

Exegesis of Marxist Labor Theory in the Context of Contemporary Artificial Intelligence Development

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Abstract: *The Marxist labor theory mainly includes the essence and function of labor, the labor value theory, alienated labor and labor emancipation, etc. This study delves into the contemporary AI context to interpret the labor value theory. By systemically reviewing relevant literature and conducting in-depth theoretical analysis, it re-examines key issues such as value creation and labor essence under the background of diversified labor forms, transformed labor subjects, and changed labor processes, showcasing its characteristics of timeliness and innovation.*

Keywords: Development of artificial intelligence; Marxism; Labor value theory.

1. NEW CHANGES IN LABOR INDUCED BY THE DEVELOPMENT OF ARTIFICIAL INTELLIGENCE

The 19th National Congress of the Communist Party proposed that “We should promote the optimization and upgrading of traditional industries with national standards, and support enterprises in using digital and intelligent technologies to transform and upgrade traditional industries.” Digital and intelligent technology is the organic integration of digitalization and intelligence. It is the process of integrating and applying machine learning and artificial intelligence and other intelligent technologies on the basis of digitalization. The most important artificial intelligence simulates human intelligence, endowing machines with the capabilities of perception, reasoning, learning and decision-making through algorithms and models. Its goal is to enable machines to complete tasks that require human intelligence to complete. Therefore, the development of artificial intelligence will inevitably lead to new changes in labor forms, labor subjects, and labor processes.

1.1 Labor Form

With the development of artificial intelligence, the forms of labor are becoming more diverse. Under the scenarios of the Internet platform, a new type of labor has emerged, namely digital labor. The creation of online content is an important manifestation of digital labor, including writing blogs, making videos, and live streaming. Such labor emphasizes creativity and individuality. Laborers attract audience attention through creation to obtain economic benefits or other forms of returns. The characteristics of such labor lie in the high creativity and transmissibility of labor products, which can be rapidly disseminated through the Internet. At the same time, the labor process also faces fierce competition and constantly changing market demands. Digital labor transcends traditional labor forms. While traditional labor is mostly in the form of tangible production or services that can be seen, digital labor is a form of abstract labor based on knowledge and technology.

1.2 Labor Force

In the manufacturing sector, intelligent machines have already widely replaced simple repetitive labor. Intelligent robots can accurately complete the assembly, welding, and other tasks of parts, and most simple repetitive assembly tasks can be undertaken by intelligent robots. In the agricultural sector, the application of smart agricultural machinery is also gradually replacing some human labor. Automatic harvesters can efficiently complete the harvesting work of crops, reducing the labor intensity of farmers in the harvesting process. The scope of replacement of simple repetitive labor by intelligent machines is constantly expanding, extending from traditional industrial production to more fields. This not only improves production efficiency but also reduces errors caused by human factors. The application of smart machines has changed the role humans play in labor. Humans are no longer just executors, but also designers and operators of smart machines. Humans are being transformed into commanders, supervisors and decision makers, while intelligent machines, as artificial intelligence develops, are becoming the main body of labor.

1.3 Labor Process

In industrial production, automatic production processes are widely used. Robots, numerical control machine tools, and other equipment on automatic production lines can automatically complete processing, assembly, and other tasks according to preset programs, greatly increasing production efficiency and product quality. The automation of production processes has had a profound impact on various stages of the labor process. In terms of raw material preparation, automated equipment can precisely extract and preliminarily process materials according to production requirements. During the production and processing stage, automated equipment enables high-precision operations, reducing the need for human intervention. In the product assembly stage, robots can quickly and accurately assemble components, making the entire production process more compact and efficient. Smart management systems also play a significant role in labor organization and scheduling.

2. INTERPRETATION OF MARXIST LABOR THEORY IN THE CONTEXT OF THE TIMES

2.1 Labor is the Essence of Man

With the development of artificial intelligence, Marxism still holds that labor is the essential activity of man. Marx not only regards labor as the way of human survival: "First of all, the productive activity, the activity of life itself, is for man only a means of satisfying one of his needs, the need for the maintenance of his bodily existence," [1] but also considers labor as the essence of humanity, which differentiates humans from animals: "The animal is directly one with its life activity. Man makes his life activity, his vital process, an object of his will and of his consciousness. He has conscious life. This is not the immediate unity of man with himself which characterizes the animal. Man is a being of conscious life." [2] In today's era, the classic labor theory of Marxism holds that even if smart machines have replaced some human labor to a certain extent, the attribute of labor as the essence of humanity has not changed. Human beings realize the objectification of their self-value and essential strength through the research, control and application of smart machines. The initial driving force of the development of artificial intelligence is: human beings hope to manufacture and use tools to replace human heavy physical and mental labor, so as to achieve the liberation of human labor. That is, human beings have achieved the transcendence of their own intelligence through the continuous improvement of labor tools, but such transcendence is only a partial transcendence. Artificial intelligence cannot fundamentally transcend human subjectivity.

2.2 Labor Creates Value

At the same time, the view that labor creates value is still insisted "Marx's labor value theory is based on materialist historiography. It no longer regards labor as merely an individual activity, but as the 'social labor' that creates history as a whole, In the creation of material wealth, labor also creates the most fundamental social relations between people." [3] Marx not only saw the mediating role of labor between man and nature, but also more importantly, he saw the essential attribute of labor -- human labor, "the process of material exchange between man and nature." Through the total social production process, it is transformed into "the process of material exchange between people." Starting from the dual nature of man -- natural and social, and then analyzing the dual nature of human labor, under the premise of affirming that "labor is the only source of value," Marx further confirmed that "labor" is the only source of value, thus completing the creation of his labor value theory.

The concepts of "living labor" and "dead labor" are integral parts of Marxist political economy and historical materialism. They reveal the mechanisms of value creation in the labor process and the dialectical relationship between labor and technological development. Living labor refers to the physical and mental exertion of workers in the production process, representing "labor in motion, in the present tense." Marx emphasized that living labor is the sole source of value and surplus value, as it transfers the old value of production materials (dead labor) into new products while adding new labor content. Dead labor denotes the past labor embodied in production materials such as machinery, tools, and raw materials, representing "labor in the past tense." It does not create new value by itself but serves as the material conditions for labor, which can only function through the activation by living labor. As the carrier of dead labor, the value of machines depends on the preservation and transfer through the use of living labor. In the age of intelligence, while machines appear to operate autonomously, their value creation still hinges on the design, programming, and supervision of living labor.

Marx stressed that technology is not a neutral tool, but "an instrument of capital to discipline labor." While AI and automation have dramatically increased productivity, Marx's insight remains relevant: technology is dead labor,

and its value creation depends on the activation and oversight of living labor. We must be wary of capital's monopoly on technology and work towards reorienting it through institutional change to serve human development rather than further alienation.

3. CONCLUSIONS

By re-studying the Marxist theory of labor value, on the one hand, we can enrich the Marxist theoretical system, enable Marxism to possess strong vitality and explanatory power in the new era, and on the other hand, we can provide scientific theoretical guidance for social practice. We can help people in the new era to better recognize the value of labor and the status of workers, rationally respond to changes in employment structure and social equity, and promote social progress and harmonious development.

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