

## THE MARXIST PHILOSOPHICAL BASIS OF SOCIALIST LITERATURE AND ART

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**Abstract:** Socialist literature and art are constructed on the basis of Marxist philosophy. The “people character” of socialist literature and art is based on the fact that Marxist philosophy abandons individualism and focuses on a wider population’s freedom and happiness. Therefore, socialist literature and art take people rather than individuals as the subject of expression. Realism, the basic principle of socialist literary and artistic creation, is based on the materialism of Marxist philosophy. The “typical environment and typical characters” proposed by Marxist classic writers for socialist literary and artistic creation are the method and principle formed by applying the philosophical concepts of the organic combination of the objective world and human subjectivity, and the organic combination of nature and social history to the concrete literary and artistic creation in Marxist theory. Marxist philosophy regards sensibility and aesthetics as important elements for literature and art to play a practical role. It believes that sensibility and aesthetics are not limited to the subjective world of people, but have the possibility of connecting with the external objective world. Therefore, socialist literature and art must pay attention to aesthetics.

**Keywords:** Socialist literature and art. Marxist philosophy. People character. Realism. Aesthetics.

### INTRODUCTION

Socialist literature and art are a kind of literature and art form constructed by socialist ideology with Marxist theory as the guiding principle. To some extent, socialist literature and art are also a kind of practice that Marxist theory uses literature and art to participate in the construction of socialism. Any practice is built on a certain philosophical basis, and the philosophical

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basis of socialist literature and art is naturally Marxist philosophy. Essentially, the characteristics, creative principles and aesthetics of socialist literature and art are determined by its Marxist philosophical basis. Analyzing the Marxist philosophical basis of socialist literature and art can not only better understand the characteristics of socialist literature and art, the principles of creation and the internal decisive factors of their realization path, but also present the manifestation form of Marxist philosophy in literature and art in a clearer way, so as to have a new angle of understanding Marxist philosophy. In addition, socialist literature and art are a concept that is constantly being constructed. It should reject some sort of essentialist fixed explanation. However, no matter how it is constructed, its most basic principle content should always be fixed. For example, what is the goal of socialist literature and art and how to achieve the goal should be the core content that has always been adhered to in the process of dynamic construction. The analysis of the Marxist philosophical foundation of socialist literature and art may clarify these contents.

### **1 THE PRINCIPAL POSITION OF MAN AND THE TOTAL LIBERATION OF MANKIND: THE MARXIST PHILOSOPHICAL FOUNDATION OF THE “PEOPLE CHARACTER” OF SOCIALIST LITERATURE AND ART**

Marxist philosophy has been criticized for “seeing history but not humanity” (Peng, 2015, p. 148-152), which actually has some misunderstandings. It is not that Marxism does not pay attention to “people”, but the “people” that Marxism pays attention to are not abstract people, but people in specific historical situations. Marxism does not only focus on the concept of “people” constructed on the basis of the self, but on a wider group of people (TAN, 2016, p. 30-37), that is, in Marxism, people are not the self, but the world. In the Marxist philosophical system, the common people in the world, in the specific historical reality, are always in the most central principal position. All the theoretical systems of Marxist philosophy are to find a path for comprehensive liberation of this specific group of “people”. Marxist philosophy pays more attention to the unity of human liberation and the individuals’ overall freedom, rather than pursuing the freedom and liberation of oneself and the groups in the same class (XU, 2012, p. 25-28).

Marx believed that theoretical deductions confined to words cannot make “people” free and liberated. Only through practice can we enter the real world and change the production relations that oppress most people.

Only then can human liberation and personal freedom be realized (MARX; ENGELS, 1960, p. 22-23). But this does not mean that Marx denies the important role that theory and art can play in the realization of human liberation and individual freedom.

As pointed out by some researchers, what Marx opposed was just the empty talk of self-closing in the cage of language instead of entering the real world and putting it into practice (LU, 2014, p. 125-134). That is why he criticizes the Young Hegelians: “They just use words against words (MARX; ENGELS, 1960, p. 40).” He hoped that theories and literature and art could influence people’s thinking and understanding, thereby promoting people to enter the real world and realize social change. In this process, literature and art can play the role of “weapon of criticism (MARX; ENGELS, 1960, p. 9)”. This forms the ideological motivation of socialist literature and art. This ideological motivation can unfold on two levels. One is in the field of spiritual production. Marx once regarded literary and artistic creation as a kind of spiritual production, and the products produced are to meet people’s spiritual needs. In this field, how to realize the principal position of man in the sense of Marxist philosophy? If it is only to express the literary and artistic creators’ subjective feelings, regardless of the life feelings of more people in the real world, only a few people can obtain spiritual pleasure and enjoyment in appreciating literary and artistic works. Most of them cannot have spiritual resonance, that is not the principal position of man in the sense of Marxist philosophy. Socialist literature and art are not created for a small number of people, instead, its benefits should benefit a wider group of people. The other is the role of socialist literature and art at the level of “weapon of criticism”, that is, to promote changes in the real world. In order to achieve this goal, socialist literature and art must also leave the abstract “human” and “human” in a small range, and then pay attention to the larger group of “human” in historical reality. In socialist literature and art, this large-scale group of “human” in history is called “people” by some socialist literature and art theorists. “People character” has become an important or even fundamental feature of socialist literature and art (WEN, 2022, p. 10-12).

The “people character” of socialist literature and art has undergone a process of dynamic development, and its meaning has changed in different historical periods. In the 1940s, “people character” was more developed at the level of who is literature and art for, that is, it emphasized that literature and art serve workers, peasants and soldiers, rather than serving the bourgeoisie

and landlord class. In his *Speech at the Forum of Art and Literature in Yan'an*, Chairman Mao once criticized some works “from the standpoint of the petty bourgeoisie, and they created their works as the self-expression of the petty bourgeoisie”, while literary and artistic works should “gradually move to the side of the workers, peasants and soldiers, and to the side of the proletariat in the process of going deep into the masses of workers, peasants and soldiers and their actual struggles and in the process of studying Marxism and studying society (MAO, 1991, p. 865-867)”. After the founding of New China in 1949, “people character” has continued to have such a political meaning. During the 17-year period from 1949 to 1966, a large number of literary and artistic works were created with workers, peasants and soldiers as the main body of expression, while a few works expressing petty bourgeois sentiments were criticized politically. After the reform and opening up, the national ideology began to change its attitude towards literature and art, and the meaning of “people character” also changed to a certain extent. It is no longer a concept filled with polar opposites. There is no clear division of which part of the people is not the “people”, and the expression of personal life experience by writers and artists in their works is no longer considered to be the opposite of people’s literature and art. Therefore, the performance themes of literary and artistic works in this period have diversified characteristics.

It was in 2014 that China once again emphasized the “people character” on the ideological level. President Xi pointed out in his speech, at the symposium on literature and art work, “Socialist literature and art, in essence, are the literature and art of the people”; “Literature and art cannot deviate from the question of who they serve (XI, 2015, p. 22)”. This seems to be re-emphasizing the people’s literature and art tradition of the 1940s, but it is not simply copying the people’s literature and art of the 1940s. What should attract people’s attention most is that the people’s nature of literature and art proposed in 2014 is no longer a bipolar concept, that is, it no longer implies the confrontation and struggle between people’s groups and non-people’s groups. The ideological department of China once required satellite TV stations to broadcast main-theme TV dramas only during the prime time period, so the TV dramas broadcast during these time periods can be regarded as works that meet the socialist literary and artistic requirements advocated by the state ideology. In recent years, TV dramas, such as the *Ode to Joy Series*, which reflect the theme of urban life, have been broadcast in prime time (LIU, 2019, p. 46-51). The main characters highlighted in these TV dramas include both the ordinary working class in the city and the very wealthy capitalist class.

These characters of different classes live and struggle together in the works, and there is no confrontation and struggle among different classes at all. There are also TV dramas, such as *Feather Flies To The Sky*, that have won the Best Works Award (an award set by the national ideology department to enhance the influence of mainstream ideology), which also takes entrepreneurs as the object of expression (LIU, 2018, p. 58-66). Entrepreneurs are capitalists who are the former workers, peasants and soldiers' opposite. We can see from this that the concept of "people" in contemporary China no longer causes confrontation among the masses of workers, peasants, soldiers, the petty bourgeoisie and capitalists, but instead integrates different social strata groups, showing inclusiveness and harmony.

Although "people character" has been endowed with different meanings in different periods, it is essentially determined by the political and ideological motives of socialist literature and art, that is, it is also for the purpose of realizing the comprehensive liberation of mankind (GU, 2022, p. 25-33). Therefore, socialist literature and art refuse to sing and whisper in the small circle of creators, but focus on the broader "people" outside the self. Generally speaking, the "people character" of socialist literature and art contains three levels of content. First of all, it means that "people" are the subject of literary and artistic expression. It describes the people's life world, especially the majority of ordinary people in the people, expressing the people's joys and sorrows, rather than just showing the creator's personal feelings and life experience. Xi Jinping put forward a series of requirements and expectations for socialist literature and art workers, such as "making the people the central focus of development", "going deep into the masses and life", "loving the people", and "All aspiring and pursuing literary and art workers should follow the footsteps of the people, go out of the world, read the world, and let their hearts always beat with the hearts of the people (XI, 2016)" and so on.

In addition, "people character" also includes a correct attitude towards the people. First, socialist literature and art should praise the people and truly reflect the truth that the people are the creators of history and the decisive force in promoting social development. Wanton attacking, slandering and vilifying the people are not allowed by socialist literature and art. This does not mean that the people cannot be criticized for their shortcomings. Criticisms made for the purpose of exposing the problems and attracting the attention of healing, and sincerely hoping to awaken the people to become better people, are also in line with the purpose of serving the people. Lu Xun, for example,

a famous modern Chinese writer, criticized the national character, but his essence was to criticize the feudal ideology and culture that caused the bad root of the national character, hoping that, after changing the ideology and culture, the people could get rid of their shortcomings and become better people. Therefore, instead of being criticized by socialist ideology, Lu Xun was identified as “the standard bearer of culture”, “the soul of the nation” and “the backbone of the nation”. In addition, socialist literature and art should help the people improve their art appreciation. Lu Xun’s literary works are definitely not popular literature and art, and the admiration of his works also shows that socialist literature and art do not exclude high-level minority literature and art and blindly advocate popular literature and art that meet the public’s taste.

In fact, the constructors of socialist literature and art have always paid attention to the dialectical relationship between the popularization and improvement of literature and art, emphasizing that literature and art should be understandable to the people, and also emphasize the need to help the people improve their appreciation of literature and art. In Chairman Mao’s *Speech at the Forum of Art and Literature in Yan’an*, “how to serve the masses” is one of the key issues discussed, and the relationship between “popularization and improvement” is the foothold for his discussion of this issue (QIN, 2020, p. 21-28). President Xi pointed out in his *Speech at the Forum of Art and Literature* that socialist literature and art must have a sense of high-quality works, and that producing more high-quality works is the key to the prosperity of socialist literature and art. This further shows that socialist literature and art do not blindly pursue popularization and reject high-quality literature and art, and do not blindly cater to the people, but emphasize the dialectical unity of satisfying the people’s spiritual needs and helping the people improve their appreciation of literature and art (ZHAO, 2015, p. 20-26).

Moreover, “people character” is also reflected in the people’s position of literary and artistic creators. In the process of creation, literary and artistic creators must not forget that they are also a member of the people. They must not think that their cultural level, vision and knowledge are higher than the ordinary people’s ones. So they criticize the people from a high position in their works, and criticize the people’s shortcomings. Criticizing the people’s shortcomings and, at the same time, elevating oneself, this invisibly forms the creators and the masses’ separation, and creates a confrontation between intellectuals and ordinary people. It’s not that you can’t criticize the people, but don’t forget that you are also a member of the people while criticizing.

For example, Lu Xun, whom Chairman Mao highly admired, often does not view, criticize and educate ordinary people in his works from the intellectuals' perspective. Instead, he regards himself (expressed as the narrator of the novel in his works) as a member of the common people, and always shares the same fate with the people. Even when criticizing the people's shortcomings, it is still as a member of the people, criticizing and reflecting together.

## **2 REALISM ON THE BASIS OF MATERIALISM: THE MARXIST PHILOSOPHICAL BASIS OF THE PRINCIPLES OF SOCIALIST LITERATURE AND ART CREATION**

Marx's materialism was established on the basis of criticizing Hegel's idea of absolute spirituality. Marx was dissatisfied with the unrestrained ideas and language of the Hegelian school in the field, but was incapable of doing anything in the real world or even paid no attention to the transformation of the real world. So he parted ways with the Hegelians he believed in in his early years, and established a materialism that focuses on the objective world. From this point of view, Marx's materialism is to get rid of the tendency to attach only importance to people's subjective spiritual imagination while ignoring the objective real world. This seems to be the same as Husserl's phenomenology that, removing the cover of subjective ideas on the real world, the objective world will naturally appear (REN, 2015, p. 20-26). And Heidegger's "ontology", that "existence" is an objective world that is not covered and invaded by the subject concept, has the same meaning direction (WANG, 2022, p. 81-86).

However, under the common intention of focusing on understanding the "objective world" or "objective existence", there are important differences between Marx's materialism and Heidegger's "existence". The difference is that Heidegger's "existence" is a pure free space that completely removes the obscuring and interference of various subjective concepts, and in the process of removing the obscuring, human's subjective initiative to change the world also disappears, while the former is full of strong will and practical efforts to transform objective existence with human subjective initiative (CHEN, 2022, p. 140-143). The practice theory of Marxist philosophy maintains that people can understand the objective world through practice, and the process of practice is the process of giving full play to human subjectivity. That is to say, the objective world will not be known automatically by people, but can only be discovered and known by people through the people's subjective care. People

must start from certain subjective concepts to come to the understanding of the objective world. Therefore, “existence” in Marx’s materialist vision is the objective world under the care of human subjectivity, rather than a pure objective “image”.

The Marxist view of literature and art established on the basis of Marxist materialism naturally does not insist that literature and art depict the face of the natural world in a completely objective and calm way, and cannot require literary and art creators to restore the reality of the world with zero emotion, but pursues a “typical reality” under the care of the Marxist world view. Perhaps this is why when Engels commented on literary and artistic works, such as *Jijingen* and *City Girl*, that truly described the life of ordinary people, he pointed out that these works should strengthen the working people’s tragic situation at the bottom to portray more truly and deeply (MARX; ENGELS, 1960, p. 589-592). This is the expectation of these works: by describing the people’s suffering at the bottom, the work becomes a weapon to criticize capitalist exploitation and the people’s oppression. In fact, the Marxist theory of literature and art believes that literature and art should not only reflect the real life world, but also become an ideological weapon to change the objective world. Socialist literary and artistic works should express the laws of social and historical development through “typical environments” and “typical characters”, which not only deeply reveal historical truth, and allow people to accept socialist ideology, thereby generating material forces that change the world and promote social development.

It is on this basis that socialist realism has been established as the basic principle of socialist literary and artistic creation. Realism is an important part of the Marxist literary thought system. Engels once advocated the creative method of realism and pointed out that “typical environments and typical characters” should be used to expose and criticize the workers’ exploitation and oppression by capitalism, and to show the real life conditions of the working class (MARX; ENGELS, 1960, p. 578-579). Therefore, the Chinese socialist literature and art constructed with Marxist theory, as the philosophical basis, will naturally take realism as the basic creative principle. However, in different periods, the understanding and implementation of “realism” in socialist literature and art are not the same.

From the 1930s to before the founding of New China, socialist literature and art were largely used as part of the political propaganda work of the Communist Party of China, so realism, in this period, emphasized



that literature and art should reflect the political themes of the time. Since its founding, New China has taken the Soviet Union as a learning object for its socialist construction. Not only did it learn from the Soviet Union in terms of politics and economy, but it also imitated the Soviet Union a lot in terms of cultural construction. The realist writers promoted by the ideology of the Soviet Union, such as Gogol, Turgenev, Tolstoy, Chekhov and Gorky, and Soviet realist works, such as *Iron Flow*, *Destruction*, *How Steel Was Made*, *Young Guards*, etc., are widely known in China. In 1951, three Chinese works won the Stalin Prize in literature and art in the Soviet Union: Ding Ling's novel *The Sun Shines on the Sanggan River* (second prize); He Jingzhi and Ding Yi's opera *White Haired Girl* (second prize); Zhou Libo's novel *Storm* (third prize). These winning entries are all "realistic" works. Zhou Yang, Vice Chairman of the Chinese Writers Association (then called the National Writers' Association), wrote the article *Socialist Realism - The Way Forward for Chinese Literature* for the Soviet literary magazine "Banner". This happened after his Chinese works won awards, pointing out that the socialist literature and art that China is building must be "Learning from the Socialist Realism of Soviet Literature (Wu; Ma, 2016, p. 167)". Subsequently, the Writers Association organized leaders, writers and critics of literary and art work to study the theory of socialist realism, and designated Marx's, Engels', Stalin's, Mao Zedong's, etc. 22 works on literary and artistic issues as required reading. Since then, "socialist realism" has basically become the basic method of socialist literary and artistic creation. In 1956, the literary and art circles launched another discussion on socialist realism, and published Zhou Bo's on *Realism and Its Development in the Socialist Era* and Zhang Guangnian's *Socialist Realism Exists and Develops* in newspapers and periodicals, such as *Changjiang Literature and Art*, *Literary and Art Newspaper*. Since then, socialist realism has been established as the basic creative principle of Chinese socialist literature and art (HONG, 1996, p. 60-75).

However, once socialist realism is established as a principle and has a decisive impact on literary and artistic creation, many of its negative effects will follow. The most prominent problem is that the artistry of literary and artistic creation is suppressed by ideology. Literary and artistic creators must reflect real life according to political themes. However, the real life that political themes require them to reflect is often the other people's they are not familiar with. Therefore, many writers and artists are forced to give up their familiar life experience to write about the others' life world that they are not familiar with, so some works are written very bluntly. Some writers

and artists have spent a lot of energy collecting folk songs, that is, going to the countryside or other grassroots to understand and be familiar with the people's lives, and then reflect the people's lives in their works, so as to meet the requirements of socialist realism. There are also some famous writers and artists in the 1930s who chose not to engage in literary creation because they could not write about other people's real life. Obviously, this has stifled some writers and artists' creativity to a certain extent (DING, 1999, p. 58-64).

After entering the 1980s, the national ideology no longer required "socialist realism" for literary and artistic creation, but encouraged writers and artists to use the methods they are good at to carry out creations that meet the requirements of the "main theme" of the country, that is, "promote the main theme and advocate diversification". Over the next thirty years, Chinese literature and art developed simultaneously in two directions. One is the rise of individualistic creations, modernist creations and postmodernist ones that have been suppressed before. The other is that realistic creations that focus on social and people's livelihood have also continued to develop. The latter not only received strong support from national ideology. For example, most of the winning works of various government-sponsored literary awards were the latter, but also received strong praise from academic critics, who believed that these works assumed the social responsibility of intellectuals (LIU, 2014, p. 171-172).

At a time when marketization is increasingly affecting literary creation and the logic of capital is controlling literature and art more and more, the realism advocated by socialist literature and art begins to show its positive significance. Some researchers pointed out, "From the perspective of creation, socialist realism literature suppresses individuality, but the writer's enthusiasm for deeply intervening in reality in an attempt to construct an era in the text and influence the people of an era has practical significance. Perhaps in the state of lack of artistry, this kind of enthusiasm is not important to some people, and it is just the result of politics over art. However, if we put aside our prejudices and return some issues to the level of the writer's professional attitude and creative resources, we may get new inspiration from socialist realism literature. From the perspective of production and dissemination, the realism creation mode for the public has formed a wonderful echo relationship with the production mode of film and television dramas, comics, and games that we are familiar with in a non-market state. They are by no means the same thing, but they also remind us that in this era of increasingly niche literature,

the reason why “popularization” and “creation for the people” is difficult to achieve lies in the barriers of concepts and the limitations of abilities, not the insoluble problems themselves” (ZHANG, 2022, p. 68-73).

This seems to indicate that, in today’s cultural context, people’s views on realism have undergone fundamental changes. In their view, realism once suppressed the individuality of literary and artistic creation. However, with some reframing of realism, it is entirely possible to make the word glow in a positive sense. This kind of positive meaning can enable literature and art to maintain its independence under the impact of capital logic. Therefore, it can be said that the inner meaning and form of expression of “realism” have undergone major changes compared with those in the 1940s and 1970s. This change makes realism closer to the true face of Marxism and more in line with the spirit of Marxist philosophy. When Marx and Engels advocated literature and art to reflect social history and the people’s life world at the bottom, most people interpreted it as literature and art should serve political purposes. In fact, maybe we should notice that Marx and Engels hoped to liberate most of the oppressed people from the oppression of capital. Realism is a means for literature and art to achieve this goal, but for a long time during the development and construction of socialist literature and art, we regarded this means as an absolute principle and dogma, which instead formed a constraint on the realization of the goal of human liberation. Fortunately, in recent years, more and more people have realized this point. Literary and art creators and critics are reconstructing “realism”, integrating modern consciousness and the spirit of realism in the new era into the new “realism”. It is expected that this reconstruction effort will enable “realism” to lead socialist literature and art to find the channel of human liberation in the siege of capital.

This new understanding of “realism” is also reflected in the supervision of socialist literature and art by national ideology in recent years. The approval process for the 2017 TV drama *In the Name of People*, which attracted wide attention, illustrates this point. Zhou Meisen, a writer who created the TV drama *In the Name of People*, sent it to state authorities for approval. He expected to delete at least five episodes and revise it 1,000 times, but the review was approved in just 10 days, with few major changes or cuts required (Liu, 2019, p. 46-51). The fact that the TV series became popular later proved that it was correct not to make a large number of cuts and changes. Socialist literature and art on the main theme should fully consider the people’s

concerns and reflect the real situation in the real world, rather than be written according to political intentions.

The realistic creation principle of socialist literature and art is a special way of dealing with realistic situation constructed on the basis of Marxist materialism. The Marxist view of literature and art hopes that realism can make literature and art reflect the true state of the objective world. It is just that the purpose of reflecting reality at that time became a political intention, so that later socialist literature and art mistakenly turned realism into reflecting political intentions, thus deviating from objective reality. This actually runs counter to the original intention of Marxist materialism. When materialism becomes politicalism, and objectiveness becomes subjective, literature and art therefore embark on a narrow path. When realism returns to Marx's original expectations, subjective political intentions no longer interfere with it too much. When it truly reflects the realities of life of the people's broad masses, socialist literature and art may be able to regain vigor and vitality.

### **3 THE POWER OF SENSIBILITY: THE MARXIST PHILOSOPHICAL BASIS OF THE AESTHETICS OF SOCIALIST LITERATURE AND ART**

In German classical philosophy, sensibility and the feeling of beauty are suppressed to a certain extent, because classical philosophy respects ideas and thinking, and despises the power of sensibility. Hegel recognized the revolutionary power of aesthetics, which can awaken people's awareness of resistance and has an emancipatory nature, but he believed that beauty is the product of people's rational thinking, rather than being directly triggered by sensibility. A literary image is a reflection of an idea existing in the form of an idea. Some people break through the cover of reason and discover and point out that sensibility is an important way to realize aesthetics. For example, Schiller believes that people's perceptual impulses play a more fundamental role in the aesthetic process than rational thinking (SCHILLER, 1984, p. 106); Marxist philosophy is obviously influenced by these theories. However, the materialism stance of Marxist philosophy makes the position of subjectivity "idea" in aesthetics drop significantly, and the importance of objectivity "sensibility" in aesthetics becomes more prominent.

Philosophers who respect and value sensibility are often prone to belittle rationality and lose the rational connection with the external objective reality world, thus maintaining a tense relationship with the external world

and indulging in the perceptual aesthetic world constructed by themselves, making their philosophical propositions lose the possibility of changing the real world. For example, Freud was indulged in the “daydreams” constructed by himself (SCHILLER, 2009, p. 113), and his criticality to reality was greatly reduced; Heidegger lived poetically in the illusory world of language, but he could not generate the power of reality in the cage of language. Unlike some philosophers who admire sensibility and regard sensibility and aesthetics as a beautiful paradise, Marxist philosophy regards sensibility and aesthetics as an important shaking force that can break through the old order. The introduction of the concept of “practice” in Marxist philosophy breaks the traditional “subject-object” thinking mode, and puts forward the statement that practice is the objectification of human nature, thus communicating the subject and the object with practice (ZHU, 2014, p. 26-33). This makes sensibility and aesthetics no longer limited to people’s subjective world, but has the possibility to connect with the external objective world, so that sensibility and aesthetics can become a driving force for social change.

When Marx and Engels criticized the ideological constraints of ideology on people, they keenly pointed out that it is impossible to win a complete victory by opposing words with words, and that the real elimination of the influence of erroneous ideas on people must be done by changing conditions rather than by theoretical deduction. Sensibility and aesthetics are another way of affecting people that is different from rational logic. The rich diversity of human feeling determines that it cannot be completely bound by a simplistic idea, so sensibility and aesthetics are always easy. Discovering the flaws in false ideas makes people spontaneously reflect and doubt the interpretation of the world provided by false ideas. Therefore, socialist literature and art are also placed on such high hopes. Through literature and art, people’s rich feelings are aroused to question false ideologies, and then subversive forces are generated.

Therefore, on the one hand, Marxism emphasizes the “historical standard” of literature and art, that is, it advocates that literature and art should reflect social history and real life, express the law of social and historical development through “typical environments” and “typical characters”, and profoundly reveal historical truth, rather than just expressing personal encounters. This is the inevitable requirement of Marxism for the realization of the revolutionary nature of literature and art. But at the same time, we should also note that Marxism also emphasizes the “aesthetic standard” of literature

and art. Marxist philosophy has fully noticed that literature and art are not words and phrases of theoretical speculation, but to activate people's sensibility through literature and art images and produce aesthetic pleasure. This process subtly affects or even changes people's ideas. Therefore, Marx and Engels paid great attention to the irrational aesthetics in literary and artistic works. Marx believed that the art of the ancient Greek period was the peak of human art, just like a child's innocence can make artistic achievement reach a very high level. However, once adults have mature reason, they lose their innocence, so that they can never surpass the artistic achievements of childhood. This fully shows that Marx believes that the aesthetics of literature and art is not within rational logic, but within another set of perceptual logic. When evaluating literary and artistic works, Engels also pointed out that literary and artistic works should express the writers and artists' ideas and concepts. But the more subtle the expression, the better the effect. This shows that both Marx and Engels paid full attention to the influence of sensibility and aesthetic power on people. Literature and art are different from theoretical speculation, but arouse people's sensibility through literary and artistic images, so as to form subtly certain concepts in the process of aesthetic production. There is a huge revolutionary force in this, which can cause a shaking force to false ideas.

In the practice of socialist literature and art construction in China, there have been cases where political goals overwhelmed the aesthetics of literature and art. For example, in the 1930s, Chinese revolutionary literature paid special attention to the political purpose of literature and art, and used literature and art as a means of propaganda. There was nothing wrong with this in itself, but when the pursuit of political propaganda suppresses the aesthetics of literature and art, and the theoretical dogma suffocates the readers' perceptual perception of literature and art, the revolutionary power of perceptual aesthetics contained in literature and art is actually weakened. For example, in the 1930s, when Mao Dun, a famous modern Chinese writer, was writing his novel *Midnight*, he followed the advice of the Communist Qu Qiubai, an early leader of the Communist Party of China and an outstanding literary theorist, and revised the novel according to political standards.

However, many literary critics believed that the revised part was the same as the rest of the novel. The narration based on the real feeling of life is too blunt. When readers see such novels, they are not able to activate their perceptual perceptions, and then have a real psychological identification with political ideas. They will only feel estranged, thus losing the emotional power

of literature and art, and unable to accomplish the task of revolution effectively. During the ‘Seventeen Years’ literature period after the founding of the People’s Republic of China, many literary and artistic works overemphasized the political nature, resulting in the weakening of sensibility and aesthetics. A similar situation also occurred in the creation of model dramas during the Cultural Revolution after the founding of New China. The attempt to publicize and interpret political ideas overwhelmed the sensibility and aesthetics of literature and art, which makes the model play, although illustrating political concepts, lose the aesthetic power of sensibility contained in literature and art. Actually, the loss outweighs the gain. Because propaganda and interpretation of political ideas can be carried out in theoretical logic through propaganda, education and other forms. It is a unique advantage of literature and art to profoundly affect people’s cognition in the logic of literature and art through sensibility and aesthetics. The loss of this advantage is a great loss of socialist literature and art.

In fact, Marxist philosophy particularly emphasizes and values the aesthetics of literature and art. Not only did Marx, Engels and others emphasize repeatedly in their comments on literary and artistic works that they should pay attention to the aesthetic nature of literature and art when revealing reality, but also realized the use of aesthetics to reflect reality in some socialist literary and artistic creators’ works. For example, Qu Qiubai, who emphasizes the political nature of literature and art, not only put forward many theoretical principles about socialist literature and art in literature and art theory to guide the creation of literature and art, but also engaged in the creation of prose. In his two collections of essays, *The Chronicles of Hungry Township* and *The Heart of Chidu*, not only achieved the realm of “typical truth” expected by Engels by depicting the ordinary people’s living conditions, but also used real insights to explain Marxist theory specifically, and, at the same time, integrated real and simple emotions into the meticulous description, which can resonate with the reader at the perceptual level, so that the reader perceives and identifies with Marxist theory at the aesthetic level during the reading process. Another example is Chairman Mao’s poetry, which is also a model of a high degree of unity between politics and aesthetics. All these examples can prove that it is completely possible to achieve political goals through sensibility and aesthetics advocated by Marxist philosophy, and this is also the correct path that socialist literature and art should take.

In a country like China, where socialist ideology has already dominated, does it still need to develop the aesthetics of socialist literature and art? The answer is yes. Today's China is facing the problem of capital controlling people at the cultural level pointed out by the Frankfurt School. The logic of capital has penetrated into literature and art, making literary and artistic creation completely swayed by commercial logic. "Searching for novelties, blindly kitsch, and vulgar tastes, treating works as a 'cash cow' for chasing interests, and as an 'ecstasy' for sensory stimulation." In order to obtain commercial benefits quickly, some creators "make things up, rough and far-fetched," and create a pile of rubbish, and some "pursued luxury, over-packaged, and ostentatiously ostentatious; there are also some literary and artistic works that, while taking the initiative to stay away from commercial logic, are also divorced from the current real life", and "make a big fuss over a minor issue" (LU, 2006, p. 50-54). In such an environment, socialist literature and art have been entrusted with a major mission, that is, to guide people out of the shackles of capital logic and onto the road of liberation. Therefore, the struggle of socialist literature and art still needs to be emphasized, but this struggle and aesthetics are unified rather than opposed. That kind of opportunistic literary and artistic creation, which grasps a political theme and then conceptualizes it bluntly, is incapable of fulfilling the mission undertaken by socialist literature and art. It must be the creator's high-level creation through the accumulation of true emotions, so that it is possible to resonate with readers in the aesthetic and emotional dimensions, and this can make it possible for people to embark on the road to liberation. Perhaps this is what Engels said, the more subtle the subjective intention expressed in literary and artistic works, the better the inner meaning. That is to say, the more implicit the concept, the less the power of sensibility and aesthetics will be suppressed, and the stronger the power of sensibility and aesthetics will explode, the easier it will be for people to accept the concepts contained in it.

## CONCLUSION

Marxist philosophy regards the existing society as a reality that should be transformed. Socialism means that human beings can enjoy more freedom and greater happiness in it.<sup>18</sup> Socialist literature and art are also an important part of the socialist system. As a fundamental decisive force, Marxist philosophy fundamentally determines some of the most basic characteristics and norms of socialist literature and art. The philosophical foundation of



Marxism guarantees from the inside that socialist literature and art always pay attention to the people's freedom and happiness. It plays a unique role in realizing the ideal of human liberation in Marxist philosophy.

LIU, Z. La base filosófica marxista de la literatura y el arte socialistas. *Transformação*, Marília, v. 46, n. 3, p. 255-274, Jul./Set., 2023.

**Resumen:** El arte y la literatura socialistas se construyen sobre la base de la filosofía marxista. El "carácter popular" de la literatura y el arte socialistas se basa en el hecho de que la filosofía marxista abandona el individualismo y se centra en la libertad y la felicidad de una población más amplia. Por lo tanto, el arte y la literatura socialistas toman como sujeto de expresión a las personas y no a los individuos. El realismo, principio fundamental de la creación literaria y artística socialista, se basa en el materialismo de la filosofía marxista. El "ambiente típico y los caracteres típicos" propuesto por los escritores clásicos marxistas para la creación literaria y artística socialista es el método y el principio formado por la aplicación de los conceptos filosóficos de la combinación orgánica del mundo objetivo y la subjetividad humana, y la combinación orgánica de la naturaleza y la historia social a la creación literaria y artística concreta en la teoría marxista. La filosofía marxista considera la sensibilidad y la estética como elementos importantes para que la literatura y el arte jueguen un papel práctico. Cree que la sensibilidad y la estética no se limitan al mundo subjetivo de las personas, sino que tienen la posibilidad de conectarse con el mundo objetivo externo. Por lo tanto, el arte y la literatura socialistas deben prestar atención a la estética.

**Palabras clave:** Literatura y arte socialistas. filosofía marxista. carácter de la gente. Realismo. Estética.

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