

The Relationship Between Alienated Labor and Private Property in Economic and Philosophical Manuscripts of 1844

Xuan Wang

School of Marxism, Zhejiang Normal University, 321004, China

Abstract

Purpose: Because of the "circular argument", the relationship between alienated labor and private property has always been a theoretical difficulty, but in fact, Marx demonstrated the relationship between the two in detail in the Economic and Philosophical Manuscripts of 1844 from the two aspects of logical deduction and practical expression. In order to refute the so-called "circular argument", it is necessary to clarify the relationship between the two. **Research methodology:** In the framework of Marxism theory combined with reality. And this is a qualitative study. **Result:** From the logical level, alienated labor is the essence, private property is only a phenomenon, that is, alienated labor is the cause of private property, otherwise the conclusion is not valid. From the perspective of reality, the two are interactive relations.

Keywords

Alienated labor; Private property; Logical derivation; Realistic representation.

1. Introduction

In the history of the development of Marxist philosophy, the Economic and Philosophical Manuscripts of 1844 for the first time discussed in detail the relationship between alienated labor and private property. After concluding the analysis of the four provisions of alienated labor, Marx made the following two concluding remarks. "Therefore, private property is an outcome of externalized labor, or the external relationship between the worker and himself or herself and nature ." Second,"As a result, we derive the concept of private property through analysis from the concepts of externalized labor, i.e., alienated labor, alienated life, and alienated man "(Marx & Engels, 2012).It is clear that Marx here holds that alienated Labour is the cause of the formation of private property, and that the opposite conclusion is not valid. The problem arises in Marx's next passage:

"As a result of the movement of private property, it is true that we derive the concept of externalized labor (externalized life) from national economics. However, an analysis of this concept reveals that, although private property appears to be the ground and cause of externalized labor, it is actually the consequence of externalized labor, just as God was initially not the cause but the result of the error of human reason" (Marx & Engels, 2012).

It is on this basis that there has been such a view in the academic circles at home and abroad that Marx has fallen into the so-called "circular argument" here. On the one hand, he ascribes private property to alienated labor, which is the source of the formation of private property. On the other hand, he ascribes alienated labor to private property, which is the source of the formation of alienated labor.

2. Literature Review and Hypothesis Development

After paying attention to this problem, the author consulted relevant literature, and it is worth noting that some scholars have elaborated on this issue on the basis of solid literature research and text interpretation, refuting the so-called "circular argument" from different angles. For

example, Jiang Haibo(2008), on the basis of distinguishing between externalized labor and alienated labor, argues that private property originates from externalized labor, not alienated labor, and that externalized labor is the labor process itself. The externalization of labor may or may not lead to alienation. Only "under the rule of capitalist private property" does the externalization of labor appear as "alienation," the essence of which is that "the cycle between externalization and appropriation" is broken. Han Lixin(2012) further pointed out that Marx did not make the same concept both cause and effect in the process of argument, but used two concepts of "alienated labor" and two concepts of "private ownership" respectively. What emerges in Marx's mind should be a conceptual sequence of "alienated labor I→ private ownership I→ alienated labor II→ private ownership II". What it means is that "human Labour" in general leads to "private ownership" based on self-labour, and this private ownership leads to "alienated Labour" belonging to others, and this alienated Labour eventually produces capitalist "private ownership".Wang Fengming(2013) thinks that Marx examines the relationship between alienated labor and private property from two different levels: "essential regulation" and "realistic expression". On the first level, alienated labor is the basis and basis of private property, and the opposite conclusion is not valid. On the latter level, there is a complex relationship between alienated labor and private property, which interact and cause and effect each other. If the latter is presented as the "time relationship" between causing and being caused, producing and being produced in the sense of "genesis", then the former shows the "logical relationship" between understanding and being understood, explaining and being explained in the sense of "hermeneutics".These views all show that Marx did not fall into the so-called "circular argument", on the contrary, this is Marx's "genius", is the "germination" of dialectical materialism and historical materialism scientific research methods. Therefore, on the basis of combining and summarizing the predecessors, the author makes a systematic exposition of this problem and puts forward his own different argumentation ideas.

3. Results and Discussions

Logical inference: From private property to alienated labor

Marx's investigation of the problem of alienated labor and private property relations "results from the various national economics premise "(Marx & Engels, 2012). In these "premises," the division of Labour, competition, exchange value, etc., are subordinate to the mutual separation of wages, capital profits, and rent; the mutual separation of wages, capital profits, and rent is subordinate to the mutual separation of labor, capital, and land; and the mutual separation of labor, capital, and land is subordinate to the existence and function of private property. Marx's final premise, therefore, is "private property." On this "premise," Marx first describes the accepted "fact" that "The worker is reduced to the lowest level of commodity, and his poverty is inversely correlated with the quality and volume of his output" (Marx & Engels, 2012). This "fact" is presented by national economics.

Then, after giving full "respect" to national economics, Marx pointed out that "national economics starts from the fact of private property." It takes the material processes that private property goes through in reality and turns them into general, abstract formulas that it then treats as laws; it does not understand these laws, i.e., it does not show how they come about from the nature of private property "(Marx & Engels, 2012). That is to say, the national economy stops at the facts themselves, is unable to penetrate the surface of the facts and grasp the essence and laws behind them, that is, the national economy regards all kinds of economic facts and laws, private property itself, as self-evident and self-sufficient things, as things that do not need to be demonstrated.

In view of the incomplete nature of national economics, Marx was determined to make clear what national economics did not and could not make clear: "The crucial link between all of this

alienation and the monetary system must be made clear, as must the distinctions between private property, greed and the separation of labor, capital and property, exchange and competition, human value and human depreciation, monopoly and competition, etc "(Marx & Engels, 2012). So how do you explain this connection?

Marx's first words were, "Let's move on from the current economic realities "(Marx & Engels, 2012). The current economic realities are "Labor produces not only commodities, but also labor itself and the worker as commodities, as well as in the same proportion as it produces commodities in general. The more wealth the worker produces, the greater the power and quantity of his products, the poorer he becomes. The more goods the worker creates, the more he becomes a cheap commodity. The appreciation of the world of things is proportional to the depreciation of the world of man" (Marx & Engels, 2012). Then Marx made an analysis and explanation of this fact. "This fact, he continued, simply demonstrates that the thing that Labour produced, the product of Labour, stands in opposition to Labour as an alien being, as a force independent of the producer "(Marx & Engels, 2012). What Marx discusses here is the first stipulation of "alienated labor", namely the alienation of the product of labor or the alienation of things. This statement marks the discovery and acquisition of a theoretical "commanding height". In Marx's consciousness, just by virtue of this commanding height, he realized the true grasp of essence and law, and realized the true understanding and explanation of real economic facts from essence and law. As Marx concluded, "We express the concept of this fact: alienated, externalized labor. We analyzed the concept, so we just analyzed an economic fact. Our starting point is the economic fact of the alienation of the worker and his product" (Marx & Engels, 2012). In this way, Marx overcame the limitation of explaining phenomena with phenomena in the study of national economics and completed the transcendence of national economics.

Following the same logic, Marx analyzes the second definition of alienated Labour, namely, the alienation of Labour itself. "If the worker does not alienate himself in the act of production itself, how can the product of his activity be opposed to him as something different? A product is just a summary of activity, of production. Alienation is expressed not only in the result, but also in the act of production, in the productive activity itself" (Marx & Engels, 2012). Without the alienation of the "act of production" from the worker, there is no alienation of the product of Labour from the worker. The latter is merely a "summary" of the former. Thus, the second stipulation of alienated Labour is the cause, and its first stipulation is the effect.

From this point, it follows that when Marx says that "We derive the idea of externalized labor from national economics as a result of the movement of private property" (Marx & Engels, 2012), he means that, starting from the premises provided by national economics as "private property," he arrives at the conclusion of "alienated labor" through an analysis of the economic facts connected with private property. In this sense, the relation between private property and alienated labor is not so much the relation of "sequence of time" between "cause" and "effect" as the relation of "logical deduction" between the "phenomenon" as the premise and the "essence" as the conclusion. In the same way, the second stipulation of alienated labor is logically "deduced" from the first, but the first stipulation is not the cause of the second stipulation, on the contrary, the second stipulation gives rise to the first stipulation.

After understanding this problem, we can understand that when Marx elaborated the relationship between alienated labor and private property, he did not simply demonstrate from the single level of cause and effect, but he had explored the dialectical relationship between the two, and in order to explain this relationship to us, he had to start from the known "facts of national economy". That is, from the abstract to the real, so that it can be understood. So how does Marx explain the dialectical relationship between the two?

Realistic manifestation: the interaction between alienated labor and private property

Let's first analyze a question that Marx pays attention to and thinks about, "How should the idea of externalized and alienated labor be explained and expressed in practice?" (Marx & Engels, 2012) This shows that Marx wants to break through the abstract stipulation of the concept of alienated labor itself, and explore its concrete existence and expression form in reality. To this end, Marx made two questions: First, "Who does the labor's product belong to if it is foreign to me and confronts me as an alien force?" "Whose property is it if my own activity is an forced, foreign activity that does not belong to me (Marx & Engels, 2012)?" The common sense of political economy tells us that this is the most typical and popular way of expressing the problem of "property", and that the problem of "belonging to who" is actually the problem of who "owns" and "occupies", that is, the problem of "property" in the legal sense. Therefore, Marx put forward two rhetorical questions, not to continue to elaborate the fourth provision of alienated labor, but to analyze the relationship between alienated labor and private property at the "realistic" level. We already know that.

It is not necessary to ask that the product of Labour and Labour itself belong to another being distinct from the "I", the worker himself. What needs to be asked is, what is this existence different from that of the workers themselves?

After excluding "God" and "nature", Marx pointed out that "The only possible candidate for the alien being to which labor and its byproducts belong, the existence to which labor is directed, and the enjoyment of which labor is intended, is man himself "This is because "Every human self-alienation from nature and himself is expressed in the relationship that man creates with those who are different from him (Marx & Engels, 2012)". This shows that the alienation of Labour itself from man does not actually arise out of thin air, but must be reflected and manifested through a "medium", that is, through the relationship between "others" and the Labour process or Labour itself. In the same way, the alienation of the product of labor or nature from "man" must also be reflected and expressed through the relationship between "other people" and the product of labor or nature. "Man alone can be the alien force that rules over man, not God or nature" (Marx & Engels, 2012).

Who is this "unproductive man" who possesses and controls the product of the worker's Labour and Labour itself? According to Marx, "The relation of workers to labor, producing capitalists - or whatever other name one may give to the master of labor - to the relation of this Lab, produces an alienated, externalized relation to labor that is alien to it and that stands outside of it" (Marx & Engels, 2012). At the same time, it can be said that out of alienated labor comes private property. It is thus the alienated Labour of the workers that "produces" the relations of possession and domination of Labour and its products by capitalists or other "non-producers", and that "produces" capitalism or other historical forms of private ownership. Therefore, without alienated Labour, there can be no private property; Alienated labor is the cause of the formation of private property, and private property is the result of alienated labor.

In the above analysis, Marx based on "reality" confirmed the "time" priority of alienated labor over private property, alienated labor is the cause and private property is the result. But we shall soon see that Marx also affirmed the "time" priority of private property over alienated labor, that private property is the cause and alienated labor is the effect. Marx said, "If the activity of the worker is a pain to himself, it must give pleasure and pleasure to others. If the product of labor does not belong to the worker and is opposed to him as a foreign force, it can only be because the product belongs to someone other than the worker" (Marx & Engels, 2012). This clearly shows that without private property, without the control and domination of the product of Labour and of Labour itself by others other than the worker, the product of Labour would not be a force against the worker, the process of Labour would not cause suffering to the worker, and there would be no alienated Labour. The reason why the products of labor are different from "man" is that "other people" are the "masters" of these products. The productive

activity of "man" is not a free activity because "others" control and dominate the process. Therefore, without private property, there can be no alienated labor.

Therefore, when Marx says that "afterwards this relation becomes a relation of interaction", he is referring to the mutual causal relationship between the first and second provisions of alienated Labour, which exist in "reality", and private property. Moreover, this reciprocal causal relationship exists between all four provisions of private property and alienated Labour. From Marx's discussion of the third and fourth provisions of alienated Labour, it can be seen that Marx derives his third and fourth provisions from the first and second provisions of alienated Labour; at the same time, the first two provisions are the cause and the last two are the effect. The logical relation then is as follows: if the third and fourth provisions of alienated Labour result from its first and second provisions, it may equally be said that the third and fourth provisions of alienated Labour result from private property. In this way, the first and second provisions of alienated Labour give rise to private property, which in turn give rise to the third and fourth provisions of alienated Labour, and the relationship between alienated Labour and private property is thus formed, in a causal and reciprocal manner.

This shows that Marx has formed a complete logical chain, namely, that alienated Labour is the essence, that it appears as the alienation of the product of Labour and of Labour itself, and that private property is the phenomenon rooted in alienated Labour. Marx, of course, does not deny the role of private property in alienated labor; on the contrary, he mentions later: "If man views his own activity as an activity that is not free, he views it as an activity that is in the service of others, which is dominated by others, which is under the control of others. If man views his own activity as an activity that is not free, he views it as an activity that is in the service of others, which is dominated by others, which is under the control of another alien, hostile, powerful, independent of him" (Marx & Engels, 2012). The product of Labour is alienated from "man" because "others" possess it. It follows, therefore, that private property is, on the one hand, the product of externalized labor, and, on the other, the means by which labor is externalized, the realization of this externalization.

4. Conclusion

In short, in the Economic and Philosophical Manuscripts of 1844, Marx explained clearly the relationship between the concepts of alienated labor and private property, which was progressive and interlinked, rather than the so-called "circular argument". As far as its core and theme are concerned, whether it is the investigation of alienated labor or the investigation of private property, in the final analysis, it is to explore the way of proletariat and human liberation. The alienation of labor itself is the reality of the suffering of the proletariat. In today's society, in this era of continuous improvement of the social system and more scientific social governance, thinking about the relationship between alienated labor and private property is still of great practical significance for the transformation of society.

References

- [1] Marx, K., & Engels, F. (2009). *The Economic and Philosophic Manuscripts of 1844 and the Communist Manifesto*. Prometheus Books.
- [2] Marx, K., & Engels, F. (2012). *Karl Marx and Frederick Engels: Selected Works*.
- [3] Marx, K. (2011). *Capital, Volume I: A Critique of Political Economy*. Courier Corporation.