” of Bonaparte’s imitation of Napoleon’s “Brumaire coup” to usurp political power, realize political interests, and restore political status. Marx’s grasp of the “event” is “a combination of the contemporary structure, situation, and actors.”^[1]

Marx had a complete understanding of the “event” process. While both Victor Hugo’s “Napoleon the Little” and Proudhon’s “The Social Revolution” recorded the “event”, Marx differed from Hugo, who focused partially on Bonaparte’s poor personal qualities. Instead, Marx began his narrative by analyzing the economic and political power structure before the “event”. He discussed the successive failures of the proletariat, petit-bourgeois democrats, bourgeois republicans, and the Party of Order, and the ultimate success of Bonaparte’s deception through his bought and controlled armed forces.

Marx provided a comprehensive and profound analysis of the “event”. His analytical path and conclusion traced political struggles back to the underlying material interests. Following this path, Marx also paid attention to the proletariat and peasant classes, providing a more comprehensive and profound analysis of these two classes.

Regarding the proletariat, Marx both acknowledged the inevitability of their revolutionary failure while maintaining high hopes for them. During the “event”, the proletariat did not, as Marx predicted in “The German Ideology”, completely break free from the ideological constraints of the bourgeois state to become true spokespersons for communist revolution; instead, they fell into the whirlpool of bourgeois ideology and monetary fetishism^[2]. In “The Eighteenth Brumaire”, Marx acknowledged the fact of the proletariat’s entrapment in ideology and fetishism and the inevitability of their failure, while also indicating that when commerce and

industry no longer prosper and social economic crises frequently occur, the proletariat would further gain their revolutionary nature and rise as a revolutionary class for itself.

Regarding the peasant class, Marx acknowledged their class limitations while recognizing their enormous influence, giving rise to the idea of a “worker-peasant alliance”. Starting from the concept of “small land parcels”, Marx analyzed the narrow space for communication among French peasants and their minimal overlapping interests, pointing out that the “smallness” of French peasants lay in their backward, conservative, and prejudiced moral outlook.^[3] On the other hand, he recognized the importance of the peasant class, believing that to achieve proletarian victory, the worker-peasant alliance must be strengthened, affirming the peasants’ potential as part of the masses in creating history.

2. Direction: The development of theory

Truth is relative, and the process of understanding is an infinite progression towards truth and science - theories become more scientific as they develop.

In analyzing the Bonaparte “incident”, Marx’s historical materialism developed through inheriting and building upon excellent past achievements. The text’s attribution of political events to ultimately economic causes represents Marx’s fundamental revelation of the internal causal relationships in politics. The competition between traditional political forces reflects the underlying contest of material and economic interests. From the dissolution of the parliamentary republic to Bonaparte’s coup d’état, the entrance of various classes and their alliances or betrayals were all intuitive choices and self-interested actions driven by material interests. If the actions of political subjects are key to historical transformation, then interests are the practical cause determining the direction of political events.^[4]

The developmental nature of Marxist theory is also reflected in the evolution of its own theoretical framework. The scientific nature of a theory lies not in proving itself as absolute truth, but in its developmental tendency toward truth. During the “incident”, the proletariat, despite being the most revolutionary class, was the first to be kicked out of the political struggle and was continuously deceived and betrayed by various political parties. “Whenever the movement seemed to take a new beginning, the proletariat attempted to push forward again, but with increasingly weaker momentum and diminishing results”^[5]. Meanwhile, Bonaparte and his interest group, who initiated the coup, achieved ultimate victory - the political reality seemed to contradict theoretical analysis. However, Marx delved deeper into social development realities, pointing out that the timing for proletarian revolution was not yet mature, and revolutionary revival needed to wait for economic crises to damage capitalist social development. While writing “The Eighteenth Brumaire of Louis Bonaparte”, Marx enriched his previous understanding of the proletariat based on actual developments. However, Marx also overestimated the destructive power of crises at this time, treating them as the fundamental “pathological” sign of bourgeois society and founding revolution upon crisis, thus failing to fully grasp the internal nature of crises and being overly optimistic in judging revolutionary conditions.^[2]

3. Driving force: The revolutionary nature of theory

An incomplete revolutionary theory merely represents the revolution of a minority class. Their theoretical starting points and theoretical developments will be constrained by class limitations, making it difficult to achieve a true account of facts and to derive genuinely scientific conclusions from historical momentum.

The direction of historical development indicates that the state will ultimately return to society and to

the people. The fundamental position of Marxism is to consistently stand with the masses. In “The Eighteenth Brumaire of Louis Bonaparte”, Marx repeatedly criticizes the hypocrisy of the bourgeoisie in expressing their interests, declares that proletarian interests need no concealment, and demonstrates the absolute break between the proletariat and previous classes. Its revolutionary nature is manifested in the criticism and break from traditional exploitative concepts of proletarian ideology, and in its dissemination among the working class.

In “The Eighteenth Brumaire of Louis Bonaparte”, Marx believes that Bonaparte’s successful deception also benefited from the lag of ideological consciousness behind historical reality. Traditional ideas, lagging behind the actual revolution, pushed Bonaparte to the presidential throne and restored the empire, creating a historical farce.^[6] The bourgeois advocacy of “liberty, equality, fraternity” has its class limitations, but this does not prevent them from using these high-sounding ideals to maintain their legitimate ruling position. On the other hand, the bourgeoisie uses state machinery to strengthen ideological control and continuously instill bourgeois ideology in the working class to paralyze their revolutionary will.^[2]

The proletariat needs no such pretense. Once the proletariat becomes a class-for-itself, its ideology will make an absolute break from traditional forms of exploitation. It is not enough for proletarian ideology to merely criticize and break from bourgeois ideology; it must also be disseminated among the working masses to counter the corruption of bourgeois ideology and awaken the revolutionary nature of the proletariat.

4. Conclusion

“The Eighteenth Brumaire of Louis Bonaparte” played an extremely important role in advancing Marxist theoretical development. In discussing the “incident”, Marx expressed new perspectives on certain understandings, initiating the development of theory that keeps pace with the times. Its scientific momentum lies in its revolutionary nature - the proletarian revolution is completely different from previous revolutions, as its revolutionary character stems from its interests being directed toward the happiness of all humanity, demanding a complete break from traditional theories of exploitation.

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