

## *Original Paper*

# Marx's Riddle Metaphor about History: Based on the Discussion of "The Riddle of History"

Jing Li<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup> School of Philosophy, Beijing Normal University, China

Received: March 7, 2023

Accepted: March 25, 2024

Online Published: April 23, 2024

doi:10.22158/jrph.v7n1p84

URL: <http://dx.doi.org/10.22158/jrph.v7n1p84>

### **Abstract**

*Ancient Greek philosophers believed that the eternal truths were wrapped in riddles, and the deciphering of these riddles constituted a process of unraveling the objective world and understanding oneself, ultimately leading to a scientific comprehension of the hidden inner patterns. History, being an open-ended riddle, manifests different facets of enigma at various periods, displaying a profound complexity and secrecy. Marx employs the metaphor of riddle in his analysis of essence of history, forming a distinctive mode of contemplation characterized by the interplay of "distinguishing the riddle" and "solving the riddle," encapsulated within his renowned discussion on the "riddle of history." The riddle of history is not an abstract, mystical concealment of truth, but rather, the objectivity of the driving laws and the connection between experience determine the universality and realistic value of "riddle" as a metaphor for the real predicament of human existence. Portraying the development of history as a grand game between distinguishing and solving riddles should not hinder our understanding of the world but serve as an effective medium and means. Through the discernment of "riddle facets," it continually inspires us to maintain curiosity and enthusiasm for the unknown within the ongoing process of historical development.*

### **Keywords**

*Marx, riddle, history, metaphor, the riddle of history*

Riddles, as a metaphor, not only point to the generation and evolution of everything in the world but also represent the continuous maturation of human consciousness and thought, as well as the ongoing process of "Know thyself." Heraclitus' famous aphorism "Nature loves to hide", which challenges traditional notions in a mysterious manner. New understandings of the world require the emergence of new methods —emphasizing the importance of "hiding." Marx focused on "history" as his object of study, striving to establish a unique historical science. Marx believed that the awakening of

self-consciousness, cognition, and the development of practical abilities are key factors in determining the direction of the “riddle of history,” thus opening up new spaces and possibilities for the “enigmatic phenomena” presented by human subjects in different conditions and social stages.

### **1. Riddles and Metaphors**

The tradition of “riddles” can be traced back to ancient Greece. In early Greek thought, the etymology of riddles originated from “a fishing basket or trap made of bulrushes,” used for fishing or carrying. In its original meaning, the main connotation of the word is “to grasp” or “to control,” rather than “to lose” or “to hide”. Only in special circumstances, when the level of weaving is complex enough to weaken the clear perception of the object, it can also be used to hide. From a metaphorical perspective, the Greeks believed that riddles were meticulously crafted and could be anything intricately woven, with the ultimate intention of achieving a more comprehensive control over the cognitive object rather than blurring and confusing it. This seemingly contradictory characteristic is the inevitable result of the complexity of weaving riddles. The limitation in understanding plays a unique feature in the riddle itself, where “human involvement” or “action” constitutes the core of the riddle. The action of the participants provides endless tension for the unfolding and development of the riddle’s solution, and removing the “clues” of the riddle from the context of action would only render it into a rigid routine. Participation in action is not limited to solve the riddle or find the ultimate solution, but is inherent in the designated purpose of the participant with the effects of human cognitive levels and structures generated within the range of possibilities of the riddle, this purpose manifests as the ultimate realization of value.

Sophocles once said, “I will speak in riddles, so as to be understood.” What does it mean to “speak in riddles”? Just as Socrates stimulated the thinking of others through questioning and asking in retort, riddles can also be adopted as a path to guide people’s expression and thinking. In terms of verbal expression, Heraclitus believed that the path to wisdom is not just uphill or downhill; the real wisdom is constructed by understanding of logos. As a philosopher and teacher, he enveloped what he considered eternal truths in the form of riddles, using plain language to express cosmic truths and giving people enough clues to solve them through hints. Certainly, the riddles we see are not only found in language or appearance. It can be said that riddles are products of the relationship established through sensory perception between linguistic expression and appearance, originating from the “riddling status” inherent in experiential things in the world. In a sense, the control and mastery of the “riddling state” have already surpassed the question of “what they are”, which is the important principle for the birth of wisdom and guiding the direction of solving riddles correctly.

The “riddling state” is not difficult to understand. Obvious things often have a deceptive nature, because they retain themselves in the process of their manifestation, while also not completely hiding signs of their essence. Therefore, it often leads people to fall into the “trap” of being deceived under enthusiasm and impulsivity. In fact, everything in the world does not solely depend on the answer to a

riddle. Once a riddle is solved, it often becomes trivial and obvious, transcending the literal meaning. At the same time, it will present a certain pattern of relationships that is even contradictory. Understanding and mastering this pattern will change our way of perceiving things, rearranging the relationship between sensation and appearance. Visible things are like riddles; the process of fully understanding and mastering the world parallels the drive to interpret riddles. Our basic perception of the “riddling state” is to seek a correct way to view things in the intersection of manifestation and concealment. Just as logos considers itself a manifestation of a riddle world, the impetus it reveals is the source of its hidden power, and the misleading and falsification it creates are the origins of creating and stabilizing the value of order. This is the essence of the “riddling state”: the partial understanding of the world is inevitable, but also making it possible to overcome and master this partiality. Exploring the breadth of the world from the depths of riddles, although there is a risk of confusion, it also points out a path to understanding oneself, elucidating the world, and broadening our ways of cognition.

The most mysterious aspect of riddles lies in the riddles themselves. Each riddle conceals its true “signified” through seemingly peculiar or unrelated descriptions. In fact, the final answer is what we all know, even take for granted. Using riddles as metaphors is not only a form of folk cultural expression but also a way of exploring and resolving the contradictions and conflicts of reality. Metaphor is not about expressing obvious connections between known things but rather aims to point towards an initial, unperceived connotation. “The essence of metaphor is to understand and experience the current thing through another thing,” (George Lakoff, Mark Johnson, 2003) By studying the “transfer” of metaphors and observing the similarities hidden in different things, we can view existing people, nature, and society from unconventional perspectives, which is precisely the task of philosophers.

Early analyses linked riddles with metaphors, with Aristotle possibly being the first scholar to define riddles using this method, profoundly influencing the study of ancient Greek riddle traditions. Aristotle defined riddles as the result of using metaphors: “It is the form of a riddle to use impossible combinations [of names] in saying things that are the case” (αὐτὸ γὰρ ἰδέα αὐτῆ ἐστὶ, τὸ λέγοντα ὑπάρχοντα ἀδύνατα συνάψαι, *Poet.* 22.1458a26-27). In his *Poetics*, Aristotle pointed out that metaphor is a way to avoid banality in expression, being “clear but not ordinary.” Especially in the field of poetry, riddles are used as a mysterious language by adopting metaphorical methods. At the same time, Aristotle emphasized the contradictory nature of riddles. As he discussed in the *Rhetoric*, many riddles deviate from everyday views—seemingly clearly pointing to fantastical or even impossible occurrences, but leading to self-contradictory results. However, once its true reference is discovered, the paradoxical nature of the riddle collapses on its own. Using riddles as a metaphorical method not only involves the transfer of meanings but also encompasses the transfer process itself. Riddles establish a “cognitive function” through their connection with metaphors: even if obscure and difficult to understand, they can still serve as tools for transferring perceptions of similarity between experiential contents. This metaphorical method allows for a deeper understanding and insight into the connections between things or facts. Metaphor is not merely a means of developing riddles; in other

words, the existence of riddles and metaphors entails a more complex and fundamental logic. In fact, some riddles do not involve metaphorical meaning at the literal level, as Plato famously mentioned in the “riddle of the eunuch”: a person, but not a person (a eunuch), feeding a bird, but not a bird (a bat), throwing a stone, but not a stone (a pumice stone), and the bird sits on a perch, but not a perch (a reed). This is a case where no metaphor is involved, but rather a series of oppositions expressed as “X” and “non-X.” In other words, whether in the representation of names themselves or in the semantic representation of internal relationships and meanings, Aristotle places greater emphasis on an “internal transfer (πιφορ)”.

It is not difficult to see that in ancient Greece, the functional definition of riddles mainly focused on the deepening of the cognitive level. The pursuit and enthusiasm of humanity in the face of truth often exist in contradiction to the state of ignorance. Søren Kierkegaard, in his *Philosophical Fragments* discussed the ultimate paradox of thought: to want to discover something that thought itself cannot think. With the continuous expansion of the scope of understanding, philosophers have always been committed to exploring the laws and truths of the existence and operation of the world, solving the puzzles about the essence. The popularization and application of traditional riddles have prompted many wise men and sages to derive a way of “thinking in riddles,” leading to the pursuit of ultimate and eternal solutions through the process of “posing riddles - guessing riddles - solving riddles.” Or it can be said that as long as there are areas that are difficult to reach in the current world, or even in human self-awareness, as long as the footsteps of natural change and historical development have not stopped, contradictions and oppositions still exist, and riddles will always have exploratory value and remain ever-changing.

## **2. The Riddle Metaphor of Marx’s “Riddle of History”**

History, as the theme that Marx continuously explored throughout his whole life, particularly in the process of constructing his “unique historical science,” was not entirely expressed and contemplated through purely theoretical and empirical methods. Instead, Marx employed a large number of metaphors and literary rhetorical devices, especially metaphorically portraying history as a grand riddle. The riddle of history, grand yet not elusive, concretizes the riddles into various layers of reality, manifesting as multiple forms such as “the riddle of state and civil society”, “the riddle of human emancipation”, and “the riddle of money”, each revealed at different stages of historical development. While the seemingly inscrutable “enigma” plays its role, there exists an inevitable ultimate direction, converging towards the essence of the riddle of history, which is also the ultimate aim of Marx’s theoretical construction. To a certain extent, Marx based on the dialectical relationship between human and history, elevated the metaphorical tradition inherited from ancient Greece’s riddles to the height of history, applying it to the contemplation and exploration of history. Marx believed that the transformation of the historical perspective must be based on a full understanding of history itself, including all the aspects of the riddle history presents, which further leads to questions regarding how the riddle is constituted, how its essence is generated, and how humans should solve it.

As early as 1842, Marx discussed the riddle of history in a manuscript, he thinks the world history itself, besides resolving and dealing with old problems by posing new ones, has no other way. Therefore, the “riddle of each historical period” reflects “the questions posed by the era” (Marx, 1842). The solution to the riddle of history lies in posing new questions and resolving old ones. At this time, although Marx had not yet studied political economy or analyzed the material conditions of the riddle of history, he outlined two requirements for “posing questions”: first, the questions must be “practical”; second, the questions must be “reflective of the era,” as they are “the slogans of the era”, “the public, fearless voice of the era that influences everything” (Marx, 1842) It can be said that Marx’s two insights are completely correct. The period of the “Deutsch-Französische Jahrbücher” (German-French Annals) was a crucial turning point in the development of young Marx’s thought. Working for the “Rheinische Zeitung” (Rhineland Newspaper), Marx faced the practical perplexity brought by material interests, leading to a contradictory reflection on Hegelian philosophy and the theory of the state. “After the truth of the otherworldly world has disappeared, the historical task is to establish the truth of this world... Criticism of religion becomes criticism of law, and criticism of theology becomes criticism of politics” (Marx, 1843). What is the “historical task” is actually to reveal the riddle of history and establish the “truth” of history. “Philosophers keep all the answers in their desks, and the ignorant common world just needs to open its mouth and wait for the roasted dove (the absolute science), to fall in” (Marx, 1843). Dogmatic predictions about the future are no longer applicable in the rise of new ideas, and internal criticism of the existing world, especially a realistic critique under secularization, is the correct way to unravel the riddle of the world’s future development. “We do not dogmatically face the world with new principles... We expound new principles from the old principles of the world.” Here, Marx opposing the use of “super-historical” to explain the world, but rather explaining principles and the riddle of each historical period based on the world itself.

In his work *On the Jewish Question*, Marx discussed the issue of political liberation and human emancipation. He revealed a riddle: “why the relationship is turned upside-down in the minds of the political emancipators and the aim appears as the means, while the means appears as the aim. This optical illusion of their consciousness would still remain a puzzle, although now a psychological, a theoretical puzzle” (Marx, 1843). Marx realized the binary opposition between the political state and civil society, where the political state became a means to protect private rights, resulting in human social life becoming a tool to maintain the interests of the ruling class. Under this constraint, the separation of human social attributes and individuality occurred. The riddle between political liberation and human emancipation, according to Marx, is attributed to the conflict between universal interests and private interests, and the division between the political state and civil society. Following this logical pathway, Marx explained the hidden internal signifiers of the riddle — the inevitable disintegration of the alienated state system from the people.

In the *Economic and Philosophic Manuscripts of 1844*, Marx explicitly delving into the economic aspect of civil society, exposing the coexistence of “the development of human value is not equal to the

achievement of industrialism.” This marked the first explicit exposition of the riddle of history. Through the exploration of the origins and abandonment of private property, Marx sought to understand the reasons for the dehumanizing characteristics of the proletariat and the path to liberation, viewing it as the answer to the “riddle of history.” He proposed, “Communism as the positive transcendence of private property, as human self-estrangement, and therefore as the real appropriation of the human essence by and for man..... This communism, as fully-developed naturalism, equals humanism, and as fully-developed humanism equals naturalism; it is the genuine resolution of the conflict between man and nature and between man and man the true resolution of the strife between existence and essence, between objectification and self-confirmation, between freedom and necessity, between the individual and the species. Communism is the riddle of history solved, and it knows itself to be this solution.” In the process of analyzing the reality of capitalist economics, Marx conceptualized two main clues: man and nature and between man and man. By exploring the conflicts and tensions inherent in the four pairs of relationships — “existence and essence”, “objectification and self-confirmation”, “freedom and necessity”, “individual and species” — Marx expanded the domain of real problems, gradually forming a concrete interpretation of the riddle of history.

Firstly, Marx posits an inherent contradiction between the “ought to be” and the “to be” regarding human existence and essence, signifying a conflict between the characteristics prescribed by human nature and the alienated state present in actual society. Whether the species-nature is alienated or not directly determines the realization of individuals and species, and whether humans, as subjects, can return from the alienated “non-existence” to genuine human existence. Marx defines laborers as the real subjects of alienation, grasping humans not only as “natural, species existence” but also as labor subjects, subjects of self-activity. Therefore, the determination of “species existence” inevitably possesses certain social attributes. This necessitates that the realization of species-nature must be reflected in actual economic activities, showing new significance from a societal perspective. Hence, “objectification” becomes the fundamental pathway for individuals to possess, develop, and ultimately liberate their nature and confirm their existence. This is concretely manifested in human labor activities within economic society. However, under the conditions of private property, the products of labor do not belong to the laborers themselves but as external, alien, and independent forces, influencing and interfering with the self-confirmation of individuals. Alienated labor fails to realize the nature of humanity, resulting instead in the loss of value. Consequently, “freedom” and “necessity” become particularly important as further limitations and explanations of the objectification. Thus, in “free conscious activity,” the true realization and development of human species-nature can be achieved. Marx’s conception of freedom, based on human essence, is a kind of “necessary freedom” where freedom is actualized through conscious response and restraint to internal and external objective laws. Ultimately, whether it’s about existence and essence, objectification and self-confirmation, or freedom and necessity, it all boils down to achieving the dialectical unity of the individual and the class.

Alienated species-nature fails to achieve this unity, instead leading to a state of “non-existence” where human objective existence is in opposition to its essence.

In summary, Marx believes that the contradictions and conflicts mentioned above concern the natural evolution and human modes of existence, are inherent in history, and are fundamental problems that must be solved to establish harmonious relations between man and nature and between man and man. They constitute the main content of the riddle of history and follow a necessary logical progression. At this point, Marx’s discourse still carries traces of philosophical humanism, “Not to explain alienation from history, but to explain history from alienation.” He presents “communism” as the ultimate solution: only through the transition to a communist society and the eventual realization of communism, where alienation is eliminated, and private property disappears, can the riddle of history be “truly resolved.” Marx believes that communism is the ultimate realization of human nature and can dissolve any inherent contradictions in reality. However, Marx’s argument for communism here is not about pointing out the answer to the riddle. Instead, it is about using practical analysis in political economy to unlock the internal economic contradictions of capitalist society, indicating that the correct path to solving the riddle lies in the orderly transition to communism. The facets of the riddle revealed here are merely the present manifestations of conflicting relationships at this stage, difficult to be “truly resolved” within the confines of limited time and space. However, achieving the return of human essence to itself inevitably requires addressing the alienated relationships revealed above. Just as the riddle of history “does not stagnate in history but moves in the direction of history.” Marx’s metaphorical link of this riddle to the realization of communism provides a new dimension for understanding it. For the first time, he establishes the communism on the basis of economic analysis. Whether in logical construction or future practical paths, it is indispensable for a deep understanding of the riddle of history and even the subsequent conception of historical materialism.

If Marx’s focus at this time was to link alienated labor and the riddle of history by examining economic facts, forming a historical view that could be achieved at that time, then in *The German Ideology*, Marx began to use his formed historical view to write human history and attempted to describe the overall development from the philosophical premises and original scenes of history. The formation of the concept of “practice” heralded the scientific unfolding of the riddle, which is no longer an evaluation dimension based on the “core meaning of the abstract essence of human beings,” but can be confirmed through specific practical activities in the real process of material production. The contradictory relationship of the riddle is transformed into the contradictory movement between productive forces and forms of intercourse. At the same time, the riddle of history requires delving into different stages of civil society, rooting theoretical tentacles of political economy deeply into civil society, in order to trace the roots and essence of the contradictions between productive forces and relations of production. In the critique of political economy, Marx repeatedly puts forward explanations such as the “riddle of money,” the “fetishism of money”, and the “riddle of commodity fetishism”, the “riddle of commodity fetishism”, and integrates the thinking mode of solving riddles into the revelation of the logic of capital.

Under the contradictory force between the socialization of production and capitalist private ownership, the relationship between people is solidified into relationships between goods, capital and wage labor. As a result, capitalist relations of production finally completely shed the cloak of freedom and equality, revealing themselves as the hypocritical forms of goods. It is the abstract “logic of capital” that dominates the operation laws of capitalist society, constituting the fundamental contradiction of the riddle of history.

### **3. “Riddle-Solving” and “The Secrets Within the Riddle”**

Adopting the format of “Riddle-Solving” is a novel perspective for Marx’s analysis of history. In terms of specific content, the contradictions and conflicts revealed by the riddle of history, involving the evolution of nature and human existence, are inherent in historical development. They are fundamental problems that must be solved to achieve harmonious coexistence between man and nature, and among humans themselves, which align with the overall research direction of Marx’s theory. In terms of expression, Marx employs the format of “Riddle-Solving” to thoroughly permeate the grand riddle and its inherent metaphors. This riddle is not a product of spirit and ideology, but arises from historical reality and can only be solved through the weapons of material forces and practice. Certainly, the grandeur of the riddle of history is not elusive or void; it concretizes riddles into numerous real-life challenges, each appearing at different stages of historical development. While these riddles may seem inscrutable, they actually have an inevitable ultimate direction, converging at the core essence of history. This convergence is also the ultimate aim of Marx in constructing his theoretical doctrine. Due to the limitations of cognitive levels and objective conditions at specific stages, Marx’s unraveling of the riddle is not accomplished overnight but undergoes a developmental process from initial criticism and clarification to scientific unfolding. It can be observed that the realization path of unraveling the riddle is consistent with the construction process of Marx’s historical theory. While the former emphasizes the detachment of riddle and the latter focuses on theoretical construction and practical integration, their ultimate aim is consistent—the genuine realization of human liberation and freedom. Through the above analysis, it is evident that Marx, in his youth, established his “riddle of history” on the basis of contradictory relationships. Just as philosophers often fail to grasp the full meaning of specific words, formulas, or metaphors in riddles, descriptions of the world that are too direct and obvious may actually be deceptive. The meanings contained within the world all in intense tension, and it is precisely this tension that makes grasping the concept of “univocal” difficult. Baudrillard once discussed the univocal concept itself has risk of erroneousness, which makes it necessary to establish opposing poles whenever we define concepts or phenomena. Marx adopted this way of thinking, which is reflected in his portrayal of the riddle of history. Humans and nature are both part of history, but the metaphors inherent within them often contradict with daily experience. The purpose of metaphors is to reveal and expose the fundamentally conflicting relationships, ultimately leading to the resolution. When conflicting relationships are maintained in a state of balance, it gives birth to the correct clues to



unravel the riddle. Marx combines the characteristics of riddles with confusions presented by history, aiming to guide us to believe that there are no absolutes of either/or. Some conflicts are inevitable, and certain meanings are bound to occur. Whether it's between man and nature and between man and man, existence and essence, or freedom and necessity, they all present the full panorama of history through a larger dialogue between each other.

The essence hidden within riddles is often profound, relatively stable, and more fundamental, while the surface of the riddle presented is variable and unpredictable. Therefore, the surface of the riddle, as manifested through numerous historical events, can be directly understood, while the underlying essence hidden behind the surface is difficult to fundamentally change until new material conditions emerge. Of course, despite the diverse and complex surfaces manifested by riddles, they are still ultimately determined by the essence that constitutes their existence, and inherently contained within them. In other words, the tension inherent in the dialectical relationship between the particular and the universal, phenomena and essence, ultimately originates from the contradictory opposition and conflict, serving as the driving force behind the formation of riddle surfaces, their resolution, and the formation of new riddle surfaces. It is this tension that allows riddles to serve as forms of metaphor, establishing interrelations with external experiential phenomena. "No metaphor can be understood or even adequately presented without a foundation in experience" (George Lakoff, Mark Johnson, 2003). History, as a dynamic developmental process, possesses inherent laws of operation and organic unity, hidden within the complex facts, which perfectly corresponds to the secretive nature of riddles themselves. Using riddles as metaphors allows the entire developmental process to be condensed into specific environments and material conditions through stages such as posing, knowing, and solving riddles. This process is also the fundamental process of delving into the basic laws and operational essence of historical development.

Marx realized the "imbalance" or "discrepancy" in people's cognition of themselves and external phenomena. Human cognitive abilities are often constrained by specific historical stages and real-life environments. Despite being situated within history, individuals may struggle to perceive the entirety of historical events and thus fail to form a comprehensive and systematic understanding. This "cognitive gap" arises partly from the limitations imposed on the cognitive subject, i.e., individuals, by objective conditions. On the other hand, it is directly related to the intrinsic nature of "riddles" inherent in history, which constitutes the cognitive object. In other words, the "enigmatic nature" of history is determined by human activities, especially productive activities. On the one hand, the inherent flaws of the capitalist production mode result in incomplete development, constraining human productive and social activities within the logic of capital. Consequently, human history is inevitably filled with real contradictions and conflicting oppositions. On the other hand, in such circumstances, the accumulated conflicts in history are exacerbated at the practical level, manifesting in complex and elusive riddles in various forms. Firstly, the formation of each stage of riddles cannot fully reveal their hidden essence within the limited time and space, but merely achieves a partial manifestation of their aspects. Thus, the

true solution to the riddle gradually emerges through the successive unraveling of different surfaces. This process is not only the development of human cognitive and practical abilities but also the process of deep understanding of the essence of historical riddle. Secondly, the surfaces of historical riddles are not merely mirrored reflections of historical reality. Just as there is a distinction between truth and falsehood in phenomena, riddles also entail the possibility of falsehood, constituting a manifestation of the opposite side of essence under specific conditions. This falsehood is not always elusive. Marx, facing the challenges triggered by real problems, gradually pierced through the flourishing but illusory appearance of society, using practical criticism as a sharp blade to directly strike at the core of issues, uncovering and unraveling their hidden true essence. Therefore, in the process of insight into history through the metaphor of riddles, Marx was not disturbed by the diverse phenomena presented by the grand riddle of history. Instead, he continuously witnessed the relationship between individual and history, phenomena and essence, will and law, through the “Riddle-Solving” approach.

Why was Marx so enthusiastic about using the “Riddle-Solving” approach to explore the secrets within the riddle? On one hand, this can be attributed to Marx’s early adoption of the mode of thinking inherited from ancient Greek natural philosophy. On the other hand, German classical philosophy, by resolving historical riddles through the free of thought and liberation of spirit, provided an important reference for Marx to think about reality and historical issues in the same way. Marx’s adoption and application of riddle metaphors have already transcended the traditional literary form. Firstly, traditional riddles’ metaphors typically possess a relatively complete closed loop, achieving the purpose of true cognition of things or phenomena through the final pointing to the answer, which is clear and indisputable. However, Marx’s riddle metaphors often point to an open and dynamic process. Thus, both the manifestation forms of riddles and even the final answers will undergo corresponding changes in different historical stages. Therefore, in Marx’s riddle metaphors, there is no absolute solution to the riddle in the true sense. In other words, Marx emphasizes the process of solving and deciphering the riddles one by one, rather than revealing the final answer. Scientifically demonstrating the process of transitioning from private ownership to communist practice that conforms to laws is what he refers to as the solution to the riddle of history. Secondly, unlike the singularity and directness of riddle forms in traditional riddles, Marx pays more attention to the complexity and diversity of the riddles. He realizes that many aspects of historical development processes have a certain degree of perplexity and often cannot fully reveal their connotations. This is not a questioning or denial of the rationality of riddle. Just as from the perspective of metaphor, the ultimate intention of setting riddles for people is to have more comprehensive control over cognitive objects, rather than making them blurry and confused. Therefore, only in the chaotic scene created by the riddle faces can people improve their ability to discern and judge, thus opening up the correct direction and path to the solution. Finally, in Marx’s application and practice of riddle metaphors, what is more important than the “riddle” itself is the exploration of the “secrets” within the riddles. The “secrets” hidden by the riddle are precisely the employment relationship of exploitation of surplus value concealed under the dominance of capitalist

logic, and the social system based on capitalists owning the means of production and exploiting wage labor. The process of historical development is a process of the covering of “riddle” and the “secret” being opened up. This “secret” within the “riddle” gradually reveals traces through the intensification and manifestation at the practical level in different stages, thus provide new thinking model and references for Marx to focus on the historical development process.

#### 4. Conclusion

In conclusion, the exploration of riddles involves the inherent rules and sources of development in history, becoming a way for people to explore the breadth of the world and deepen understanding of themselves and history. In different social stages, people focus on different aspects, and there is a certain tendency in the direction of research on riddles. Marx, with his unique use of metaphors in riddles, leads people into a thorough examination of history, telling us that the challenges faced by humanity in each historical period are not always straightforward, and require multiple stages to grasp the true essence and the full aspects of human civilization. As “actors” and “participants” in history, people are constantly engaged in a struggle with reality through the repeated interaction of encountering and solving problems. It is through the exploration and unraveling of historical riddles that the unknown purposes and opportunities gradually reveal themselves. Just as the world does not always reveal its entirety, humans do not fully understand themselves. The existence of riddles gives humanity an infinite and fearless space to exercise wisdom, and the metaphor of riddles is the rules and limitations imposed on this domain, in other words, it is the “boundary” or “direction” on the path from “unknown” to “know”. Marx used metaphor to remind people, to keep a clear mind in the face of complex phenomena, constantly pursue internal clues, overcome obstacles, and reveal the true core of history. Examining the world of life from the depths of riddles is not only to avoid people encroach and occupy the territory of wisdom by arrogant reason, but also to prevent them from driving towards ultimate nothingness due to unrestrained desires.

#### Reference

- Ankersmit, F. R. (1994). *History and Tropology: The Rise and Fall of Metaphor*. Berkeley: University of California Press. <https://doi.org/10.1525/9780520309814>
- Black, M. (1962). *Models and Metaphors*. Ithaca: Cornell University Press. <https://doi.org/10.7591/9781501741326>
- Chitwood, A. (1995). Heraclitus αἰνυκτῆς Heraclitus and the Riddle. *Studi Classici e Orientali*, 43, 49-62. Retrieved from <http://www.jstor.org/stable/24185303>
- Gardella, M. (2022). Aristotle on Riddle. *Ancient Philosophy*, 42(1). <https://doi.org/10.5840/ancientphil20224218>
- Habash, J. (2019). Heraclitus and the Riddle of Nature. *Epoché: A Journal for the History of Philosophy*, 23(2), 275-286. <https://doi.org/10.5840/epoche2019214133>

- Hayden, W. (1978). *Tropics of Discourse: Essays in Cultural Criticism*. Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press.
- Lakoff, G., & Johnson, M. (2003). *Metaphors We Live By*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press.  
<https://doi.org/10.7208/chicago/9780226470993.001.0001>
- Mariana, G. (2022). Aristotle on Riddle. *Ancient Philosophy*, 1, 233-249.  
<https://doi.org/10.5840/ancientphil20224218>
- Marx, K. (1988). *Economia and Philosophic Manuscripts of 1844*. New York: Prometheus Books.
- Phil, H. (2008). Weaving the Fish Basket: Heraclitus on the Relation of Word and World. *Brown Working Papers in the Arts and Sciences*, 4. Retrieved from  
<http://collections.southwestern.edu/s/suscholar/item/6>
- Richard, J. E. (1997). *In Defence of History*. London: Granta Books.