

Paradox and Resolution: The Possibility and Feasibility of Embedding Labor Ethics into Common Prosperity—A Study Centered on the Economic and Philosophic Manuscripts of 1844

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Abstract

Marx reveals in the *Economic and Philosophic Manuscripts of 1844* that labor ethics possesses a unique value-supporting role for common prosperity. Although Western societies have entered an affluent society based on capital ethics, they simultaneously face obstacles such as the paradox of wealth distribution, the paradox of human development, and the paradox of ecological environment. Proceeding from the labor ontology, people's value, and social historicity of common prosperity, Marx focuses on the labor moral foundation of common prosperity, the standpoint of labor subjects, and the ethical direction of "harmonious coexistence between laborers and nature." The value function of labor ethics lies in cultivating the public virtue of "co-creating and sharing social wealth" in common prosperity, clarifying the "people-centered" value orientation of common prosperity, and emphasizing the ecological well-being of "sustainable development" in common prosperity. Embedding labor ethics with value contents of labor justice, labor freedom, and green labor into common prosperity can effectively alleviate the "triple paradox" arising from capital ethics. To construct universal prosperity that unifies individual existence and social existence, achieve comprehensive prosperity that unifies the material world and spiritual world, and realize overall prosperity where naturalism and humanitarianism are reconciled, coordinated efforts are needed across institutional, cultural, and ecological dimensions.

Full Text

Paradoxes and Solutions: The Possibility and Possible Actions of Embedding Labor Ethics into Common Prosperity: An Examination Centered on the Economic and Philosophical Manuscripts of 1844

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Keywords: common prosperity; labor ethics; capital ethics; *Economic and Philosophical Manuscripts of 1844*

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The new era's advancement of common prosperity requires strengthening the operation of ethical concepts and adjusting social moral order to construct a comprehensive, multi-level, and wide-ranging common prosperity. "Western developed countries, due to their pioneering position, were the first to enter a state of 'universal affluence'", yet due to the historical formation of capital ethics and its comprehensive deployment and deep penetration in social life, they face value order dilemmas such as paradoxical poverty, dilemmas in human development, and ecological environmental destruction. Developing countries differ significantly from Western nations in labor ownership structures, class labor relations, social labor forms, occupational cultural elements, and many other aspects. Seeking answers from existing Western capital ethics and blindly imitating the Western path to wealth accumulation is not applicable to most developing countries. The ethical norms of common prosperity have become increasingly prominent and constitute a modern issue urgently requiring theoretical reflection and value interrogation.

Common prosperity, as a developmental value discourse and moral concept, has its processes, elements, and links directly connected to and based on labor ethics. From the 2021 Central Financial and Economic Affairs Commission meeting where Xi Jinping proposed "encouraging prosperity through diligent and innovative work" as an ethical norm to promote common prosperity, to the 2022 Party Congress report emphasizing that the distribution system based on labor contribution as the value principle is the "fundamental institutional arrangement for promoting common prosperity", and further to the 2023 Central

Financial and Economic Affairs Commission meeting clarifying that “promoting comprehensive human development and common prosperity for all people” reveals that social members, primarily laboring masses, are the moral subjects of common prosperity. In view of this, embedding labor ethics into Chinese-style common prosperity is both possible and actionable. Currently, academic circles focus on seeking implementation paths for common prosperity in the realm of material production and economic foundations, neglecting the value support role of ideological factors such as spiritual values and moral ethics for common prosperity. In fact, Marx in his *Economic and Philosophical Manuscripts of 1844* (hereinafter referred to as the *Manuscripts*), from the perspective of labor moral examination and labor ethical judgment, reflected on the paradoxical forms and realistic causes of capital ethics in achieving affluent society, demonstrating the logical connection and internal coupling between labor ethics and common prosperity, and providing scientific ethical thought sources and moral implementation paths for advancing Chinese-style common prosperity.

1. Why It Is Necessary: The Triple Paradox of Capital Ethics in Achieving Affluent Society

As capital has become the core discourse in modern social history, capital ethics, defined as “the moral choices and ought-to-be relationships among people when facing capital logic”, essentially constitutes the ethical judgment and value narrative of the Western wealth world. Along with the contemporary collusion between capital’s will to power and bourgeois ideology, a set of capitalist values characterized by “liberty, equality, property, and Bentham” gradually formed, with capital ethics comprising mainly capital justice, capital freedom, and capital egoism. In the *Manuscripts*, Marx expounded how capital ethics triggered profound contradictions and tense confrontations between humans and society, humans and themselves, and humans and nature, causing crises in the social order, meaningful dwelling, and ecological foundation that make common prosperity possible, and profoundly calling for the value guidance and ethical orientation of labor rationality’s actualization.

1.1 The Wealth Distribution Paradox: The Antagonistic Relationship Between Capital Justice Priority and Universal Poverty Among Laboring Groups

The first major manifestation of capital ethics is the belief that affluent society is built upon the value norm of capital justice, which holds that “the growth of capital into massive capital, the increasing wealth of a nation” is the prerequisite. National economists advocate capital justice as social orientation, arguing that “the person who employs his capital in supporting domestic industries, necessarily endeavors to direct that industry so that its produce may be of the greatest value”. This moral evaluation prioritizing capital justice emphasizes that social wealth proliferation results from the material resources owned by capitalists, attempting to regard the laws of capital’s movement and 增殖 as

universal, eternal, just, and legitimate natural laws.

Driven by capital justice values, a wealth distribution paradox emerges where “the growth of wealth is consistent with the growth of poverty and enslavement” . On one hand, capital justice promotes vigorous market economy development. The ethical concept of “capitalist economic impulse” can effectively promote the spiritual liberation of capital and the flourishing of commodity economy. Without the moral impetus of capital justice that emphasizes “money as king,” “capital 增殖 supremacy,” and “economic indicators first,” society could not reach a certain volume of affluence. On the other hand, capital justice undermines fair distribution of social wealth. The value concept that “capital is the power of command over labor and its products” treats capital’s domination over labor as a universal, transhistorical “natural justice.” However, capital justice that does not address the issue of ownership of means of production is merely “formal justice” belonging to the exploiting minority, rather than “substantive justice” for the overwhelming majority of laboring classes. The capital justice spirit of “natural selection, survival of the fittest, and survival of the strong” elevates particular class interests to the absolute bond of universal social interaction, excluding overall people’s wealth growth from its value horizon. Due to the dual 叠加 of unjust distribution of social production materials and unjust distribution of labor products in the capitalist economic system, social labor subjects do not receive reasonable wealth distribution, as “the worker’s poverty is inversely proportional to the power and size of his production” . Evidently, capital ethics based on capital justice as the value standard leads to an unbalanced and unjust distribution paradox in enjoying social development achievements, making the spiritual guardianship of labor ethics indispensable for realizing common prosperity.

1.2 The Human Development Paradox: The Ideal Gap Between Capital Freedom Generalization and the Narrowing of Human Labor Essence

The second major manifestation of capital ethics is the belief that affluent nations cannot do without the capital freedom ethical norm of “obtaining free capital” . Capital freedom advocates that “a free market is a market bound by ethical norms” , demanding unrestricted and borderless free flow of capital. It emphasizes that “only laissez-faire, self-directed private property can create the most favorable and all-encompassing division of labor” , providing ethical support for capitalist society to exploit workers’ surplus value for wealth 增殖.

Under generalized capital freedom, the process of constructing capitalist affluent nations produces the human development paradox that “the appreciation of the world of things is directly proportional to the depreciation of the world of humans” . On one hand, capital freedom promotes one-sided development of individual capabilities. The bourgeoisie believes that “all men are naturally free” , encourages “implementing universal free trade” , and supports capital’s effort to “open up free roads for itself through competition” . On the other hand, cap-

ital freedom intensifies labor alienation of labor subjects. After workers freed themselves from “personal dependency relations” in feudal society and entered “material dependency relations” in capitalism, they suffered even more concealed and intense bondage, enslavement, and exploitation. To survive, workers “completely abandon all freedom”. While suffering material poverty, workers also endure spiritual poverty, as they “do not freely develop their physical and mental powers, but rather torture their bodies and ruin their minds”. Labor products, labor activities, and even human species-essence and human beings themselves appear alienated to workers. Evidently, the social fact of the dual 割裂 between capital ethics based on free moral will and the extreme alienation state of humans proves that generalized capital freedom places the labor essence that constitutes human survival foundation in serious crisis, making an axial turn from capital ethics to labor ethics urgently needed for common prosperity.

1.3 The Ecological Environment Paradox: The Realistic Imbalance Between Capital Egoism Supremacy and Labor Ecological Environment Destruction

The third major manifestation of capital ethics is the capital egoism ethical norm that “calls egoism and private interest the foundation of exchange” as an important factor in promoting affluent society. National economists provide a spiritual foundation of legitimacy for capital 增殖 through egoism, believing that “every man is first and principally recommended to his own care”, and that every rational economic person carefully calculating their own interests can promote rapid social wealth growth. Under the utilitarian-oriented moral standard that “only pleasure and freedom from pain are desirable”, only economic activities that maximize profit are worth considering and pursuing.

Driven by capital egoism supremacy, the process of constructing affluent nations produces the ecological environment paradox that “the more the worker appropriates the external world and sensuous nature through his labor, the more he loses means of subsistence in two respects”. On one hand, capital egoism expands the activity sphere of economic life. Weber emphasized that national wealth growth “is the necessary conclusion of extreme utilitarianism”, and capital ethics serves as the spiritual motivation, moral barrier, and value support for capitalist economic production. Capital’s endless pursuit of self-interest degrades nature to an economic growth tool “subordinate to human needs,” transforming nature from “something higher in itself” into a link in the “system of universal utility”. On the other hand, capital egoism causes the alienation of natural ecology.

The capital egoism ethical concept manifests as a zero-sum, either-or, subject-object dichotomous value principle, leading to instrumental, utilitarian, and solipsistic definitions of nature by humans: “when it exists for us as capital... it is ours only when we use it”. Under the value orientation of self-centeredness and disregard for others, humans exploit nature without restraint and discharge waste wantonly during labor production, so that “for the worker who appro-

priates nature through labor, appropriation appears as alienation” . “Capital underestimates the existence value of nature, therefore it can only touch upon ecological limitations through the form of economic crisis” . Evidently, the value concept of capital egoism supremacy severely constrains the positive development of common prosperity featuring healthy coexistence between humans and nature, making sustainable development demands for common prosperity require rational reflection on labor ethics.

2. How It Is Possible: The Ethical Turn from Capital Ethics to Labor Ethics for Common Prosperity

Common prosperity has undergone historical evolution in moral emotions and value concepts, indicating that it implicitly contains the inevitable logic of a perspective shift from capital ethics to labor ethics. Capital ethics tends to measure the progress and civilization of affluent society using the single indicator of material wealth thresholds. Labor ethics is a value regulation proposed in response to capital value anomie, capital rights deficiency, and capital spatial contradictions, a philosophical value category that conducts rational inquiries and teleological examinations of labor subjects, labor objects, labor activities, labor relations, and labor modes. In this sense, labor ethics constitutes the value principles and moral paradigms of common prosperity, regulating and guiding its qualitative stipulations and developmental direction.

2.1 The Foundation of Common Prosperity: The Genesis and Internal Logic of Labor Ethics

“Affluence” is a developmental concept following an efficiency-centered model based on labor practice activities, while “commonality” reflects universal needs, refracting social groups’ conscious understanding of labor equality and wealth sharing. The emergence and embedding of labor ethics can serve as a mediator and bridge to answer how “commonality” and “affluence” can be simultaneously realized, thereby overcoming the ethical conflicts and value dilemmas triggered by capital ethics.

First, emphasizing the labor ontology of common prosperity enables Marx to profoundly reveal the labor moral foundation of common prosperity. National economics advocates that social wealth distribution should be guided not by labor contribution but by the quantity of input factors in social production. Unlike national economics, which evades the fact that private property is “the consequence of alienated labor” and one-sidedly develops the argument that “labor is the sole essence of wealth” to obscure the substantive contributions of the laboring collective (the working class), Marx deeply innovates the theoretical basis for the moral spirit of common prosperity on the foundation of labor ontology. On one hand, common prosperity is established on the labor moral cognition that “labor is the source of wealth.” “Capital is stored-up labor” , and labor is the profound ontology and important basis for human existence and

development. Various forms of wealth in social life do not exist naturally; their formation inevitably involves human labor's tempering and shaping, being the result and product of human labor's sensuous objectification. To achieve fairness and justice in the social state of common prosperity, it is necessary to introduce ethical principles that view labor as the value source of wealth creation and as the moral legitimacy basis for wealth acquisition. On the other hand, emphasizing the labor ethics of "getting what one deserves" reflects the conceptual response to social wealth distribution methods that improve the state of wealth inequality. Common prosperity is essentially a resource distribution method and interest allocation system that should have public nature and just quality, following the moral paradigm where all participants obtain wealth proportional to their labor contribution. What labor ethics values is that all social strata can obtain proportionally commensurate remuneration through their own labor, both procedurally (formally) and consequentially (substantively), with "equal treatment," "getting what one obtains," and "getting what one deserves." Thus, using real "labor" rather than abstract "capital" as the reasonable basis for moral generation of common prosperity can stimulate people's legitimate motivation for wealth acquisition and enhance the motivational utility of labor for achieving common prosperity.

Second, emphasizing the people's value of common prosperity enables Marx to scientifically confirm the labor subject standpoint of common prosperity. Western-style common prosperity, with capital ethics as its core development and goal-driven force, severely compresses human comprehensive development. Marx pointed out that labor is humanity's "species-characteristic", and that economic behavior conforming to "the greatest interest of laborers" is "good." On one hand, common prosperity is the realization of the fundamental interests of all laboring people. Interest relations determine value standpoints, and interest sharing forms the basis of value consensus. Marx attached great importance to ethical issues of inter-group differences in wealth growth, pointing out that humans are "social beings", and that "we must above all avoid once more establishing 'society' as an abstraction over against the individual". Common prosperity is a sharing process where developmental benefits are universally惠及 social labor groups, characterized by consistent interests, realizing not only the minority interests of special individuals but also the universal interests of the entire people. On the other hand, the people with laboring masses as the main body are the fundamental driving force for common prosperity. Laboring masses confirm their essential power in the object world of achieving common prosperity: "it is the subjectivity of objective essential powers, and therefore the activity of these powers must also be objective activity". In the process toward common prosperity, social basic members with laboring masses as the main body are builders and enjoyers of spiritual wealth and cultural achievements. Common prosperity demonstrates a new labor virtue ethics mode of thinking: "in the historical development of these material and intellectual products, humans create themselves, create the human essence of their own history". Thus, cultivating public virtue that always stands on the standpoint of the broad la-

boring masses is an important aspect of realizing common prosperity, and the moral standard for evaluating common prosperity should be reduced to whether it conforms to the fundamental interests of the broad laboring masses.

Third, emphasizing the social historicity of common prosperity enables Marx to comprehensively explore the ethical direction of “harmonious coexistence between laborers and nature” for common prosperity. Western wealth theory, deeply constrained by capital ethics, has become an empty conceptual system, unable to thoroughly present the social and historical factors behind common prosperity. Hegel pointed out that labor is the bridge connecting natural objects and human subjects: “through activity and labor, which is the mediation of subjectivity and objectivity”. Drawing on Hegelian labor dialectics, Marx examines common prosperity within its logical relationship and historical evolution with labor ethics, accommodating both synchronic and diachronic dimensions to achieve comprehensive and essential cognition of common prosperity. On one hand, maintaining the natural environment is the social material foundation of common prosperity. “Nature is a social category”, and common prosperity is built upon the material transformation relationship between humans and nature through social labor. “Nature is the material in which the worker’s labor is realized, in which it acts, from which and by means of which it produces its product”. The natural world provides labor material resources for achieving common prosperity, and the confirmation of this labor’s objective reality is the premise for acknowledging the social significance of common prosperity. On the other hand, the labor production practice of common prosperity promotes natural historical development. Marx emphasized that “the entire so-called world history is nothing but the creation of man through human labor, the process of the genesis of nature for man”. Achieving common prosperity is a natural historical process, whose content, nature, scope, level, and methods are constrained by social historical conditions through which humans transform nature through labor. “History is man’s true natural history”, and through labor activities, humans imprint their will on natural objects, achieving the historical unity of human and nature in common prosperity while shaping external natural objects. Thus, only when human society’s labor modes, labor activities, and labor relations align with nature’s developmental demands for law-conformity, purpose-conformity, and norm-conformity can common prosperity be possible and sustainable.

2.2 The Core of Common Prosperity: The Value Orientation and Functional Connotation of Labor Ethics

An intrinsic, essential, and natural deep connection and logical relationship exists between labor ethics and common prosperity. In the *Manuscripts*, Marx examined the moral rationality of common prosperity, focusing on the value support significance of labor ethics for common prosperity, providing ethical foundation arguments and moral basis establishment for common prosperity.

First, labor ethics helps cultivate the public virtue of “co-creating and sharing

social wealth” for common prosperity. The value concept of “interest priority” promoted in capital ethics directly affects laborers’ value judgments and conceptual identification regarding common prosperity. Based on the content of “affluence,” common prosperity emphasizes the value concept of “commonality,” valuing the complete virtue of co-creation, sharing, common wealth, and mutual benefit. On one hand, labor ethics stimulates the wealth motivational utility of common prosperity. Integration and cohesion of value concepts regarding social wealth creation and generation are essential. Unlike capital ethics that emphasizes “capital generates interest, capital generates profit,” labor ethics stresses that “labor creates wealth, labor creates value,” expressing the direct identity between labor ethics and common prosperity. Labor ethics endows common prosperity with new spiritual characteristics: moral responsibilities and lifestyles such as hard work, wealth creation, and diligent labor, interpreting wealth’s endogenous original motivation, resolving constraints of improper cognition about common prosperity, and addressing the problem of insufficient motivation among common prosperity subjects to pursue wealth. On the other hand, labor ethics reshapes the distribution value scale of common prosperity. Wherever interest relations need to be handled and adjusted, corresponding ethical requirements and value demands exist. “The moral question of capitalism must transcend an individual-ethical framework to achieve a holistic observation” . Common prosperity, as the sum of rules regulating interpersonal interest relations and behaviors, precisely emerges in the space-time where individual interests and overall interests conflict. Labor ethics demands treating labor rights and responsibilities, labor 收益 and costs according to the principle of equality, establishing a normative concept of equal rights for building universally shared common prosperity, and promoting value 重塑 of common prosperity’s social production structure and economic relation order. Thus, labor ethics provides the social function of moral protection for labor production and wealth acquisition, ensuring labor subjects occupy equal positions in common prosperity’s social production interaction and 成果 distribution.

Second, labor ethics helps clarify the “people-centered” value orientation of common prosperity. The focus of common prosperity is “human rights” rather than “property rights.” Capital ethics is capital-centered and money-centered, causing human labor essence to “become an alien essence to man” . Labor ethics emphasizes people-centered and laborer-centered values, stressing that “the standard for measuring individual self-realization is not the amount of wealth possessed, but the amount of wealth created” . For one, labor ethics promotes scientific cognition of the subject-object attributes between labor subjects and common prosperity. Labor ethics greatly influences the formation of common beliefs, social ideals, and value concepts about common prosperity among laboring masses. Labor subjects confirm their labor essential power in the process of transforming objective objects: “through practice creating the objective world and transforming the inorganic world, man proves himself to be a conscious species-being” . Labor ethics plays an important guiding role in forming subject rational thinking, emphasizing the need to establish scientific ontological cognition of labor

subjects and wealth objects, which helps realize the humanistic value of common prosperity. Additionally, labor ethics guides the healthy development of labor subjects' spiritual needs. Labor ethics is the deep-level design of labor subjects' life order. As moral ethics generated from labor subjects' practical activities, labor ethics itself is the ought-to-be orientation of common prosperity: "productive life is species-life, it is the activity that generates life". The more modernity develops, the stronger the demand to return to human spiritual essence becomes. The value aim of common prosperity lies in realizing the completeness of laborers' life expression, with people presenting spiritually fulfilled, free, and autonomous life states when their labor needs are well satisfied: "the rich man is simultaneously the man in need of a totality of human manifestations of life". Thus, labor ethics can serve as a spiritual force that optimizes social moral atmosphere, continuously enhances social cohesion and centripetal force, and thereby realizes the collective goodwill of common prosperity.

Third, labor ethics helps emphasize the ecological well-being of "sustainable development" for common prosperity. Because people have long been immersed in capital ethics' egoistic consciousness and profit-oriented guidance, they develop the illusion that nature can be arbitrarily destroyed. Labor ethics can limit subjects' concern for self-interest, and this promotion of others' interests is precisely the target orientation of common prosperity. On one hand, labor ethics strengthens labor subjects' moral responsibility for environmental protection. Maintaining social members' basic right to live in normal, healthy, and suitable natural ecological environments is an important content of common prosperity and the core orientation of labor ethics. Labor subjects recognize that "man reproduces the whole of nature" and must shoulder the moral care responsibility for maintaining ecological sustainability, taking future interests and overall well-being as common prosperity's value demands so that both current and future generations can coexist on Earth. On the other hand, labor ethics enhances the efficient utilization of natural capital. Natural capital "refers to renewable and non-renewable resources provided by nature, including ecological processes that affect the existence and use of these resources". In labor processes, individuals "make the whole of nature—first as the direct means of life, secondly as the material and tool of his life activity—into his inorganic body", and humans develop the ability to conform to and utilize natural conditions and capital through labor. Labor ethics focuses on how to effectively improve resource allocation efficiency and scientifically conserve natural capital within the carrying and 消化 capacity of resources and environment, thereby promoting common prosperity where humans and nature prosper together. Thus, labor ethics needs to be elevated to the moral norms and value concepts of common prosperity, encouraging people to enhance green values in labor production activities and realize sustainable development of common prosperity.

2.3 The Aim of Common Prosperity: The Realization Mode and Ideal Vision of Labor Ethics

Labor ethics assists common prosperity by examining how it “transcends the limits of capital itself” and improves or even reverses various imbalances caused by capital ethics. Concepts such as labor justice, labor freedom, and green labor constitute the main content of labor ethics. They focus on studying the rational consciousness and behavioral choices of ontological 内涵 utility, shared distribution methods, subject-object essential attributes, and green ecological production, reconstructing the moral mode and ethical path for the benign development of common prosperity.

First, using labor justice to regulate economic interest order integrates capital justice’s “wealth distribution paradox.” Under private ownership conditions centered on capital ethics, “ultimately all inequality reduces to this final inequality of wealth” . Since capitalists obtain larger shares of benefits generated through labor cooperation while workers who contribute more labor receive smaller shares, economic interest conflicts inevitably arise. To regulate interpersonal interest relations, labor moral principles are needed to guide social arrangements that conform to the interests of the vast majority, thereby breaking through the profound paradox of capital ethics where society as a whole experiences “wealth accumulation” while individuals suffer “poverty 叠加.”

Labor justice is the primary indicator of labor ethics, focusing on examining the ontological moral 内涵 of common prosperity and scrutinizing the proper methods for legitimate wealth acquisition. Capital ethics forces human labor to submit to capital will: “labor itself, not only under present conditions, but insofar as its general purpose is merely the increase of wealth” . As a method and specific path to change polarization trends, common prosperity signifies “the end of the split between individuals, between individuals and community, between individual interests and public interests” and requires labor ethical 准则 to coordinate economic interest relations among people. Labor justice is “the rational inquiry and value examination of whether people’s labor activities, labor relations, and labor modes conform to justice values” . Labor justice essentially seeks “equality of what,” 致力于 promoting the rationalization of interest relations in common prosperity and ensuring dynamic balance in social groups’ interest distribution order. Therefore, labor justice conducts critical reflection and value interrogation of the internal tension in interest relations, alleviating the trend of continuously expanding income gaps and wealth disparities among social members, and 破解 the 困境 of wealth growth in capitalist private ownership economies where “abundance” coexists with poverty and extreme wealth comes at the cost of extreme poverty.

Second, using labor freedom to manifest species-life characteristics 破解 capital freedom’s “human development paradox.” Modern cultural industries “speculate by artificially creating crudeness of needs” . Humans are dominated by “false needs” created by capital ethics, losing reflective capacity at the spiritual level

and class consciousness to promote social-historical development, thus “human essence can only be reduced to this absolute poverty”. How to replace “wealth and poverty in national economics with rich human needs” requires the firm presence of labor ethics in laboring people’s spiritual world.

Labor freedom is the main dimension of labor ethics, focusing on elevating the spiritual world of common prosperity’s social subjects and enriching its ethical connotation. “The realization of development depends comprehensively on people’s free subject status”. Labor freedom is originally a right that everyone should have in labor, but under the shadow of capital ethics, it is shrouded in shame. The moral consciousness of labor freedom is endogenous to laborers, gradually formed through long-term labor production activities: “it is precisely in the process of transforming the objective world that man truly proves himself to be a species-being”. Labor freedom treats labor subjects as “free beings”, 致力于 solving the value 难题 where human survival essence is submerged in capital’s disorderly expansion, and promoting the realization of common prosperity where “man appropriates his comprehensive essence in a comprehensive way, that is to say, as a whole person”. Therefore, labor freedom promotes reflection on the materialized state of spiritual life, liberating people from the mire of material desire, thereby achieving comprehensiveness and universality in individual labor capacity development and integrating the paradox of unbalanced and insufficient spiritual life caused by capital freedom.

Third, using green labor to lead natural collaborative development eliminates capital egoism’s “ecological environment paradox.” When “everyone strives to create an alien essence that dominates others in order to satisfy their own egoistic needs”, they easily neglect nature, environmental protection, and other non-economic utility factors. Capital egoism ethics oriented by economic interests treats “labor power and land as commodities”, causing humanity to face enormous crises in resources, climate, ecology, and environment. To make economic subjects’ labor activities conform to natural laws, labor ethics is needed to provide value guidance for production labor activities, thereby achieving common prosperity where humans and environment reconcile for mutual benefit.

Green labor is an important standard of labor ethics, focusing on establishing common prosperity on the foundation of maximizing economic-environmental benefits. Common prosperity implies mutual benefit and 共生共赢的利他愿望: “society is the accomplished unity of man with nature, the true resurrection of nature, the realized naturalism of man and the realized humanism of nature”. Common prosperity is a beautiful 倡议 for moderately utilizing the ecological environment for the common interests of humans and nature. Green labor understands the relationship between humans and nature from the dialectical relationship of subject-object unity: “nature that is abstractly understood, isolated from and opposed to humans, is nothing for man”. Green labor emphasizes expanding green service scale and green product production capacity in production processes, conducting material-energy exchanges between humans and nature through moderate and reasonable labor modes, and continuously im-

proving labor ecological mechanisms for environmental protection. Therefore, green labor overcomes the comprehensive coercion and moral jurisdiction of individualism, egoism, capital self-interest, and anthropocentrism, creating moral conditions for breaking through the imbalance 困境 between humans and nature.

3. How It Can Be Done: Constructing the Labor Ethics Path for Chinese-Style Common Prosperity

Marx's revelation in the *Manuscripts* of the internal mechanism and implementation path for labor ethics to transcend capital ethics and embed itself in common prosperity has important theoretical value and practical significance for promoting Chinese-style common prosperity. Common prosperity refers to a social state where material life, spiritual life, social life, and ecological life are all affluent: "this communism... is the true solution of the conflict between man and nature, between man and man, the true solution of the conflict between existence and essence, between objectification and self-affirmation, between freedom and necessity, between individual and species". As a new model of social wealth distribution and human anti-poverty that surpasses the "Western universal affluence" pattern, "'common prosperity' is a concept with distinct Chinese imprint". Chinese-style common prosperity is a social vision constructed through practical requirements of labor production efficiency, labor fair distribution, harmonious labor relations, and labor freedom and autonomy, incorporating value objectives such as optimizing and upgrading economic growth structures, improving human survival practice modes, and realizing ecological value enhancement. It is precisely this labor ethics characteristic that constitutes a moral paradigm vastly different from Western societies rooted in capital ethics.

3.1 The Institutional Dimension: Promoting Labor Justice and Fairness, Constructing Universal Prosperity that Unifies Individual and Collective Existence

Marx pointed out that constructing universal prosperity unifying individual and collective existence depends on socialist labor institutional arrangements that demonstrate fairness and justice. The contradiction between socialized production and private ownership of means of production constitutes the institutional root of paradoxical poverty in capitalism. Common prosperity corrects the productivity development mechanisms and ownership/distribution mechanisms of class society: "under socialist premises, what significance the richness of human needs possesses, and therefore what significance a new mode of production and a new object of production possess. Human essential powers acquire new proof and new manifestation". Thus, it is necessary to embed labor principles into the essential norms and operational framework of common prosperity, building a solid labor ethics foundation for common prosperity's institutional design.

Embedding labor ethics into institutional design for promoting common prosper-

ity in high-quality development adds political character and moral standpoint to Chinese-style common prosperity. On one hand, construct a wealth co-creation model dominated by labor contribution, enhancing the value of labor and laborers' social status in common prosperity. "The people create history, and labor creates the future. Labor is the fundamental force driving human social progress". Labor is the source of all wealth, and wealth's appropriation, distribution, use, and consumption must be connected with labor ethics. The primary principle for promoting common prosperity in high-quality development is adhering to labor and laborers as the foundation, mobilizing the enthusiasm and creativity of socialist laborers most extensively, and "focusing on encouraging hardworking, law-abiding, and entrepreneurial pioneers to become wealthy". Establish economic subjects' consciousness of becoming wealthy through labor, enhance laborers' endogenous motivation for wealth creation, and make the common prosperity "cake" bigger and better through diligent labor creation. On the other hand, adhere to a wealth sharing system with distribution according to work as the main body, fully reflecting the institutional advantages and ethical mission of socialist common prosperity. "Justice is the primary value of social institutions". Explanations of labor distribution shares need to be properly reflected in social basic structures and specific institutional arrangements, and "distribution according to work is naturally the most basic just distribution". "Public ownership of means of production determines that social production aims to enhance the welfare of all laborers". Therefore, common prosperity requires "promoting social fairness and justice", consciously overcoming institutional imperfections such as unclear ownership of labor means of production, insufficient freedom in labor processes, and unjust distribution of labor products. "Real social justice is achieved through actively promoting high-quality development of social productivity and rational distribution of social wealth", continuously improving labor legal systems, labor employment systems, and labor security systems, transforming labor ethics into value logic universally followed by economic subjects.

3.2 The Cultural Dimension: Developing Labor Cultural Resources, Achieving Comprehensive Prosperity that Unifies Material and Spiritual Worlds

Marx pointed out that achieving comprehensive prosperity unifying material and spiritual worlds cannot be separated from labor ethics culture formed by the masses in labor production processes. The real world is a cultural world and a humanized world accumulated through human labor. Marx criticized oppressed alienated labor and eagerly anticipated free and comprehensively developed labor subjects in future ideal society: "communism is the real generation of human essence, the true realization of human essence for man". Thus, common prosperity must ensure laborers enjoy healthy and beneficial cultural life, cultivating laborers to possess noble sentiments and elegant life interests, capable of creating various social wealth "freely and consciously."

Cultivating new-era individuals with coordinated moral, intellectual, physical, aesthetic, and labor development through labor ethics education provides ideological strength and spiritual motivation for Chinese-style common prosperity. On one hand, promote traditional Chinese labor culture, highlighting the traditional foundation and civilizational 底蕴 of Chinese-style common prosperity. “Traditional value systems and local cultures are not ineffective accumulations of wisdom or rituals, but vibrant realities that change over time and continue to provide identity and meaning for people”. Xi Jinping quoted the ancient saying from *Baopuzi* “diligence is the teacher of all virtues” and the proverb from *Zuo Zhuan* “people’s livelihood depends on diligence, diligence leads to abundance”, illustrating that labor ethics is deeply rooted in excellent traditional Chinese culture. Traditional Chinese labor culture contains profound labor moral values such as “diligence leads to wealth” (*Book of Rites*), “diligent land cultivation according to seasons necessarily enriches the state” (*Guanzi*), and “the foundation of people’s livelihood lies in farming for food and sericulture for clothing” (*Yan’s Family Instructions*). Therefore, it is necessary to promote the creative transformation and innovative development of traditional labor ethics culture, realizing the implicit moral constraints and ideological normative functions of labor ethics in promoting common prosperity. On the other hand, establish the new-era ethos of striving to be labor models, encouraging a social moral atmosphere centered on “glorious labor” for common prosperity. Labor ethics plays an important role in forming the social spiritual 风貌 and ethical moral value system of common prosperity. “We should promote the spirit of labor among students, educate and guide them to advocate and respect labor, and understand the truth that labor is the most glorious, noble, great, and beautiful”. By vigorously promoting socialist advanced labor culture such as model worker spirit, labor spirit, and craftsman spirit in the new era, the humanistic value of common prosperity is realized in the process of enhancing laborers’ moral spirit and ideological realm.

3.3 The Vision Dimension: Practicing Green Labor Concepts, Realizing Overall Prosperity that Reconciles Humanitarianism and Naturalism

Marx pointed out that realizing overall prosperity reconciling humanitarianism and naturalism benefits from forming labor production concepts that unify economic and environmental benefits. Capital ethics views the relationship between human society and nature as binary opposition or incompatible poles, while labor ethics contains the deep implication that common prosperity and nature can be incorporated into a larger whole: “as completed naturalism, it equals humanitarianism, and as completed humanitarianism, it equals naturalism”. Thus, labor ethics needs to become the normative scale for morally measuring the rationality and legitimacy of economic behavior, to achieve common prosperity where wealth growth and natural ecology coexist synergistically.

Promoting the two-way transformation between economic and ecological values

in social development through labor ethics concepts provides methodological guidance and ideological reference for Chinese-style common prosperity. On one hand, at the individual moral concept level, consciously uphold green labor concepts and practice healthy and environmentally friendly labor modes. “A good ecological environment is the practical guarantee of the labor foundation for common prosperity”. Labor ethics manifests as labor individuals’ concern for natural welfare conditions, internally strengthening this generation’s responsibility and emotional commitment to environmental quality for future generations. People with green labor sentiments are not completely self-interested; they deeply realize that “man lives from nature... man is a part of nature” and “man is directly a natural being”, understanding the important significance of the natural world for common prosperity, and consciously develop altruistic desires to maintain rights, fulfill obligations, and follow justice norms. Only when the current generation possesses a high sense of historical responsibility for the well-being and prosperity conditions of future generations can they better protect green mountains and clear waters for common prosperity. On the other hand, at the social production concept level, clarify the ecological characteristics of common prosperity and implement the concept of a community of life between humans and nature. Common prosperity will inevitably replace capitalist wealth growth modes with a more advanced social form and more reasonable labor production relations: “nature as it comes into being in human history, in the process of the formation of human society, is man’s real nature; therefore, nature as it develops through industry, albeit in an alienated form, is true anthropological nature”. Therefore, General Secretary Xi emphasized that “ecological and environmental problems are ultimately problems of development modes and lifestyles”. Labor ethics adheres to value norms such as simplicity, moderation, greenness, and low carbon, promotes the formation of sustainable industrial production structures and labor activity modes, and fully demonstrates the ethical pursuit of conceptual goodness, value goodness, institutional goodness, and process goodness in common prosperity.

Note: Figure translations are in progress. See original paper for figures.

Source: ChinaXiv — Machine translation. Verify with original.