


COMMENT ON “THE MARXIST PHILOSOPHICAL BASIS OF SOCIALIST LITERATURE AND ART”


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In 2017, the report of the Nineteenth National Congress of the Communist Party of China pointed out that socialist literature and art are the people's literature and art, and we must adhere to the people-centered creative orientation, and carry out literary and artistic creation worthy of the times while going deep into the life and taking root in the people. It is necessary to prosper literary and artistic creation, adhere to the unity of profound thinking, exquisite art and excellent production, strengthen the creation of realistic themes, and continuously produce high-quality masterpieces that praise the Party, the motherland, the people and the heroes. As the author mentioned in the paper, socialist literature and art are a concept that is constantly being constructed. The 2017 report can be regarded as the result of the construction of socialist literature and art theory at the moment, and its development is a complex tortuous and dynamic process.

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Before the founding of the People's Republic of China (1949), Marxist literature and art theory began to spread widely. This theory holds that literature and art are ideological forms determined and restricted by social existence in human social life. However, as a kind of spiritual production, it is often out of balance with the development of material production. Therefore, literature and art are relatively independent. Marx hopes that literature and art can subtly influence people's thinking and understanding, thereby promoting people to enter the real world to realize social changes. In this process, literature and art play the role of "critical weapons". Liu (2023) cites the example of the 1940s in the paper. Chairman Mao's speech at the Yan'an Literature and Art Symposium emphasized that literature and art should serve the workers, peasants and soldiers, not the bourgeoisie and the landlord class. The standpoint of literary and artistic works should be gradually shifted to the workers, peasants and soldiers' side, to the side of the proletariat in the process of going deep into the masses of workers, peasants, soldiers, and their actual struggles, and in the process of studying Marxism and society. All in all, literature and art at that time were regarded more as a tool of struggle, no different from the "critical weapon" advocated by Marx.

After the founding of the People's Republic of China, due to political needs, the meaning order of literature and art was stipulated within the scope of political ideology. It was required to explain the "new" of new China, while the secular scenes of daily life were often abandoned to the mainstream cultural environment due to its lack of novelty and mediocrity. "Seventeen-Year Literature" is a high-level summary of the cultural environment at that stage. From the founding of the People's Republic of China (1949) to the beginning of the "Great Proletarian Cultural Revolution" (1966), in the past 17 years, the political aspect was above the literary one. Works are forced to fit within situational-sanctioned political thought and prevailing political orientation. When high revolutionary enthusiasm replaces the realistic creation of literature, literary norms that meet these requirements will naturally emerge. We can see that the alienation of literature from everyday life is pushed to extremes. Themes unrelated to "serving the workers, peasants, and soldiers" such as love pursuit, thought depression, sentimentality, loneliness, compassion and sympathy, were regarded as "petty bourgeois sentiment" and were rejected. Love and kinship are the motifs of literary creation of all nations in the world, but for a long time after 1949, they were forbidden areas for Chinese writers to create (DING; WANG, 1999, p. 59). Seventeen years later, the ensuing "Great Proletarian Cultural Revolution" caused the literary and

artistic work of China to suffer the most serious setback and loss since the founding of the People's Republic of China.

In 1979, the Fourth Congress of Chinese Literary and Artistic Workers opened. Deng Xiaoping, on behalf of the Central Committee of the Communist Party of China and the State Council, addressed the Fourth Congress of Chinese Literary and Artistic Workers. The speech fully affirmed the important status and role of literary and artistic work. The author also pointed out in the paper that after entering the 1980s, the national ideology no longer required "socialist realism" for literary and artistic creation, but encouraged artists to use their good ways to create in line with the requirements of the national "main melody", that is, "promote the main theme and advocate diversity". In the following three decades, realistic creations concerned with social and people's livelihood have continued to develop. And the creation of individualism, modernism and postmodernism, which were suppressed before, also rose in large numbers. This grand blooming scene everywhere is echoing the connotation of socialist literature and the emphasis of art on the people's character: the people must be regarded as connoisseurs and judges of literary and artistic aesthetics. Since the masses of the people are the consumers of literary and artistic works, the quality of works should be judged by the masses of the people. So far, after the literary and artistic career of China has experienced major setbacks and the haze has been cleared away, it finally ushered in the spring of development.

Today, socialist literature and art itself are once again facing new challenges and difficulties. From the ideological level, the concept of "Sinology" and "Sinologism" has gradually spread, and there are tendencies of "de-valuation", "de-ideologization", "de-historicization", "de-Sinicization" and "de-mainstreaming". Judging from the phenomenal level, these trends of thought promote the popularity of vulgar works, causing bad money to drive out good money. Such literary and artistic workers have violated the professional ethics and civic virtues of literary and artistic creation. The so-called literary and artistic works they create are full of negative factors such as "vulgarity", "desire" and "pure sensory entertainment", which will lead to the destruction and dissolution of people's social spirit and moral virtues. As far as the external environment is concerned, since the socialist market economy is still developing and improving, and the Chinese market is widely connected to the international one, negative factors such as the supremacy of profit, money supremacy, intrigue and profit-seeking are widely present in the market

economy. As a part of it, the cultural market has also widely encountered the problem of absolute market indicators, being led by the nose by the market, and even directly reduced to a slave to the market. When market factors are included in the evaluation criteria of “people” and “culture”, we must maintain a high degree of soberness and accurate judgment. We must never replace artistic standards with simple commercial standards and equate literary and artistic works with ordinary commodities. This is a wake-up call to today’s literary and artistic undertakings. In terms of the direction of the times, the application of digital technology has brought new changes to literature and art. Themes, characters, stories and events with artistic value have been widely disseminated by the news media before they have been reflected in literature and art. A dizzying number of versions have been derived, and the eccentricity and beauty of life itself dwarf the most imaginative literature and art. In the fast-paced torrent of information, if literature and art want to surpass the chaotic news and information and closely connect with the people, they need to further break through themselves and make adaptive changes in concepts, forms and connotations. This requires literature and art workers to grasp the pulse of the times, go deep into people’s lives, discover, excavate, refine, sublimate, rebuild, reshape, and innovate life, and create unique and shocking works of art.

The basic philosophical standpoint of socialist ideology adhering to historical materialism determines the consistent “people” theme of socialist literature and art. The people are not only the creators and writers of the history of a socialist country but also the creators and interpreters of socialist literature and art. As the main body of society, “people” is the political ideology of socialism; as the main body of literature and art, it is the aesthetic ideology of socialist literature and art. However, no matter whether it is the political ideology or aesthetic ideology, it naturally carries the belief factor and has a direct impact on the concept identification of secular life. As a result, the belief system jointly constructed by the secular political system and the literary and artistic style, together with the long-standing cultural memory of ancient China, has become an imaginative enclave of socialist literature and art. Of course, since the beginning of the new century, the complexity of the internal elements of “the people” and the internal transformation and morphological transformation of literature and art led by the “people” have also led to the ups and downs of the value of socialist literature and art. The narrative of social modernization in the tide of the market economy requires that socialist literature and art go beyond the instrumental mission of peace

and prosperity and align themselves with aesthetic modernity. In this way, it has become an inevitable requirement of the modernity of socialist literature and art that literature and art dig deep into the people's hearts and express the people's throbbing thoughts, inner confusion and true ideals in the process of social modernization. The corresponding interpretation of literature and art must also turn to the pursuit of aesthetics and self-discipline of meaning in literature and art. Even so, we still cannot arbitrarily define socialist literature and art. As the author said in the paper, socialist literature and art are a concept that is constantly being constructed, and a fixed interpretation of essentialism should be rejected. But no matter how it is constructed, its most basic principled content remains the same.

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