

Ideological Exploration for Marx's "Reestablishment of Individual Property"

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Abstract: Marx proposed the idea to "reestablish individual property" in the future communist society, of which the central concept of the negation of negation is "individual property". A review of the concerned arguments in *Capital*, *Anti-Duhring*, *Critique of the Gotha Program* and *Manifesto of the Communist Party* can offer a systematic understanding of the "individual property" in terms of meaning, nature, forms of realization, existing period as well as why Marx stressed the "reestablishment of individual property", and thus help to clarify the vague understanding of this question in the current theoretical circles and finally work out the "Goldbach's conjecture" in the studies on political economy.

Keywords: Individual Property, Property of Means of Production, Political Economy, Marxist Economics

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Analyzing the historical development trend of capitalist accumulation in the first volume of *Capital*, Marx proposed to “reestablish individual property” in the future society after the capitalist system is eliminated.

There have been heated debates upon how to interpret this proposition in the Chinese and foreign theoretical circles since the beginning of the 20th century, but so far no clear conclusion has ever been reached. As it is related to the understanding of the future communist society and the basic orientation of the socialist construction and reform in China, this question has been recognized to be on the cutting-edge of political economy, and even called by some scholars as the “Goldbach’s conjecture” in this field.

It is believed in this paper that the majority of the different views on this question nowadays have deviated from the correct orientation of understanding. A review of the works of Marx and Engels shows that they have made very clear the form of property in the future communist society. It is actually not difficult to understand the “reestablishment of individual property” based on these clear and unmistakable arguments. Many misunderstandings and assumptions of the later generations are in a large part the result of the negation of negation, an expression used by Marx and Engels here, also a hindrance for people to accurately identify and practically reflect on this question.

§ I. The Original Narration in *Capital* and the Interpretation of “Reestablishing Individual Property of Means of Consumption” by Engels in *Anti-Duhring*

“The capitalist mode of appropriation, the result of the capitalist mode of production, produces capitalist private property. This is the first negation of individual private property, as founded on the labor of the proprietor. But capitalist production begets, with the inexorability of a law of Nature, its own negation. It is the negation of negation. This does not reestablish private property, but gives him individual property based on the acquisition of the capitalist era: i. e. , on cooperation and the possession in common of the land and of the means of production.”¹

¹ Marx, *Capital*, Volume 1. Beijing: People’s Publishing House, 1975: 832.

This is Marx's original narration of "reestablishing individual property", for which he used the negation of negation, a dialectic formulation.

Later, Duhring attacked Marx for his description here of a "nebulous world of his property which is at once both individual and social", and leaves a "profound dialectical enigma".

In order to refute the attack of Duhring, Engels made a special explanation in *Anti-Duhring*, arguing: "The state of things brought about by the expropriation of the expropriators is therefore characterized as the reestablishment of individual property, but on the basis of the social ownership of the land and of the means of production produced by labor itself. To anyone who understands plain talk this means that social ownership extends to the land and the other means of production, and individual ownership to the products, that is, the articles of consumption."

Engels also refers to the statements in *Capital*, saying that in order to make the matter comprehensible even to children of six, Marx assumed in the book "a community of free individuals, carrying on their work with the means of production in common, in which the labor-power of all the different individuals is consciously applied as the combined labor-power of the community". "The total product of our community is a social product. One portion serves as fresh means of production and remains social. But another portion is consumed by the members as means of subsistence. A distribution of this portion amongst them is consequently necessary."¹

Later, Lenin expressed his total agreement with this explanation of Engels. In *What the "Friends of the People" Are and How They Fight the Social-Democrats* which was written to criticize the Russian populists, he quoted the above words of Marx and Engels and put down such note that "to anyone who understands German (and Russian too, Mr. Mikhailovsky, because the translation is absolutely correct) this means that social ownership extends to the land and the other means of production, and individual ownership to the products, that is, the articles of consumption".²

1 Engels. "Anti-Duhring". *Complete Works of Marx and Engels, Volume 20*. Beijing: People's Publishing House, 1971:143,144.

2 Lenin. "Who Are "Friends of the People" and How They Fight the Social-Democrats". *Selected Works of Lenin, Volume 1*. Beijing: People's Publishing House, 1995:35-41.

Engels mentioned in the preface to *Anti-Duhring* that the world outlook expounded in this book was established and developed in far greater measure by Marx and only to an insignificant degree by himself; that the book would not be issued without his knowledge. Engels also pointed out that he read the whole manuscript to Marx before the book was printed, and the tenth chapter of the part on economics (“From *Kritische Geschichte*”) was written by Marx. Thus it can be considered that *Anti-Duhring* was written jointly by Engels and Marx, and the scientific explanation of Engels on the “reestablishment of individual property” was supposed to be championed by Marx.

As for what “reestablishment of individual property” is, there are a variety of new and old formulations within and out of China. For example, “Appropriation of the means of production by community of individual laborers”,¹ “individual ownership of the means of production dissolved in public ownership”,² “individual ownership shared by everyone on the basis of socialist public ownership”,³ “real individual property of labor power on the basis of the social property of the means of production”,⁴ “laborers’ individual property of labor”, “socialist laborers’ partial individual property of their own labor and products”, “laborers’ property neither social nor private”,⁵ “individual property shared by everyone”⁶ and so on. Some people even regard the Household Contract Responsibility System as the preliminary reflection of Marx’ s reestablishment of individual property”.⁷

1 Dai Daochuan. “On the Individual Property Based on Social Property”. *Jiangnan Forum*. 1981 (3).

2 Luo Yucong & Wang Ruifang. “On Re-establishment of Individual Property”. *Economic Issues in China*. 1983 (Supplement); Lu Chingtang. “What Is the Exact Meaning of Marx’s Re-establishment of Individual Property?” *Economic Science*. 1983 (4); Huang Shixiong. “How to understand ‘Re-establishment of Individual Property?’” *Economic Theory and Business Management*. 1983 (6); Kong Luquan. “The ‘Individual Property’ and the Basic Economic System at the Current Stage of China”. *Study & Exploration*. 2010 (3).

3 Liang Wancheng. “Does Marx’s ‘Individual Property’ Refer to Individual Property of Means of Subsistence?” *Jianghuai Collected Essays*. 1982 (2); Wei Xinghua. “How to Understand Marx’s Theoretical View of ‘Reestablishment of Individual Property?’” *Contemporary Economic Research*. 2010 (6).

4 Song Yuanzhao. “Individual Property of Labor Based on Social Property of the Means of Production”. *Academic Monthly*. 1983 (7); Xiao Yuan. “Individual Property of Labor Based on the Social Property of the Means of Production”. *Economic Theory and Business Management*. 1985 (4).

5 Niu Yangshang. “On Socialist Individual Property of Labor”. *Inquiry into Economic Issues*. 1985 (10); Liu Defu & Chen Shujun. “On Marx’s Individual Property”. *Study & Exploration*. 1989 (1).

6 Ji Tiejian & Lin Jiyou. “New Exploration for Socialist Ownership”. *Social Sciences in China*. 1986 (3); Ge Shoukun. “Marx’s ‘Individual Property’ Is Nothing but Laborers’ Property”. *Studies on Marxism*. 1986 (3); Sun Liancheng & Lin Huinan. “How Marx and Engels Look upon Private Ownership”. *Guangming Daily*. December 19, 1988.

7 10 Li Meng. “On Marx’s Reestablishment of Individual Property and the Rural Household Contract Responsibility System”. *Journal of the Party School of Leshan Municipal Committee of C.P.C.* 2008 (3).

Today, a more popular argument in the theoretical circles is to associate it with the form of share holding system, for example, someone believes that the property going social, public or demutualized is a way to the "reestablished" individual property¹; some others simply argue that the stock reflects the unity between the social and individual property, between the public and private ownership, and between the means of production and subsistence.²

While it is impossible to comment on each view mentioned above,³ we believe that each of them is improper to some extent. Why must we uphold Engels' explanation championed by Marx? In my view, Mr. Wang Chengjia has made a thorough analysis in his long article *Correct Understanding of Reestablishment of Individual Property* published in the first issue of *Economic Research Journal* in 1990.

Of course, the confusion in the economic circles on this question shows that a consensus cannot be formed unless economists understand Hegelian and Marxist dialectical expression concerning the negation of negation.

§ II. On Marx's "Reestablishment of the Individual Property" Based on Critique of the Gotha Program

One thing is clear that Marx's argument of "reestablishment of individual property" is the visualization of the economic system for the future communist society. Critique of Gotha Program, with Marx's most mature and most detailed presentation of the communist economic system, was written in 1875, seven years after the publication of the first volume of the German version *Capital* in 1867. Judging from the ideological development and maturation, it is undoubtedly justifiable to interpret the relevant concepts and proposition in the first volume of *Capital* with Marx's statements in Critique of Gotha Program. Now that some

1 Li Yining, "Further Discussion on Forms of Public Ownership". *Economic Herald*. 2002 (3).

2 Xie Tao & Xin Ziling, "A Trial Interpretation of Marx's Theory of Reestablishment of Individual Property and China's Reform". *Yanhuang Chunqiu*. 2007(6).

3 From the 1970s, Marxist researchers in Japan had a controversy on this question, forming the school of Hirata Kiyooki and the school of Naomichi Hayashi. The former interprets individual property as private ownership and thus establishes the socialism of "civil society", and the latter defends the explanation of Engels. In addition, Masamichi and other people interpret individual property as "individual appropriation of means of production and enjoyment of this state on the basis of socialist public ownership". For details, please see Hiroyuki Okamoto, ed. *Study on Marx's "Capital"*, translated by Liu Yan, et al. Jinan: Shandong People's Publishing House, 1993: 292-294.

people questioned that Engels' explanation might not be a correct understanding of Marx's original intention, here we make an analysis based on Critique of the Gotha Program written by Marx himself.

In this book, Marx divided the future communist society into two stages, of which he elaborated more about the first, pointing out that this period of communist society is the co-operative society based on common ownership of the means of production. As it emerges from capitalist society, and thus in every respect, economically, morally, and intellectually, it is still stamped with the birthmarks of the old society from whose womb it emerges. Moreover, restricted by the development level of social productive forces, the system of distribution according to work is carried out among the members of the society in terms of the means of consumption. That is, the individual producer receives from society—after the deductions have been made—exactly what he gives to it. What he has given to it is his individual quantum of labor. It is specifically implemented as follows: the individual producer receives a certificate from society that he has furnished such-and-such an amount of labor (after deducting his labor for the common funds); and with this certificate, he draws from the social stock of means of consumption as much as the same amount of labor cost. On the one hand, the common ownership of the means of production enables the individual producer to give nothing but his labor; on the other hand, nothing can pass to the ownership of individuals, except individual means of consumption. This system of distribution recognizes no class differences, because everyone is only a worker like everyone else. The right of the producers is proportional to the labor they supply and the distribution of the means of consumption among producers follows the principle of the equal amount of labor exchange. However, the principle of equal labor rights among the producers still belongs to the scope of bourgeois right. In fact, because producers are different in endowment and families, the equality of labor rights will not result in the equal distribution among them. Such inequality in distribution will not be changed until in the higher stage of communism.

With regard to the higher stage of communism, there is only one paragraph offering relatively simple description in Critique of the Gotha Program: “In a higher phase of communist society, after the enslaving subordination of the individual to the division of labor, and therewith also the antithesis between

mental and physical labor, has vanished; after labor has become not only a means of life but life's prime want; after the productive forces have also increased with the all-around development of the individual, and all the springs of co-operative wealth flow more abundantly—only then can the narrow horizon of bourgeois right be crossed in its entirety and society inscribe on its banners: From each according to his ability, to each according to his needs!"¹

An overview of Marx's statements in Critique of the Gotha Program shows that he has provided a clear explanation for "re-establish individual property based on cooperation and the possession in common of the land and of the means of production" in Capital. The first phase of communist society that emerges from capitalist society is characterized by public ownership of the means of production and the private ownership of the individual means of consumption after distribution according to work, hence the two basic characteristics. Engels' interpretation to reestablish individual property of the means of consumption on the basis of public ownership of the means of production accords with the thought of Marx. Marx stated "reestablish individual property" closely after the mention of the basis of public ownership of the means of production; therefore, the understanding that the reestablishment of individual property consists in the means of consumption follows a logic train of thought. In order to make it more clear, Engels changed the translation of "reestablish" into "give" or "distribute" in the German version of Anti-Duhring. The object to be given on the basis of public ownership can only be the articles of consumption rather than the means of production in individual property.

All in all, in the over-all ideas of Marx, the reestablished "individual property" is only limited to the individual articles of consumption; the common ownership of the means of production to be established in the new society in the future is of the social rather than the pluralistic ownership. It is not correct for some treatises to regard this argument of Marx as an economic model of socialism or strain the meaning of Marx's argument with the policies and measures currently implemented.²

1 Marx. "Critique of the Gotha Program". Complete Works of Marx and Engels, Volume 19. Beijing: People's Publishing House, 1963: 22-23.

2 Cheng Enfu. "What is the reestablishment of 'Individual Property'". Social Science Weekly, November 23, 1989.

As for the proposal of the “reestablishment”, Marx made a clear answer in Critique of the Gotha Program: when the nature of the mode of production has changed, the distribution mode of means of consumption of course needs to be reestablished.¹ The individual means of consumption after the reestablishment are of individual or private nature, but the term “private ownership” has been specifically referred to the private ownership of the means of production in habit. Possibly to avoid confusion, the term “individual property” is used take the place. Marx mentioned in The Civil War in France published in 1871 that Paris Commune “wanted to make individual property a truth by transforming the means of production, land, and capital, now chiefly the means of enslaving and exploiting labor, into mere instruments of free and associated labor”.² It should also be a mode of formulation concerning this question.

Judging from the statements in Marx’s Critique of the Gotha Program, the interpretation on “reestablish individual property” is more abundant than that in Engels’ Anti-Duhring. According to Marx’s analyses here, in the first phase of communism, the means of consumption after being distributed according to work are clearly owned by the individual producer with the distribution following the principle that for the same amount of labor which he has given to society in one form, he receives back in another. Such provision still keeps the nature of bourgeois right, because it emphasizes the ownership of labor, reflecting the exchange of the equal amount of labor in distribution. The nature of bourgeois right in individual property of the means of consumption, which is the result of the equal amount of labor determined by the ownership of labor, indicates that this “individual property” will exist in the first phase of communist society. The change occurs in a higher stage of communism. After the elimination of the old social division of labor and the antithesis between mental and physical labor, labor has become not only a means of life but life’s prime want, i.e., man loses the meaning of existence without working. In addition, with the all-around development of the individual, the social productive forces have reached the level that all the springs of co-operative wealth flow more abundantly, and the

1 Marx. “Critique of the Gotha Program”. Complete Works of Marx and Engels, Volume 19. Beijing: People’s Publishing House, 1963: 23.

2 Marx. “The Civil War in France”. Complete Works of Marx and Engels, Volume 17. Beijing: People’s Publishing House, 1963: 362.

principle "from each according to his ability, to each according to his needs" will be implemented in the distribution of the human society, completely crossing the narrow horizon of bourgeois right. With the realization of the distribution from each according to his ability, to each according to his needs, the human society has entered the higher phase of communism, where "individual property" reflecting bourgeois right will no longer be necessary. However, "individual property" of some parts of means of consumption reflecting freedom and convenience of the individual consumption will not necessarily vanish.

Since the 1950s, Yamagishi Community obviously characteristic of communist community, which was first built in Japan and achieved some development in six other countries, has ever canceled all the individual and family ownership of means of consumption in its practice, but in recent years it has witnessed some changes, allowing a small amount of means of consumption to be owned by individuals and families. This case is an illustration in reality.

The logic of the negation of negation can help our reflection on this question. However, the crux of the great controversy on the understanding of Marx's "reestablish individual property" lies exactly in how to look on the logic of the negation of negation used here. Why Marx insists on using this method of expression? Is it simply because he likes it so much so that he shows off Hegelian dialectics with gusto? It may be worthy of further consideration.

§ III. The Logical Center of the Negation of Negation in "Reestablish Individual Property" Is "Individual Property": the Interpretive Meaning of Manifesto of the Communist Party on This Question

Though varying in viewpoints, the treatises doubting Marx's agreement with the explanation of Engels have one thing in common, that is, if the reestablishment of "individual property" is interpreted as the reestablishment of "individual property of the means of consumption", it is deviated from the law of the negation of negation because the starting point of the negation of negation here is "the individual private property, as founded on the labor of the proprietor", referring to the ownership of the means of production. It is negated by the

capitalist private ownership of the means of production. The second negation cannot result in the “ownership of the means of consumption”. Otherwise, the asymmetry of the fore-and aft concepts logically goes against the law of identity and is inconsistent with the law of the negation of negation.

The problem, however, is: couldn't Marx and Engels have realized such a simple and obvious logical question? From the beginning, Duhring attacked Marx on the expression of the negation of negation. Engels refuted Duhring and made the explanation that “individual property” is that of the means of consumption. Didn't he and Marx think about whether something is logically wrong with the expression of the negation of negation here? Marx remained firm in this dialectic formulation. In the first volume of the French version of *Capital* revised by himself which was published in 1872, he made a slight change about this statement as: “This does not reestablish private property for the producer, but ... on cooperation and the possession in common of the land and of the means of production.”¹ The purpose of Marx's adding the qualifier “producer” should have been to help the reader understand what he meant. What did he wish the reader to understand? A look at what the “producer” qualifies will enable us to be aware that it is private property and individual property. The key part to understand this statement lies here.

That is to say, the central concept symmetrical in Marx's argument is actually “individual property” or “individual private property”, and the starting point of the negation of negation is petty producers' “individual property” of the means of production and the means of consumption, which is negated by capitalist “individual property”, i.e. the big private property of capitalists; the second negation produces another “individual property”, but it is individual property of the means of consumption based on common property of the means of production. Marx unveiled the development track and law of ownership with the dialectical approach of thesis-antithesis-synthesis. Until we understand the conceptual symmetry in form and the conceptual asymmetry or changeability in content can we get to know he chose not to clearly point out but connote the object and scope of the “reestablished individual property”—the means of

¹ Marx. *Capital*, Volume 1 (Translated from the French Version). Beijing: China Social Sciences Press, 1983: 826.

consumption, because he needed to formally express the conceptual symmetry of the law of the negation of negation. In this way, the formulations of the negation of negation are all used in the identical form of "individual property" with the economic content not totally repeated and identical. It is thus evident that this famous saying of Marx and the explanation of Engels do not violate the law of the negation of negation; instead, they turn out to be a wonderful formulation of this law.¹

Judging from the discussion in the first volume of *Capital*, the understanding of ours is clearly justifiable. Marx proposed to "reestablish individual property" when he looked to the entire historical tendency of capitalist accumulation in the last part of chapter The So-called Primitive Accumulation. In terms of the arrangement of contents, Marx, the classical writer, started with the analysis of the substance of the primitive accumulation and clearly pointed out that the so-called primitive accumulation is nothing else than the historical process of divorcing the petty producers from the means of production. The process forms the pre-historic stage of capital and the mode of production corresponding with it. The expropriation of the peasant from the soil is the basis of the whole process of the capital primitive accumulation.² In other words, the central question of the capitalist primitive accumulation is the elimination of petty producers' "individual property". In order to make this point explicit to the reader, Marx further pointed out in the next chapter The Modern Theory of Colonization that the petty producers' private property and the capitalist private property are totally different; if the former cannot be eliminated, the latter is impossible to be established wherever the land is still occupied by the laborers. He re-emphasized here that the elimination of the petty producers' "individual property" is the prerequisite of the establishment of the capitalist mode of production. Thus comprehensively, "individual property" or "individual private property" is undoubtedly the central concept within the framework of the primitive accumulation of capital. It also determines how we should understand the "reestablishment of individual property" proposed here by Marx.

However, why did Marx deliberately highlight "individual property"

1 Cheng Enfu. "Reestablish Individual Property' Should not Be Misused". *Social Science Weekly*, March 18, 2004.

2 Hong Yuanpeng. *A Course Book of "Capital"*, Volume 1. Shanghai: Fudan University Press, 1988: 415, 416.

here? An overview of the relevant literature of Marx and Engels shows that the statement in Manifesto of the Communist Party (hereinafter referred to as the Manifesto) may provide us with a suitable key to solve the enigma. Look at what the Manifesto states at the beginning: “A specter is haunting Europe—the specter of Communism. All the Powers of old Europe have entered into a holy alliance to exorcise this specter: Pope and Czar, Metternich and Guizot, French Radicals and German police-spies. Where is the party in opposition that has not been decried as Communistic by its opponents in power? Where the Opposition that has not hurled back the branding reproach of Communism, against the more advanced opposition parties, as well as against its reactionary adversaries? Two things result from this fact. I. Communism is already acknowledged by all European Powers to be itself a Power. II. It is high time that Communists should openly, in the face of the whole world, publish their views, their aims, their tendencies, and meet this nursery tale of the Specter of Communism with a Manifesto of the party itself.”¹

What is illustrated with the opening words of the Manifesto? It shows that in the era of Marx, the ideal of communism was a demonized thing in Europe. In the economic field, a “crime” that communism was accused of was: “We Communists have been reproached with the desire of abolishing the right of personally acquiring property as the fruit of a man’s own labor, which property is alleged to be the groundwork of all personal freedom, activity and independence.”² It seems that communism is not completely “innocent” for this accusation because some of the earlier utopian socialists did not make it clear that the dual system of public ownership of the means of production and private ownership of some means of consumption could exist side by side. As Owen said, “private property, in the past or at present, is the root for innumerable crimes people commit and the countless misfortunes they encounter.” “In a rationally organized society, the private property will no longer exist.”³ Dézamy shouted: “Public ownership! Public ownership! All the goodness and beauty that can be reached are summarized in the noun form.” In order to achieve public ownership,

1 Marx & Engels. “Manifesto of the Communist Party”. Selected Works of Marx and Engels, Volume 1. Beijing: People’s Publishing House, 1995: 271.

2 Marx & Engels. “Manifesto of the Communist Party”. Selected Works of Marx and Engels, Volume 1. Beijing: People’s Publishing House, 1995: 271.

3 23 Owen, Robert. Selected Works of Owen, Volume 2. Translated by Ke Xiangfeng et al. Beijing: The Commercial Press, 1981: 11, 13.

he called on people to sacrifice bravely their freedom, rights and private property.¹ It can be said that their viewpoints are representative and such viewpoints become the favorable excuses for bourgeois to demonize the communist ideology.

The publication of Manifesto of the Communist Party is to clarify the difference between scientific socialism and a variety of existing thoughts in the name of "socialism", and counterattack the bourgeois vilifications and attacks against communism. Therefore, it is clearly pointed out in the Manifesto: "Communism deprives no man of the power to appropriate the products of society; all that it does is to deprive him of the power to subjugate the labor of others by means of such appropriation." "Capital is, therefore, not a personal, it is a social power. When, therefore, capital is converted into common property, into the property of all members of society, personal property is not thereby transformed into social property. It is only the social character of the property that is changed. It loses its class-character. For the utopian socialists' propaganda and education, the Manifesto states that: "The revolutionary literature that accompanied these first movements of the proletariat had necessarily a reactionary character. It inculcated universal asceticism and social leveling in its crudest form." In a word, "The Communist revolution is the most radical rupture with traditional property relations",² but the revolution is not to eliminate "individual property".

However, the publication of Manifesto of the Communist Party does not mean the ending of bourgeois vilifications and attacks against the proletariat to "abolish private property". Marx, as a proletarian revolutionary theorist, was bound to pay attention to this aspect in his subsequent writings. The reason that in the first volume of Capital, he deliberately emphasized "reestablishment of individual property" in the future society with capitalist system ended is supposed to further clarify the stand, views and goals of action of the Communists so as to fight back the false charges of all kinds of reactionary forces on the basis of the profound theoretical work and systematic analysis. Awareness of this logic can

1 Dézamy, Théodore. Code de la Communaute. Translated by Huang Jianhua et al. Beijing: The Commercial Press, 1982: 28.

2 Marx & Engels. "Manifesto of the Communist Party". Selected Works of Marx and Engels, Volume I. Beijing: People's Publishing House, 1995: 287, 288, 293, 303.

obviously help to correctly understand the negation of negation formulation used by Marx.

§ IV. Conclusion

An overview along the train of Manifesto of the Communist Party—Capital, Volume 1—Critique of the Gotha Program—Anti-Duhring shows that Marx and Engels, the classical writers, have made relevant statements and even explicit explanation around the scientific definition and institutional forms of proposition of “reestablishment of individual property” and how to understand the negation of negation logic, and thus formed a relatively complete and rigorous logical system. We have drawn two conclusions based on our analyses: one is that Marx, Engels and Lenin are proficient in the law of the negation of negation and their refutatory explanations are authoritative and accurate. It is with the dialectical approach of “thesis-antithesis-synthesis” that Marx unveiled the development track and laws of ownership, and he chose not to clearly point out but connote the object and scope of the “reestablished individual property” —the means of consumption, in order to formally express the conceptual symmetry of the law of the negation of negation. In this way, the formulations of the negation of negation are all used in the identical form of “property” with the economic content not totally repeated and identical. In other words, what is negated by the capitalist ownership of the means of production is “individual property” of the means of production and consumption, and the negation of capitalist ownership will result in reestablishing “individual property” of the means of consumption on the basis of the public ownership of the means of production (in a communist society, the means of consumption can belong to individuals and the society respectively, and such a structure will continuously change in reality). Until we understand the conceptual symmetry in form and the conceptual asymmetry or changeability in content can we get to know that this famous saying of Marxist writer and its explanation do not violate the law of the negation of negation; instead, they turn out to be wonderful formulations of this law. Second, Marx, Engels and Lenin have consistently advocated that the means of production are owned by the whole society in common in a pure socialist or communist society (not including the transitional period to the socialist society), and therefore individual property

required to be reestablished in the future society cannot be cooperative ownership and shareholding ownership of the means of production. Accordingly, there is no need and reasons to strain the meaning of Marx's argument with the current theories and institutions (shareholding system, rural contract responsibility system, etc.).

It is thus obvious that if we ideologically return to the ideas of Marx, Engels and Lenin, and adhere to their basic logic and master their overall writings, if we do not only seize a word or two and arbitrarily abridge the current economic reality, the metaphor of "Goldbach's conjecture" in the political economy will not emerge.

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[1] Cheng Enfu. "Reestablish Individual Property' Should Not Be Misused". *Social Science Weekly*, March 18, 2004.

[2] Cheng Enfu. "What Is the Reestablishment of 'Individual Property'". *Social Science Weekly*, November 23, 1989.

[3] Zhang Yanxi & Peng Shaozong. "The Goldbach's Conjecture in Economics—Review of the Research Points of Marx's 'Reestablish Individual Property'". *Social Sciences in China*, 1999: (5).

[4] Hu Jun. "'Reestablish Individual Property' Is the Ownership Relation in the Higher Stage of Communism—A Concurrent Comment on the View to Equate It with the Socialist Public Ownership and Shareholding System". *Economic Perspectives*, 2009 (1).

[5] Li Huibin. "Re-read Manifesto of the Communist Party—Reinterpretation of Marx's 'Private Ownership', 'Public Ownership' and 'Individual Property'". *Contemporary World and Socialism*, 2008 (3).

[6] YAN Xiaolong. "Review of Recent Years of Studies on Marx's 'Reestablish Individual Property'". *Contemporary World and Socialism*, 2011 (3).

