

A Research Review on Lukács's View of History

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Abstract: Lukács's exploration of Marxist historical philosophy not only deepens the understanding of its revolutionary significance but also paves a new path for the study of Marxism. Although Lukács's view of history differs from that of Marx, both are rooted in the same theoretical foundation, and Lukács has absorbed and improved Marx's views. In a particular historical period, his new interpretation has both enriched Marxism and reflected his unique historical perspective. This article aims to deeply explore the theoretical foundation, core arguments, and the controversies and criticisms of Lukács's view of history, thereby summarizing the diverse interpretations of his views in the academic circles at home and abroad. By analyzing the scholars' discussions, this article not only presents the current research status of Lukács's view of history in the academic community but also points out the deficiencies in the research and the possible future development directions. It is hoped that this will contribute some preliminary and insightful thoughts to the academic exploration and inject new vitality into the understanding of Lukács's view of history.

Keywords: Lukács; Conception of history; Research review

1. Summary of the Contents of Lukács' View of History

1.1 Summary of Foreign Research

Lukács' interpretation of history combines elements of materialism and ideology, emphasizing the interaction between social structure and ideology. His view of history is somewhat different from traditional Marxism, with a stronger emphasis on the roles of culture, ideology and power.

Laclau conducted a critical analysis of Lukács' view of historical materialism, stressing his understanding of the superstructure and the importance he attached to ideology.^[1]Cox, Robert W. explored the implications of Lukács' view of historical materialism for international relations theory, highlighting the significance of his analysis of ideology and culture in international politics.^[2]Simon, Roger. investigated Lukács' political thoughts, especially his understanding of ideology and the revolutionary process, which has important implications for explaining political changes in history.^[3]Halliday examined Marxism from the perspective of international relations and discussed the importance of Lukács' analysis of ideology and culture for international political theory.^[4]

1.2 Summary of Domestic Research

Zhang Kangzhi pointed out that in the book "History and Class Consciousness", Lukács systematically and elaborately expounded the concept of totality and used this perspective to conduct in-depth research and interpretation of history. Starting from real people, he regarded the evolution of history as a natural process and, on this basis, discussed the theoretical assumptions and bases of historical materialism. These expositions not only inherited Marxism but also further enriched and expanded its theoretical system.^[5]

When analyzing "History and Class Consciousness", Xu Hengbing emphasized that Lukács deeply criticized the estrangement from history by the theorists of the Second International and bourgeois thinkers, pointing out that they thus fell into a non-revolutionary and purely intuitive attitude. On this basis, Lukács advocated a return to Hegelianism to reinterpret Marx's view of the philosophy of history. Specifically, Lukács' reinterpretation deepened the exploration of Marx's view of the philosophy of history in many aspects and demonstrated the broad depth and inheritance of his theory.

2. Controversies and Criticisms of Lukács' View of History

Lukács' historical perspective, although having left an indelible mark in the social sciences and humanities in the 20th century, has also encountered challenges and doubts from multiple angles. Some critics have pointed out that his idealized treatment of history and excessive emphasis on individual subjectivity have overlooked the crucial roles of social structures and subconscious forces in the evolution of history. In addition, Lukács' viewpoints, in some cases, seem to tend towards excessive determinism and economic reductionism, which appears to

contrast with the recognition of the multiple causes of social phenomena and the respect for the complexity of history in the profound theoretical context of Marxism.^[6]

2.1 Summary of Foreign Research

In "Considerations on Western Marxism", Perry Anderson put forward a critical reflection on Western Marxism, including Lukács' thoughts, and pointed out the rupture between its theory and practice.^[7] And in "The Antinomies of Antonio Gramsci", Anderson further discussed the theoretical differences between Lukács and Gramsci, highlighting the limitations of historicism.^[8]

Löwy conducted an in-depth analysis of Lukács' thoughts in his works, pointed out his original interpretation of Marxism and also put forward criticisms regarding some assumptions in Lukács' historical theory. Goldmann, when exploring Lukács' interpretation of historical materialism, raised criticisms about Lukács' neglect of the concreteness and complexity of history. Andrew Arato and Paul Breines, in the book "The Young Lukács and the Origins of Western Marxism", discussed the influence of Lukács' early works on later Western Marxism and also presented criticisms of some of Lukács' viewpoints.^[9]

István Mészáros, a student of Lukács, delved deeply into Lukács' theory of historical materialism in his 1979 work "Lukács's concept of dialectics" and put forward important criticisms and developments regarding it. This article is part of the internal discussions within Marxist philosophy. Mészáros examined Lukács' dialectical method and its impact on the understanding of social and historical processes. This process not only demonstrated the layers and complexity of Lukács' theory but also reflected the brilliance and challenges of the profound theoretical foundation of Marxism when exploring the essence of history.^[10]

2.2 Summary of Domestic Research

There are also controversies and criticisms regarding Lukács' view of history in the Chinese academic community. Xu Hengbing pointed out that in "History and Class Consciousness", through profound analysis and criticism, Lukács demonstrated the estrangement of the theorists of the Second International and bourgeois thinkers from history and their indulgence in a non-revolutionary and intuitive attitude towards bourgeois society. Based on this, Lukács advocated a return to the philosophical spirit of Hegel in order to bridge and reinterpret Marx's view of the philosophy of history. This reinterpretation aimed to deepen the understanding of historical dynamics and emphasize class struggle and social change in the historical process. Although Lukács' interpretation closely adhered to the core of Marxism, his position deeply rooted in Hegel's philosophy also led to a fundamental deviation from Marxism. He attempted to use Hegel's dialectical framework to deepen the understanding of Marx's ideas about history and social change, but to some extent failed to fully capture Marx's core assertions about material historical conditions and class struggle, thus reflecting the dialectics and challenges of theoretical exploration.^[11]

Zhao Li pointed out that in the face of the spiritual decline of capitalist society, Lukács adopted a romantic theoretical stance and attempted to carry out critical transformation in this way, but ultimately failed to achieve his goal. After turning to Marxism, Lukács endeavored to transcend the material reality of capitalism, which was based on the abandonment of the ideology of positivism. He believed that the key lay in revealing the "myth" behind the positivist methodology and exposing its essence of isolation, ahistoricity and ideological nature. Lukács responded to this challenge by emphasizing the historical dialectics featuring "the integrity, historicity and revolutionary nature of society". Through this re-exploration of historical dialectics, Lukács relatively successfully promoted the theoretical development of Marxism in the 20th century. However, the emphasis on the subjective dimension of historical dialectics ultimately limited Lukács' theoretical achievements.^[12]

Liu Huaiyu and Zhang Murong pointed out that Western Marxists represented by Lukács and Habermas re-evaluated the epistemological characteristics of Marxism by returning to the classical German dialectics. However, in the process of over-interpreting or overemphasizing certain aspects, they eventually fell into the misunderstanding of canceling the epistemology of Marxism in a disguised form. This deviation reveals the complex tension between theoretical criticism and application.^[13]

Xu Hengbing emphasized that Lukács comprehensively returned to the Hegelian tradition theoretically and thus reinterpreted the Marxist view of history. This approach ultimately led to a fundamental departure from Marxism. He believed that fundamentally speaking, Lukács had gone too far in "correcting an error" in theory. Because he attempted to understand Marx in the "pure Hegelian spirit", he overlooked the revolutionary transformation that Marx had made to Hegel's philosophy, and thus an essential deviation was inevitable. As Hanák pointed out, regarding Lukács' understanding of Marx's view of the philosophy of history, "it was not Marx who triumphed over Hegel, but Hegel who revised Marx".^[14]

Liu Lulu believes that Lukács analyzed the historical causes of the reification of capitalist society in isolation without comprehensively and scientifically examining the entire development of human history. This led him to deviate from the original intention of Marx's view of history. Therefore, he turned to seek the speculative structure of Hegel's philosophy to provide logical support and attempted to find theoretical justifications within this philosophical framework.^[15]

3. Deficiencies and Future Prospects

3.1 Deficiencies

In our overview of Lukács' view of history, although we have gathered research achievements both at home and abroad, we still face some limitations and unfinished aspects in this process, presenting room for improvement and deepening:

Limited depth: When analyzing various dimensions, our discussions have not reached the ideal level of in-depth exploration. On the path of future research, through more meticulous literature review and theoretical exploration, it is expected that these issues can be explained and expanded in a more profound manner.

Limited perspectives: Although this article takes Lukács' view of history as the center of discussion, it fails to widely cover other fields that his thoughts might influence, such as education, cultural industries, political philosophy, etc. Future research should strive to broaden the vision and explore the application and influence of Lukács' theory in more fields, aiming to achieve a profound understanding and comprehensive evaluation of the whole picture of his thoughts.

Literature selection: Although this article is committed to selecting highly authoritative and representative literature to construct this review, it is still inevitable to have preferences in the literature selection process and omit some key literature. Future research should be dedicated to further expanding the coverage of literature to ensure that the comprehensiveness and representativeness of the review work can be significantly improved.

3.2 Future Prospects

Looking ahead, the research on Lukács' view of history can develop in the following directions:

Interdisciplinary exploration: Deepen the discussion on the application and influence of Lukács' thoughts in different disciplinary fields such as cultural studies, education, and sociology, and promote the theoretical integration and in-depth dialogue among different disciplines.

Comparative exploration: Incorporate Lukács' view of history into the dialogue with other theoretical viewpoints, such as different Marxist schools and diverse theories of cultural criticism, aiming to reveal their uniqueness, intersections, and the mutual inspiration and influence among them.

Empirical research: Closely focus on specific historical events or social dynamics and conduct in-depth empirical exploration on Lukács' view of history, aiming to evaluate the effectiveness and wide applicability of his theory in practical applications.

Theoretical innovation: Based on an in-depth understanding of Lukács' thoughts, be committed to the further development and innovation of theories, and explore new ideas and methods for dealing with contemporary social challenges and problems. Through continuous deepening of the research and discussion on Lukács' view of history, the potential and value of his theory can be better explored, thus making greater contributions to promoting the development of social theories and practices.

4. Conclusion

All in all, Lukács' view of history not only constitutes a core part of Western Marxist theory in the 20th century but also endows the research fields of contemporary social sciences and humanities with profound theoretical insights and inspiration. In the face of numerous criticisms and challenges, his view of history is still stimulating profound discussions on social change, cultural criticism and theoretical innovation. These discussions have not only deepened the exploration of the academic community but also reached the broader fields of social and political practice and cultural creation. The current research trends reveal the powerful analytical power and adaptability of Lukács' theory when facing emerging social phenomena and challenges, continuously providing sharp and inspiring insights.

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