

The Generation and Inspiration Analysis of Alienated Labor in Contemporary China

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Abstract: The theory of alienated labor, as the core content of Marx's early classic text work "Economic and Philosophical Manuscripts of 1844", contains rich humanistic care in its criticism of alienated labor. Due to the historical causes of low productivity and remnants of "old-fashioned division of labor", the realistic causes of fierce social competition, and the institutional causes of socialist market economy, the existence of labor alienation in contemporary China has objective inevitability. It is not only manifested in the aspects of things, but also in the aspects of people. In 2024, we are in the sprint stage of the "five-year transition period from the day of poverty alleviation". It is particularly important to address the issue of labor alienation, achieve a true return to human nature, and enhance people's happiness and sense of achievement by ensuring that the fruits of development are shared by the people in high-quality development, fully leveraging the position of public ownership as the main body of the economy, nurturing a correct labor concept with socialist core values, and actively building a harmonious labor relationship between labor and management.

1. The four-fold character of Marx's alienated labor theory

"Alienation", originally used as an economic and legal term, began to be widely used in classical German philosophy as a philosophical term in the 17th and 18th centuries. The theory of alienated labor is a landmark theoretical achievement of political and economic criticism in Marx's Economic and Philosophical Manuscripts of 1844. It is a theory created by applying Hegel's concept of spiritual alienation and Feuerbach's concept of human alienation to the analysis of capitalist social and economic activities. Marx's alienation is not only reflected in the aspects of things, but also in the aspects of people, revealing the various drawbacks of capital enslaving labor and material domination of people.

1.1 The laborer is alienated from the product of labor

Labor products are material products that objectify the essential power of workers. According to the law of natural power, workers should possess their own labor products, but the fact is that labor products are far away from workers and are occupied by capitalists, while workers only obtain the necessary part as workers and able to reproduce the slave class of workers. The more wealth the

worker produces, the greater the power and quantity of his products, the poorer he becomes ^[1]. The more commodities the worker creates, the more he becomes a cheap commodity, and the increase in the value of the world of things is proportional to the decrease in the value of the world of man ^[1].

1.2 The laborer is alienated from the labor activity

Alienation is not only manifested in the result, but also in the act of production, in the productive activity itself ^[1]. Marx believed that people's labor behavior should be a free and conscious active choice, and the labor process should be comfortable and able to fully exert subjective initiative and creativity. But under capitalist private ownership, labor has become a compulsory activity external to humans. Workers suffer from both physical and mental torment and devastation. Labor is not about producing happiness, but about producing misfortune. The purpose of labor is not to achieve oneself, but to sell oneself. As soon as physical compulsion or other compulsion ceases, men will flee from labor like the plague ^[1].

1.3 The laborer is alienated from his own nature

Human physical activity is different from animal physical activity: animal physical activity is instinctive, while human physical activity is self-physical activity. Here, Marx drew on the concept of "class" in Feuerbach's humanism and further rooted himself in real material life. He believed that human beings, as class beings, have the characteristic of free and conscious activity. Only by consciously exerting subjective values and participating in production and practical activities in the process of transforming the world can they confirm themselves as class beings. However, under the conditions of capitalist private ownership, labor as a life activity, this production activity itself is only a means to satisfy a need, that is, to maintain physical survival ^[1], and human initiative has become a luxury.

1.4 Alienation between people

Through alienated labor, humans not only produce their relationships with the objects and behaviors of production as alien and hostile forces, but also their relationships with others in their production and products, as well as their relationships with these others ^[1]. The core of "Alienation between people" is the antagonism between two major classes, namely the proletariat represented by farmers and workers and the bourgeoisie represented by farmers and capitalists. In addition, within the two major classes, capitalists engage in vicious competition in order to win the competition and avoid bankruptcy. As capitalism develops into a monopolistic stage, the organic composition of capital continues to increase, leading to a large number of workers losing their jobs. Within the proletariat, there is competition for job opportunities to compete for power that will not lead to death.

2. The Generation of Alienated Labor Phenomenon in Contemporary China

The proposal of Marx's theory of alienated labor is based on the criticism of the "reality" of real labor and the unremitting pursuit of the "should be" of real labor. Its ultimate value is to achieve the development of "comprehensive human freedom", demonstrating rich humanistic care. In the primary stage of socialism, the existence of alienated labor in China is objectively inevitable.

2.1 The specific manifestations of labor alienation in Chinese society

First, the alienation of labor and labor products. In modern society, migrant workers build high-rise buildings for urban development, but cannot afford to buy commercial housing with rising housing prices, or become "mortgage slaves"; Foxconn employees have produced Apple phones, but they are unable to buy expensive Apple phones at any time, and such examples are everywhere.

Second, alienation of labor process. In the primary stage of socialism, Labour for the vast majority of people is still the means of maintaining physical existence and supporting the family. In some fields, overtime has become a common phenomenon. The alienation and regulation of working time previously limited to working time has now spread to free time. Coupled with poor working conditions and imperfect welfare system, workers do not feel that they exist as people with emotional will in their work, but as things managed and controlled. There is even a burnout of "when a monk hits a bell one day".

Third, alienation of labor subject. In the materialistic consumer society, not only material products are produced, but also unbridled material desires are produced, which makes people show excessive pursuit of material wealth and extreme emptiness of the spiritual world. Labor should be to make oneself a better "human", but people regard it as the key to success and the ticket to the upper society. The distortion of human values gives labor the attribute of utility, and the subject of labor naturally has the attribute of alienation.

Fourth, alienation between people. In the Outline of Feuerbach, Marx clearly pointed out that "the essence of human beings is the sum of all social relations." In modern social networks, one of the most basic relationships is work relationships, with the most difficult to handle being relationships between colleagues and superiors and subordinates. Harmonious workplace relationships can help improve work efficiency and enhance organizational cohesion, but in reality, colleague relationships tend to be profit oriented and utilitarian due to competition in business and positions. The contradiction between superiors and subordinates is caused by the infinite encroachment of time by leaders and the infinite waste of work time by employees, leading to a strained relationship.

2.2 Analysis of the Causes of Labor Alienation in China

First, the historical causes of low productivity and the remnants of "old-fashioned division of labor". The historical reasons for low productivity have made labor a means of maintaining human survival, even in today's era of tremendous development of productivity. The old division of labor, on the one hand, fixed people in a certain profession or department and unable to freely transform, on the other hand, with the development of science and technology, the application and popularization of information technology and artificial intelligence technology, division of labor has led to the phenomenon of fragmentation, singularity, and one-sidedness in human labor, hindering the comprehensive development of people. Only in communist society can labor become attractive labor and an individual's self-realization.

Second, the realistic causes of intense social competition. With the large-scale expansion of enrollment in various universities, university education has become a popular choice for general education, and graduate education has also become a popular choice for college graduates. As a populous country, education "internal volume" will inevitably make employment "internal volume". In recent years, the global economic situation and the domestic job market are full of instability, the cruel social reality has soured the competition, and people's life pressure has increased, psychological imbalance, and happiness has been lost. In addition, the fierce competition makes people pay too much attention to their own interests, while ignoring the communication and exchange with others, resulting in estrangement of interpersonal relations.

Third, the institutional causes of the socialist market economic system. China's socialist market economic system supports, encourages and guides the development of private capital such as private enterprises and foreign-funded enterprises, but because of the nature of capital chasing profits, there is bound to be exploitation, and then by virtue of the absolute possession of capital, capital owners will form a political alliance with power and form a huge advantage over laborers in both politics and economy. It provides certain soil for the growth of alienated labor. Moreover, because our market economy system is not perfect, many places still only pay attention to efficiency rather than social fairness, only pay attention to economic efficiency rather than pay attention to workers' rights and interests, resulting in labor and capital opposite.

3. The Enlightenment of Alienation Labor Theory on Contemporary China

Marx's theory of alienated labor has been born for more than a hundred years. Although its appearance has a specific historical background and historical connotation, it can still give enough inspiration or some warning to contemporary China as a theory of introspection and transcendence of capitalism. 2024 is in the sprint stage of the "five-year transition period from the date of poverty alleviation", and there is a long way to go to solve the problem of new unbalanced and inadequate development and common prosperity for all people. How to achieve all-round development of people and improve people's happiness and sense of gain is particularly important.

3.1 Ensuring the People Share the Fruits of Development in High-quality Development -- the Perspective of Alienation of Labor Objects

Under the conditions of capitalist private ownership, social achievements are firmly held in the hands of a few capitalists, and the amount of wealth that capitalists possess depends on the degree of exploitation of workers, which determines that capitalists cannot share the fruits of social development with workers. The cause of socialism with Chinese characteristics is a common cause for all the people. The people are not only the main force in comprehensively building a socialist modernized country, but also the key force in achieving communist society. Therefore, during the 14th Five Year Plan period, economic and social development must firmly grasp the principle of "always pursuing development for the people, relying on the people for development, and sharing development achievements with the people, safeguarding the fundamental interests of the people, stimulating the enthusiasm, initiative, and creativity of all people, promoting social equity, enhancing people's well-being, and continuously realizing the people's aspirations for a better life"^[2]. Let the achievements of modernization construction benefit all people more and more fairly^[3]. High quality development is an important material prerequisite for eliminating alienated labor and achieving the sharing of social achievements among the people.

First, to ensure the ownership and use rights of workers to the object of work. Under the conditions of the socialist market economy, the laborer should be the real master of the means of labor and the object of labor, so we must unswervingly adhere to the principal position of public ownership of the means of production, prevent the separation of the means of production from the laborer to the greatest extent, and ensure the emergence of alienation of labor from the system. Second, we should promote the rational allocation and optimal utilization of labor objects. In the process of economic development, we should rationally allocate and optimize the use of various factors of production, especially the object of labor, according to market demand and resource endowment. At the same time, we should strengthen the scientific management and technological transformation of the object of labor, improve its utilization efficiency and quality level, and reduce the waste of resources and environmental pollution. Third, sharing the fruits of development focuses on the issue of social equity and justice. There must be no such phenomenon as "the rich get

rich while the poor eat the chaffes". Therefore, it is necessary to establish a scientific mechanism for determining wage levels and a long-term mechanism for wage growth, increase the proportion of labor remuneration in the primary distribution, pay attention to the fairness of the primary distribution process, and protect labor income.

3.2. Giving Full Play to the Dominant Position of Public Ownership Economy-the Perspective of Alienation of Labor Process

The worker under capitalist private property, free from the means of production and having nothing, is obliged to sell his Labour power in order to obtain the necessary means of subsistence, a phenomenon peculiar to capitalist society and the most essential distinction between capitalist production and any previous mode of production. The public sector of the economy is the economic foundation of the socialist system. It can lead the direction of socialist development, give better play to the advantages of the state in concentrating its resources to accomplish major undertakings, implement the people-centered development philosophy, ensure the people's political ownership and meet the material prerequisites for achieving common prosperity in the economy. Therefore, we must uphold and consolidate the dominant position of the public sector.

The dominant position of public ownership determines the consistency of the fundamental interests of the people, so give full play to the dominant position of public ownership to ensure that the labor process reveals human dignity and value. First, we need to promote the optimization and structural adjustment of the layout of the state-owned economy to achieve efficient allocation of resources and sustainable economic development. Second, we need to deepen the reform of state-owned enterprises and enhance the competitiveness, innovation, control and resilience of the state-owned economy, so as to enhance the overall strength and market competitiveness of state-owned enterprises. Third, we also need to prevent and avoid the solidification of social classes, smooth the passage of upward mobility, and create opportunities for more people to get rich, so as to promote social equity and stability. Fourth, we need to improve the policy system of distribution according to factors of production, increase the income of low-income groups and expand the middle-income group, so as to achieve more balanced wealth distribution and more stable social development. Fifth, we also need to comprehensively build a pro-clean relationship between government and business, promote the healthy development of the non-public economy and the healthy growth of the non-public economy, so as to stimulate the vitality and creativity of the market economy.

3.3 Cultivating a Correct Labor Concept with Socialist Core Values -- the Perspective of Alienation of Labor Subject

The mainstream value of capitalist society is the maximization of interests. As representatives of the interests of the bourgeoisie, national economists are keen to use various "scientific" theories to demonstrate the possibility of capitalists obtaining the maximum wealth and the rationality of the poverty of the working class, and that the capitalist system is the most perfect and reasonable social system. In contrast to capitalist society, the core values of socialism are mainstream values that are widely recognized and accepted by society. The principles of "advocating labor, loving labor, hard work and honest labor" upheld by the correct concept of labor are in line with the core values of socialism and are highly consistent.

Due to the influence of diverse values during the social transformation period, there is a certain deviation between people's mainstream values and labor values, which is manifested in a lack of enthusiasm for labor, contempt for physical labor, delusions of getting something for nothing, and strong utilitarianism. The socialist core values are beneficial for people to establish a correct view

of labor and guide their production and life practices. Firstly, we should take the socialist core values as the guide and establish a "happy view of labor". Since the 18th CPC National Congress, our general secretary eulogize the spirit of model workers and artisans on various occasions. He also pointed out that "labor is the source of all happiness", "labor creates happiness, hard work makes great achievements"^[4]. In the primary stage of socialism, although alienated labor still exists, everyone can still choose his own occupation and give full play to his intelligence on the basis of a full estimation of his own interests, aspirations and abilities. Second, with the guidance of socialist core values, we should establish a correct view of job selection. Socialism is done, the new era is fought out, and a happy life is created. There are only differences in the division of labor in occupations, no high or low, and everyone is a "screw" in socialist construction and a person of different levels and talents on the road to realizing the great rejuvenation of the Chinese nation, with an irreplaceable role. Third, for the majority of young people, it is necessary to aspire to be a good young person in the new era who has ideals, dares to take responsibility, can bear hardships and is willing to struggle ^[5], oppose the desire for pleasure and gain without effort, and establish a correct career view.

3.4 Both employers and employees actively gather together to "build harmonious labor-capital relations"—the perspective of labor relations alienation

In capitalist society, due to the profit-seeking nature of capital, labor-capital relations are mainly based on the relationship between the employer and the employed, and the talents and creativity of the laborers cannot be fully brought into play. In modern society, labor relations are still one of the most basic and important social relations, and constructing harmonious labor relations is an important premise for maintaining rapid and sound economic development, and an important content of building a harmonious socialist society.

The system advantage of socialism in our country determines that labor relations are harmonious in essence, and the form of conflict between labor and capital is mild. Enterprises should: first, establish and improve the social security system for employees, increase the proportion of employees' social insurance in the redistribution of national income, such as strictly implementing the employment unit to purchase pension insurance, medical insurance, unemployment insurance for employees. Second, improve the democratic management system of enterprises. Through the comprehensive establishment of the labor contract system, the rights of employees to obtain labor remuneration, the rights of employees to rest and vacation, and the rights to enjoy social insurance in accordance with the law are effectively protected. The internal management of enterprises needs to be humanized, and through proper distribution of rights, the workers can complete the essential work according to quality and quantity, and at the same time, they can have a certain free imagination and free play space, so that the production activities of workers are not only a means of making a living, but also a purposeful activity to complete their own will and realize their own value. Third, strengthen professional ability training and ideological and political education. Enterprises carry out professional ability training for employees, which can not only improve the professional ability of employees, promote the development of enterprises, but also enable employees to develop themselves in production activities, and avoid the one-sided and deformed development of workers under capitalist conditions. At the same time, through ideological and political education for the vast number of employees, it promotes the formation of correct professional ethics, enhances their sense of identification and responsibility towards the enterprise.

4. Conclusion

Alienated labor is a product of social development to a certain historical stage, and the

phenomenon of alienated labor in the primary stage of socialism is objectively inevitable. Therefore, it cannot be denied that the socialist system is not in line with the development laws of productive forces and social development. At the same time, it must also be clarified that there is a fundamental difference between the phenomenon of labor alienation in the primary stage of socialism and that under capitalist private ownership. It can be overcome through the continuous improvement and development of the socialist system itself, and eliminated as socialism develops to a higher level. Therefore, we must adhere to the "Four Confidences", especially the confidence in the path, firmly establish the development concept centered on the people, concentrate our efforts to promote high-quality development, unswervingly deepen reform and opening up, leverage the institutional advantages of socialism, and avoid alienated labor being deeply rooted and flourishing in China's soil.

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