

# The Scientific Connotation and Practical Implications of the Marxist Concept of Happiness

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**Abstract:** Happiness is an unchanging topic, and the question of human happiness is the most important concern of Marxist philosophy, and the achievement of the common happiness of all human beings is the starting point and the anchor point of Marx and Engels' scientific worldview and methodology. Then, it is of great academic value and practical significance to correctly understand the theoretical connotation and spiritual essence of Marxist concept of happiness.

**Keywords:** Marxism; Concept of happiness; Labor; Morality; Revelation

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## 1. Introduction

In a draft creed written by Engels for the Communist League in 1847, clearly pointed out that “such principles exist in the consciousness or feeling of every human being, they are unbreakable principles, the result of the whole historical development, which do not need to be proved. For example, every human being seeks happiness <sup>[1]</sup>.” For Marx, happiness is the free and comprehensive development of man, an overall holistic good life. In short, happiness is the organic unity of material happiness and spiritual happiness, process happiness and result happiness, individual happiness and social happiness, which is the happiness that really exists.

## 2. The scientific connotation of Marxist concept of happiness

Happiness is not a given existence, but a constantly developing reality creation. Marxism believes that man is the creator of his own happiness and labor is the source of happiness.

### 2.1. Labor is the source of happiness

Labor is the source of all material and spiritual wealth. Labor creates a good life, labor writes a good tomorrow, and labor achieves a good dream. The more the times move forward, the more the style of hard work cannot be lost, and the quality of hard work and courage cannot be lost. We should cultivate the “spirit” of hard work and diligence, and use our hardworking hands to create and meet a happy and beautiful life. The history of human society is not only the history of the continuous pursuit of happiness, but also the history of labor development. Labor makes people stand up and make them independent of nature. At the same time, labor strengthens the ties between people, forms various social relations, and promotes the formation and development of society. Therefore, labor is the most basic way of human activity and existence, and engaging in free and conscious labor is the essential need of human beings, the need for their existence and development. As Marx said, “Any nation that stops working will perish, not to say for a year,

but for a few weeks.” Man is born in labor and develops in labor. Man is not only the subject of labor, but also the active fruit of labor. In labor, man not only dynamically transforms the objective world, but also constantly transforms the subjective world; not only satisfies his own needs, but also generates new needs, and generates the motivation to further pursue happiness. It is in labor that man confirms his essential power, realizes the value of his existence, and “truly proves that he is a class of existents [2].”

In fact, we should realize that not all conditions of labor can create happiness. When the worker is separated from the means of production, “alienated labor” is created. The alienation of labor separates labor from enjoyment and becomes a means of exploiting labor. In order to be happy, we should “be proud of our hard work and ashamed of our good and bad work”, and use our hands to create the fruits of our labor, so as to obtain happiness.

## **2.2. Morality is the catalyst of happiness**

Marxism points out that man is the synthesis of all social relations. Morality is a social ideology, which is the code and norm of people’s common life and their behavior. As the pursuit of human subjectivity, morality plays an irreplaceable role in the regulation of human-human and human-social relations.

Morality is an important way for human beings to grasp the world. In the treatise “Introduction to the Critique of Political Economy,” Marx divided the ways of human beings grasping the world into four kinds: the way of scientific spirit, the way of artistic spirit, the way of religious spirit and the way of practical spirit. Morality grasps and knows the world in the spirit of practice. It takes the evaluation of good and evil as the way and the should and should not as the scale, and tells people the right way to open the ideals and qualities they should pursue, so as to continuously improve their personalities and enhance the realm of life, and reap a fuller, more complete and more valuable life. Morality is an important means of regulation. The social scope of moral adjustment is broad, and morality is needed to regulate all periods and fields of human life. It guides and corrects people’s behavior through social opinion, traditional habits, and inner beliefs. As a practical spirit, morality is distinctly ideal, reflecting the subject’s pursuit of “ought.” It is based on reality, showing the perfect ideal personality and inspiring people to strive for it; it praises the true, the good and the beautiful, and depresses the false, the evil and the ugly, inspiring people’s sense of moral identity, achievement and dignity, and prompting them to “know the good and follow the good,” “see the virtuous and think of the virtuous”, and “see the unworthy and reflect on themselves.” “To see the unworthy and reflect on themselves,” to constantly improve themselves. Morality reflects the natural state of social life, embodies the pursuit of one’s own integrity, and is a necessary condition for happiness in life.

The moral virtues are the first and foremost, and people with high morals are the ones who benefit others and society, and can gain more praise and support from others and society, which helps to obtain happiness. Whether at work or in life, we must cultivate our moral discipline, virtue and goodness, and be prudent to the end. Therefore, the pursuit of happiness should be combined with perfecting morality and achieving a happy life with noble morality [3].

## **3. The inner underlying of Marxist concept of happiness**

### **3.1. Happiness is the mutual integration of material happiness and spiritual happiness**

Marx Engels pointed out: “We should first of all determine the first premise of all human existence, that is, the first premise of all history, which is that people must be able to live in order to be able to “make history.” However, in order to live one first needs food, drink, shelter, clothing, and a few other things.” Second, the degree of satisfaction of material needs affects the satisfaction of spiritual needs. As Marx said, “The anxious poor have little sense of even the most beautiful scenery.” Again, the best possible satisfaction of material needs is an important condition for achieving happiness. We cannot say that if material conditions are superior, we must be happy; if they are not, we must not be happy. We must oppose the view of

happiness that belittles or even denies material needs. All legitimate and reasonable material needs should be respected. As Engels said: “Only a very small part of the desire for happiness can be satisfied by conceptual rights, but the vast majority depends on material means to achieve.

Material life and spiritual life are the two major forms of human social life. Marxism endorses material happiness, while emphasizing spiritual happiness. Man is not only a natural being, but also a social being. Material happiness is primary and short-lived, while spiritual happiness is profound and lasting. The satisfaction of material needs is the condition for happiness, and we should pursue a lasting spiritual happiness that is based on certain material basis and beyond material desires.

### **3.2. Happiness is the organic unity of personal happiness and social happiness**

The thinkers before Marx and Engels often failed to see the social nature of human beings and regarded them as individuals only, even “treating ‘society’ as something abstract in opposition to the individual.” This is not only detrimental to the realization of individual happiness, but also to the development and progress of society. Marxism emphasizes that happiness is the unity of individual happiness and social happiness. This is the significant difference between the Marxist concept of happiness and the previous concept of happiness. Individuals are social beings. Social relations, as the essential existence and realization form of human beings, contain all the social conditions needed for human existence and development. Anyone in the pursuit of happiness must necessarily relate to others and society. Even the most isolated individual activity cannot be separated from social relations or from the social and cultural context that creates the conditions for it. Robinson on the desert island was able to survive and return to human society, thanks to his previous social and cultural accumulation. Marx made a profound explanation of this: “The individual is a social being. Therefore, the expression of his life, even if it does not take the direct form of a common, life-expression done together with others, is the expression and corroboration of social life.” Today, as society develops, the division of labor becomes more and more refined, production becomes more and more socialized, and the realization of individual happiness becomes more and more dependent on the progress of society and the development of the community.

Marxism holds that happiness is neither just the happiness of an independent individual, but that individual happiness can be achieved not only in society alone. Happiness lies in the realization of what Marx called “the community of free men”. From the perspective of dialectical unity, we should unify individual happiness and social happiness, and constantly promote individual happiness to a new level, while giving social happiness rich and concrete content.

### **3.3. Happiness is the harmonious symbiosis of creating happiness and enjoying happiness**

Engels said, “Labor creates man himself.” In the process of labor, people can gain knowledge, sharpen their will and purify their souls; in the process of labor, all human talents are maximized and the value of life is realized to the greatest extent. In a deeper sense, happiness lies not only in enjoying the fruits of labor creation, but also in the labor creation activity itself. In the process of social practice and labor creation, people not only obtain material materials for their own survival, but also develop their own abilities, enrich their spiritual life and improve their spiritual realm. Labor creates valuable material and spiritual wealth, so that people can enjoy the physical and mental satisfaction and happiness brought by labor, and this satisfaction and happiness will inspire people to be more enthusiastic about labor in order to create more material and spiritual wealth. In this virtuous circle, labor becomes a prerequisite for enjoyment, and enjoyment becomes a driving force for labor, and happiness is the unity of creating happiness and enjoying happiness.

#### **4. The way to realize the Marxist concept of happiness**

We should establish a correct concept of happiness, expand the scope and influence of the spread of Marxist concept of happiness, solidify the foundation of happiness culture with Marxist theory, guide people to refine the main points of happy life in social life, seek personal happiness and realize social happiness in the right way.

##### **4.1. Adhere to the human-centered view of the happiness of the subject**

On one hand, people are the people who exist in society, the real existence and the subject of happiness; on the other hand, they are relatively independent existences, with independent consciousness and thoughts, with emotions. From the perspective of Marx's materialistic view of history, the people are the creators and continuators of history, the producers and inheritors of material and spiritual materials, and the main driving force and backbone of social development. People are a necessary and important force driving historical progress, according to the materialism view of history, which emphasizes people's subjective power. The real existent human being, standing in the context of history and reality, underlining the subjectivity and relevance of human beings, is the foundation of all Marx's theories and activities. The Marxist idea of happiness has a critical mission: to find a viable path to people's satisfaction. The subject of the Marxist definition of happiness is a living person, not an abstract being. As a result, adhering to the human-centered notion of pleasure means putting people first, with the goal of promoting people's free and comprehensive development. In today's society, we highlight the essential provisions of the human-centered view of happiness of social subjects by combining Marxist happiness thought and the common needs of contemporary people and social development, and clarify the human-centered view of happiness. To adhere to people-oriented is to take people's happiness as the basis and destination of practice. To improve people's cultural literacy on the basis of meeting their material needs, to stimulate people's creativity and sense of achievement in practice, and to obtain inner satisfaction and happiness.

##### **4.2. Adhere to the social happiness concept of willingness to devote oneself**

Marx believed that people should choose a noble profession, which is to seek the welfare of mankind, and struggle for the liberation and happiness of all mankind is the value of the meaning of life, "In choosing a profession, the main pointer we should follow is the happiness of mankind and our own perfection. Man can reach perfection himself only if he works for the perfection of his contemporaries and for their happiness. He believes that working for personal self-interest is vulgar. The person who brings happiness to the majority of people is the happiest person. The highest value goal of human happiness is to achieve the happiness of all human beings. To achieve this ultimate goal requires each of us to struggle continuously in social practice, to set up great ideals and goals in life, and to contribute our strength to the development of society and the happiness of human beings <sup>[4]</sup>.

##### **4.3. Adhere to the practical view of happiness of hard struggle**

Marx introduced the view of practice into the theory of happiness, believing that labor practice is the realistic root of people's happiness, and that the essential power of human beings is displayed in conscious and free labor. The concept of practical happiness is the main symbol of Marx's concept of happiness, and is an important criterion distinguishing it from other traditional concepts of happiness. In the process of modernization, we need to establish a view of practical happiness with labor as its essence, that is, to fully express our value in labor and enjoy the material and spiritual fruits created by labor, while creating new needs in the practice of labor to promote social progress and human development. It is necessary to combine the value and significance of the Marxist concept of happiness about labor with the spirit of hard work and struggle advocated in the excellent Chinese traditional culture to consolidate the theoretical foundation of

the culture of happiness. Labor is the way to happiness, and the concept of hard work should be permeated into all areas of society <sup>[5]</sup>.

### **5. The practical significance of the Marxist concept of happiness**

The Marxist concept of happiness, based on the practice of social production, develops the productive forces and improves the relations of production, which is the basic way to achieve the common happiness of all human beings. In the present society, due to the development of industrial civilization, the development of commerce, the expansion of communication and the increase of economic interests, people are increasingly pursuing individual independent life. Under such circumstances, the acquisition of material wealth becomes the main purpose of people's actions and the criterion of happiness. According to Schopenhauer, man is always pursuing the satisfaction of diverse desires. Man is in pain when his desires are not satisfied, and once his wishes are satisfied, he will be attacked by the horrible emptiness and boredom. In the plentiful material resources of life, man does not find corresponding happiness, and anxiety and dread become an alienation of happiness. Marx's definition of happiness has some relevance to modern people's lives and psychological states <sup>[6]</sup>.

The pursuit of happiness and the achievement of life values is a basic and legitimate right for everyone. The strategies of acquiring personal satisfaction are growing more and more numerous as societal productivity and the abundance of means of production increase. It should be apparent that pursuing happiness in life is not the same as pursuing material sensory pleasure, and that happiness must be distinguished from hedonism and money worship. The objective of life will be lost if life happiness is equated with sensory pleasure, which is contrary to Marx's conception of happiness. The human quest of happiness can only achieve a true value of life and a true feeling of satisfaction if it is guided by reasonable value goals. In terms of achieving social happiness, it is inextricably linked to achieving personal happiness. Only when people are motivated by the belief of pursuing happiness can they promote the development of society, and the continuous development of society creates conditions for people to develop themselves freely and comprehensively, which in turn stimulates individuals to create happiness even more, so that a good cycle will be formed, and personal happiness and social happiness will promote and cooperate with each other, which not only brings human The development of social civilization, but also to bring freedom and happiness to the survival and development of the individual.

### **Disclosure statement**

The author declares no conflict of interest.

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