

The Implications of Marx's View of Career Choice for the Youth in Post-Pandemic Era

—An Interpretation Based on Epistemological Perspective

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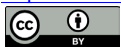
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Abstract

The world economy and society have devastated by the COVID-19, and the employment situation has become more urgent than ever in the aftermath of the epidemic. Effectively assisting college graduates in developing a realistic perspective on profession choice and overcoming the negative effects of the COVID-19 pandemic is of utmost practical importance in this regard. In certain ways, the notion of career choice as it is embodied in the thesis is Marx's own epistemological expression of the social reality. This is evident in Karl Marx's "*Reflectiones de un juvene sur le selection de un profession*", which profoundly reflects Marx's wisdom and consideration about the issue of choice of occupation. This thesis employs a Marxist epistemological framework to sort out and explain the ideological underpinnings of Marx's perspective on job choice and explore the philosophical enlightenment for the career choice of college students in the post-epidemic era.

Keywords

Karl Marx, Post-Pandemic, Epistemology

1. Introduction

The COVID-19 epidemic has destroyed the global economy and society, and the employment situation has become more critical than ever in the aftermath of the epidemic. Some experts predicted that China's college graduates would face particularly challenging job situations in the coming years. In response, the Ministry of Education and the Ministry of Human Resources and Social Security have started several focused programs to support college graduates make informed career decisions and helping them in finding satisfying jobs. These programs of-

fer college graduates substantial policy backing and protection for employment. By the end of the epidemic, China had started to transition into the post-pandemic era, which comprises the following features. First, the epidemic has been effectively controlled in general, and individual sporadic epidemics occasionally recur, so that people need to accept the reality of the normalization of epidemics in their lives and thoughts, and actively explore ways of life to coexist with them. Second, after the widespread epidemic, all kinds of social problems and contradictions previously concealed by the epidemic have been highlighted and exposed, and the experience of the epidemic has changed people's previous worldview, outlook on life and values in many ways, and these changes have been continuously counteracted in the society through the interactions between people and the society. Along with the arrival of the post-pandemic era, the reality of college students' employment situation has also changed.

2. The Reality of Graduate Employment in Post-Pandemic Era

For a long time, the employment of college graduates is an important issue related to the protection of people's livelihood, social harmony and stability, and the healthy development of the economy, and doing a good job in the employment of college graduates is of great significance to China's construction of a strong human resources and innovative country. In the context of the pandemic of COVID-19, in order to cope with the prevention and control of the epidemic and to protect the health of graduates and recruiters, many activities during the traditional employment season have been called off. For example, offline interviews in traditional recruitment activities were difficult to conduct during the epidemic, job fairs organized by society and schools for graduates were difficult to organize, and some necessary employment processes were difficult to be conducted offline, etc. These circumstances have made the already critical issue of employment even more challenging, and the employment process for many graduates has been delayed or deferred because of the epidemic. With the effective control of the widespread epidemic and the gradual recovery of the economy, the pressing issue of graduate employment has become increasingly urgent, and the employment of graduates in the post-pandemic era is facing new pressures and challenges.

2.1. Changes and Challenges of Employment Situation in Post-Pandemic Era

The economic downturn caused by the epidemic has led to a drastic reduction in job supply. The labor market has suffered a huge impact due to the double impact of the epidemic and the downward pressure of the economy, and the employment situation is not optimistic. In terms of job supply, industries more adversely affected by the epidemic are mainly concentrated in tourism services, catering and entertainment, trade and sales, transport, securities, insurance and so on. In years of normal economic development, these industries are the ones with

the highest demand for labor and the ones that provide the largest number of jobs for graduates. However, because of the impact of the epidemic, the income of these industries has dropped drastically, with many small and medium enterprises closing down and large enterprises also facing the objective situation of downsizing their internal staff. All these circumstances have led to a significant reduction in the employment programmes of these industries, and the supply of jobs has shrunk significantly compared with the situation before the epidemic.

A backlog of unemployed former students has led to a surge in demand for jobs. According to the Ministry of Education, “the magnitude of college graduates has reached 11.58 million in 2023, an increase of 820,000 from the previous year” (Ding & Yan, 2019). The increase in the number of college graduates to be employed makes the already reduced job supply even tighter. The situation of former students who were not employed in previous years competing for employment opportunities with the current year’s fresh graduates has occurred from time to time in the past, however, in the post-pandemic era, this situation appears to be even more serious. The two years before the epidemic were a critical period for prevention and control, and due to the suspension of offline recruitment activities, many colleges and universities adopted closed campus management, objectively backlogging more former graduates than in previous years. These unemployed college students, who exceeded the usual number in previous years, will compete with fresh graduates for the already reduced employment opportunities, thus worsening the employment situation which was already not optimistic.

In order to actively respond to the negative impact of the above situation on the job search of college graduates, the relevant state departments and colleges and universities have successively launched a number of employment initiatives for college graduates, such as “encouraging online services, simplifying the employment procedures, and postponing the processing time”, and have continued to carry out recruiting and job applications through the Internet and other means of communication, which has alleviated the negative impact of the epidemic to a certain extent the adverse impact of the epidemic to a certain extent. However, this form of online recruitment is a temporary solution to cope with emergencies, and still has certain shortcomings compared with the traditional form of recruitment based on regular offline interviews, and the effectiveness of recruitment and subsequent on boarding has yet to be observed and confirmed. How to face the negative impact of the epidemic is a common problem in front of the state and graduates, which needs to be solved by the state, universities and graduates. External factors, the state has introduced several policy measures and regulatory policies, effectively creating more employment opportunities and conditions for graduates. As for internal factors, the graduates’ personal outlook on career choice is particularly important.

2.2. Value Diversity and Conflict in Graduates’ Views on Employment

After the reform and opening up, the economy has been developing rapidly, and

the exchange of ideas and culture at home and abroad has become more and more frequent. With the successive influx of various social trends from abroad, these trends and the domestic local culture to produce a blend of collision, people's ideological concepts and values are increasingly towards the direction of diversification. After entering the information society, the developed mechanism of information interaction and exchange has made the contemporary youth in a variety of worldviews, outlook on life, values, left and right. College students have long been under the multiple protection of family and school, life experience is still shallow, lack of social experience, has not yet established a sound outlook on life, world view and values, and confined to the general psychological characteristics of this age, it is easy to be influenced by some radical ideas, lost in all kinds of values, lost the direction, lost the subjectivity. In more serious cases, they may also be misled and compelled by bad social values such as money worship and hedonism, blindly pursuing high salaries, high-class working environments, and high-ranking positions when choosing careers, thus neglecting important factors of consideration in choosing careers such as their own personalities, abilities, career preferences, and potential for future development. After the extensive and intensive epidemic, the whole society has stepped into the post-pandemic era, and some social problems and contradictions accumulated and suppressed during the previous epidemic have gradually come to the forefront and been exposed, and the experience of the epidemic has caused many people's values and psychological state to change, which are also manifested in the college student group. During the epidemic, a large number of students were unable to return to school, and graduates could only participate in recruitment and interviews organised online at home. These objective factors led to the separation of students from school and society, and in some areas, due to the seriousness of the epidemic, students were even unable to return to school for a whole year, and the isolation of students formed by this long-term home teaching made many college students have some degree of psychological problems, and some of them could not meet with peers and teachers for a long time. Some students are unable to communicate with their classmates and teachers for a long time, and have the emotion of resisting social interaction, these negative psychology and emotions make the employment mood more negative and depressed. For college students nowadays, in the face of the complicated social environment, the diversification and impact of the values of career choice, and the psychological and emotional changes brought by the epidemic, how to give full play to the subjectivity, actively overcome the negative psychology, avoid the loss of values, and firmly establish a rational view of career choice is an important and arduous task.

3. An Epistemological Interpretation of Marx's View of Career Choice

In his article "*The Considerations of Youth in Choosing a Career*", Marx elaborated on the elements of youth's consideration in choosing a career through

multiple perspectives, such as value standards, subject selection and social relations. Combining these elements, from the perspective of Marxist epistemology, we can make it clear that contemporary young people should insist on the harmonious unity of personal value and social value, make efforts to improve their self-knowledge to make better use of their subjective initiative in establishing a rational concept of choosing a career. At the same time, on the basis of subjective initiative, make full use of and grasp the connection between themselves and the objective world.

3.1. Integration of Personal Values and Social Values

In “*Reflectiones de un juvene sur le selection de un profession*”, Marx called on young people to “human happiness” and “our own perfection” as the highest value standard when choosing a career. Marx lamented that “if we choose the career in which we can best labor for the good of mankind, then our happiness will belong to millions of people, and noble people will shed hot tears in the face of our ashes” (Marx & Engels, 1982: p. 7). In Marx’s perception, “our own perfection” means the realization of personal value, and “the happiness of all mankind” means the realization of social value. On the road of value realization, if we can perfectly combine personal value and social value, take the realization of personal value as the basic goal, take the realization of social value as the ambitious ideal, and insist on the unity of personal value and social value. In this way, we can create unparalleled value, make millions of people happy, and live up to the expectations of our own lives. Generally speaking, the realization of personal value is crucial to the development of each person’s life, and the vast majority of people tend to devote all their efforts to the pursuit of personal value. However, most people do not consider the social value they can create, the value they can bring to others, to society, or even to all humanity. In this regard, Marx, who was only 17 years old, had high aspirations in his youth, transcending the limitations of most people who focus on thinking about personal values, and taking into account more people and a wider range of fields, which is undoubtedly worthy of our learning and admiration. From the perspective of historical experience, most noble people are noble because when they are faced with choices, they do not only limit themselves to their own interests, but at the same time consider their personal interests (sometimes even at the expense of their personal interests) to benefit more people, and strive for the happiness of the vast majority of people. As Marx said, “History has proved that those who make themselves noble by working for the common goal of all mankind are great men ... Experience praises those who bring happiness to the majority as the happiest man of all.” (Marx & Engels, 1982: p. 7)

3.2. Enhancement of Self-Knowledge and Full Utilization of Conscious Initiative

Marxist epistemology believes that the subject’s cognitive ability is the subject

in the cognitive process can be correctly played out of the self-conscious mobility, in the cognitive development of any part of the subject cannot be separated from the subject's mobility, cannot be separated from the subject's cognitive ability to play. Marx himself mentioned many times in his writings that the cognitive ability possessed by man is precisely what distinguishes man from animals. "Nature itself prescribes to the animal the sphere of activity which it should follow, and the animal moves peacefully within that sphere... God, too, has appointed to man the common goal—Man should seek nobility for himself and for all mankind—But God leaves man to find for himself the means by which he may attain this end... God will never leave the world entirely unguided, but man should rely on himself to find the means to achieve his goal, and this divine right to freely choose his occupation is what distinguishes and excels man from other creatures." (Marx & Engels, 1982: p. 7). As the main body of practice, man should give full play to his subjective initiative in the process of choosing his occupation. Some college students in the job-seeking process once encountered problems, they are afraid of the end, negative response, or blame God, complaining about the economic situation is not good, and some fear of hard work, just waiting for other people's assistance, all of these are the lack of personal subjectivity performance. Nowadays, every college student has the right to choose their own career aspirations and life goals, and should actively enjoy such rights and freedoms, bravely challenge the difficulties in job hunting, actively think of ways to solve the problem, and take the initiative to try out new fields and work content and expand their cognitive level and practical ability in practice. But at the same time, we should also note that this free choice praised by Marx is not a blind choice, not a temporary decision made arbitrarily and rashly in accordance with perceptual knowledge, but a choice made based on rational knowledge after rational and prudent thinking on the basis of sufficiently improved self-cognition. In this regard, he said: "To be able to choose in this way is precisely what makes man superior to other creatures, but at the same time it is an act that can destroy a man's life, ruin all his plans, and plunge him into misfortune." (Marx & Engels, 1982: p. 7) Therefore, in choosing a career, it is necessary, under the premise of fully grasping the freedom of choice, to focus on improving the level of self-knowledge, objectively and comprehensively assessing one's own abilities and qualities, giving full play to the subject's self-consciousness and initiative, and choosing a career in a way that is both proactive and conscientious, so as to avoid making rash decisions that could affect one's whole life.

3.3. Maximization of the Connections to the Objective World

No one is living in isolation, people in the survival and development of all the time in the establishment and development of the connection with the objective world. Marx pointed out in "*Theses on Feuerbach*" that "the nature of human is not an abstraction inherent in a single human being, but in its reality it is the

sum of all social relations” (Marx & Engels, 1995: p. 56). In “*Reflectiones de un juvene sur le selection de un profession*”, Marx also mentioned that “our relationships in society begin to be established long before we are in a position to have a decisive influence on them” (Marx & Engels, 1982: p. 5). The process of human cognition is “not a closed process that takes place within the human being alone, but a process that takes place in the interaction and interrelationship between the human being and the external world.” (Yang & Yang, 1992: pp. 38-41) For example, each one of us is connected to our parents and relatives from the moment we are born, and in the stages of our growth and development, new social relationships are constantly established and developed new social relationships. Comparatively speaking, a person’s subjective cognitive ability and scope is limited, and this limitation is affected by various objective environments to which the subject belongs on the one hand, and by subjective factors such as the subject’s personal knowledge and experience on the other. It can be said that different people have different empirical understanding, knowledge reserves and life experience, the experience of a single person in the scope of their understanding is limited, but the social relations in which each person is linked to the sum of all the experience of the people is likely to be unlimited, the experience is necessarily much broader than the individual experience, which often covers many positive elements of the university students. These experiences often include many positive elements that are helpful to college students’ career choice, such as teachers, parents, seniors, schools, and social employment guidance agencies, many of whom have the ability to provide us with advice and help to a certain extent, and these elements are very likely to play a facilitating role in the process of choosing a career. Therefore, we should make full use of the subject’s own connection with the objective world and seek advice and guidance from social relations related to ourselves. By fully grasping these external connections, we can more objectively assess the level of our own abilities, avoid our own defects, give full play to our personal strengths, and find a career that matches our own objective conditions. In short, in Marx’s view of career choice we can see that young people should not only give full play to the subjectivity and subjective initiative in job hunting, but also make full use of and grasp the connection with the external objective world and pay attention to the positive role of these social resources on career choice.

4. The Epistemological Perspective on the Implications of Marx’s View for Graduates’ Career Choices in Post-Pandemic Era

According to Marxist epistemology, cognition is the product of interaction between the subject of cognition and the object of cognition in practice. The subject’s cognitive ability is the conscious initiative that the subject can correctly exert in the process of cognition, and it is inseparable from the subject’s initiative and the exertion of the subject’s cognitive ability in any part of the development of cognition. The subject’s cognitive ability is determined by a variety of

factors related to the subject, from the subject's cognitive ability of the constituent elements of the subject can be explored to establish a rational view of the youth of the choice of employment of some revelation. In the post-pandemic era, the employment situation of college students shows new changes and faces many new challenges. In this social background, college students should actively use Marxist epistemological thinking, consciously improve their cognitive ability, give full play to their subjective initiative, and scientifically cope with the choice of career and employment.

4.1. Establish the Correct Perspective and Apply the Scientific Method

In Marxist epistemology, "opinions refer to what kind of theory the subject takes as the support or framework of the cognitive problem, and the opinion adopted by the subject will have a direct effect on the cognitive process, which is an important constituent factor of the subject's cognitive ability." (Marx & Engels, 1982: p. 7) Method is the way how the subject knows the object. If the point of view is correct but the method is biased, it will still hinder the improvement of the subject's cognitive level and the exertion of the subject's cognitive ability. Therefore, we need to establish a correct viewpoint on the understanding of things in practice, using scientific methods of understanding. Materialistic dialectics is the scientific method of Marxist understanding, and Lenin called it the "epistemology of Marxism" (Lenin, 1995: p. 559). In establishing the correct viewpoint and method of understanding in choosing a career, young people should consciously use the Marxist method of understanding and consciously improve the ability and level of the subject's understanding. In "*Reflectiones de un juvene sur le selection de un profession*" Marx mentioned that we should "choose a profession which is based on the idea that we are convinced of its correctness; choose the perfect profession that will give us a wide place to carry out our activities for all mankind, close to a common goal" (Marx & Engels, 1982: p. 6), which shows that the correct viewpoints and methods in choosing a profession are crucial to the results of the career choices. It is obvious that the correct viewpoint and method in choosing a career are crucial to the outcome of career choice. In the post epidemic era, the social environment is changing, the economic downward pressure is increasing, and the employment situation is not optimistic, college students should pay more attention to adopting a scientific and rational point of view to view the choice of career and guide the choice of career, consciously use the Marxist cognitive method and materialistic dialectic to guide the process of choosing a career, grasp and make good use of the supportive policies provided by the state, set up a correct value of career choice, and look at the multiple elements of choosing a career dialectically, so as to avoid being misled by the wrong choice of career. They should set up correct values for career choice, look dialectically at the many factors involved in choosing a career, avoid being confused and misled by wrong values, hold firm to a scientific and rational view of choosing a career, and choose and pursue a career based on

correct ideology.

4.2. Accumulation of Knowledge and Experience

Knowledge is the subject's acquired understanding, including various subject systems. The subject's understanding is not all from scratch, at the beginning of a new process of understanding, the subject's mind often already has a relevant knowledge base, so whether the subject's knowledge is rich, whether the knowledge structure is reasonable, to a large extent, affects the speed and depth of the acquisition of new knowledge. "Experience is the accumulation of past experiences and experiences in the mind of the subject of knowledge, and experience also plays an important role in the process of forming new knowledge." (Marx & Engels, 1982: pp. 7-8) Contemporary college students have generally accumulated a wide range of basic knowledge of academic subjects during their study in colleges and universities, but they often lack relevant knowledge about the job-seeking situation and the tendency of social demand for talents, and some of them are unable to give full play to their personal strengths when choosing a job because they are not clear about the recruitment standards and tendencies of the employers, and they even fight for the strengths of others with their own shortcomings, which leads to undesirable results in the job-seeking process. In the post epidemic era, the economy is gradually recovering, social undertakings are also gradually on the previous track, and all kinds of employers have resumed the scale of recruitment one after another. Affected by the epidemic has not been employed and will soon be employed college students should grasp this time, in addition to the usual study life more participation in social practice activities, make full use of the school employment guidance department recommended internship opportunities, through practice out of the campus, contact with the community, accumulation of internship experience and employment planning experience, improve and exercise in addition to professional knowledge of the subject of the practical experience and practical skills, more targeted to increase their competitiveness in the job market. Increase their competitiveness in the job market, so as to take more employment initiative in their own hands.

4.3. Cultivate Tenacity and Optimism through the Process of Choosing Careers

According to Marxist epistemology, the cognitive process of the subject is not only rational, but also involves irrational factors and plays an important role in some cases. Among them, will, emotion and character are important components of irrational factors. Will is a kind of psychological state produced by people in order to achieve a certain purpose, strong will can make the subject of knowledge in the process of realizing the purpose of knowledge, with the courage to overcome difficulties. Character is people's attitudes towards people and things and behavioral patterns of psychological characteristics, optimistic and pragmatic character will have a positive impact on the subject's cognitive process. Emotion is people's psychological reaction to the external stimulus with positive

or negative attitude, positive and noble emotion can stimulate the subject to know the power of the object. Contemporary college students are quick-witted and highly receptive to new things, and they are easily interested in some new industries and new occupations, and then hastily choose to engage in a certain occupation. However, after a period of practice, they find that it is different from what they imagined before, and after encountering some obstacles and setbacks, they find it difficult to persist and choose to give up. “There are also individual students with delicate emotions and sensitive and fragile character, who are prone to negative delay or pessimistic abandonment when encountering difficulties in job searching”, (Liu, Guo & Ou, 2022), and even more, they are guided by the bad social atmosphere and wrong information of the media, which leads them to have unrealistic thoughts such as detaching from reality, getting something for nothing and being over-ambitious. The road of job-seeking is inevitably full of competition and many twists and turns. In the background of the severe employment situation in the post-pandemic era, college students need to do a good job of actively coping with the psychological construction of problems before choosing a job, focusing on improving the ability of the main body’s understanding, and focusing on cultivating tough will and optimistic and positive character in the event of a problem. In the face of the problems during the career choice period, they should face the problems positively in their thoughts, be practical in their actions, and be brave enough to explore and solve the problems instead of avoiding the problems negatively or giving up lightly. They should treat the career choice experience as an important life experience, think calmly, face the problems optimistically, be based on the reality, be brave enough to try, and try hard to improve their own will and character so as to seek for a wider space for career development. When constructing a rational concept of career choice, we should grasp both internal and external training, fully improve and give full play to the subject’s cognitive ability, and at the same time pay attention to strengthening the multi-dimensional connection and interaction with the external world, so as to construct a scientific and rational concept of career choice by improving the subject’s cognitive ability, and to test and develop the existing concept of career choice through continuous practice, so as to realize the material interests and value pursuits, personal and social values, and personal ideals and common ideals in the process of choosing a career.

5. Conclusion

In conclusion, it is a great challenge for the employment of university graduates in such a special period as the post-epidemic era. The impact of the epidemic on the employment of university graduates is mainly manifested in two aspects. On the one hand, from the perspective of the employment rate, the employment rate of graduates of most universities has not yet recovered to the level before the epidemic. On the other hand, from the perspective of employment structure, affected by the COVID-19, the proportion of people choosing to study abroad after graduation has decreased dramatically, and the proportion of those pursuing

further education domestically has not changed much compared with that in the past, which means that the pressure of competition for domestic employment has increased significantly. In this regard, adhering to the correct value orientation in job hunting plays an important role in career choice, and Marx's concept of career choice is an important revelation for college graduates: firstly, upholding the correct values and finding effective methods related to employment; secondly, improving the level of self-knowledge and accumulating rich knowledge and practical experience; and lastly, seizing the connection between oneself and social relations and seeking help adequately.

Conflicts of Interest

The author declares no conflicts of interest regarding the publication of this paper.

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