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# Re-examining the Core Philosophical Views of Marx and Engels From the Perspective of the Unified Complex Systems Theory

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With holism, dynamics, interconnectedness, and emergence as its core characteristics, the Unified Complex Systems Theory (UCST) focuses on the evolutionary laws and intrinsic mechanisms of multi-element, multi-level, and multi-dimensional systems, providing a scientific analytical framework for accurately judging the existence and development of various complex phenomena. The core philosophical views of Marx and Engels, including historical materialism, dialectics, alienation theory, and communism theory, have sparked extensive debates since their proposal—garnering numerous adherents while also facing sharp criticisms—and continue to exert a certain influence on the global intellectual and political arenas. Based on the perspective of the UCST, this paper draws on both the interpretations and developments of their views by proponents such as Lenin, Lukács, and Habermas, as well as the doubts and reflections raised by critics like Popper, Russell, and Hayek. From the dual dimensions of theoretical logic and practical verification, it comprehensively analyzes the theoretical value and inherent limitations of Marx and Engels' core philosophical views. Incorporating practical cases from multiple countries and academic research findings, this study aims to provide a neutral, objective, and pluralistic reference for the rational understanding of Marxist philosophy.

*Keywords:* Unified Complex Systems Theory (UCST), Marx, Engels, philosophical views, pluralistic examination, proponents, critics

## Introduction

Proposed by the research team led by Weicheng Cui at Westlake University, the Unified Complex Systems Theory (UCST) is constructed on the basis of an in-depth comparison and integration of mainstream contemporary complex systems theories in recent years (Cui, Li, & Pan, 2025). The core innovations of this theory are reflected in four dimensions: (1) Dualist mind-body ontology: Transcending materialist monism; (2) Introduction of active force: Unifying the dynamics of living and non-living entities; (3) Axiomatic unification: Integrating micro-macro and cross-scale systems; (4) Postmaterialist expansion: Bridging science, ethics, and spirituality.

This theory not only breaks through the limitations of traditional linear thinking, reductionism, and determinism, but also defines its research objects as "organic wholes composed of multiple interacting and interrelated elements that include both living and non-living entities". It corely emphasizes the essential characteristics of system evolution, such as dynamics, uncertainty, nonlinear correlation, and holistic emergence (Cui et al., 2025).

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Complex systems exist extensively at all levels of nature and human society—from microcosmic particle systems to macroscopic cosmic systems, and from natural ecosystems to human social systems. Their evolutionary processes are driven by the dual effects of the interaction of internal elements and the changes of external environments, where there exist no absolutely unified and rigid laws of evolution, nor any pre-determined evolutionary endpoints.

As the founders of Marxist philosophy, Marx and Engels have had their core philosophical views become a focal point of academic debates since their inception. Historical materialism reveals the dialectical relationship between productive forces and production relations, as well as between the economic base and the superstructure, providing a perspective for understanding the development of human society; dialectics breaks through the cognitive limitations of metaphysics and elaborates on the dynamic laws of things' development; the theory of alienation criticizes the inherent contradictions of capitalist society in that era; and the theory of communism depicts an ideal vision for humanity's pursuit of freedom and liberation (Marx & Engels, 2012). These views have not only been inherited and developed by thinkers such as Lenin (2012), Lukács (1999), Gramsci (2014), and Habermas (1993), and become the guiding ideology for revolution and construction in many countries, but also faced sharp criticisms from philosophers including Popper (2015), Russell (2016), and Hayek (1997), who argued that these views have inherent flaws in theoretical logic and potential risks in practice.

At present, academic research on Marxist philosophy either inclines to defense and interpretation, or focuses on criticism and negation, lacking a neutral examination based on scientific theories and practical facts. Based on the core perspective of the UCST, this paper both absorbs the in-depth interpretations of Marx and Engels' core views by their proponents and draws on the rational reflections of their critics to systematically analyze the rationality and limitations of these theories. It aims to break through the constraints of a single cognitive dimension and promote a comprehensive and rational understanding of the laws governing the development of human society.

## Theoretical Origin: Affirmation and Criticism of the Core Views of Marx and Engels

Since their inception, the core philosophical views of Marx and Engels have given rise to two distinct camps in the philosophical circle: one affirming them and the other criticizing them. Proponents have enriched and developed their theoretical system from diverse perspectives, while critics have directly pointed out the flaws in their theories in terms of logic, methodology, and practice. These two contrasting viewpoints together form a pluralistic interpretation of the philosophical thoughts of Marx and Engels, providing an important foundation for an impartial examination of their theoretical value.

### Historical Materialism: Exploration and Controversy Over the Laws of Historical Development

As a core component of Marxist philosophy, historical materialism's discussions on the driving forces and evolutionary paths of human social development are not only the theoretical cornerstone adhered to by proponents but also the focus of concentrated questioning by critics. Table 1 presents the main viewpoints of representative figures from both camps as well as the comments of this paper.

Table 1

*Debates on Historical Materialism and Comments of This Paper*

| Core philosophical views of Marx and Engels | Main views of proponents | Main views of critics | Views of the UCST |
|---|---|---|---|
| The development of human society is a natural historical process driven by the contradictions between productive forces and production relations, as well as between the economic base and the superstructure. It has objective regularity and will eventually move towards communism. | Lenin emphasized that historical materialism reveals the essential laws of social development and provides scientific theoretical guidance for the proletarian revolution. His assertion that the economic base determines the superstructure accurately grasps the core contradictions of the social system (Lenin, 2012a); from the perspective of historical materialism, Lukács believed that historical materialism achieves a holistic understanding of the development of human society and overcomes the one-sidedness of bourgeois thought (Lukács, 1999); although Habermas reconstructed traditional historical materialism, he recognized its core logic that regards economic factors as an important driving force for social development, believing that it provides an important starting point for analyzing modern society (Habermas, 1993). | Popper pointed out that historical materialism falls into the misunderstanding of historical determinism, regarding social development as a fixed linear process, ignoring the influence of uncertain factors such as knowledge growth and individual choice, and violating the principle of scientific falsifiability (Popper, 2015); Russell believed that historical materialism regards economic factors as the sole driving force for social development, ignoring the independent role of politics, culture, ideology, and other elements, falling into single-factor determinism (Russell, 2016); Hayek criticized the presupposition of social development laws in historical materialism, arguing that complex social systems have no preset evolutionary paths, and their evolution is characterized by spontaneity and uncertainty (Hayek, 1997). | Human society is an open system with diverse elements and complex connections. The contradiction between productive forces and production relations is an important driving force for social development, but not the sole one. Politics, culture, individual behavior, natural environment, and other elements also play a key role; the evolution of social systems has objective correlation and dynamic uncertainty, and there are no absolutely fixed evolutionary laws or preset endpoints. Its development is the result of the joint action of the interaction of internal elements and changes in the external environment, with both regularity and contingency (Cui et al., 2025; Cui, 2025; Cui & Pan, 2025). |

**Dialectics: Interpretation and Questioning of the Laws of Thing Development**

The materialist dialectics formed by Marx and Engels through transforming Hegel's dialectics, with the laws of unity of opposites, mutual transformation of quality and quantity, and negation of negation as the core, has become the methodological basis for their analysis of nature and society. This methodology has triggered continuous support and debates in academic circles. Table 2 presents the main viewpoints of representative figures from both camps as well as the comments of this paper.

Table 2

*Main Debates on Dialectics and Comments of This Paper*

| Core philosophical views of Marx and Engels | Main views of proponents | Main views of critics | Views of the UCST |
|---|---|---|---|
| The law of unity of opposites is the fundamental law of thing development, the law of mutual transformation of quality and quantity reveals the form and state of thing development, and the law of negation of negation shows the trend and path of | Lenin highly evaluated the scientific value of dialectics, regarding it as the "algebra of revolution". As the core of dialectics, the law of unity of opposites accurately grasps the contradictory movement within things (Lenin, 2012a); Gramsci | Russell criticized dialectics for having serious logical fallacies, absolutizing the unity of opposites, ignoring various relational forms such as coordination, complementarity and irrelevance between things, and falling into dualistic | The connections between elements in complex systems are diverse. Oppositional conflict and cooperative synergy are coexisting core relational forms that jointly promote system evolution, and there is no single "fundamental |

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| thing development. The three together constitute the internal logic of thing development. | emphasized the practicality of dialectics, arguing that it is not an abstract logical system but a tool for guiding revolutionary practice and understanding social changes (Gramsci, 2014); Sartre proposed "existentialist dialectics", inheriting the dynamic development perspective of dialectics, and believing that it reveals the dialectical relationship between human practical activities and social development (Sartre, 1998). | opposition thinking (Russell, 2016); Popper believed that the "negation of negation" law of dialectics is vague and unfalsifiable, and cannot provide clear guidance for specific scientific research (Popper, 2015); members of the Vienna Circle such as Schlick and Carnap argued that dialectics violates logical rules, with vague concepts and imprecise reasoning, and does not belong to a scientific thinking method (Schlick, 1974; Carnap, 1967; Kraft, 1953). | law"; quantitative change and qualitative change are intertwined in system evolution without absolute boundaries. Qualitative change can be achieved through the accumulation of quantitative change or triggered by external mutations; system evolution is a dynamic and open innovative process, not a mechanical cycle of "affirmation—negation—negation of negation", but an evolutionary path with both continuity and breakthrough, diversity, and innovation. |

**Theory of Alienation: Critique and Controversy of Capitalism**

Marx's theory of alienation focuses on the phenomenon of labor alienation in capitalist society and conducts an in-depth critique of the inherent contradictions of the capitalist system. This theory has not only been recognized and developed by numerous scholars but also faced extensive challenges. Table 3 presents the viewpoints of the main representatives of the two schools and the comments of this paper.

Table 3

*Debates on the Theory of Alienation and Comments of This Paper*

| Core philosophical views of Marx and Engels | Main views of proponents | Main views of critics | Views of the UCST |
|---|---|---|---|
| In capitalist society, private ownership gives rise to the alienation of labor products, the labor process, human species-being, and interpersonal relationships. Alienation constitutes an inherent contradiction of the capitalist system. | Georg Lukács integrated the theory of alienation with class consciousness, arguing that alienation is a universal phenomenon in capitalist society and that the proletariat's class consciousness is crucial for overcoming alienation (Lukács, 1999). Erich Fromm further developed the theory, noting from a psychoanalytic perspective that alienation in capitalist society manifests not only in the sphere of labor but also permeates various aspects such as consumption and interpersonal relationships (Fromm, 2015). Jean-Paul Sartre endorsed the theory's critique of capitalism, maintaining that it reveals the loss of individual freedom in capitalist society (Sartre, 2012). | Isaiah Berlin criticized the theory for its one-sided interpretation of capitalist society, arguing that it overlooks capitalism's progressive role in advancing productive forces and safeguarding individual rights, and that simplistically attributing alienation to private ownership reflects reductionist thinking (Berlin, 2003). Karl Popper held that the theory lacks falsifiability, with its vague definition of "species-being" rendering it unverifiable through practice (Popper, 2009). Joseph Schumpeter pointed out that capitalist society possesses self-regulatory capabilities in its development, which can alleviate alienation to a certain extent, and that alienation is not an absolutely inherent attribute of capitalism (Schumpeter, 2023). | The phenomenon of alienation arises from the interaction of multiple elements within the complex social system. While private ownership is a significant contributing factor, it is not the sole determinant. Cultural ideas, social structures, individual psychology, and institutional design may also lead to alienation. Every social system has dual characteristics: Capitalist society exhibits defects such as alienation while also demonstrating progressive significance in advancing productive forces, institutional innovation, and cultural prosperity. The emergence and resolution of alienation constitute a dynamic and complex process of systemic evolution. |

**Theory of Communism: Expectations and Doubts Regarding the Vision of an Ideal Society**

The communist society depicted by Marx and Engels, as the ideal form of human social development, has

not only become the goal pursued by countless individuals but also sparked extensive debates regarding its feasibility. Table 4 presents the viewpoints of the main representatives of the two schools and the comments of this paper.

Table 4

*Debates on the Theory of Communism and Comments of This Paper*

| Core philosophical views of Marx and Engels | Main views of proponents | Main views of critics | Views of the UCST |
|---|---|---|---|
| Communist society will eliminate class exploitation and oppression, realize public ownership of the means of production, abolish commodity-money relations, implement the principle of "from each according to his ability, to each according to his needs", and ultimately achieve the free and all-round development of human beings. | Vladimir Lenin inherited the theory of communism, holding that it pointed out the direction for the proletarian revolution. The victory of the October Revolution stands as a significant achievement in the practice of the theory, laying the foundation for the realization of human emancipation (Lenin, 2012a). Mao Zedong developed the theory by integrating it with China's realities, proposing a path toward socialism through the New Democratic Revolution and ultimately achieving communism (Mao, 1991). Jürgen Habermas, while advocating for the "reconstruction of historical materialism", acknowledged the core value of the pursuit of human freedom and emancipation embedded in the theory of communism, considering it an ideal reference for the development of modern society (Habermas, 1999). | Friedrich Hayek criticized the planned economy model advocated by the theory of communism for contradicting the decentralized information characteristics of complex social systems. Central planning cannot grasp all social information, inevitably leading to inefficient resource allocation and social rigidity (Hayek, 2000). Karl Popper argued that communist society represents a utopia divorced from the evolutionary laws of complex systems, ignoring the diversity and uncertainty of social development, and that its presupposed "ultimate goal" violates the dynamic evolutionary nature of complex systems (Popper, 2015). Robert Nozick, from a liberal perspective, maintained that public ownership of the means of production would infringe upon individual rights, and the distribution principle in the theory of communism contradicts individual freedom and justice (Nozick, 1991). | Human society is an open and dynamic complex system, and its evolution exhibits diversity and uncertainty. There exists no uniform social form or ultimate goal applicable to all countries and regions. Public ownership of the means of production and the market economy are not absolutely opposed; resource allocation in complex social systems requires leveraging the advantages of both centralized coordination and decentralized decision-making. The free and all-round development of human beings is an ideal pursuit with value rationality, yet the path to its realization must align with the elemental characteristics and evolutionary laws of specific social systems. It should be promoted through incremental reforms and systematic optimization rather than pursuing a single model of an ultimate state. |

## Multidimensional Analysis of the Core Views of Marx and Engels From the Perspective of the UCST

The UCST emphasizes that all complex systems possess core characteristics such as the plurality of elements, nonlinearity of relations, dynamics of evolution and uncertainty of outcomes, and their evolutionary processes represent a unity of regularity and contingency, as well as unity and diversity (Cui et al., 2025; Cui, 2025; Cui & Pan, 2025; Miao, 2006). The core philosophical views of Marx and Engels (2012) to a certain extent conform to some characteristics of complex systems and demonstrate important theoretical value (Miao, 2004; Zhang, 2020); meanwhile, due to the limitations of their times, these views have certain inadequacies that are inconsistent with the evolutionary laws of complex systems, thus requiring an objective analysis from a multidimensional perspective.

**Historical Materialism: Rationality and Limitations of the Laws Governing Social Development**

The theoretical contribution of historical materialism lies in its astute identification of the core contradictions within social systems, namely the productive forces and relations of production, as well as the economic base and superstructure. It reveals the fundamental role of economic factors in social development, breaks through the one-sidedness of idealist conceptions of history that attribute social development to spiritual forces, and provides a crucial analytical dimension for understanding the overall evolution of social systems. From the perspective of complex systems, historical materialism emphasizes the integrity and interconnectedness of social systems, recognizing that the development of productive forces, as a core element of social systems, triggers a chain reaction in other elements such as relations of production and the superstructure, which aligns with the basic characteristics of interactions between elements in complex systems. The development of historical materialism by proponents such as Vladimir Lenin and Georg Lukács further highlights its grasp of the dynamic evolution of social systems. For instance, the principle of "totality" emphasized by Lukács is inherently consistent with the holistic nature of complex systems.

However, historical materialism also has obvious limitations of its era and theoretical deficiencies. Firstly, by regarding productive forces as the "ultimate determining force" of social development, historical materialism to some extent neglects the relative independence and counteractive effects of elements such as politics, culture, ideology, and individual behavior, falling into the trap of single-factor determinism, which is inconsistent with the characteristics of plurality and equality of elements in complex systems. In complex social systems, changes in cultural concepts, innovations in political systems, and creative practices of individuals can all serve as important driving forces for social development, rather than merely being dependent on the development of productive forces (Cui, 2025; Cui & Pan, 2025). Secondly, historical materialism depicts the development of human society as a linear evolutionary path from primitive society, slave society, feudal society, capitalist society to communist society, presupposing fixed stages and an endpoint of development, which contradicts the diversity and uncertainty of the evolution of complex systems (Cui et al., 2025). Historical practice has shown that due to differences in elements such as historical culture, geographical environment, and social structure, the development paths of different countries exhibit significant diversity and do not follow a uniform linear law.

**Dialectics: Value and Limitations of a Thinking Tool**

The theoretical value of dialectics lies in its breakthrough from the static and isolated thinking of metaphysics, emphasizing the dynamic development and universal connection of things. The laws of the unity of opposites, the transformation of quantity into quality, and the negation of negation reveal the dynamic characteristics of the evolution of things from different dimensions, which are inherently consistent with the dynamic and interconnected nature of complex systems. Lenin referred to dialectics as the "algebra of revolution" precisely because dialectics provides a thinking tool for analyzing the contradictory movement of things and grasping developmental trends, enabling people to understand the interactive relationships and evolutionary directions of elements in complex systems. The development of dialectics by proponents such as Antonio Gramsci and Jean-Paul Sartre has further strengthened its practicality and integrity, making it more suitable for the analysis of complex social systems.

Nevertheless, dialectics also has limitations in terms of logic and application. Firstly, Marx and Engels regarded the law of the unity of opposites as the "fundamental law" of the development of things, which to some extent downplays the importance of other relationships between elements in the system, such as coordination and

complementarity, and is prone to binary oppositional thinking (Cui, 2025). In complex systems, the connections between elements are diverse, and both oppositional conflicts and collaborative cooperation jointly promote system evolution. For example, in economic systems, market competition (opposition) and win-win cooperation (coordination) are coexisting core mechanisms. Overemphasizing the unity of opposites alone will lead to a one-sided interpretation of the relationships between things. Secondly, the interpretation of the laws of the transformation of quantity into quality and the negation of negation in dialectics is somewhat rigid, regarding the accumulation of quantitative changes as the only path to qualitative change and simplifying the development of things into a mechanical cycle of "affirmation—negation—negation of negation", which is inconsistent with the characteristics of sudden changes and innovation in the evolution of complex systems. In complex systems, sudden changes in the external environment and breakthroughs in core elements can both trigger qualitative changes in the system. For example, the transformation of social systems brought about by scientific and technological revolutions does not stem from the long-term accumulation of quantitative changes. Meanwhile, the evolution of systems is an open process involving innovation and breakthroughs, rather than a simple cycle of repetition.

**Theory of Alienation: Profundity and One-Sidedness of Social Criticism**

The profundity of the theory of alienation lies in its accurate capture of phenomena such as labor alienation and interpersonal alienation in capitalist society, revealing the inherent contradictions of the capitalist system, and providing an important theoretical weapon for social criticism (Harvey, 2017). From the perspective of complex systems, the theory of alienation focuses on problems caused by the imbalance of elements in social systems, that is, the contradiction between the institutional element of private ownership and labor as an essential human activity leads to the distortion of system functions, which reflects an understanding of the integrity and interconnectedness of social systems. The development of the theory of alienation by proponents such as Georg Lukács and Erich Fromm has further expanded its scope of application, revealing the universality and complexity of alienation phenomena in modern society and deepening the understanding of the defects of social systems.

Although the theory of alienation has significant value in criticizing capitalist exploitation and revealing the loss of individual freedom, it also has obvious one-sidedness and is difficult to fully adapt to complex social realities. Firstly, the theory's simplistic attribution of the root causes of alienation phenomena to the intertwined and mutually influential nature of capitalism is inconsistent with reality. In fact, alienation is not an exclusive product of capitalist private ownership; it can also occur in the context of socialist public ownership. In complex social systems, the emergence of alienation phenomena is the result of the dynamic game and interaction of multiple elements such as economic systems, cultural concepts, social structures, power operation mechanisms, and individual psychological demands, and is by no means determined by a single institutional factor. From a practical perspective, regardless of the social form or institutional environment, various forms and degrees of alienation phenomena may exist, such as power alienation, consumption alienation, labor alienation, and technological alienation. Their root causes often run through multiple social elements and are not limited to the single dimension of private ownership.

Secondly, the theory of alienation places excessive emphasis on the negative aspects in its interpretation of capitalist society, ignoring its historical progressiveness and self-regulatory capacity as a specific stage in the evolution of human social systems. Complex social systems inherently possess the characteristics of self-

optimization and dynamic adaptation. In the long-term development process, capitalist society has not been mired in the predicament of alienation; instead, through various means such as institutional innovation, welfare system reform, technological iteration and upgrading, and the reconciliation of labor-capital relations, it has alleviated the contradictions of alienation in core areas to a certain extent, and promoted the continuous development of productive forces, the improvement of social welfare, and the progress of human civilization. Merely exaggerating the drawbacks of alienation in capitalist society while ignoring its progressiveness and adaptability will inevitably lead to a one-sided understanding of the laws governing the development of social systems, making it difficult to objectively grasp the overall picture of the evolution of human society.

From the perspective of practical cases, although Nordic countries such as Sweden, Norway, and Denmark are still essentially capitalist systems, they have effectively curbed the spread of some alienation phenomena by building highly comprehensive social welfare systems, optimizing power supervision mechanisms, advocating multicultural tolerance, and balancing market efficiency and social equity. These countries use high taxes to regulate income distribution, ensure citizens' life-cycle rights and interests from education, medical care to elderly care, and reduce labor alienation and consumption alienation caused by excessive wealth gaps; they regulate the operation process of power through sound democratic supervision systems, reducing the risk of power alienation; at the same time, they focus on combining the realization of individual values with social public welfare, alleviating the predicament of individual alienation under the logic of capital to a certain extent. Their practices show that even within the framework of capitalist systems, the negative impacts of alienation phenomena can be effectively counteracted through the coordinated regulation of multiple elements, which indirectly confirms the diversity of the root causes of alienation and the adaptability of social systems.

In contrast, socialist countries such as Cuba, Romania, and the German Democratic Republic in history also experienced various types of alienation problems based on public ownership, forming a stark contrast. For example, in the later period of Nicolae Ceaușescu's rule in Romania, excessive concentration of power and the prevalence of personality cult led to prominent phenomena of power alienation, and government decisions were divorced from the needs of the people, ultimately intensifying social contradictions; in the operation of the planned economic system in the German Democratic Republic, there were problems such as institutional rigidity and inefficiency in some areas, which inhibited the enthusiasm of workers for production and led to labor alienation and restrictions on individual development; in the long-term development of Cuba, due to external blockades and insufficient internal institutional adjustments, there were tendencies of alienation such as unbalanced resource allocation and irregular operation of some public power. These cases fully prove that socialist public ownership is not a "safe haven" from alienation phenomena. Regardless of the system, if the coordinated governance of multiple elements such as the economy, culture, and power operation is ignored, alienation problems may arise, further confirming the one-sidedness of the theory of alienation in attributing the root cause solely to private ownership.

**Theory of Communism: Expectations and Practical Limitations of the Vision of an Ideal Society**

The value of the theory of communism lies in its depiction of an ideal vision for humanity's pursuit of freedom, equality, and emancipation, highlighting humanity's eternal pursuit of the optimization of social systems, and providing an important value reference for the development of modern society. From the perspective of complex systems, the theory of communism focuses on the issues of fairness and efficiency in social systems, attempting to eliminate class exploitation and oppression through institutional restructuring and achieve the

harmonious coexistence of system elements, which is consistent with the goal of complex systems to pursue overall optimization. The practical exploration of the theory of communism by proponents such as Lenin and Mao Zedong has attempted to combine ideal goals with the reality of specific social systems, providing valuable experience for exploring the path of optimizing social systems.

However, the theory of communism also has limitations that are divorced from the evolutionary laws of complex systems. Firstly, by presupposing an ultimate goal for the development of human society, the theory of communism ignores the diversity and uncertainty of complex social systems. The evolution of complex systems has no fixed endpoint. Due to differences in elements such as historical culture, development level, and social structure, the form and path of realizing an ideal society in different countries will inevitably show diversity, rather than following a single communist model. Secondly, the theory of communism advocates the elimination of commodity-money relations and the implementation of a comprehensive planned economy, which contradicts the characteristics of information dispersion and dynamics of complex social systems. In complex social systems, information is scattered and fluid, and the market mechanism, as a spontaneous order, can achieve the efficient allocation of resources through price signals. In contrast, a comprehensive planned economy relies on the centralized decision-making of the central government, which cannot capture scattered social information in a timely manner, inevitably leading to inefficient resource allocation and social rigidity. Practice has shown that successful social systems are often an organic combination of planning and the market, rather than the absolute pursuit of a single model.

## Practical Verification: Practical Effects, Experiences and Lessons of the Core Views of Marx and Engels

The value and limitations of a theory must ultimately be tested through practice. The core philosophical views of Marx and Engels have yielded remarkable results while also exposing numerous problems in their practice across many countries worldwide. These practical cases provide an important basis for us to objectively evaluate their theory; meanwhile, research findings and award recognitions in the academic field also reflect the influence and scope of application of their theory from a collateral perspective.

### Cross-National Practices: Coexistence of Achievements and Problems

Since the 20th century, more than 20 countries around the world have successively taken the core philosophical views of Marx and Engels as their guiding ideology and carried out practical explorations of socialist revolution and construction. These practices have yielded historic achievements while also facing numerous challenges.

In terms of practical achievements, the core views of Marx and Engels have provided a powerful ideological weapon for many countries to achieve national independence and people's liberation. For example, through the October Revolution, the Soviet Union founded the world's first socialist country, realized industrialization in a short period, greatly enhanced national strength, and laid the foundation for the victory of the Anti-Fascist War; under the guidance of Marxism, China achieved national independence and people's liberation, established the socialist system, and after decades of development, has become the world's second largest economy, attained the historic achievement of poverty alleviation, and significantly improved people's living standards. These practical results indicate that the core views of Marx and Engels hold important guiding value in grasping the laws of social development, uniting revolutionary forces, and advancing national industrialization and modernization.

Their pursuit of the development of productive forces, class emancipation, and fairness and justice is consistent with the historical needs of many developing countries.

In terms of practical problems, practices in some countries have also exposed the limitations of applying the core views of Marx and Engels. Some countries mechanically copied the theoretical model of Marxism, ignoring the actual conditions of their own historical culture, social structure, and development level, and implemented a single planned economy and public ownership of the means of production, leading to rigid economic structures, low production efficiency, and slow improvement of people's living standards. For instance, at the end of the 1980s and the beginning of the 1990s, socialist countries such as the Soviet Union and Eastern Europe experienced drastic changes and abandoned the socialist system due to institutional rigidity and erroneous reforms; some countries overemphasized class struggle in practice, triggering social division and violent conflicts, and undermining social stability and harmony. These problems demonstrate that the core views of Marx and Engels are not absolute truths applicable everywhere. Their application must be combined with the reality of specific social systems and innovated and developed in light of the development of the times and changes in the environment; otherwise it will lead to the failure of practice.

From the perspective of scientific cognition, human beings have not yet mastered an absolute method to prove the truth, and can only prove the existence of fallacies through practical tests and logical deduction (Popper, 2005). With the help of systematic thinking, we can reveal the operating laws of some social and natural systems, but every law has its specific scope of application and boundary conditions. If some laws discovered by human exploration are absolutized and universalized as ultimate truths applicable everywhere, such cognition is essentially a matter of belief rather than a rigorous scientific attitude (Lenin, 2012b).

**Academic Recognition: Coexistence of Influence and Limitations**

The core philosophical views of Marx and Engels also exert a certain influence in the academic field and have become important research objects in many disciplines such as philosophy, sociology, political science, and economics. However, their influence is relatively limited in the field of natural sciences and some social sciences, a phenomenon that objectively reflects the scope of application of their theory.

In terms of academic influence, the core views of Marx and Engels have given rise to numerous academic schools, such as Western Marxism, Analytical Marxism, and Ecological Marxism. These schools have continuously enriched and developed Marxist theory, enabling it to maintain a certain academic vitality. Researches by thinkers such as Lenin, Lukács, Gramsci, and Habermas have further expanded the theoretical boundaries of Marxism, allowing it to respond to new problems and challenges in modern society. In the field of humanities and social sciences, the works of Marx and Engels are widely cited, and their expositions on alienation, class, capital, ideology, and other aspects have become important theoretical tools for analyzing modern society, exerting a great influence on academic research.

In terms of the limitations of academic recognition, the core views of Marx and Engels have relatively limited influence in the field of natural sciences, and no Nobel laureates have mentioned their guiding role in their acceptance speeches. This phenomenon is not accidental but determined by the essential attributes and applicable boundaries of their theory. Natural science research takes positivism as its core method, emphasizing the falsifiability of conclusions, the repeatability of research processes, and the accuracy of results, while the core views of Marx and Engels belong to the category of humanities and social sciences, and their core value lies in providing different perspectives and methodological support for analyzing social phenomena and interpreting

social laws, rather than directly guiding the specific technical paths and practical operations of natural science research.

Einstein's comment on the suitability of publishing Engels' manuscript *Dialectics of Nature* also confirms this judgment. His comment pointed out:

> Mr. Eduard Bernstein has handed me a manuscript by Friedrich Engels on natural science and asked for my opinion on whether it should be published. My view is as follows: If the author of this manuscript were not a renowned historical figure, I would not recommend its publication. For from the perspective of contemporary physics and the history of physics, the content of the manuscript has no special significance. But I can fully understand that if this work is regarded as an interesting document for clarifying the development of Engels' thoughts, then its publication is justifiable. (Einstein, 1924)

In addition, the development of modern social sciences presents a distinct trend of diversification. Besides Marxism, many theoretical schools such as liberalism, conservatism, and constructivism develop side by side and compete with each other. The core views of Marx and Engels are only one of the influential schools, and their academic radiation is inevitably affected by both the competition between schools and the changes of the times. This objective situation fully shows that the core views of Marx and Engels have a clear scope of application, and their value is mainly focused on the field of humanities and social science research and the practice of social transformation. We should not regard them as a universal theory applicable to all disciplinary research.

It is important to clarify that Marxist philosophy is not the only one with limitations. From the perspective of the UCST, all scientific systems based on either materialism or idealism have inherent deficiencies at the ontological level (Cui et al., 2025). As for materialist philosophy, it is difficult to answer the core question of the "first driving force" (Sarfati, 1998)—for example, if the universe is composed of elementary particles, what is the origin of elementary particles? Where do the various forces that drive elementary particles to form complex material structures come from? These fundamental questions can never be thoroughly and clearly explained within the framework of materialist scientific theory. Similarly, scientific systems based on idealist philosophy also have contradictions at the logical and practical levels. The core cognition that "a clever housewife can cook a meal without rice" is not only contrary to basic scientific axioms such as the law of conservation of mass and the law of conservation of energy, but also inconsistent with the current reality of human social competition around material resources.

The UCST takes the "Axiom of Relative Simultaneity" as its core support, holding that all concepts that human beings can define must exist in pairs, and the objective existence of matter cannot be separated from the corresponding support of non-material mind. Therefore, a dualist perspective must be adopted to describe the ontological existence of the phenomenal world (Cui et al., 2025). Only in this way can the inherent defects of monist philosophy (whether materialism or idealism) be avoided. Notably, an increasing number of scientists have now realized the limitations of the monist scientific system and begun to engage in scientific research and exploration in the post-materialist era (Walach, 2019).

## Conclusion

From the perspective of the UCST, by integrating the diverse viewpoints of proponents and critics, as well as cross-national practical cases and academic research findings, we can clearly see that the core philosophical views of Marx and Engels form a complex theoretical system with certain theoretical value and inevitable limitations of their times. Historical materialism reveals a fundamental contradiction in social development and the foundational role of the economic base, yet it is limited by the tendencies of single-factor determinism and a linear view of development; dialectics provides a dynamic and holistic thinking tool, but it has inclinations toward

binary opposition and rigid interpretation of laws; the theory of alienation offers a profound critique of the inherent contradictions in capitalist society, yet its interpretation of social phenomena is one-sided; the theory of communism depicts an ideal vision for humanity's pursuit of freedom and emancipation, but it carries utopian traits and has limitations in practical application.

The core philosophical views of Marx and Engels are products of a specific historical era. Their theoretical value lies in breaking the limitations of traditional thinking of that time and providing new perspectives and methods for understanding the development of human society; their pursuit of fairness and justice, human emancipation and social progress embodies enduring temporal value. Their theoretical limitations, however, stem from the constraints of historical conditions and the inadequacies of a binary oppositional way of thinking, requiring constant innovation and improvement with the advancement of the times. In contemporary society, humanity is confronted with numerous complex global challenges such as climate change, the wealth gap and geopolitical conflicts. Addressing these challenges demands a rational, inclusive, and collaborative mindset based on scientific theories and methodologies (Cui, 2025).

Therefore, we must neither blindly venerate the core views of Marx and Engels, treating them as absolute truths to be mechanically copied, nor completely negate their theoretical value, ignoring their pivotal role in the history of human thought. We should adhere to the guidance of scientific theories such as the UCST, and in light of the development of the times and practical needs, conduct critical inheritance and innovative development of Marx and Engels' core views. We need to absorb the rational core of their theory, while also facing up to its limitations and improving upon them. At the same time, we should respect the diversity and dynamics of human social systems, encourage the exchange and collision of different theoretical schools, realize the optimization and development of social systems through moderate and incremental reforms, and propel human society toward a more free, equal, just, and harmonious future (Cui & Pan, 2025).

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## Data Availability Statement

The original contributions presented in this study are included in the article. Further inquiries can be directed to the corresponding author CUI Weicheng.

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## Conflicts of Interest

The authors declare no conflicts of interest. The funders had no role in the design of the study; in the collection, analyses, or interpretation of data; in the writing of the manuscript; or in the decision to publish the results.

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