

The Interpretation and Value Application of Marx's Labor Justice Thought in Contemporary Times

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Abstract: Labor is the foundation of human society, and throughout its development history, justice has always been the core value that humanity strives to pursue. As the entity of labor, humans continuously innovate and create tools for labor, and labor behavior and systems evolve historically and concretely. Using evolving justice standards to examine and evaluate labor behavior and systems is an embodiment of the labor entity's pursuit of "labor justice." Justice is the primary value of social systems, and in the face of labor injustice phenomena that exist in the process of achieving common prosperity in China, it is important to explore the true meaning of labor, fully reflect the entity status of workers in labor, and work to enhance workers' sense of happiness in the labor process, thereby realizing the comprehensive and free development of individuals. Therefore, re-examining Marx's labor justice thought and exploring its interpretation and value application in contemporary society will not only help us gain a deeper understanding of the relationship between labor and justice, but also provide important theoretical support and practical guidance for promoting social justice and realizing workers' rights.

Keywords: Marx; Labor Justice; Value Application.

1. Marx's Concept of Labor

Marx analyzed the concept of labor from both material and social dimensions. From a material perspective, labor is first and foremost the activity of human beings engaging in material production; secondly, it is an activity that people engage in with the help and use of tools; and finally, labor is the primary activity through which humans establish a relationship with nature. From a social perspective, Marx believed that labor created society and all social relations. According to Marx's ideas, labor essentially refers to a purposeful activity in which humans transform or humanize nature within certain social relationships, while also creating material and spiritual wealth. In a scientific socialist society, Marx defined labor as a conscious life activity, an inherent function of humans. Through liberation, labor is transformed into free, conscious labor [1-3]. Marx concluded that in capitalist society, labor is primarily used to produce surplus value, while in the future communist society, labor will transform into an activity of people's conscious, free, and comprehensive development, becoming a form of free labor that promotes the holistic growth of individuals.

The Formation Process of Marx's Labor Justice Thought
The formation of Marx's labor justice thought was a gradual deepening and development process, with its roots traceable to early works such as *Critique of Hegel's Philosophy of Right*. In these works, Marx expressed concern about social injustice and the suffering of workers, beginning to show his thoughts on the issue of labor justice. Although Marx had not yet developed a complete theory of labor disputes during this period, he had already begun to question the prevailing notions of justice in society and expressed strong dissatisfaction with the unjust treatment of workers. As Marx's research on capitalist society deepened, he gradually recognized the exploitation and oppression of workers under the capitalist mode of production. In works such as *Capital*, Marx provided a detailed analysis of the injustice of labor under the capitalist mode of production, pointing out that capitalists obtain profits by appropriating the surplus value

produced by workers. This is a deprivation of the fruits of workers' labor and a severe violation of social justice. Marx introduced the concept of labor justice, emphasizing that workers should have rights corresponding to the value of their labor. Marx's labor justice thought continued to evolve. He argued that to achieve labor justice, it was necessary to fundamentally eliminate the exploitation and oppression inherent in the capitalist mode of production and establish a socialist and communist society, where workers truly become the masters of their labor, enjoying full freedom and dignity. This provided crucial support for later socialist and communist movements [4-5].

Table 1. The Formation Process of Marx's Labor Justice Thought

Stage	Description
The bud of Marx's thought of labor justice	In his early works such as <i>Critique of Hegel's Philosophy of Law</i> , Marx began to pay attention to social injustice and the suffering of workers, and initially thought about the issue of labor justice.
The generation of Marx's thought of labor justice	In works such as <i>Capital</i> , Marx analyzed the injustice of labor under the capitalist mode of production, put forward the thought of labor justice, and emphasized that workers should enjoy the corresponding rights and interests.
The development of Marx's thought of labor justice	Marx believed that to achieve labor justice, it was necessary to eliminate capitalist exploitation and oppression, establish a socialist and communist society, and let workers enjoy freedom and dignity.

2. Marx's In-depth Analysis of Labor Value

2.1. The Relationship Between Labor and Capital

Marx pointed out: "The core of the modern social system is the relationship between capital and labor." In this

contradiction, labor creates value and drives its appreciation, playing a decisive role, while capital serves as the necessary tool or means for labor to realize its value. In capitalist society, the widespread use of large-scale industrial production, centered on mechanization, has led to the emergence of wage labor. The formation of wage labor accelerated the capitalists' goal of extracting more surplus value and profit through large-scale production. The capitalists' desire for unlimited surplus value caused capital to concentrate in the hands of a few, while the majority of workers, apart from selling their labor in exchange for the minimal material goods necessary to survive, had no other options. However, with the continuous development and innovation of labor productivity, and the intensification of capitalist exploitation and oppression of workers, the contradiction between labor and capital will inevitably explode. This contradiction is the fundamental and irreconcilable contradiction of capitalist society, and its irreconcilability signals the inevitable collapse of capitalism. Specifically, the existence of wage labor causes the concentration of production means in the hands of a few capitalists, rather than the collective ownership of resources by all workers, resulting in inequality. This exacerbates the contradiction between labor and capital, making the conflict between productive forces and relations of production in capitalist society more acute and prominent.

2.2. The Dual Nature of Labor

The development of labor has driven changes in social and economic forms. In the era of natural economy, self-sufficient labor dominated social life; whereas in the era of commodity economy, exchange labor became the mainstream. This indicates that the essence and core of social and economic life lie in labor, and changes in the form of labor profoundly influence the social economic structure and people's way of life. In *Capital*, Marx provided a detailed elaboration on the economic concept of labor, analyzing the two factors of commodities. Marx distinguished labor into two forms: concrete labor and abstract labor, based on labor that creates the use value and value of commodities. Marx's theory of the two factors of commodities and the duality of labor arose from this. Marx believed that the use value of a commodity derives from the concrete labor involved in producing the commodity. He referred to this purposeful, result-oriented, value-generating production activity as useful labor or concrete labor. Concrete labor is the key factor that determines the use value of a commodity because its purpose is to transform natural materials into universal necessities for human life [6-7]. Concrete labor is the fundamental condition for human survival, unaffected by social forms, and is the eternal natural necessity for the exchange of material with nature, supporting human life.

2.3. The Emergence of Alienated Labor

Marx's study of the relationship between labor and capital in capitalism revealed the dual nature of labor in commodity value and exposed the essence of alienated labor and the true

source of surplus value, deepening the understanding of capitalist economic laws. Marx conducted a detailed analysis of wages, profits, and rents in capitalist society, presenting the phenomenon of alienated labor. He uncovered the antagonistic relationship between rent and wages, as well as wages and capital profits. Marx thus discovered the exploitation and oppression of workers by capitalists in capitalist society. Marx first pointed out that workers' wages are determined by both capitalists' demand for labor and workers' living needs. He argued that both the capitalists' demand for workers and the workers' own living needs are ultimately determined by the overall development of social wealth. When social wealth is in decline, it is most detrimental to workers. When social wealth is abundant, capitalists greedily seek to capture more wealth by expanding production and monopolizing industries. Marx noted that capitalists, in pursuit of profits, expand production, monopolize industries, increase capital, and control labor, thus appropriating most of the labor products. Workers' wages remain meager, while profits and capital mutually promote each other, standing in opposition to wages, revealing the exploitative nature of capitalism.

3. The Contemporary Interpretation of Marx's Labor Justice Thought

3.1. Promoting Labor Education in the New Era

Marx believed that labor is the means through which humans transform the objective world, and it also creates human society and history. Since human society has always been the starting point for education, closely integrating the labor process with the educational process is both reasonable and necessary. This helps us better understand and promote comprehensive human development (see Figure 1). On one hand, labor education is the prerequisite for achieving the ultimate goals of moral education. Moral education is the primary task of socialist education, and its fundamental goal is to cultivate virtuous individuals. The essential goal of labor education is to improve labor literacy, foster a labor spirit, and form correct labor values. Moral education affects people's social consciousness, and to achieve its goals, it can only be realized through practice. It is through labor practice that spiritual elements such as beliefs and values are formed, which validate the content of moral education. On the other hand, labor education promotes intellectual education, which involves the process of learning scientific knowledge, improving intellectual abilities, and honing skills, playing a crucial role in social practice. Therefore, it is essential to integrate labor education into intellectual education, enabling individuals to apply theoretical knowledge in labor practice and understand the essence of that knowledge. This not only improves intellectual capabilities and thinking skills but also enhances learning enthusiasm, thus achieving the educational goal of cultivating well-rounded individuals.

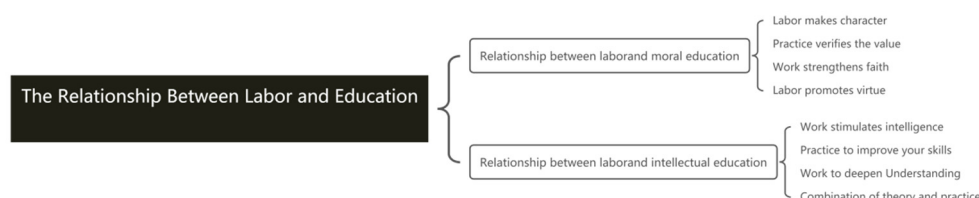


Figure 1. The Relationship Between Labor and Education

3.2. Promoting and Practicing the Spirit of Labor

In the construction of the nation in the new era, the role of labor models should be emphasized, integrating the spirit of model workers with the spirit of craftsmanship into personal work practices. Labor spirit refers to the overall attitude of laborers displayed during their work. It includes people's understanding of labor, their labor values, and their attitude toward work. The entity of labor spirit is the working masses, and it is formed during their labor process in creating a better life. The spirit of labor models refers to the labor ethos and values formed by labor models, reflecting their hard work and endurance throughout the labor process. The spirit of craftsmanship, a concept popular in China in recent years, refers to workers who pursue perfection in their work, exhibiting meticulous and focused professional spirit. It emphasizes the refinement and meticulousness in skills and the pursuit of personal excellence. This spirit is a life goal that every laborer should strive for, and it has become a benchmark for measuring the professionalism of technical talent in the new era. The professional and technical talent emerging from various industries are practitioners of the spirit of craftsmanship [8-10]. This spirit promotes the development of industries and social progress in China, serving as a cornerstone for enhancing the international competitiveness of "Made in China" and globalizing its products.

3.3. Promoting Fairness in the Distribution of Social Wealth

As society progresses with the times, the development of technology and artificial intelligence continuously updates the forms and methods of labor. The rapid growth of knowledge-based economies and service industries, among others, requires the diversification of production factors. Under such circumstances, it is crucial to ensure the fair distribution of social wealth. The socialist distribution system, which is centered on labor-based distribution with multiple distribution methods, has been established. In addition, the distribution system now also includes the distribution of production factors, improving the fairness and reasonableness of distribution. Therefore, we must adhere to the principle of labor-based distribution, as the majority of the laboring masses form the foundation of society. The standard for distributing wealth is their labor, which should be distributed based on the quality and quantity of their work and their contribution to society. Marx pointed out that the total amount of material goods produced in society at a certain time serves as the basis for labor-based distribution. These production and consumption goods are jointly created by the working masses and thus belong to them collectively, not to any individual or specific sector [11-13]. In socialist society, the total amount of material goods is primarily distributed through labor-based distribution, ensuring reasonable fairness in the process, thereby improving the national economic level.

4. Conclusion

Justice, as a lofty value pursued by humanity for millennia,

guides society toward truth, goodness, and beauty. However, justice should not be confined to theoretical constructs; it must be realized through the integration of ideal and reality, the bridging of values and facts, and the unity of ideals and practicalities, thereby truly lighting the path forward for human society. People create social wealth and drive historical progress through labor. Marx's labor thought is an important component of the entire Marxist ideological system. It is the foundation of Marx's historical materialism and theory of surplus value, offering valuable theoretical insights and practical guidance. Therefore, we should continue to delve into and explore the contemporary value of Marx's labor justice thought, encouraging us to constantly reflect on and improve the existing labor relations, promoting social justice and harmony.

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