



Current Situation and Challenges of Labor Relations in the Era of Digital Economy

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Abstract: Human society has entered the era of digital economy, and China is also accelerating to the digital and refined industry. With the popularity of the Internet, labor relations in the era of digital economy show new characteristics in terms of expression form, labor process, labor conflicts and other aspects. The exploitation of labor by capital is becoming more and more hidden, and labor relations are becoming more and more tense. In this context, it is urgent to explore the labor relations suitable to the digital economy to ease the labor contradiction. This paper takes Marx's labor theory of value as the cornerstone, re-examines the labor relations in the digital economy era, and actively discard them, so as to promote the liberation of workers in the digital era.

Keywords: digital economy; digital labor; labor relations; Marx's labor theory of value

1. Introduction

Digital economy is a new form of economy, which is based on digital technology and uses data and algorithms to carry out economic activities. With the rapid development of emerging technologies such as the Internet of Things, big data and artificial intelligence, the digital economy is gradually becoming a new engine of world economic growth. However, the development of the digital economy has also brought new problems and challenges to the labor relations. Therefore, how to build a harmonious and stable labor-management relations under the condition of digital economy is an urgent problem to be solved at present.

2. Theoretical overview

2.1 The Digital Economy

Digital economy is a high-level economic form after agricultural economy and industrial economy. It originates from but is not limited to the capitalist society. It is not ideological and can be used for reference and developed by socialist countries. In 1988, the Tapscott first mentioned the "digital economy". The 14th Five-Year Plan for Digital Economy Development in 2022 clearly proposes that "digital economy" is a new economic form with data as the core element.

2.2 Digital labor

Labor is the starting point of the emergence and development of human society, and is an important way to realize self-value. In the digital environment, new forms such as smart labor and virtual labor impact traditional concepts. Marx pointed out that labor is "the sum of the physical strength and intelligence used in the production of a certain useful value" .[1] "as long as society has not revolve around the sun of labor, it can never achieve equilibrium." [2] Labor is like the sun, stipulating and restricting the development state of human society. Although the form of digital labor is novel, but the essence has not changed, it is still an extension of human physical or mental power.

3. The embodiment of Marx's labor theory of value in the era of digital economy

3.1 Duality of digital goods

3.1.1 The value of digital goods

The value of digital products is created by the living labor of digital workers, which requires digital workers to engage in simple physical labor and complex mental labor. It is an exchange relationship of human labor. Digital products need to go through "thrilling jumps" to achieve their value, if not sold in a short period of time, it will lead to its stagnation in the circulation field, unable to achieve value appreciation.

3.1.2 The use value of digital goods

Digital commodities, as commodities, also have the attribute of use value, which can meet certain needs of people

and are the material bearers of exchange value. The use value of digital goods is deeply affected by the active labor of digital workers. When the more labor the digital workers invest, the higher the use value of the digital goods produced will be. The difference between the use value of digital goods and traditional goods is shown in terms of replication and non-consumability, and there is a positive correlation between the use value of digital goods and the number of users.

3.2 Duality of digital labor

3.2.1 Digital specific labor

Digital labor in the production process through specific labor to give digital commodity use value, "the use value of each commodity contains a certain purposeful production activities, or useful labor." [1] digital labor produces the "usefulness" of digital goods, generating a kinds of information to meet people's diverse needs to obtain information.

3.2.2 Digital and abstract labor

Digital labor creates commodity value through abstract labor in the production process. Although digital labor presents a new form, its essence is the same as traditional labor, which is the consumption of human intelligence and physical strength, so it has the nature of abstract labor. Digital workers process complex data information to create the value of digital products, and then copy a large number of them, requiring only a small live labor.

4. The current situation of labor relations in the digital economy era

4.1 Labor relations under digital labor

The development of digital economy seems to give digital workers more freedom, but in fact, the labor conflict is intensifying. Capitalists exploit the surplus value more secretly, and the digital economy breaks the shackles of time and space, blurs the working boundary, and provides convenience for the further exploitation of capitalists. In the period of digital economy, the conflict between labor and management remained unchanged, and digital labor still belonged to digital capital, and the contradiction intensified. While digital labor expands the field of production, the scope of capital exploitation is also quietly expanded. It is worth noting that exploitation is not an innate phenomenon, but when the social productivity develops to a certain stage, and in the field of digital labor, exploitation takes a more secretive way.

4.2 The expression form of the alienation of digital labor relations

4.2.1 Alienation of digital labor products

In the context of digital capitalism, digital labor is not completely divorced from the control of the logic of capital. For workers, digital labor products are still the object of alienation. Due to the unclear boundary of time and space of digital labor, "non-employment labor relationship" is widespread in the field of information. The labor fruits of digital workers are occupied by the platform capitalists, which in turn act on the workers themselves and can control the workers implicitly. Network users on the digital platform every behavior can be regarded as data material manufacturing process, platform analyzes the data independently, in order to achieve accurate production and build the purpose of the "information cocoon room", and the user data into platform traffic and income, become the Internet platform for profits, the important means of capital appreciation.

4.2.2 Alienation of the digital labor process

Marx thought: "If the product of labor is externalized, then the production itself must be the active externalization, the externalization of activities, the externalization of activities. In the alienation of labor object, it only summarizes the alienation and externalization of labor activity itself." [3] Digital workers and digital labor products alienation, digital labor process is bound to occur alienation, the capital exploitation methods and means of labor are increasingly complex and diversified, free or implicit labor is a new form of exploitation.

4.2.3 The alienation between people

In Marx's opinion, "the direct result of the alienation of people with their own labor products, their own life activities and their own nature is the alienation of people." [3] 98 Digital technology and capital promote the development of society to artificial intelligence, but digital control faces the risk of weakening, and social relations tend to be digital classification. Digital workers and capitalists are alienated, data becomes the communication intermediary, and digital capital carries out the "enclosure" movement to control the data production and marketing. Users become "prosumers", and digital capital secretly presses the surplus value, exacerbating the imbalance of labor-capital relations.

5. The realization path of the new type of labor relations under the digital economy

5.1 Recognize the nature of digital labor and wake up the consciousness of labor subject

Digital labor is the product of the development of digital productivity. In the modern digital economy society, "digital dehumanization" and "human digitization" can not achieve the best effect, what we need is a kind of "humanization of digital technology". We must base ourselves on realistic activities, pay attention to the core values of people, and reintroduce human factors in the technical decision-making, so that people's subjective initiative and creativity can be realized.

5.2 Optimize digital socialism and build harmonious labor-management relations

Labor relations are the "barometer" of healthy economic development and the "vane" of social harmony and stability. In terms of digital labor relations, the digital labor relations in western capitalist countries show a characteristic of "either-or", while China's digital labor relations show a feature of "coordination". Digital socialism is an effective way to solve the problem of digital labor force. It emphasizes that the means of labor under the socialist public ownership economy belong to workers. There is no class antagonism in the production process, and workers can "share" all the surplus created by socialist enterprises.

5.3 Beyond the logic of capital with human-oriented logic, promote and discard the alienation of digital labor

"Labor — alienated labor — The alienation of labor is abandoned — development of people" is the theoretical context of Marx's sublation of alienated labor. First of all, the essence of capital logic is "object-oriented", and the nature of "occupying" labor and the logic of "disorderly expansion" imply the relationship between subject and object of people and things, and virtually dissolve the subject status of people. Secondly, the starting point and destination of human-oriented logic is the development of human beings. In the process of solving the material and spiritual dilemma of the subject of digital labor, it promotes the realization of "the possession of human life" .[4] Finally, the intelligent and independent production with artificial intelligence as the core can free people from the monotonous labor and restore their essence.

6. Conclusion

In the context of the digital economy era, the current situation and challenges of labor relations have become extremely complex and diverse. In view of these current situation and challenges, we need to strengthen the subject consciousness of workers, and advocate the people-oriented concept to transcend the single capital-driven logic. Only in this way can we establish a harmonious and stable labor relationship, promote the benign interaction between the digital economy and the labor market, and promote the sustained and steady prosperity of the social economy.

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