

A New Interpretation of the Relationship Between Theory and Practice

Jie Fang^{1*}

¹ School of Marxism, Jiangsu University, Zhenjiang, China

Email Address

1476956477@qq.com (Jie Fang)

*Correspondence: 1476956477@qq.com

Received: 19 May 2025; **Accepted:** 16 June 2025; **Published:** 30 June 2025

Abstract:

The relationship between theory and practice is not only an important theoretical issue, but also a profound practical issue. Today's understanding of theory and practice is still limited to the framework of subject-object duality, which is essentially based on the philosophical basis of traditional metaphysics. There are major misunderstandings in understanding the relationship between theory and practice based on the binary framework of traditional metaphysics. Therefore, taking practical survival as the basis, the traditional metaphysical dual position is eliminated and the authentic relationship between theory and practice can be restored, thereby making a more reasonable explanation of the relationship between theory and practice.

Keywords:

Theory, Practice, Traditional Textbook, Traditional Metaphysics

1. Explanation on the Relationship Between Theory and Practice in Traditional Textbooks and Its Physical Basis

According to the understanding of traditional theories, truth is a philosophical category that marks the consistency of subjectivity to objectivity, and is a correct understanding of objective laws. Practical activities are objective material activities in which the subject carries out the world according to his own intentions. Here, the relationship between theory and practice is mainly discussed at the epistemological level. First of all, it is reflected in practice to provide sensory materials for cognitive activities. The so-called cognition is the active reflection of the subject on the basis of practice, and cognition can develop from individual and concrete perceptual cognition into a universal and abstract rational cognition through practice. The universal and abstract rational understanding mentioned here is what is commonly referred to as theories. In other words, under the premise that the subject is dichotomized with the object, the cognitive subject can reach the object through practical tools and gradually understand abstract and universal rational understanding from the intuitive perceptual understanding of the object, which means grasping all the truths about the object, that is, the correct theory. Secondly, correct theories can guide practice. There is an assumption here that correct theories can serve as guiding practical activities without practice. This shows that its interpretation still unconsciously follows the premise of

modern epistemology: the dual division between the subject and the object. In other words, traditional textbooks discuss the relationship between theory and practice under the model of modern epistemology. Such understanding can easily lead to dogmatism blindly following theory and blind activism that is separated from theory. This modern epistemological position, in the final analysis, is a traditional metaphysical position. Therefore, we should understand why traditional metaphysical positions lead to the breaking of theory and practice.

Traditional metaphysics began in ancient Greece where natural simplicity was born. The original intention of ancient Greek philosophy was to “save nature”. The object they studied was the universe and everything, and the central problem they studied was the “original origin of the world”. The world grasped by sensibility is fleeting and unchanging, so it is the most unreliable. Only reason can understand the “original origin of the world”. This actually shows a premise, namely the separation and breakage between the phenomenon world and the ontology world. Ancient Greek philosophers used a causal deterministic way of thinking, believing that there is a “world origin” outside the world as the reason for the existence of this world, in order to explain the world. Plato believed that there is an idea world outside the world of things, which is the reality that transcends the world of things and serves as the basis for the existence of the world of things, and is the essence of the world of things. The world of things is sensible but unknowable, and the world of ideas is sensible but unknowable. As Plato said, “We say there are things like ‘so’. What I mean is not that a piece of wood is equal to another piece of wood, a stone is equal to another stone, and so on, but that things other than this, this ‘so’ is separated from the ‘so’ of things itself.” [1] Wood and stones in the world of things are sensible and unknowable, while “so” itself is identifiable and unknowable. This completely breaks theory and practice. As a sensory practice, it can only be active in the world of things and can never understand the concept. Only thinking and rationality can surpass individual things to understand the highest universal concept. Plato’s philosophical tradition of dichotomizing the world of things and the world of ideas was profound, making it difficult for later philosophers to escape. What Aristotle is wise to Plato is that he discovers that practice has important philosophical significance. He distinguished theory, practice from creation. He believes that the so-called theory is to study the eternal and unchanging field of universal necessity, and is universal knowledge about the field of necessity, and seek knowledge through meditation, including mathematics, physics and metaphysics.

Practice is an activity in which a person obtains good through his own behavior and choices. Good practice should be a kind of wisdom and ability to make correct behaviors in different situations with the purpose of the highest good. It pursues human happiness and is the object of study in political science and ethics. Creation refers to human production and production. Here, theory and practice are clearly distinguished because Aristotle distinguished the world ontologically into eternal fields and accidental fields, which naturally leads to the breaking of theory and practice and their respective duties. Until the modern philosopher Bacon, he empirically and technically transformed scientific theory, and then turned practice into the application of scientific theory. The “production” that was almost abandoned by Aristotle was closely combined with scientific theory, achieving a high degree of “integration” between scientific theory and practice. However, this “fusion” does not go beyond the ontological position of traditional metaphysics, but rather, it is still a discussion of issues within the traditional philosophical position. Through rigorous

and repeated scientific practice, the subject uses testing tools to record the changes and attributes of the measured object observed in the experiment, and deduce the most common understanding of the measured object - theories - through induction, judgment, and deductive reasoning. This is the way of thinking between the subject and the object. The theory under this way of thinking is that it cannot argue how to transition from experience to universal truth; the second is that it believes that its internal logic is meticulous and can survive independently, making practice a mechanized and repeatable means under the absolute leadership of theory. Kant theoretically returns to the transcendental dimension of Aristotle's practical concept, but he also distinguishes phenomena from matter itself ontologically. Phenomenon belongs to the natural field, is the content discussed in natural philosophy, and is legislated by intellectual law, which belongs to epistemological issues; matter itself is the field of human will and freedom, which is the content discussed in moral philosophy, which belongs to ontological issues. Because Kant's tradition of opposition and dualism between cognition and practice, he limited practice to the scope of the moral field, believing that practical reason can innately recognize the universal law of practice, namely moral law, and practice is an activity under the guidance of practical reason. Although practice cannot be separated from theoretical reason, practical reason is higher than theoretical reason and has the direct realistic characteristics of transforming ideas into reality. However, its ontological position has irresistibly divided theory and practice into two completely different fields. It divides human reason into theoretical reason and practical reason, and has also legislated its own laws in phenomena and matter itself, which has fallen into the ruling of traditional metaphysics.

It can be seen from this that the world was explained in a binary framework at the beginning of its birth. The division of the world into two will inevitably lead to a break between theory and practice. The development of philosophy for more than two thousand years has not escaped the ideological stamp of traditional metaphysics. Its interpretation of the relationship between theory and practice from the dual standpoint of traditional metaphysics will inevitably lead to theory being separated from practice and becoming a "theory" without land. Theory relies on its own logical system to encapsulate the infinite of the world, which ultimately leads to the collapse of theory. Practice has become an instrumental and means activity under the guidance of theory, which eliminates the human factors in practical activities and makes practice a low and painful labor. The root of the breakage between theory and practice lies in its traditional dual position. Therefore, to reasonably solve this problem, we must base ourselves on a higher basis - practical survival theory, and seek a reasonable and unified solution to the two.

2. New Basis for the Relationship Between Theory and Practice: Practical Survival Theory

It is beautiful that traditional metaphysics wants to find an absolutely necessary basis for explaining the world, but because it separates thinking from existence, subject and object, it can never bridge the two, thus causing the breakage and opposition between people and things; or unify the two in the abstract spirit, unify the particularity in absolute universality, thereby eliminating the concrete and rich life experience in human life. The root of the problem lies in the ontological basis of traditional metaphysics. Marx based on the principle of sensory objectivity subverts this basis and reinterprets the true essence of man and the world. The two-way

interpretation of man and the world gives practice an ontological status through the intermediary of practice.

Marx criticized traditional metaphysical thoughts based on the principle of sensual objectivity. Marx believed that all beings are object-like existences, and “non-objective existences are non-realistic, non-sensory, and only ideological, that is, they are just fictional existences, and are abstract things.” The ultimate existence considered by traditional metaphysics, because it is infinite, nothing outside itself can become its object, because once an object is an opposite, it is subject to the prescriptiveness from the object and loses its own infinity. Pure infinity is absolute “non-nothing” for people, because people are finite object existences, and the ultimate existence is outside people because it has no object. People cannot reach infinite beyond their own boundaries, so this ultimate existence is absolutely unaware of. But why would people imagine this absolute “nothing”? It is because the so-called ultimate existence essence is the condensation of the essential power of human objectivity, and it is a personalized “God”. “If a God does not contain the essence of finiteness, does not contain the principle of sensibility, and does not contain the essence of dependentness, then for a limited, sensual being, he will not be God.” [2] Traditional metaphysical thought reflects that religion is the so-called God, which is nothing more than the greatest condensation of the essential power of human objectivity, is purely abstract, and therefore not reality. This criticizes the free things and independent self-consciousness set by traditional metaphysics. The so-called free things and self-consciousness are ultimate existences, things that can exist entirely on one's own basis without relying on other things. Therefore, they are purely abstract things, not real, and can only be grasped in thought.

The two-way objectivity of man and the world is mediated by practice and moves towards the dialectical generation of the two in practice. “All social life is practical in nature. Any mysterious thing that leads theory to mysticism can be reasonably solved in human practice and in the understanding of this practice.” [3] As Marx said in the Outline on Feuerbach, on the one hand, the world and society are not pure collections of things, but a connection in practical activities. Objects are object-like existences, which are manifested as a kind of association and existence in practice. They are objective existences that are not transferred by human will. Marx mentioned in the 1844 Economic and Philosophical Manuscript: “The sun is the object of the plant, the indispensable object of the plant and the object of confirming its life, just as the plant is the object of the sun, the manifestation of the power of the sun awakening life, and the manifestation of the essential power of the sun.” [4] Things need object relations and existence between people or objects to confirm their own essential power, which is the true predicate of things, and therefore the essence of things that are real things. Then, then extend it, that is, things dialectically generate themselves with the development of practical activities, and with the change of object relations and existence between people and objects, and objects in practical activities, the way things use to confirm their own essential power also changes, and then things themselves have a new meaning. Therefore, there is no so-called free thing. All things change with the change of the relationship in practical activities, and are dialectical generation in negation. They are generated in practical activities and driven by practical activities. Therefore, as for things themselves, it is practical; on the other hand, people are self-consciousness, but not the abstract self-consciousness that has been believed in modern times. The so-called self-consciousness is nothing but arises in the process of objectification between people and things. “The externalization of

self-consciousness sets the material nature.” But “because this setting of material nature itself is nothing but an appearance, an act that contradicts the essence of pure activities, this setting will inevitably be rejected again, and material nature will inevitably be denied.” [4] Without pure self-consciousness, pure self-consciousness is a non-objective existence, so it is non-existent. Self-consciousness always needs to be externalized and restored in the process of dealing with things, and needs an object that is completely different from the self. In the practice of the object, self-consciousness invades the object, the object itself continues to disappear, and the self is constantly objectified and materialized. However, the material nature set by externalization is still an abstract object, not a real thing. Therefore, immediately afterwards, self-consciousness must abandon this externalization and material nature and take it back to itself, which is a re-reflection on the objectified relationship. This process is the dialectical development process of self-consciousness experiencing affirmation-negation-negation-negation-negation-negation-negation-negation. Self-awareness is always generated in practice with the object and is built by the object.

In practical existence theory, the principle of perceptual objectivity eliminates the binary opposition between the subject and the object, and uses practice as the mediation, and bridges the two in the two-way construction process of practical activities, realizing the dialectical generation of the two, transcending the binary opposition of traditional metaphysics, breaking through the traditional understanding of theory and practice, and also means a new interpretation of the relationship between theory and practice, providing a higher basis for reasonably interpreting the relationship between theory and practice.

3. New Interpretation of the Relationship Between Theory and Practice

“Whether human thinking has objective truth is not a theoretical question, but a practical question. People should prove the truth of their own thinking in practice, that is, the reality and power of their own thinking, and the nature of their own thinking.” [5] The reason why people can prove the objectivity of their own thinking in practice is because individual practical activities have an experience within them. This experience is different from the cognition mentioned in modern times, and is not abstract intuition. It is a personal experience and reflection of the objectified relationship between people and things in practical activities, and understand a certain degree of universality from it. However, unlike traditional metaphysics, the product of this reflection does not have a very high degree of abstract universality, nor does it have the nature of independence, but is deeply internalized in practical activities.

The product of this personal experience and reflection is theory. The practice of philosophy itself is theoretical. As a kind of human activities, theoretical activities are human beings’ personal experience and discoveries of the existence of real relationships in real life in the real world. However, because individual practice is unique, practical activities always occur continuously on the spot for a period of time, demonstrating the on-site nature of practice. The magic of theory lies in its ability to break through the on-site nature of practical activities to reach a certain degree of universality. The reason why theory can break through the universality of on-site understanding of practice is that the consistency between human body and spirit in practical activities. From a physical perspective, when anyone observes a specific thing, he can only observe the side of the thing facing him, while the other side cannot be observed through the naked eye, such as the front of the book. But in real life, with

life experience, it's easy to know that this is wrong, because when we see this side, we are already "convinced" the existence of the other side, such as the back of the book. So in English, there are two words "see", one is "look", that is, looking in a biological sense; the other is "see", which means that we have "see" while looking. The reason why we can "see" is not because our eyes have perspective functions, but because of our "spirit". From the perspective of etymology, "see" comes from the ancient English "seon", which means to perceive or realize through the eyes, and also to psychological perception and understanding. Its derivative word "foresee", is literally translated as "seeing the front", but is generally translated as "premonition". This shows that when anyone observes, the body and spirit are completely consistent. We cannot incorporate sensory materials into our sight as a camera, but naturally contain an understanding in each inclusion. As Heidegger said: "The understanding of existence has always belonged to this place, and it is already 'living' every time we deal with existence." [6] The human body is subject to biological limitations, and the human sensory organs are always concrete and limited, and all we can grasp is the complexity of sensibility. So how can such a living person understand universality in the on-the-spot nature of practical activities? The reason is that in practical activities, it is not only pure physical activities, but also spiritual activities. The two are consistent and are two aspects of the same activity. The spirit has a transcendent nature within it, and can understand a certain degree of universal relationship between people and things in the limitations of specific elements and the conditions of the current situation. It is universality in the concrete.

At the same time, when practical activities occur, various internal elements also exist at the same time. Therefore, practice is always under certain specific conditions. This conditionality indicates the finiteness of practice, so theory is also conditional and limited. Theory is the experience and perspective of a specific thing from a certain angle or perspective, with ambiguity and individuality. But immediately we found that in practical activities, it is impossible for people to have only one pure view of specific things. Even when discussing death, there are many different views. People always seek diverse perspectives through different practical methods to explain things more reasonably. Even in the same practical method, there are subtle differences in the experiences between different people. Multiple perspectives do not cause contradictions and divisions within the theory. On the contrary, there is a certain tension between theories from different perspectives. This tension gives theories the possibility of mutual dialogue, reducing one-sidedness in the dialogue, expanding diversity, and thus moving towards a more inclusive new theories. The fusion between theories is not a reconciliation or compromise without principle with the slurred mud. The fundamental difference is that fusion is a process of continuous dialectical denial of development, which is consistent with the nature of dialectical development in practice. The rationality of the existence of tension between theories lies in that the diversified theory is that the experience of the same specific things by different practical methods, and the specific things remain unchanged, while the underlying logic in different practical methods is changing, and the underlying logic of different practical logic brings different experiences and discoveries of things. Marx said: "The solution of the opposition of theory itself is only possible through practical methods and only with the help of human practical power; therefore, this opposition is by no means a task of cognition, but a task of real life, and philosophy has failed to solve this task because philosophy regards this only as a task of theory." [7] In the past, philosophy only regarded itself as a task of theory, and theories separated from practice are purely abstract. The opposition between diversified

theories can only be reasonably resolved in practice, analyzing the underlying practical logic followed by different theories and in mutual dialogue.

4. Conclusions

To sum up, theory is the product of practical activities' personal experience and reflection on people's existence. Theory is a specific universality that people understand in the on-site nature of practice. The consistency between the body and the soul in practical activities ensures the legitimacy of the understanding in practical activities. At the same time, due to the differences in the underlying logic of different practical activities, there are also differences between diversified theories, but this difference is not irreconcilable. On the contrary, there is a subtle tension between multiple theories, which gives the possibility of mutual dialogue between different theories. The mutual dialogue between different theories is also a process of dialectical denial of the development of theory, and is an proof of the dialectical denial of the nature of development of practical activities.

Conflicts of Interest

The author declares that there is no conflict of interest regarding the publication of this article.

Funding

This research received no specific grant from any funding agency in the public, commercial or not-for-profit sectors.

References

- [1] Plato. *Phaedo*. Translated by G. M. A. Grube, *Five Dialogues: Euthyphro, Apology, Crito, Meno, Phaedo*, 2nd ed., Hackett Publishing, 2002, pp. 93-154.
- [2] Feuerbach, L. *The essence of Christianity*. Dover Publications. 2008.
- [3] Marx, Karl, and Friedrich Engels. *Selected Words*. Vol.1, Progress Publishers, 1975.
- [4] Marx, K. *Economic and philosophic manuscripts of 1844*. 1975.
- [5] Marx, K.; Engels, F. *Selected works of Marx and Engels* (Vol. 1). People's Publishing House. 2012.
- [6] Heidegger, M. *Sein und Zeit*. Tübingen: Max Niemeyer Verlag, 2006.
- [7] Marx, K.; Engels, F. *Collected works of Marx and Engels* (Vol. 1). People's Publishing House. 2009.



© 2025 by the author(s); licensee International Technology and Science Publications (ITS), this work for open access publication is under the Creative Commons Attribution International License (CC BY 4.0). (<http://creativecommons.org/licenses/by/4.0/>)