

The Implementation of Labor Education in Schools from Marx's Theory of Alienated Labor— And the Issue of Socialist Core Values Identity

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Abstract: Alienated labor is Marx's original concept. In his analysis of alienated labor, Marx removes category obscurations and proceeds directly from the facts, and therefore, it is also the analysis of the general labor process. By analyzing the forms of labor, Marx pointed out that when workers passively and mechanically use their bodily functions for labor, it is a deviation from the essence of human, and that only free, conscious, and conscious life activities are labor in accordance with the essence of human. In the implementation of labor education in schools, "physical labor is the main focus", but should avoid choosing labor projects that involve only physical exertion and suppression of mental abilities, and instead use conscious rather than instrumental labor as the basic form, so that students can experience creativity and beauty in labor to achieve the purpose of education. Also based on the status of labor in the Marxist theoretical system, this is a necessary part of the identification with the socialist core values.

1. Introduction

On March 20, 2020, The Opinions on Comprehensively Strengthening Labor Education in Schools and Colleges in the New Era (hereinafter referred to as Opinions) were released by the State Council of China, which put the family, school, and society as the power support for labor education, and required schools to play a leading role in labor education, and to establish labor education courses in all school sections of schools and colleges, and to assess them as compulsory courses, one of whose objectives is to establish the concept that labor is "glorious", "noble", "great" and "beautiful" [1]. Before the implementation of the present Opinions, some schools have carried out labor education programs, but in terms of the real effects, there are still some problems, and the purpose of education has not been achieved, but has resulted in students' aversion to labor and fear of labor, and the labor education program "has become a tool for economic gain, a means of punishment and a way of discipline for schools" [2]. This, of course, is contrary to the good vision of labor education.

In Marx's theoretical system, the concept of labor runs through Marxist philosophy, political economy, and scientific socialism, and the theory of alienation also run through Marx's thinking all along, and are creatively applied in the analysis and dissection of the economic field, and alienated

labor is Marx's original concept. Marx fully explained alienated labor in the Economic and Philosophic Manuscripts of 1844, and continued to use this concept in *Die Deutsche Ideologie* written in 1845-1846. In the published *Das Kapital*, Marx made little reference to alienation and alienated labor, but continued to use these concepts in unpublished manuscripts during his lifetime. It can be said that Marx's thinking about alienated labor continued until the maturity of his thought [3] and is an important part of Marxist theoretical system; Marx had mature and profound thinking about alienated labor. Starting from Marx's theory of alienated labor can give us some insight into how to avoid the specific implementation of the curriculum in the scenario of realistic labor education in schools that deviates from its purpose.

2. Marx's Analysis of Alienated Labor

Marx systematically explained alienated labor in his Economic and Philosophic Manuscripts of 1844, in which he analyzed the alienation of the process of labor activity itself. The coercive, instrumental nature of the worker's labor process makes the worker "not affirm himself in his own labor, but deny himself, not feel happy, but feel unhappy, not use his physical and intellectual strength freely, but make his body suffer and his spirit be destroyed." [4]. In his analysis of the labor process, although Marx was dealing with the labor of wage workers, Marx broke away from "the presuppositions of national economics" [4], cleansed presuppositions and categories, and directly "proceeded from the economic facts of the present" [4]. This approach was later called the "phenomenological reduction" in philosophy. If one starts from the economist's categories, then the worker is obscured by the identity of the "worker" [5], and Marx's analysis of this process is reduced to the phenomenon itself, which is directly presented by the worker, and therefore they are the analysis of the labor process in general. This aversion of contempt for labor because of participation in it is neither a metaphysical fiction nor a specific category, but an objective phenomenon that still exists today.

In Marx's analysis, labor is a life activity, which should be the development of human vitality, active and conscious, but when the worker is in a passive, mechanical and instrumental reality, then the worker is only using the body's functions like an animal, and in such a process human can neither experience the creativity of labor, the meaning of labor, nor the perfection and beauty of labor for human himself. Treating human bodily functions only in an instrumental way is a departure from the essence of human in actually. According to Marx, in the process of labor that uses human as a tool, "labor is something external for the worker, that is to say, something that does not belong to his essence." [4]

So how does Marx view the question of the essence of human? What kind of labor is an activity consistent with the essence of human? In this manuscript, Marx primarily compares human as a class with animals, noting that "animal production is one-sided, while human production is comprehensive." [4] The distinction between one-sidedness and comprehensiveness lies primarily in the involvement of human consciousness, "Conscious vital activity distinguishes human directly from the vital activity of animals.", "And the class characteristic of human is precisely the free conscious activity." [4] In short, only free, conscious life activity is labor in accordance with the nature of human. Although the name for the "class essence" of human of Marx's comes from Feuerbach, in Feuerbach's view, the class essence of human " involves in will power and love" [6], "love" still has the characteristics of abstraction and generalization, Feuerbach's attempt to remove metaphysics stopped there and did not succeed. Marx had completed his renunciation of Feuerbach in 1844 actually, and the human consciousness alienated in alienated labor was not a purely spiritual activity in the abstract metaphysical sense [7], but the free and conscious life activity of real individuals. If Marx, had completed his intellectual critique of Feuerbach in 1844, retained perhaps

some marks of Feuerbach, and Marx removed this last mark in the spring of 1845 when he set out his Theses on Feuerbach. In his Theses on Feuerbach, Marx replaced the concept of "class essence" with the concept of essence of human and suggested that Feuerbach "could understand essence of human only as 'class', as an inner, silent, and universality that connects many individuals in a purely natural way." [8] What Marx meant at this point was not the abstract individual, but the sum of all social relations in practice and in sensual activity. In conjunction with the Economic and Philosophic Manuscripts of 1844 and the Theses on Feuerbach in 1845, labor in conformity with the essence of human exhibits energetic, for-itself, and practical nature.

3. Basic Form of School Labor Education is Conscious Rather than Instrumental Labor

In the Opinions, it is proposed that the implementation of labor education "is based on physical labor" and that students should "sweat" [1], and here it is important to note a possible tendency to treat students' participation in labor only as a process of pure physical effort. If it is only a physical activity in which human initiative and self-consciousness are not reflected and mobilized at all, what is the difference between human labor and animal activity or some kinds of machine and tool at this time? How can students who participate in labor experience and acquire the creativity and beauty of labor? Therefore, in the process of implementing labor education in schools, the selection of labor projects should be carefully thought out and not arbitrary, and should be based on the principle that consciousness rather than instrumental labor is the basic form. Combined with Marx's analysis of the labor process, it is important to avoid choosing labor projects with such characteristics: students' mental abilities are completely suppressed in the labor process, almost purely physical consumption, and people have only instrumental values at this time, and their mental abilities, consciousness and creativity cannot be reflected. The Opinions do not specify the choice of the labor program, and leave this choice to individual places and schools. In fact, the appropriateness of the choice of the labor program is directly related to whether the purpose of education can be achieved.

According to Marx's theory of labor alienation, whether the specific process of labor conforms to human nature or deviates from it is directly related to whether the laborer feels torment, repression, destruction, or creativity and beauty in labor. Improperly chosen labor programs not only have no educational effect, but also create disgust and contempt for labor. Therefore, in the process of implementing labor education in schools, it is important to avoid choosing labor projects that treat students as substitutes for animals such as cows and horses, etc. or as substitutes for certain tools. How to choose labor projects that will enable students to exert their conscientiousness and creativity needs to be thoroughly thought out in the light of reality, but its principle should be established that labor projects should not be purely physical expenditures, but physical labor that has the element of human conscientiousness, in short, that should reflect human dignity and human motivation as a prerequisite.

In the current labor education, there is still an objective situation of labor without education. The reason for this is also related to Marx's analysis of the labor process in which human participate in labor only as instrumental, where there is only physical expenditure, that is, only physical participation, without consciousness and motivation, that is, without the participation of the human mind, so how can the effect of education occur? Conscious labor, in which students' labor, should not only have physical expenditures, but also meaningful inquiries: Why do I labor? What will be the consequences of my labor? In the process of labor, students should be given the right to make certain judgments and choices. The educational goals of "glory," "nobility," "greatness," and "beauty" of labor cannot be taught to students; they can only be taught to students through their own physical experience in the practice of labor.

4. Significance of Conscious Labor in the Identity of Socialist Core Values

Values are a basic attitude toward what is good and what is important, and socialist core values are a set of values that have achieved the greatest consensus in the new era. Socialist core values cannot be separated from the guidance of Marxist theoretical system from both theory and practice. The concept of labor has an extremely important and special status for Marx's theoretical system, which has both the significance of existentialism in philosophy and the significance of value criticism in political scripture. [9] In Volume 1 of *Das Kapital*, Marx creatively divided labor into abstract labor and concrete labor, and took them as the root of the value and use value of commodities respectively, and as the basis for analyzing the entire law of capitalist production operation. In the *Communist Manifesto*, "Communism does not deprive anyone of the right to appropriate the products of society; it only deprives the right to use this appropriation to enslave the labor of others." [8] Labor is the source of value, and the importance of conscious labor to the entire Marxian theoretical system is evident from the fact that in a communist society, people work consciously rather than being forced and passive to engage in labor. In labor education, whether students participate in labor projects that are passive and instrumental, or those that bring into play their consciousness, are not only a question of educational effectiveness, but also a question of the connotation and identification of socialist core values from the ground up. Only in the consciousness of labor is it possible to establish the concept that labor is "glorious", "noble", "great" and "beautiful". "The educated people's feelings and understanding of labor are also related to the issue of identification with socialist core values.

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