

# **A Study on the Interpersonal Relationship in Modern Society from the Perspective of Marx's Human Essence Theory**

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**Abstract:** Marx's concept of human essence overcomes the defect of an abstract and isolated understanding of human essence in traditional Western philosophy, which fully demonstrates the spirit of historical materialism. Marx's concept of human essence provides an important methodology for us to fully understand the interpersonal relationship in modern society. Based on the author's learning and practical experience, this paper analyzes the significance that a comprehensive interpretation of Marx's human essence theory has to understand the interpersonal relationship in modern society. Then, based on these analyses, this article discusses the practice of understanding the interpersonal relationship in modern society from the perspective of Marx's human essence theory.

## **The Significance that a Comprehensive Interpretation of Marx's Human Essence Theory Has to Understand the Interpersonal Relationship In Modern Society**

**Help to elucidate the human thoughts of Marxist theoretically and comprehensively, especially the human essence theory.** Traditional assertions on Marx's nature of human reality are expounded in a certain field with neglecting associations between all parts. Moreover, some people put Marx's early views in opposition to later ones. Some favor them and some criticize these views. Furthermore, some people amplify Marx's nature of human reality inappropriately. All these cannot interpreter Marx's human essence theory completely. The author assumes that only the unity of the nature of human reality and the nature of human possibility can make people have a complete understanding of human theories of Marxism, particularly the human essence theory; this is the only way to truly elucidate the profound connotation of Marx's human essence theory, which will surpass the human essence theory in old philosophies.

**Help to clarify misunderstandings on Marx's human essence theory theoretically.** The most prominent understanding on human essence theory is the one-sided emphasis on the so-called nature of human reality. The understanding and publicity of Marx's human essence theory has always been about the nature of human reality. Almost all Marxist philosophy textbooks in China say that "in its reality, it is the summation of all social relations", which is the most classic definition on Marx's human essence. They even use the sentence, "human essence is a summation of all social relations ", as the headline to discuss human essence. They even ignore the important determiner, "with the nature of human reality" in specific discussions and analyses directly or

purposely. In other words, such analysis will make Marx's discussion of human reality equal to all contents of human essence directly.

### **Help to build people-oriented economic and political system and social management system.**

From the perspective of the people, adhering to the unity of human reality and possibility is to continuously improve people's inner qualities including morality knowledge, knowledge and physique. Moreover, this will reform people's subjective world to prepare for the development of self potentials, improvement of creativity and contribution to society. The key is to break stereotypes and caged minds. From the perspective of society, the state should provide a vast space for everyone to have a free and all-around development, which requires the state to improve socio-economic, political and cultural conditions and to give people an open, fair and just economic and political system and social management system. The key is to develop education at all levels and to provide basic conditions for people to gain knowledge and enhance capacity. At the same time, we should fully protect human basic rights and provide legal conditions for human survival, development and well-being. Only to integrate the individual with society can we create conditions for the complete possession of human essence to realize the goal that human is the highest essence. Meanwhile, it will promote comprehensive, coordinated and sustainable development of society.

### **The Practice of Interpersonal Relationship in Modern Society from the Perspective of Marx's Human Essence Theory**

**Practice of face (Mianzi in Chinese) in interpersonal relationship.** In all nations in the world, Chinese love face most. No matter what you do, you pay attention to the face. Whether it is a private matter or an official one, we must do it prestigiously. At the same time, we should consider other people's face everywhere. It will give rise to disastrous consequences if you do not consider other people's face and make them lose face in public. A person who did something immoral or illegal tries to do everything possible to save face. Dealing with disputes, mediators have to save face for both in various ways. If you lost your face in public, it would be hard to bear, so that many people have committed suicide. For example, many professors and officials who could not bear to parade them across the streets committed suicide during the Cultural Revolution. Of course, not everyone has the face-saving awareness. Some people save face extraordinarily, especially prestigious ones. If a leader always has tough talks and criticizes others in public, he would not get support and advocacy of the majority. Some people do not save face so much. The saying goes "a dead pig feels no cold". Someone also curses people "extremely shameless." In general, most Chinese people save face and people who do not save face are minority. Therefore, saving your own face and that of others is an important principle for Chinese.

The importance of face for Chinese is materialization of spiritual factors in interpersonal relationship, which emphasizes their status and impression in the eyes of others. Saving face would have been an expression of dignity, but Chinese people have distorted it and pay attention to the

operability of saving face. That is a constraint to normal human relationship to a certain degree. Saving face has become a satisfaction of vanity, which manifests in phenomena of keeping up with the Joneses.

Marx mainly emphasizes practice which has been fully developed in interpersonal relationship in China. This development mainly embodies in the operational aspect, which is a kind of material and profitable relationship. Whether face, favors, predestined ties or returns in interpersonal relationship are specific embodiment in the materialization trend. This is also a superficial focus on the materials and neglects spirit.

### **Practice of Favors (Renqing in Chinese) in Interpersonal Relationship**

The Chinese nation attaches importance of Renqing most. From the ancient time, favors and face bear the brunt of other factors when Chinese people handle and consider issues. In daily life, Renqing is a word used often, especially in rural areas where you often hear words or phrases, such as unkind, no affection and so on. Interpersonal relationship in ancient time, such as affinity, geographical relations, work and God connections, still has great influence on contemporary interpersonal relationship. People rely on a variety of networks to get help from acquaintance or help friends depending on Renqing.

“Favors” has a negative impact on society. The focus on Renqing is not a symbol of spiritual connections in interpersonal relationship in many occasions and it is just a kind of material competitiveness. People who have more relations can occupy a favorable position in the competition, that is to say who will win in the competition. This deprives of many people’s chances for fair competition. Therefore, many people do not develop their own hard-working quality, especially young people, but to try hard to look for relations through various channels. That is a backward in social competitiveness and an opposite force to build a harmonious society and a socialist market economy in China. The practice of Marx's human essence theory pursues people’s status and values in social relations. However, it is a variation in China, because it does not develop the essence of human relationship and measures people’s relationship with Renqing and materials.

**Practice of predestined ties (Yuan in Chinese) in interpersonal relationship.** Predestined ties play an important role in traditional Chinese people's consciousness. There is a very popular Chinese saying that fate has it that distance is nothing if you are to meet and that you will never meet even if you are facing each other. Genetic connections, geopolitical relations, nepotism are the most important or even fundamental relations in interpersonal relationship. Chinese enterprises, especially some private enterprises and the family business, manage positions and social benefits based on Renqing and kinship such as relatives, fellow villagers and schoolmates. The equality of opportunity and meritocracy in the world is incompatible with nepotism in current situation. The age appeals us to accelerate the smash of Yuan-oriented family business.

The retention of so-called Yuan is nepotism retention, which, in fact, is a kind of speculation and is

not a normal social phenomenon. Nepotism also exists in foreign countries, such as the Kennedys, the Bushes, the Clintons, the Lee Kuan Yew family, the Aso family and so on. Nepotism is affirmed and regulated at the system level in the US Ivy League schools, such as Harvard University, Yale University and Princeton University where professors' children have admission priority. However, once nepotism is transferred to China, it is distorted on many occasions, especially in officialdom. In fact, a lot of people get many unfair opportunities by virtue of the so-called Yuan and not by the hard work. Yuan is a manifestation of inbreeding, and especially it is an opportunistic variant in unfair competition. Currently, the role of nepotism makes people helpless. The unfair competition brought by nepotism makes a lot of people powerless and helpless. The retention of nepotism is close to trade-like transactions rather than the summation of all social relations advocated by Marxism.

**Practice of returns (Bao in Chinese) in interpersonal relationship.** Nowadays, Chinese people equate gifts with money and take money as the most fundamental factor in interpersonal relationship. Relations between colleagues, between the superior and subordinate, and between the public have alienated into undisguised transaction with money. The degree of materialization becomes deeper and deeper. In order to attract leaders' attention and have the promoting appointment, people use money as a stepping-stone to success, which is very popular now. Money is also essential in public things. Utility is the principle to deal with interpersonal relationship, which reflects convenience, so that emotional factors give way to money. Some people even convert their own dignity, reputation and status into money to conduct transactions.

The increasing utilitarianism in interpersonal relationship leads to moral degeneration. The value that usefulness is truth in interpersonal relationship has been given fully played. In the era with rapid development of economy and society, people are more and more indifferent. Reciprocity is a completely materialistic performance, which will pave the path for own development. The material gift culture deprives of normal development opportunities and platforms for many people who are unable to afford gifts or disdain this invisibly. You should give gifts in the following occasions, such as career advancement, job transfer and university admission. You should give gifts when taking civil service exam to bribe officials in charge, and give gifts as a stepping stone, to find a job. With the increasingly intense competitive in society, the amount of money has also been higher and higher. The saying that courtesy costs nothing is now a pursuit of interpersonal relationship. The way to present gifts is various and people try hard to enhance material incentives. The retention of material interpersonal relationship is opposite to the pursuit of summation of all relations and sociality.

## **Conclusion**

Marx said the human essence is needs which are rich and comprehensive, including material and spiritual needs, rational and emotional needs, and survival and developmental needs. Only to admit

that naturalness is a part of human essence, people's need can be fully satisfied and realized. Marx's human essence theory has important methodological significance for us to build a socialist harmonious society. Whether the face, favors, predestined ties or returns in interpersonal relationship in China have largely ignored the role of the spirit, which, on the contrary, lays one-side emphasis on superficial materiality, utilitarian and material incentives. That is far from the starting point and the end result of interpersonal relations of Marxism.

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