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The Materialistic View of History and 'Men'

Kazuo Miura

The aim of this paper is to provide a key for clearer understanding of the materialistic view of history. And for this purpose the author tried to shed light upon the rather abstracted 'men' figuring in the view, for it is this very aspect of the view, around which most of criticisms against it are brought forth. The paper is subdivided into four parts.

The first of them means to formulate the problems raised by critiques, namely the alleged fatalism included in the view.

The second tries to elucidate the level of abstraction on which the view is based. Generally speaking, the 'men' represented in this view are not psychic subjects who select freely among alternatives, but the agents seemingly determined to act one way or other. So the author explained how was it possible to treat 'men' in this way, by examining Marx's notion of "personification of social relations."

In the third part this 'personification of social relations' which seems objectively structural, is again exposed as merely fixed form of objectivation of human activity under certain condition. And from this exposition the author goes further to distinguish two kinds of human action in society: the first one, by which men make history more or less involuntarily, and the second, by which men make history more or less voluntarily and consciously on the ground provided by former action.

The last part tries to answer the questions raised in the first part.