

An Ontological-Axiological Interpretation of The Problem of Unemployment and Idleness in The Historical Development of The Philosophy of Labor: On the Example of The Heritage of Eastern Thinkers

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Abstract: This article analyzes the interpretation of the phenomenon of unemployment and idleness within the history of Eastern philosophical and religious thought from ontological and axiological perspectives. The philosophy of labor in the teachings of Zoroastrianism, Islam, Sufism, and Jadidism is comparatively studied, revealing their common and distinct aspects. The research indicates that in all these doctrines, labor is interpreted as an expression of human ontological existence, moral purification, and social responsibility, while idleness is condemned not only as an economic issue but also as a profound moral-existential vice. This philosophical heritage holds significant gnoseological importance for understanding the contemporary problem of unemployment.

Keywords: Philosophy of labor, unemployment, idleness, Zoroastrianism, Islamic ethics, Sufism, Jadidism, ontology, axiology, national revival.

Introduction: When discussing the problem of unemployment, our minds usually involuntarily turn toward statistical indicators, labor market trends, and economic policy instruments. However, the deeper question underlying this phenomenon-the question of man's relationship to labor and, consequently, to himself and to existence-is often overlooked. In fact, any people, any civilization has formed its attitude to idleness, lack of labor, first through religious and philosophical thinking, and only then this attitude has become legal and economic institutions. Therefore, in our view, the modern socio-philosophical analysis of unemployment cannot bypass this historical and intellectual background.

The purpose of this article is to observe how the issue of labor and idleness was philosophically grounded in the history of Eastern peoples, particularly Turkic-Islamic civilization, to compare approaches characteristic of different eras and different teachings, and to show what lessons can be learned from them to

understand the problem of modern unemployment. In this regard, we will conduct a four-stage historical and philosophical analysis using the example of Zoroastrianism, the legal and moral system of Islam, the tradition of medieval science and Sufism, and finally, the Jadid movement.

In the history of philosophy, the phenomenon of labor is understood through a pair of bipolar concepts: on one side is the activity that encourages a person to creativity and creation, and on the other side is the renunciation of it, that is, idleness. It is noteworthy that in almost all ancient and medieval teachings, this duality is posed not only in the economic plane but also as an ontological question-that is, a question of man's place in existence and his mode of existence. In other words, a working person is interpreted as an active participant in existence, while an idle person is interpreted as a being who has distanced themselves from existence and lost their identity.

It is this ontological approach that offers us a distinct

line of analysis that differs from modern unemployment theories but complements them: while economic theories explain unemployment as a result of market mechanisms, classical Eastern thought evaluates it primarily as a human deviation from one's inherent function. Below, we will consider the expression of this idea at different historical stages.

The ontology of labor in Zoroastrianism: the wisdom of the "Avesta"

In the "Avesta", which is the sacred text of the peoples of ancient Turan and Iran, the issue of labor is encountered not as a separate chapter or section, but as an integral part of the entire doctrine. The central principle of Zoroastrian philosophy-the trinity of humata (good thought), huqta (good word), and huvarshta (good deed) -defines a three-stage path to human perfection, and it is the third stage, huvarshta, that is realized directly through honest labor. Here, labor is not a purely practical need, but the realization of thought and speech in the material world, i.e., the expression of the organic connection between a person's inner world and their external activity.

In the book "Vendidad", engaging in agriculture and animal husbandry is described as "one of the greatest duties" of man, this reveals a noteworthy aspect: in Zoroastrianism, labor is considered a moral duty not only to man but also to the earth and nature. To cultivate the earth and care for it is one way to rid oneself of sin and mobilize the forces of good against evil. From this point of view, idleness in the Zoroastrian worldview is not only a personal defect, but also interpreted as a person taking a "neutral" position in the struggle between good and evil on a cosmic scale, and therefore indirectly going to the side of evil.

In our view, it is precisely this-seeing labor as a part of the cosmological-moral struggle-that is the most characteristic and currently little-recognized aspect of the Zoroastrian philosophy of labor. He views unemployment not as a personal misfortune or an economic failure, but as a departure from a person's mission to create goodness, which imposes a very high responsibility on labor.

In the Islamic legal and moral system, the attitude toward labor is of particular importance from the perspective of axiology, that is, the theory of values. The Holy Quran states: "And for man, there is only what he strives for" emphasizes that a person's destiny is directly linked to their personal actions and labor-this is a religious-philosophical direction that requires an active, hardworking life position rather than a passive, interpretative position toward fate.

This view is also consistently developed in the science of hadith. In a hadith narrated by Imam Bukhari, our

Prophet (pbuh) said: "The best food is the food that a person finds with their own hands", they noted. Here, the definition of "the best" is not accidental, but it puts the sustenance earned through labor above any other, even if honest, benefit without labor. Thus, in Islamic axiology, value is determined not only by the result-that is, the material good itself-but also by the process of achieving it, that is, by the act of labor.

At the same time, in the hadith narrated by Abu Dawood, "Allah loves a servant who earns an honest job" raises labor to the level of a means of gaining divine love, and in the narrative of Imam Muslim, "Lazy people are doomed to destruction" defines the axiological opposite pole of idleness through a strict warning. Thus, a dual mechanism operates within the Islamic philosophy of labor: on one hand, labor is encouraged and sanctified, while on the other, idleness is strictly condemned and associated with destruction. The tension between these two poles actually creates a system of internal moral and religious motivation that prompts the individual toward constant activity.

At the same time, the Islamic philosophy of labor is not individualistic, but social-solidarity in nature. In the Quran: "Help one another in the way of goodness and piety" indicates that labor should not be limited to individual interests, but should serve the welfare of society. Thus, in the interpretation of Islam, a person who has become unemployed (or has chosen not to work) is considered to have failed not only in fulfilling their duty to themselves but also to the entire Ummah, which shifts the issue from individual ethics to social ethics.

While Zoroastrianism and Islam justify labor primarily as a religious and moral duty, medieval Eastern thinkers-specifically Abu Rayhan Beruni-approached this issue from the perspective of epistemology, i.e., the theory of knowledge. In his work "Geodesy," Beruni emphasized the need for a scientific approach to increasing labor productivity, he interprets labor and science as two inseparable phenomena. In his opinion, labor is ineffective without science, and science remains abstract and useless if it is not applied to labor. It is no exaggeration to say that this is actually one of the first philosophical manifestations of the modern concept of "human capital".

According to Biruni, "any profession is useful; if it does not harm society and is honest, such labor will justify itself" is noteworthy: here, the value of a profession is measured by its social harmlessness and honesty; that is, Beruni promotes the principle of functional equality rather than hierarchy between types of labor. This view can, in fact, also provide a philosophical basis for criticizing the social difference between "prestigious"

and “unprestigious” professions in the modern labor market.

In the Sufi tradition, the issue of labor is considered in a completely different - existential-mystical - perspective. In his work “Futuvvatnomai Sultoni”, Husayn Vaiz Kashifi describes labor as “a factor that purifies a person not only materially but also spiritually”, In “Anwari Suhayli”, he calls the virtues of honest labor “the ornament of man”. His wisdom: “A hardworking person will be honored, while a lazy person will be humiliated” although seemingly simple, it has a deep social logic: honor and humiliation are categories of social status, and Kashifi elevates labor to the level of the main criterion determining an individual's status in society.

Jalaluddin Rumi, on the other hand, interprets labor in a deeper, mystical sense. In the “Masnavi”, he emphasizes that a person can draw closer to God and be purified through labor, In “Fih-i-ma-hi”, “A person who works will see the grace of Allah”, writes. For Rumi, labor is not merely an obligation, but a means of perceiving divine truth, a creative process similar to the potter's molding of clay. In this approach, unemployment and idleness are interpreted not only as a social or moral defect but also as a person's deprivation of transcendental truth, i.e., a profound spiritual loss.

In Alisher Navoi's work, the philosophy of labor takes on a more practical and social character. In “Khamasa”, it is emphasized that every profession has its place and that every person must contribute to the well-being of society through their labor, In “Nasoyim ul-muhabbat”, laziness is depicted as a vice that leads a person to baseness, and the responsibility of the state in preventing it is emphasized. This last aspect, that is, the philosophical justification of the state's responsibility in the fight against unemployment, is one of the most relevant aspects of Navoi's legacy for today's social policy. After all, he views labor not only as a personal virtue but also as a social condition that must be ensured in cooperation between the state and society.

The Jadid movement, formed in the late 19th and early 20th centuries, added a qualitatively new dimension to the labor philosophy related to the fate of the nation. The Jadids saw labor primarily as a means of achieving national revival and economic independence, this, unlike previous religious and mystical interpretations, turned labor into a strategic category at the level of the nation and the state.

It is noteworthy that the Jadids promoted the idea of achieving local economic independence through the development of science, crafts, and entrepreneurship, demanding that modern subjects such as mathematics,

physics, and economics be taught in the education system alongside religious knowledge. This philosophy of labor can be evaluated as a continuation of the dialectic of science and labor in the Berunian tradition at the institutional level, that is, at the level of the education system.

From the perspective of comparative analysis, it should be noted that the Jadids' views on labor relations differed fundamentally from those of Western social philosophy, particularly Karl Marx's theory of exploitation. While Marxism analyzed labor relations through the prism of class struggle and antagonism, the Jadids interpreted the relationship between employer and worker as cooperation based on the principles of honesty and social responsibility. This difference is not accidental: while Western theory viewed labor primarily as a matter of economic relations and property, Eastern thought, including Jadidism, continued to interpret labor on a moral and religious basis, based on the principles of justice and brotherhood. In our view, understanding the dialectical difference between these two paradigms-the conflictological model of the West and the cooperative-ethical model of the East-is of particular methodological importance in the development of modern labor market policy, as they explain various cause-and-effect chains of unemployment differently and propose different solutions.

It is also worth noting that among the Jadids, there were thinkers who advocated for women's access to professions and participation in economic activities. This aspect makes their labor philosophy inclusive not only from a national but also from a gender perspective, which was considered quite progressive for that time.

Although the four historical-philosophical stages considered above-the cosmological-ethical interpretation of Zoroastrianism, the religious-legal interpretation of Islam, the mystical-existential interpretation of Sufism, and the national-social interpretation of Jadidism-differ from each other, one common invariant is observed in all of them: labor has never been viewed as a purely economic phenomenon, but has always been interpreted as an ontological-axiological category representing a person's relationship with their self, society, and (in many cases) transcendental existence.

In our view, this philosophical heritage is of practical importance in analyzing the problem of modern unemployment in at least three ways. First, it shows that the fight against unemployment should not be limited to material incentives (allowances, subsidies), but should also be aimed at restoring the spiritual and

value content of labor. Secondly, the dialectic of science and labor in the heritage of Beruni and the Jadids can serve as a theoretical basis for forming modern vocational education policy. After all, labor productivity, in their opinion, depends primarily on the quality of knowledge. Thirdly, the idea of state responsibility in Jadidism (also found in the tradition of Navoi and subsequent thinkers) philosophically substantiates the active, regulatory role of the state in employment policy.

From this perspective, the employment and vocational policy being implemented in New Uzbekistan should rely not only on modern economic theories but also on the heritage of our people's millennial labor philosophy, ensuring spiritual and ideological continuity with this heritage. Otherwise, any economic measure, no matter how thoroughly it is developed, may not yield the expected effect without being detached from the system of values deeply rooted in the people's consciousness.

Conclusion. The historical and philosophical analysis shows that the problem of unemployment and idleness was never considered only as an economic issue in Eastern philosophical and religious thought. Over a long historical period, from Zoroastrianism to Jadidism, labor was interpreted as a category inextricably linked to the ontological existence of man, his moral purification, scientific maturity, and finally, his national destiny.

This heritage teaches us that in order to effectively combat unemployment, it is necessary to understand it not only as a statistical indicator, but also as a deep philosophical phenomenon that expresses a person's attitude towards themselves, society, and, more broadly, toward existence. Only such a comprehensive economic, legal and philosophical-ethical approach can form a reliable scientific and theoretical basis for the formation of a sustainable and humane employment system in New Uzbekistan.

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