



RESEARCH ARTICLE

THE WORLDVIEW IN HO CHI MINH'S PHILOSOPHICAL THOUGHT

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ABSTRACT

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Ho Chi Minh (1890-1969) was regarded as an ideologist, revolutionary, patriot, "national hero", "outstanding cultural activist", etc. by not only the Vietnamese people but also peace-loving people in the world. Throughout his life, he left many valuable thoughts for humanity, one of which is the Worldview, which serves as the principle and orientation for Vietnam's liberation, independence, and freedom for the people. To clarify the contents of Ho Chi Minh's Worldview, the author of this article employs a combination of methodologies, primarily the textual method, and the historical philosophical approach, to summarize the content and draw out the characteristics and values in this thought.

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INTRODUCTION

President Ho Chi Minh - regarded as the founder, educator, and trainer of the Communist Party of Vietnam as well as a "national hero" and "outstanding cultural activist", left humanity with many great ideological legacies. One of those legacies with important theoretical and practical significance in guiding the process of building and developing the socialist Vietnam today is the Worldview. That viewpoint, which sprang directly from the historical conditions of Vietnam in the late 19th and early 20th centuries; is the creative inheritance and absorption of the national cultural tradition as well as the quintessence of human culture, the pinnacle of which is Marxism-Leninism. In which, the national cultural tradition serves as the foundation and the source of Ho Chi Minh's philosophical thought. These include patriotism, love for the people, compassion and solidarity with the community, views on the world, and methodology of national history. Besides, Ho Chi Minh also selectively absorbed and criticized Eastern and Western philosophical thoughts such as the humanistic ethics of Confucianism, the compassionate and sociable views of Buddhism, the inaction view of Taoism, the view of the Enlightenment, and the altruistic view of Jesus Christ, among others. However, his philosophical thought only developed and changed in quality when exposed to the light of Marxism-Leninism.

This article employs the principles of dialectical materialism; comprehensiveness; specific history and development principles, as well as specific methods, especially the perspective of approaching the history of philosophy, with the method of textual studies, and document research to systematize the contents of the worldview in Ho Chi Minh's philosophical thought, thereby drawing out the characteristics of this thought.

2. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

The worldview in Ho Chi Minh's philosophical thought is expressed vividly and extensively through a variety of works and contents, but the principles of resolution remain consistent. These fundamental viewpoints serve as the foundation for him to properly and appropriately tackle specific challenges posed by the historical and social conditions of Vietnam.

First, in terms of ontology

Through many issues in his ideological system, when Ho Chi Minh wanted to talk about the "original" factor, the "prior" factor that comes to be first and decides the thoughts and actions of people, or things and phenomena, depending on the different levels of understanding of his audiences and the comparative correlation used, he selected from a rich and diverse range of categories to refer to the philosophy of matter. For example: in his speeches to those with considerable amount of knowledge, Ho Chi Minh often used general, abstract, and scientific concepts such as: *material world (in relation to thought, consciousness), objective world (in relation to the subjective world), objectivity (in relation to subjectivity)*, etc. He wrote:

"In the struggle to transform Vietnam and the world, the proletariat and the revolutionary people must transform both the objective world and their subjective world, which includes their thoughts, their situation and their understanding. It is necessary to change the dynamic between the subjective and objective worlds." (Ho Chi Minh, 2011, vol. 7, p.170);

Meanwhile, in order to convey his thoughts to the majority of the people, Ho Chi Minh often used simple, familiar, practical, easy-to-understand and easy-to-use concepts such as: *reality (in relation to religion); material life (in relation to the spiritual life); food, clothing; factories; warehouses, yards, machinery; human labor; etc.* (in relation to: knowledge; words, slogans, policies, patriotism, etc.). For example, when talking about the definition of "communism", Ho Chi Minh utilized commonly-used words to explain to people: *"Communism means everything employed in production that is of common ownership, such as machinery and land. All means of production are commonly owned by the people and the State; people use them to work and enjoy their work success together."* (Ho Chi Minh, 2011, vol. 10, p.386). It can be seen that, although the ontological categories are different in terms of the language used, they have the same connotation, because according to Ho Chi Minh's explanation, *matter is the origin of the objective world that "changes every hour and minute"* (Ho Chi Minh, 2011, vol. 4, p.28).

Second, the relationship between matter and consciousness

First of all, with the spirit of self-reliance and the dialectical materialist worldview, Ho Chi Minh criticized and rejected the superstitious, heretical, and idealistic views and phenomena that existed in society and caused negative impacts on the country and the people, which not only weaken the people's thoughts and spirits and make them dependent because they have to pray for divine blessings, but also waste their financial and social resources for organizing these worship activities. Therefore, it is necessary to fight against the diseases of superstition, heresy, idealism, etc. among a part of the masses, as well as members and cadres of the Communist Party of Vietnam. He pointed out:

"Superstition. Some members of our Party sit for trance ceremonies, carry amulets with them, and bear god palanquins on their shoulders. Is this the right thing to do? When a person joins the Communist Party or the Youth Union, it means he believes in Marxism-Leninism and materialism.... Talking about materialism while acting in the way of idealism is wrong." (Ho Chi Minh, 2011, vol. 10, p.609).

Taking a very commonly-seen illustration in the daily life of the people to criticize the erroneous views that are taking place in the production process and need to be eliminated, that is, worshiping to remove pests from plants, he wrote: *"Because there are pests, there are two mistaken thoughts: one is the belief that worshiping will get rid of the pests, the other is the fear that it's not possible to terminate all the pests since there is a lot of them. Both are gloomy and negative thoughts. If we work hard, the pests will all be gone."* (Ho Chi Minh, 2011, vol. 11, p.499)

Furthermore, when studying the relationship between matter and consciousness, Ho Chi Minh Ho Chi Minh attacked the "trivial" materialist ideas that one-sidedly absolutize the decisive role of matter over consciousness, ignoring the crucial role and impact of consciousness on matter. In his opinion, it is recommended to not absolutize any factor, but to always clearly see the role and position of matter and consciousness in the development of society. When talking

about the issue of building socialism, Ho Chi Minh wrote: *"To advance to socialism, two things are required: matter and ideology."* (Ho Chi Minh, 2011, vol. 11, p.598).

However, while analyzing the fundamental problem of philosophy, from the standpoint of dialectical materialism, Ho Chi Minh consistently asserted that the functions of matter and consciousness are different in terms of dialectical relationship. In which:

First, in the end, matter determines consciousness. Such determination is first understood as matter being the first to come to be, and the basis for the emergence of consciousness. Ho Chi Minh used a proverb to affirm his materialist stance. He wrote: *"Only with food can one uphold morality", that is materialism.* (Ho Chi Minh, 2011, vol.10, p. 619). Or when discussing the essential needs in human existence and development, in the article *Dear Vietnamese Farmers*, he also affirmed that people put food first:

"For every human being, "food is the first necessity" (meaning that first they need to eat); and our country, "agriculture is the root" (meaning that farming is the foundation). For people to eat their fill, farming must be a focus. If we want to be rich and strong, we must develop agriculture. Therefore, we should not leave any inch of land fallow, but instead treat them as gold." (Ho Chi Minh, 2011, vol. 4, p.134).

That means we must start with our internal strength and self-reliance, rather than expecting, relying on, or believing in imperialist and colonialism's claims to deliver people freedom, equality, and charity. Instead, we must have tangible activities—social revolution—to offer freedom, wealth, and happiness to people.

In addition, the determination of matter over consciousness is also expressed and explained very clearly and specifically by Ho Chi Minh when he tackled the requirements of history and society. First, he affirmed that: As matter is, so is consciousness, which means that matter determines the content and nature of consciousness's reflection. For example, when explaining "socialism" on the basis of a materialist worldview, he always affirmed that the factor that decides and creates of a good and progressive society for people exists in their daily material life: *"socialism is how to make the people rich and the country strong"* (Ho Chi Minh, 2011, vol. 10, p.390). That wealth, according to him, is created by practical activities instead of slogans, words, subjective wishes, etc. of any class or party. Ho Chi Minh wrote: *"As a result, socialism considers factories, trains, banks, and other assets to be common property. Whoever works a lot eats a lot, whoever works a little eats a little, and whoever does not work eats nothing, except for the elderly, the sick, and children"* (Ho Chi Minh, 2011, vol. 10, p.390).

On the other hand, according to Ho Chi Minh, matter determines the changing existence of consciousness. When matter changes, consciousness will also change. He wrote: *"Society is now developing day by day, and so are thoughts and actions. If you keep holding on to the old paper clip without changing, you will not get anywhere."* (Ho Chi Minh, 2011, vol. 8, p.55). Or when explaining the construction of socialism, he said: *"the increasingly growth of society, both materially and spiritually, that is socialism"* (Ho Chi Minh, 2011, vol. 13, p.438).

On the other hand, Ho Chi Minh also pointed out the impact of consciousness on matter.

That impact was explained specifically by him through many issues posed by the Vietnamese Revolution, particularly: *First of all, Ho Chi Minh affirmed the important role and impact of consciousness on matter in the social revolution.* This is a very important content in Ho Chi Minh's worldview, which guided his great attention to promoting the role of subjective factors, humans, and consciousness in the process of treating and transforming nature and society. On the issue of building socialism, Ho Chi Minh believed that ideology plays an extremely important role in providing a correct orientation and forming determination among the masses; therefore, it is necessary to have people with socialist mind who are steadfast, and pioneering to lead the development of the country and the people. He wrote:

"To advance to socialism, there must be people, and among those who wish to do so, cadres are the first and most significant. Thus, first and foremost, cadres must desire to advance to socialism, then they must be determined to realize it and guide the people to accomplish all the tasks of increasing production, saving resources, and fighting for national independence." (Ho Chi Minh, 2011, vol. 11, p.598).

Ho Chi Minh also pointed out that it is necessary to promote the role of consciousness for social development:

"Our country is poor, as is our technology, and the cities with a little technology have been occupied by the enemy. We must harness the excitement of the entire populace to find solutions to the material deficit. The Party and the Government then adopted the Patriotic Emulation campaign slogan: Emulation in all aspects, with a focus on eradicating hunger, illiteracy, and foreign invaders." (Ho Chi Minh, 2011, vol. 7, p.28).

Furthermore, the impact of consciousness on matter is specifically demonstrated by the fact that if consciousness correctly reflects matter, it will lead to the victory of the revolution. According to Ho Chi Minh, in difficult and arduous times, it is even more vital to promote revolutionary excitement, cultivate the spirit of self-reliance, and employ the revolutionary spirit to serve the country and the people to cover up the hardships and material shortages. He wrote:

"It is necessary to continue to raise socialist awareness. Ideological and political works in cooperatives must be considered top priority, especially when the material and technical facilities of cooperatives are still limited" (Ho Chi Minh, 2011, vol. 12, p.358).

He evoked the spirit of overcoming difficulties, patriotism, and hatred of the enemy, as well as revived revolutionary heroism; from there, the revolution was brought forward and stronger. He wrote: *"Everyone must enhance the spirit of collective mastery, not being afraid of difficulties and hardships, and being determined to strive for and fulfill their duties"* (Ho Chi Minh, 2011, vol. 14, p.28). For the military, Ho Chi Minh also pointed out: *"Good weaponry is useless if it is combined with a weak spirit"* (Ho Chi Minh, 2011, vol. 7, p.460).

In addition, if consciousness reflects matter wrongly, it will hinder the development of the revolution. When talking about the role of a new person's consciousness to socialism, he wrote: *"If you want to change society, you must first change yourself. If your heart remains unchanged, then don't talk about reforming society. If your heart is still corrupt and wasteful, how can you do the work?"* (Ho Chi Minh, 2011, vol. 8, p.113).

He further explained, *"If we just do things according to our own will, thought, and subjectivity, and then impose them on the masses, it is like putting the cart before the horse. The horse are the masses. The cart is our way of organizing and working. Everyone puts the horse before the cart, not the other way around."* (Ho Chi Minh, 2011, vol. 5, p.288).

According to Ho Chi Minh, the reason for that impact is due to its relative independence. He wrote: *"A policy that is correct today may not be appropriate tomorrow"* (Ho Chi Minh, 2011, vol. 4, p.28). As consciousness can be either ahead and more advanced or stagnant and more obsolete than matter, he affirmed: *"often, consciousness is in a state of backwardness compared to existence"* (Ho Chi Minh, 2011, vol. 12, p.358). He also cited evidence:

"Since joining the cooperative, their level of awareness has been raised one step further. However, it must be recognized that today's cooperative members still bear many traces of yesterday's individual farmers. A short period of working in the collective cannot immediately erase the living and farming habits, as well as the thought of private ownership that have existed for thousands of years." (Ho Chi Minh, 2011, vol. 12, p. 357).

Third, Ho Chi Minh's dialectical materialist viewpoint on religion

Ho Chi Minh criticized the limitations of the idealistic worldview and opposed the superstitious and heretical views that weakened the country and its people. However, his dialectical materialist worldview saw religions through humanistic and scientific glasses. Ho Chi Minh, on the one hand, pointed out the limitations that needed to be filtered out in some religious views, such as superstition, heresy, and passive wait for the help of some supernatural spiritual beings. He wrote:

"A wrong idea is to pray for help from the gods. Is it the gods or us who conduct a revolution, or fight a resistance war? Was the drought last year fought by people or by the gods? It's undesirable that the drought happened, but we must fight against it instead of praying to the gods to take it away." (Ho Chi Minh, 2011, vol. 11, pp. 227-228).

These are very wrong concepts that make people passive and have no idea of how to reform the objective world and make their own destiny. He emphasized that everything is done by human, and that if people want to fight against oppression and exploitation to regain independence, they must start a revolution to gain it themselves. Superstitious and backward forms such as sitting for trance ceremonies, magic, worshiping and waiting for heaven's assistance will only negatively affect the development of a civilized and modern society, and thus must be criticized. He affirmed: *"Everything is done by humans, and it is all the same, from tiny works to enormous projects, from close areas to far*

destinations" (Ho Chi Minh, 2011, vol. 5, p.281). Also, Ho Chi Minh condemned the treacherous and treasonous acts of some religious believers. He wrote:

"Religion: The majority of religious compatriots, especially the working class, are patriotic and resistant, such as Catholics in many places, Cao Dai resistance fighters, etc. Some are exploited by the enemy, such as the Cao Dai, Hoa Hao, Catholics puppet army in the South. Some Catholic compatriots, although good in nature, are swayed by reactionary leaders, so they doubt the policies of the Party and Government." (Ho Chi Minh, 2011, vol. 7, p.394).

In addition, Ho Chi Minh always promoted the humanistic and positive values that religions bring. He realized that all forms of religion are aimed towards people, seeking happiness for humanity and society. He exploited and applied religious values to revolutionary activities and people's lives. He said: *"Jesus taught: Ethics is universal love. Buddha taught: Ethics is compassion. Confucius taught: Ethics is humanity and righteousness."* (Ho Chi Minh, 2011, vol. 7, p.95).

Ho Chi Minh, applying the dialectical materialist worldview, respected and promoted the reasonable values of religion. He very reasonably resolved the contradictions between materialism and idealism, between communism and religion, considered in the actual conditions, along with cultural and traditional factors in Vietnam, for the consistent purpose of regaining national independence and building a prosperous life for the people.

From pointing out the values and limitations of religion, Ho Chi Minh affirmed the difference between the two worldviews of religion and communism: religion is idealistic, communism is materialist; idealism and materialism are opposites. This is a very clear, unambiguous, and eclectic stance of a true materialist. From that, he wrote: *"Religions are idealistic, but the working class must be materialist"* (Ho Chi Minh, 2011, vol. 10, p.480). However, Ho Chi Minh clearly saw that communism and religions share the the common goal and desire of bringing a good life to people. He wrote:

"The Bible says: "The will of the people is the will of God". The patriotic path that our people are taking is completely precise. I hope that the elders, bishops and priests will enthusiastically encourage believers in all works that benefit the country and the people" (Ho Chi Minh, 2011, vol. 14, p.381). Regarding Buddhism, he wrote: *"Buddha is compassionate and merciful. He wants to save sentient beings from suffering, so he sacrifices and fights to destroy the evil spirits"* (Ho Chi Minh, 2011, vol. 5, p.288).

In addition, Ho Chi Minh stated that the essence of humans, whether religious or not, is patriotism and hatred of the enemy and unjust oppression. He wrote:

"Our patriotism is burning bright, our courage is becoming more steadfast, our fighting spirit is rising high, and our determination to win is growing strong.

We, from the Government to the people, from the North to the South, the old and the young, the rich and the poor, are determined for our country to not be lost, our people to not be enslaved, and our nation to not be divided.

We, both Catholics and non-Catholics, Buddhists and Cao Dai believers, are closely united and determined to fight to liberate our race and preserve our Fatherland" (Ho Chi Minh, 2011, vol. 5, pp.248-249).

Therefore, Ho Chi Minh did not advocate or call for religions to be materialist, but he instead respected the freedom of belief and religion of each person. He wrote: *"Religious people have the right to freedom of belief and freedom of worship. Do not fall for the tricks of deceitful propagandists"*(Ho Chi Minh, 2011, vol. 9, p.428). This is also the policy of religious freedom and freedom of belief of the Communist Party and State of Vietnam today in managing and leading the people. Ho Chi Minh wrote about the Party: *"The Vietnam Workers' Party completely respects the freedom of belief of everyone"* (Ho Chi Minh, 2011, vol. 5, p.50).

On the characteristics of Ho Chi Minh's worldview

From the content of the Worldview in Ho Chi Minh's philosophical thought, the following unique points are drawn out. First of all, that viewpoint is a combination of national and contemporary characteristics based on Marxism-Leninism. The national and contemporary characteristics in Ho Chi Minh's philosophical thought are selective and flexible, not stereotyped and rigid, but depend on specific historical conditions to have appropriate applications, contributing to the

promotion of values and filtering out limitations in the current situation. That also contributes to the value and success of his revolutionary path. *Ho Chi Minh's Worldview is also a combination of science and popularity.* For an ordinary person, the combination seems to be impossible, as one side is characterized by a system of generalization, abstraction and academic knowledge, while the other side aims for directness, being easy to listen, easy to understand, easy to implement and concrete knowledge. However, with the heart and vision of a great man, Ho Chi Minh found the intersection point which is aimed at meeting the requirements of both historical and social practices. Therefore, in his philosophical thought, Ho Chi Minh skillfully and harmoniously combined both characteristics to achieve a common goal: for the people. *Also, his worldview is also characterized by its revolutionary and creative nature:* in Ho Chi Minh's philosophical thought, there is a principle-based relationship between being revolutionary and being creative, which is steadfastness, unity, and thoroughness in ideological stance and practical activities, as well as the creativity and innovation to fit in with specific history and avoid rigidity. Especially, the creativity in his thought is vividly demonstrated in the immutable and changeable nature of creativity, therefore, avoiding arbitrariness and lack of principles; *In particular, that viewpoint is also proof of profound humanity* that is clearly expressed throughout his life, with every thought and action of him resulting from his concern about the fate of the nation and the people. Born at the end of the 19th century, when our entire nation was immersed in the dark night of slavery, from a young age, Ho Chi Minh painfully witnessed his people experiencing a poor and miserable life, being exploited under two layers of oppression, and deprived of all human rights right on his homeland. He saw with his own eyes the crimes of the colonialists and the cowardly, weak attitude of the Southern dynasty mandarins. Loss of freedom is unacceptable for all nations. People are born to be free and all nations must be equal. Yet, through many generations, one nation still oppresses another, and that is a stain in human history. Fighting for freedom and liberation for the peoples, therefore, becomes the sacred goal of every true human being, which is also the lifelong goal of Ho Chi Minh.

3. CONCLUSION

With the spirit of self-reliance and the dialectical materialist worldview, *Ho Chi Minh criticized and rejected the superstitious, heretical, and idealistic views and phenomena* that existed in society and had caused negative impacts on the country and the people, which not only weaken the people's thoughts and spirits and make them dependent because they have to pray for divine blessings, but also waste their financial and social resources for organizing these worship activities. However, regarding religion, in his dialectical materialist worldview, Ho Chi Minh, on the one hand, pointed out the limitations that needed to be filtered out in some religious views, such as superstition, heresy, and passive wait for the help of some supernatural spiritual beings. On the other hand, he always promoted the humanistic and positive values that religions bring. He realized that all forms of religion are aimed towards people, seeking happiness for humanity and society. He exploited and applied religious values to revolutionary activities and people's lives.

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