



A Brief Analysis of the Justice Thought in *The Communist Manifesto*

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Abstract

The Communist Manifesto was a program drafted by Marx and Engels for the Communist League. It was the first scientific theoretical document of communism. The thought of justice is the ideal belief expressed by Marx in *the Communist Manifesto*, and also the application and development of Marxist thought of justice in contemporary times. With the development of social economy and the continuous improvement of people's living standards, justice has gradually become a common understanding of the society and a pursuit of value. Therefore, how to accurately understand and apply the concept of justice put forward in *the Communist Manifesto* and make it an important theoretical reference material for our theoretical research and philosophical thinking is a question that we need to seriously face and answer when thinking about the topic of justice. This paper will discuss the concept of justice, the justice thought in *the Communist Manifesto*, distributive justice and so on.

Keywords

Justice, *The Communist Manifesto*, Capitalism, Distributive justice, exploitation

1. Introduction

Justice is an ancient and vigorous topic in the history of thought, and has the most basic and eternal pursuit value in human society. The pursuit of justice is not only the human ideal shown by the Enlightenment, the Reformation and the Industrial Revolution, but also the realistic human practice, social struggle and revolutionary movement. As an epoch-making classic of human civilization, *The Communist Manifesto* is the most influential work of Marx and undoubtedly the most widely disseminated and internationally renowned work in all socialist literature (Babic, 2022). It can be seen from *The Communist Manifesto* that Marx never stopped fighting on the battlefield of justice, but criticized the naked exploitation of capitalism and the false idea of justice of the bourgeoisie fiercely, and realized the return of the analysis of justice from the abstract theory of justice to the development of social practice on the basis of criticism.

2. About justice

Justice is like a mysterious and white veil that covers exploitation, oppression, filth, atrocity, injustice and evil in society. It is an "Archimedes point" that provides a measure of other values.

Justice was regarded as obedience to the social order and the ruling class in Greece; the view of justice in the Middle Ages was actually aimed at obedience to the belief society, which eventually led to general tiredness of belief and collapse of value. In Kant's opinion, the so-called justice is also abstract moral justice that is divorced from the stipulations of concrete reality; Hegel's historical idealism cannot solve the problem of nothingness of justice.

Only Marx created the Historical Materialism, established the pre-existence of matter in human life, and showed that justice is definitely not abstract, and cannot be positioned without the pursuit of value in specific historical periods and countries. It is no longer limited to abstract morality but to the arrangement of social institutions (Arnulf, 2022).

In different contexts, people have different ideas of justice, and each concept of justice is prescribed and operated according to a special game rule. The rules of justice should be binding on all. In this sense, justice is directly related to human rights and class interests.

3. The justice thought in *The Communist Manifesto*

In *The Communist Manifesto*, Marx did not make a direct and systematic discussion of justice. Nevertheless, we can understand justice through the discussion of injustice.

3.1 The criticism of the unequal and chaotic social relations caused by the capitalist mode of production can be regarded as the starting point of Marx's criticism of injustice.

The first part of *The Communist Manifesto* criticizes the state of exploitation in capitalist society and exposes the essence of capitalist exploitation as a manifestation of injustice. In a capitalist society, capitalists are driven by power and desire to trade injustices for greater interests (Atteberry Ash, 2022). "The modern bourgeois society that has sprouted from the ruins of feudal society has not done away with class antagonisms. It has established new classes, new conditions of oppression, new forms of struggle in place of the old ones." The ruins of feudal society did not take away all oppressive conditions and forms of struggle, but just continued the brutal oppression struggle in another way, and the conflicting struggle between the bourgeoisie and the proletariat was manifested in a more concrete way in the historical evolution (Yifan Wei, 2022). The bourgeoisie pools assets in the hands of a few people and restricts people's freedom, and people's potential is not stimulated. If workers want to make a living, they must obey the division of labor unconditionally, lose their free and conscious creative activities, and become vassals and slaves of "capital". The demise of feudalism and the establishment of new institutions brought little comfort to the proletariat, as Marx said: "The history of all hitherto existing society is the history of class struggles." The proletariat always lives in dire straits. The truth of the separation of labor and capital is covered up by the bourgeoisie, and the proletariat is far from achieving social justice. Marx did not oppose the bourgeoisie's pursuit of economic wealth, but the unjust way of violating the productive forces and the relations of production in the pursuit of economic interests, which was a separation between the material and spiritual life of the proletariat (Galani, 2022).

3.2 Justice is inextricably linked to the relations of production.

Marx elaborated, "how the modern bourgeoisie is itself the product of a long course of development, of a series of revolutions in the modes of production and of exchange." Based on the actual development of the bourgeoisie at every stage, the appearance presented is not the result of deduction, but a real process of appropriation of the proletariat and the seizure of independent dominance. The transition from feudal society to the modern bourgeoisie has indeed brought about the development of more advanced productive forces, and the bourgeoisie has reaped great rewards for the exploitation of the world's resources (Sergei, 2022). Therefore, Marx unabashedly affirmed the contribution of capitalist society to the world process in terms of material, spiritual and demographic aspects in *The Communist Manifesto*: "The bourgeoisie, during its rule of scarce one hundred years, has created more massive and more colossal productive forces than have all preceding generations together." At the same time, the increase in social wealth brought about by capitalist society under the change of the mode of production and the mode of exchange has increased the burden on the proletariat. From the perspective of Historical Materialism, the justice that is also generated in the process of material production has gradually fallen to the bottom of society. But the history of class struggle does not stop at capitalist society, which has created enormous social wealth that overwhelms their path of progress, and the plague of overproduction crimps the development of industry and commerce as a whole. Only when the proletariat takes over from the bourgeoisie and throws the development of justice back into the normal operation of economic and social development can justice continue to develop in practice and in the process of material production. In conclusion, the claims for justice that are made without changing the existing structure of social relations in the class state are undoubtedly unstable. The root of justice lies in the development of social economy, no matter in which social form, as long as it is compatible with the relations of production, justice can

operate under a good mechanism, and once it is contrary to the relations of production, the development of justice will not be guaranteed (Timmer, 2021).

3.3 The elimination of exploitation is the highest demand of justice.

After revealing that socio-economic development is the root of justice, Marx combined justice with the actual social practice and mode of production, and pointed out that the pursuit of justice does not exist eternally under the absolute economic category. Proceeding from practice, Marx grasped the laws of historical development and proposed that the realization of true justice is the abolition of the irreconcilable source of contradiction between the bourgeoisie and the proletariat, that is, capitalist private ownership of the means of production. "The theory of The Communists may be summed up in the single sentence: Abolition of private property." The communist society pursued by Marx is a just society, and the justice at this time is not abstract justice under capitalist society, but the justice at this time is based on reality and conforms to the internal logic of social production conditions (Mrozla, 2021). "Communism deprives no man of the power to appropriate the products of society; all that it does is to deprive him of the power to subjugate the labor of others by means of such appropriations." Marx showed that the critique of the bourgeoisie was due to the compulsive appropriation of the labor rights of the working people by the exploitation of the products of society, whereas in communist societies class distinctions would disappear with the abolition of private property, and the proletariat regarded the pursuit of justice as an ideological weapon to overthrow the bourgeoisie. Communist society restores the essence of humans (Llorente, 2021).

4. Distributive justice

In both the Western and Chinese contexts, justice is about public values and contains the meaning of "should" and "must", which refers to the way in which the interests of public life are rationally arranged among members of society. In this sense, justice is justice for distribution. That is, the social value created by all members of the society can reflect justice by fair distribution. In Greece, distributive justice referred to the principle of ensuring that human virtues were rewarded accordingly, focusing primarily on the distribution of political status. Distributive justice in the modern sense mainly refers to the regulation of the economic interest relations of social members and the arrangement of the basic freedoms and rights of society. The distributive justice interpreted in *The Communist Manifesto* is not a moral salvation, still less an "eternal truth" that is shelved on the shelf, but a realistic point of people and their liberation as the logical starting point and value pursuit of distributive justice. In *The Communist Manifesto*, Marx did not construct an abstract concept of distributive justice, but conducted a real analysis of the actual people under certain historical conditions, and built a "people-oriented" concept of distributive justice with human liberation as the value scale. Thus, *The Communist Manifesto's* conception of distributive justice is realistic: on the one hand, it is rooted in the productive activities and historical context of the real human being; on the other hand, the promotion of human emancipation constitutes its value. In *The Communist Manifesto*, Marx objectively and profoundly depicted the real situation of man, accusing the realistic man of being bound by "money relations" and that freedom and individuality were eroded by the logic of capital. Marx gave an objective and profound depiction of the real conditions of human existence. "Capital is therefore not only personal; it is a social power." Under the shroud of capitalist relations of production, the personality of the proletarian, under the influence of wage labor, is reduced to "an appendage of the machine" and thus "loses any independent character".

Besides, *The Communist Manifesto* emphasizes that distributive justice must be pursued with the emancipation of man as its value. "In place of the old bourgeois society, with its classes and class antagonisms, we shall have an association, in which the free development of each is the condition for the free development of all." Marx pointed out that the entire capitalist system of distributive justice is hypocritical, "The executive of the modern state is but a committee for managing the common affairs of the whole bourgeoisie."

Based on the revelation of the hypocrisy and enslavement of capitalist distributive justice, Marx argued that distributive justice must be based on "seeking the interests of the majority", must overcome alienated labor, and must be in line with the interests of the proletariat. That is to say, the broad masses of workers enjoy the means of production and the fruits of social development (Sriram D, 2018).

Capitalist distributive justice is a defense of the legitimacy of the capitalist system, and plays the role of "replacing exploitation covered by religious fantasies and political fantasies with open, direct and explicit exploitation". While criticizing the ideological nature of capitalist distributive justice, Marx made a classic exposition of socialist distributive justice: socialist distributive justice is the abandonment of alienated labor, advocating that "labor is on-

ly a means of expanding, enriching and improving the lives of workers." Capitalist distributive justice is bound to perish, and communism is the ultimate solution to distributive justice. Communist society is the solution and transcendence of distributive justice. It has effectively overcome the "kidnapping" of social production and wealth distribution by private ownership, and provided a feasible path for "realizing the right and freedom of every member of society to share public affairs equally to the greatest extent possible."

5. Conclusion

Justice, as a norm of social values, is formed by people in social practice, mainly in the process of social material production practice. The basis for judging whether a certain law, morality, policy or behavior is just or not must not be some abstract principle, "absolute command" or "objective spirit", but must be based on whether it can promote the progress and development of practice and whether it conforms to the inevitability of historical development as the fundamental coordinate. Through the analysis and criticism of the capitalist system of private ownership, *The Communist Manifesto* revealed the class nature of justice and raised of proletarian justice. Marx's justice thought expressed concern for the vulnerable, which is similar to Rawls. The difference is that Rawls's theory of justice aims not only to solve the problem of resource allocation of the current vulnerable groups, but also to include a balance of freedom and fairness for all classes, even all of human beings, and the full enjoyment of the fruits of social development by all members of society. Marx's thought focused on the premise of the justice of the system itself. The realization of justice requires the support of a corresponding social system. The distribution system of justice is the foothold of our analysis of the idea of justice in the social system, and justice is the highest value evaluation scale in the social system. Put it bluntly, the development of society is, in the final analysis, the free and comprehensive development of man. The free and all-round development of man means that man must break free from the shackles of labor and exploitation and become the true master of society. The concept of justice based on the free and comprehensive development of man is Marx's highest answer to the question of justice.

Nowadays, it is an inevitable requirement for realizing justice to improve and perfect the socialist system with Chinese characteristics, adhere to the people's political subject values, practice the people-centered development concept, promote social fairness and justice to the greatest extent with system construction, and achieve common prosperity and all-round human development of all people. As far as the system of justice is concerned, it always satisfies the people's yearning for a better life, and gives priority to the continuous liberation and development of productive forces with efficiency. Only by paying more attention to fairness and constantly adjusting the relations of production can we ensure the balanced and full development of society and the harmony of social relations.

As far as I can see, real justice is not about treating everyone equally, but about treating everyone as equal and free people. Under the new historical conditions, justice theory must not only respond to the requirements of Western justice theory and the stereotypes formed by the accumulation of traditional Chinese culture, but also solve the actual dilemma of justice and meet the practical needs of social development.

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