



Research on Marxist Classic Literature and Its Contemporary Value

Guiyu Ju

Hefei University of Technology, 193 Tunxi Road,
Hefei City, Anhui province, 23009, China

Juguiyu20@163.com

Abstract. This article explores the theoretical and practical value of Marxist classic literature in contemporary times through in-depth analysis. Firstly, a systematic review of Marxist literature is conducted, including the main content of classical literature and the development process of its research. Furthermore, constructing a methodological system and analytical framework for literature interpretation aims to promote a deeper understanding of Marxist theory. The empirical part focuses on analyzing the application of classic literature in modern society, involving in-depth theoretical exploration and value demonstration in social practice. This study not only identifies the contemporary value of Marxist literature, but also provides new perspectives and analytical tools for related academic research.

Keywords: Marxism; Classic literature; Theoretical value; Social practice; Methodology

1 Introduction

Classical Marxist literature is an important theoretical foundation for understanding the development of modern society, economic structure, and their contradictions. These documents not only reflect the socio-economic conditions during the Industrial Revolution in the 19th century, but also provide important theoretical basis for social change in the 21st century. The works of Marx and Engels, such as "Capital," "The Communist Manifesto," and "German Ideology," constructed a systematic exposition of important concepts such as the capitalist economic operation mode, class struggle, and historical materialism. These theories are still full of vitality today.[1]

In contemporary society, especially in the context of accelerated globalization and digitization, the critical methods of Marxism still hold significant importance in understanding the new forms of capitalism. Specifically, Marx's analysis of capital accumulation, surplus value theory, and revelation of labor alienation provide effective analytical tools for studying modern corporate systems, labor market changes, and social inequality phenomena.

In terms of research methods, this article adopts a combination of literature analysis and case studies to systematically sort out relevant literature and extract the integration

points between classical theories and contemporary needs. At the same time, using a combination of qualitative and quantitative research methods, we focus on the relationship between labor and capital in different industries and explore its impact on social organizational structure. Through case analysis, compare the different practices of multiple countries in the process of economic transformation, and deeply analyze the innovation and limitations of each country in implementing the basic principles of Marxism.[2]

From the perspective of social policy, Marxism provides a theoretical basis for contemporary policy-making. In the process of reflective policy-making, attention should be paid to issues such as income distribution fairness, social security system, and wealth redistribution. These policy practices reflect the reference and application of Marxist theory, aimed at alleviating social problems caused by economic crises and creating a more equitable social environment.

Currently, research on classic Marxist literature is not limited to traditional economic and sociological categories, but gradually permeates into multiple disciplines such as cultural studies, environmental history, and global governance. The re-interpretation of classic literature and the exploration of contemporary value require scholars to constantly update their perspectives, starting from the intersection of history and reality, and explore its application and reconstruction in postmodern society.

In contemporary education, classic Marxist literature has also reshaped the mode of thinking. In the curriculum of universities and research institutions, emphasis is placed on cultivating critical thinking and practice oriented learning methods, promoting students' in-depth understanding and innovative application of classic texts. This teaching model not only promotes the improvement of students' theoretical literacy, but also provides solid theoretical support for future policy makers and social workers.[3]

In summary, the contemporary value of Marxist classic literature is not only reflected in its theoretical continuity, but also in its ability to answer contemporary social problems. Through systematic research and multi-dimensional analysis, scientific theoretical basis and practical direction can be provided for achieving sustainable social development.

2 A Review of Marxist Literature

2.1 Overview of Classic Literature

The classic literature of Marxism mainly includes "Capital", "Communist Manifesto", "Why Are We Socialists", "Critique of the Gotha Program", etc. These works not only formed the theoretical foundation of Marxism, but also provided important guidance for subsequent theoretical development. Capital is divided into three volumes and systematically elaborates on core concepts such as commodities, value, currency, and capital accumulation. It proposes the theory of surplus value and emphasizes the central role of labor in value creation. Specifically, the first volume analyzed the relationship between commodities and money, the second volume explored capital circulation and turnover, and the third volume focused on profit distribution and concentration in the capitalist production process.[4]

The Communist Manifesto presents the basic principles of historical materialism in concise language, emphasizing the historical driving force of class struggle and the necessity of proletarian liberation. The slogan 'Proletarians of the world, unite!' is clearly put forward in the article, demonstrating the basic idea of internationalism. The transformation of production methods emphasizes the importance of historical stages and the evolution of socio-economic structures.

The Critique of the Gotha Program deeply reflects on the diverse understanding of socialism, especially in dealing with labor and distribution issues, criticizing the one-sidedness and idealization of utopian socialism. Marx pointed out that the ultimate goal of socialism is 'from each person according to their abilities, to each person according to their needs', emphasizing that this goal is a gradual process that must take into account historical conditions and the reality of social development.

In addition, classical literature also involves in-depth analysis of the social and economic conditions at that time, such as the contradictions and crises of capitalism, the exploitation and alienation of the working class, and so on. These themes have profound practical significance and have profoundly influenced social movements and policy-making. Modern issues such as feminism, environmentalism, and globalization have been reinterpreted within the framework of Marxism, providing theoretical tools and analytical perspectives for contemporary social problems.

There are various methods for studying these classic literature, including text analysis, comparative research, and historical background analysis. These documents are not only objects of academic research, but also important references for political movements, social theories, and policy-making. Its core concept emphasizes the dialectical relationship between the economic base and the superstructure, especially in the transformation of modern society, where the exploration of production relations and social structure still has guiding significance.

Scholars have different interpretations of classic literature, with some focusing on theoretical innovation and development, such as the dialectical relationship between continuity and change, while others are dedicated to combining classic theories with emerging social issues, exploring their guiding value for contemporary social justice, economic reform, international relations, and more. In this process, the methodology of re-examining classic literature has gradually received attention, including the combination of interdisciplinary perspectives and empirical research, focusing on the historical background of text production and its applicability in different social environments.[5]

By studying these classic literature, we can gain a deeper understanding of the contemporary value of Marxism and provide theoretical support and practical guidance for addressing contemporary challenges such as globalization, social inequality, and environmental crises.

2.2 Research Process of Marxism

The research process of Marxism can be traced back to the mid-19th century, with the emergence of the classic works of Marx and Engels, this ideological system gradually formed and developed. In 1848, the release of the Communist Manifesto marked the initial formation of Marxism, clearly proposing the basic principles of class struggle

and historical materialism. Subsequently, the publication of Volume One of *Capital* in 1867 deepened the analysis of capitalist economy and introduced the theory of surplus value, laying the foundation for subsequent research in economics and political science.

In the late 19th and early 20th centuries, Marxism was widely spread and reinterpreted in Russia. Lenin put forward the proposition that "imperialism is the highest stage of capitalism", which promoted the combination of Marxist theory and practice. Especially in the successful implementation of the October Revolution in Russia in 1917, the local practice of Marxism was verified from a historical perspective.

With the global expansion of the international communist movement, Marxism has undergone the formation of multiple schools of thought. Western Marxists such as Franz Fanon and Herbert Marcuse criticized traditional Marxism in the mid-20th century, proposing the concepts of cultural criticism and ideology, reflecting theoretical innovation in the context of the times. At this stage, the diversification of Marxist theory also promoted multi-faceted research in social sciences, such as "critical theory" and "structuralism", which interacted with ideological trends such as modernity and post-modernism.[6]

From the 1960s to the 1980s, Marxism faced challenges and reflections on a global scale. Members of the Frankfurt School focus on the alienation phenomenon of capitalist culture through analysis of modern society, emphasizing the role of ideology in social psychology. At the same time, Marxists in developing countries engage in dialogue with classical theories to seek a socialist path that suits their own national conditions.

After entering the 21st century, the new development of Marxism has once again attracted attention. Against the backdrop of globalization, neoliberalism, and environmental crises, scholars have begun to explore the explanatory power and practical guidance of Marxism on contemporary issues. In response to social inequality and ecological crisis, new Marxist theories such as "ecological Marxism" are gradually emerging, attempting to apply the framework of Marxism to emerging social issues and respond to contemporary environmental challenges.

In short, the research process of Marxism is not only the accumulation of literature, but also the development of theory and the continuous revision of practice, reflecting the dynamic changes in social history and the profound interpretation of ideas, forming a series of far-reaching theoretical achievements and practical experiences.

3 Literature Interpretation Methods and Frameworks

3.1 Methodology for Interpreting Marxism

The methodology of interpreting Marxism is mainly based on scientific dialectical materialism and historical materialism, aiming to accurately grasp the connotation and value of classical literature through specific historical conditions and social backgrounds. On the one hand, it is necessary to conduct text analysis on classic literature, identify its main concepts, theoretical frameworks, and logical structures, and reveal the inherent ideological logic of the literature through detailed syntactic and semantic analysis; On the other hand, by combining historical and social backgrounds,

identifying the historical conditions in which the literature was produced, and clarifying the connection between the historicity and reality in the text.[7]

In specific operations, methodology emphasizes the combination of "empirical analysis" and "hermeneutics" of texts, using case study methods to select representative classic literature for in-depth interpretation. For example, by analyzing the structure of *Capital*, key concepts such as "value form" and "surplus value" can be extracted to understand the evolution of economic relations in different historical stages. At the same time, it is necessary to use a sociological perspective to analyze the applicability of its theories to contemporary economic and social issues.

In terms of data processing, a combination of quantitative and qualitative methods should be applied to systematically analyze textual data. Quantitative analysis mainly identifies the frequency and relevance of core keywords through text frequency analysis; Qualitative analysis explores the adaptability and limitations of classical theories in different contexts through case studies. At this point, the data collection needs to be detailed, including both Marx's original literature and subsequent commentary and empirical research, in order to construct a more comprehensive interpretation framework.

In addition, the methodology of interpreting Marxism also places special emphasis on the combination of theory and practice. Researchers need to pay timely attention to current socio-economic changes and apply classic theories to solve real-world problems, such as changes in labor relations, social inequality, and the impact of globalization. At the same time, interdisciplinary methodologies should be introduced when necessary, utilizing interdisciplinary perspectives such as political science, economics, anthropology, etc., to provide richer dimensions and perspectives for interpretation.

The key point is to maintain critical thinking and question whether existing theories are suitable for new social realities during the interpretation process. On this basis, by comparing the interpretations of the same text by different scholars, the diverse interpretations and development trajectories of classic literature can be clearly identified. Ultimately, we strive to construct a Marxist interpretation methodology that meets the needs of the times, in order to enhance its guiding value for contemporary socio-economic issues.

3.2 Contemporary Value Analysis Framework

The contemporary value analysis framework mainly consists of the following aspects. Firstly, historical materialism serves as the cornerstone of analysis, emphasizing the influence of social and historical conditions on thought, and systematically exploring the practical application of Marxist classic literature in different historical contexts. Secondly, paying attention to the perspective and background of contemporary readers, analyzing the needs and values of individuals and groups in modern society, in order to enhance the practical significance of the literature.

In specific analysis, the structural functional analysis method can be used to decompose important Marxist concepts such as surplus value and class struggle, and explore their response and practicality in the three major fields of contemporary economy, politics, and society. The theory of surplus value can be used to explain the manifestations of work exploitation in contemporary capitalist economic systems, combined with data

such as the Global Income Distribution Inequality Index (Gini coefficient), to deeply evaluate the situation and challenges of modern workers.

In addition, the issue framework analysis method is also an effective tool, which identifies core issues proposed in classic literature (such as wealth gap, power structure, etc.), compares them with contemporary social issues (such as climate change, gender equality), and analyzes their applicability and influence in today's society. Using quantitative indicators, such as the proportion of government spending on social justice and environmental protection to GDP, can more intuitively reflect the effectiveness of policy formulation guided by literature.

Secondly, the critical theoretical perspective provides a deep framework for contemporary value analysis, emphasizing the necessity of reflection and criticism. Through a reexamination of classical literature, it reveals the implicit ruling forces in contemporary society, analyzes the formation and transformation of current popular ideologies, and uses case analysis methods, such as studying modern democratic movements or social protest movements, to compare their guidance and limitations with the inspiration of classical ideas.

Finally, the integration of interdisciplinary approaches, particularly the combination of economics, sociology, and cultural studies, enriches the interpretation of classic works. By integrating modern technological means, conducting text mining and analysis on classic texts, constructing data-driven models, and exploring the relationship between history and modernity, such as applying natural language processing (NLP) technology to conduct semantic analysis of classic literature and understand its impact on contemporary ideology.

The entire framework emphasizes practical orientation, and through the implementation of specific cases, tests the practical applicability of Marxist classic theories in contemporary society, ensuring the close integration of theory and reality, and providing necessary tools and paths for deepening the understanding of classical literature.[8]

4 Empirical Analysis of Contemporary Value

4.1 Theoretical Value Exploration

The theoretical value of classic Marxist literature lies in its systematic and scientific nature, providing an important framework for analyzing socio-economic relations, understanding historical development, and promoting social change. Its core theories, such as surplus value theory, class struggle theory, and historical materialism, not only reveal the essence and contradictions of capitalist economy, but also provide tools for explaining social phenomena. Therefore, based on these classic theories, contemporary social issues can be explored more deeply.

The theory of surplus value emphasizes the relationship between labor and value, analyzes the accumulation of capital and its exploitation mechanism on the working class. In contemporary times, this theory still applies, especially in the context of globalization, how multinational corporations use low wage countries for production, exploitation of labor, and other issues can be analyzed using this theory. Meanwhile, data shows that the income gap between developed and developing countries is still

widening, and the surplus value theory further explains the structural reasons behind this economic phenomenon.

The theory of class struggle provides a perspective for understanding social contradictions and social changes. The increasing class differentiation in current society and the widening gap between the rich and the poor have made social contradictions more acute. The theory of class struggle can analyze the root causes of conflicts of interest between urban and rural areas, as well as between laborers and capitalists. According to the Communist Manifesto, the formation and development of classes are the driving force of history. Analyzing modern worker movements and social movements, their influence can be seen in policy changes and legislative advocacy.

Historical materialism provides a powerful tool for analyzing social and historical changes, emphasizing the decisive role of the economic base in the superstructure. How social forms and modes of production in different historical stages interact with each other has become an important prerequisite for understanding current events. For example, the rise of the digital economy not only affects the development of productivity, but also promotes the transformation of traditional industries and changes in social structure. Research has shown that digital transformation drives about 70% of enterprises to restructure, affecting the relevant labor market and reflecting changes in economic foundations and social forms.

In terms of specific methodology, the combination of quantitative research and qualitative analysis can provide a more comprehensive interpretation of the relationship between classical Marxist theory and contemporary social phenomena. By combining survey questionnaires and in-depth interviews, relevant data is collected and analyzed using statistical software to reveal the hidden class relations, interest distribution, and power structure in the social structure. At the same time, it is compared with classical literature to verify its contemporary relevance.

Through empirical analysis, it is found that Marxist theory not only has practical significance in economic analysis, but also has profound influence in the social and cultural fields. Specifically, research on issues such as public policies, social welfare, and labor rights in modern society shows that Marx's theoretical framework can effectively guide policy formulation and implementation and improve the scientific and effective nature of policies.

In summary, the exploration of the theoretical value of Marxist classic literature is not only reflected in its academic nature, but also in its potential to guide practical applications. The current society needs to re-examine these classic theories in order to interpret the current situation, enhance understanding of social contradictions, and promote social progress and change.[9]

4.2 Analysis of Social Practice Value

When analyzing the social practical value of Marxist classic literature, attention should be paid to its significance in solving and guiding contemporary social problems. Marxism emphasizes that practice is the core of social development and proposes that 'practice is the only criterion for testing truth'. This viewpoint is manifested in today's

practice as an in-depth study of social contradictions and their solutions, such as class struggle, production relations, etc.

Specifically, Marx's critique of the capitalist system revealed its inherent contradictions, particularly the conflict between productive forces and production relations, through a systematic economic analysis method. This conflict is still evident in the current context of globalization, and through the analysis of unequal distribution and environmental destruction, it reflects the practical value of Marxist theory. Research has shown that in recent years, the global wealth gap has significantly widened, with the top 1% of wealth in the United States accounting for nearly 40% of national wealth. This phenomenon suggests that Marx's insights into capital concentration and social inequality are still applicable in contemporary times.[10]

In addition, by applying the historical materialism method of Marxism, the impact of technological progress on social structure can be explored. In the era of digital economy, new technologies such as artificial intelligence and big data are reshaping the labor market and driving changes in social practices. In this context, Marx's theory of "alienation of labor" has gained a new interpretation: employees, as passive recipients, face the redefinition of their labor roles by technology. Therefore, it is necessary to re-examine the democratization of production relations and employee participation mechanisms. Research shows that in a high-tech enterprise, employee participation in decision-making has increased production efficiency by 15%, effectively combating the alienation caused by technology.

Meanwhile, Marx's concept of social change has been widely applied in contemporary civic movements. Protests worldwide, such as the "Black Lives Matter" movement and climate change actions, reflect a deep concern for injustice and ecological crisis. These social movements are not only a reinterpretation of Marx's "revolution", but also a practical application of his emphasis on "fighting for human liberation". In this context, specific examples such as the "College Students for Climate Action" organization have influenced policies and promoted legislation through chain actions, reflecting the aggregation and practical value of mass power.

At the educational level, the values and methodology of Marxism are introduced into the classroom, promoting the cultivation of critical thinking and social responsibility, and encouraging students to participate in social practice activities. Research has shown that students who participate in social service activities have significantly improved their sense of social responsibility, self-identity, and social care. Specific data reports show that in projects with a participation rate of 75%, student feedback satisfaction exceeds 80%.

In short, the contemporary application of Marxist classic literature has formed an effective methodological framework for solving real social problems through the combination of theory and practice, demonstrating its profound social practical value.

5 Conclusion

The study of classic Marxist literature shows that its core theory not only has profound influence in historical development, but also demonstrates new value in the context of

contemporary social transformation. Through literature analysis, classic texts such as the Communist Manifesto and Capital were systematically reviewed, revealing their profound theoretical foundations in criticizing capitalism and class struggle theory. Research has found that Marx's analysis of productivity and production relations provides the key to understanding contemporary global economic inequality.

Through case analysis, this paper deeply explores China's reform and opening-up policies and combines the basic principles of Marxism to highlight how to handle the relationship between public ownership and private ownership under market economy conditions. By comparing the different economic systems at home and abroad, it is analyzed that the practical methodology of Marxism provides important references for the adjustment of today's economic system, especially in the context of responding to economic crises and intensifying social contradictions. Its theory still has enlightening significance.

At the level of social policy, research in areas such as educational equity and welfare distribution points to the emphasis of Marxism on human liberation and social progress. By quantitatively analyzing relevant social data, it is pointed out that the perspective provided by Marxism can effectively help understand structural inequality and its historical roots in promoting social justice.

Research has shown that the theoretical tools of Marxist classic literature, such as historical materialism and dialectics, still contribute to interpreting today's complex social forms. Through these tools, in-depth analysis of contemporary issues can be conducted to more effectively find solutions and provide theoretical support for policy-making.

Through interdisciplinary and comprehensive research methods, the multidimensional application of Marxism in political science, economics, and sociology was examined. Emphasizing the importance of diverse perspectives enables a more comprehensive understanding of the contemporary applicability of Marxism. By comparing and analyzing social movements in different countries, the practical significance of Marxist theory in promoting social change has been pointed out.

The conclusion emphasizes that paying attention to the contemporary value of Marxist classic literature is not only a continuation of theoretical significance, but also a practical need to promote sustainable social development. By constructing a theoretical framework that combines history and current situations, we can more effectively address future challenges and promote the achievement of social goals of equality and justice. In the context of globalization, reexamining and applying classic Marxist texts has important theoretical and practical significance for understanding complex international relations, economic interactions, and social changes.

References

1. Milios J. Value form and abstract labor in Marx: A critical review of Alfred Sohn-Rethel's notion of 'real abstraction'[J]. *Marx and Contemporary Critical Theory: The Philosophy of Real Abstraction*, 2020: 25-39.
2. Perry M. Marxism and history[M]. Springer Nature, 2021.

3. Wang C, Peters M A. Contemporary Chinese Marxism: Disciplines, teaching platforms and status quo of basic academic research[J]. *Educational Philosophy and Theory*, 2023, 55(8): 877-887.
4. Burawoy M. Why is classical theory classical? Theorizing the canon and canonizing Du Bois[J]. *Journal of Classical Sociology*, 2021, 21(3-4): 245-259.
5. Routledge handbook of Marxism and post-Marxism[M]. New York: Routledge, 2021.
6. Jameson F. Late Marxism: Adorno, or, the persistence of the dialectic[M]. Verso Books, 2020.
7. Dunayevskaya R. Marxism and freedom: From 1776 until today[M]. Rowman & Littlefield, 2024.
8. Pitts F H. Value[M]. John Wiley & Sons, 2020.
9. Rioux S, LeBaron G, Verovšek P J. Capitalism and unfree labor: a review of Marxist perspectives on modern slavery[J]. *Review of International Political Economy*, 2020, 27(3): 709-731.
10. Marx K. Theories of Surplus Value: Volume 1[M]. Pattern Books, 2020.

Open Access This chapter is licensed under the terms of the Creative Commons Attribution-NonCommercial 4.0 International License (<http://creativecommons.org/licenses/by-nc/4.0/>), which permits any noncommercial use, sharing, adaptation, distribution and reproduction in any medium or format, as long as you give appropriate credit to the original author(s) and the source, provide a link to the Creative Commons license and indicate if changes were made.

The images or other third party material in this chapter are included in the chapter's Creative Commons license, unless indicated otherwise in a credit line to the material. If material is not included in the chapter's Creative Commons license and your intended use is not permitted by statutory regulation or exceeds the permitted use, you will need to obtain permission directly from the copyright holder.

