

Analysis of the Educational Approach to Socialist Core Values From the Perspective of Sociology of Knowledge

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Abstract

Sociology of knowledge primarily investigates the relationship between thought, existence, knowledge, and society, analyzing the interactive dynamics between a particular form of thinking and the existing social structure. It aims to provide valuable paths and approaches for the development of knowledge or thought. In this context, we can consider socialist core values as a type of knowledge. This study explores the understanding of socialist core values as a knowledge type from the perspective of the sociology of knowledge. It analyzes the interactive relationship between this knowledge type and the existing society, further discussing suitable educational approaches based on this understanding. Strengthening the construction and cultivation of socialist core values can be achieved through educational methods such as promoting traditional culture, optimizing the external social environment, and facilitating mutual fulfillment between educational subjects and objects.

Key words: New era, Sociology of knowledge, Socialist Core values, Social existence, Educational approach

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Socialist core values embody the rich ideology of Marxism. To thoroughly explore the profound connotations and social roots of socialist core values, enhance citizens' deep understanding and value identification with socialist core values, and fully demonstrate its value and practical significance as the mainstream ideology, it is essential to investigate from the perspective of the sociology of knowledge. Currently, most academic research on socialist core values is based on the Marxist perspective, with relatively fewer studies from the sociology of knowledge perspective. This research not only adds diversity to the perspectives but also presents various dimensions to showcase the cultural charm of socialist core values, promoting citizens' value identification and active practice. Additionally, through the sociological interpretation of socialist core values, this research contributes to enriching and refining Marxist ideology, further advancing the construction of socialist culture with Chinese characteristics.

1. OVERVIEW OF THE THEORY OF SOCIOLOGY OF KNOWLEDGE

To study the issue of socialist core values from the perspective of the sociology of knowledge, it is essential to first understand the discipline itself and clarify several fundamental questions related to the sociology of knowledge.

1.1 Emergence and Theoretical Origins of Sociology of Knowledge: Mannheim as the Culmination

Sociology of knowledge, as the name suggests, is the discipline that conducts sociological research on

knowledge. The concept of “sociology of knowledge” was first proposed by the German philosopher Scheler, and the research findings of scholars such as Lukács and Marx laid the theoretical foundation for the development of the sociology of knowledge. It was not until the publication of the book “Ideology and Utopia” by the German philosopher and sociologist Karl Mannheim in 1929 that the sociology of knowledge officially formed as an independent discipline, with Mannheim being one of its most significant contributors. Therefore, when we talk about the sociology of knowledge today, it is not the sociology of knowledge of a particular individual but the sociology of knowledge formed through continuous research and exploration, with Mannheim as a representative.

1.2 Classification of Knowledge Types: Sociology of Knowledge Studies Humanities and Social Sciences Knowledge

Firstly, concerning the definition of knowledge, there is still no clear and unified definition in the academic community. However, in the sociology of knowledge, knowledge is understood as thought and can also be interpreted as ideas or ways of thinking.

Secondly, regarding the classification of knowledge, Western philosophers such as Descartes, Hume, and Kant have contemplated and explored this, putting forward representative viewpoints and understandings. The philosopher Scheler, who first proposed the concept of “sociology of knowledge,” classified knowledge into seven types based on the degree of artificiality and focused on discussing religious knowledge, metaphysical knowledge, and empirical knowledge. The widely accepted classification of knowledge in academic circles today divides knowledge into two types: knowledge in the humanities and social sciences and knowledge in natural sciences.

Lastly, regarding the knowledge types studied by the sociology of knowledge, Mannheim believed that natural sciences conduct quantitative analysis, while humanities and social sciences conduct qualitative analysis. If Kant’s epistemology seeks to solve the problem of how natural scientific knowledge is possible, then his sociology of knowledge seeks to solve the problem of how knowledge, especially in the political field, in humanities and social sciences is possible. In other words, the sociology of knowledge theory does not study knowledge in the general sense; it only applies to the field of knowledge in the humanities and social sciences, excluding natural scientific knowledge from its scope of study.

From the above analysis, we can conclude that socialist core values, as a set of values and ideologies, belong to knowledge in the humanities and social sciences. Therefore, we can apply relevant theories of the sociology of knowledge to analyze and research them.

1.3 The Core Proposition of the Sociology of Knowledge: The Interactive Relationship between Knowledge and Society

The sociology of knowledge primarily explores the relationship between thought, existence, knowledge, and society. It mainly analyzes the interactive dynamics between a particular form of thinking and the existing social structure. For instance, it investigates how knowledge is constrained by the social environment and how social factors permeate the content and form of knowledge during its formation and development process. Mannheim suggests that the intention of the sociology of knowledge is not to start from the individual and their thought processes, proceeding to study the highly abstract “thought itself” in a philosophical manner. Instead, the sociology of knowledge seeks to comprehensively understand thoughts situated within specific backgrounds under certain social-historical conditions. Strictly speaking, the idea that individual entities think independently is incorrect. From these discussions, it is evident that, on one hand, this is an interpretation of the sociology of knowledge within the framework of the Marxist materialist view of history regarding the “interactive relationship between social existence and social consciousness.” (Mannheim, 2000) On the other hand, it makes it clear that knowledge cannot exist independently of the social environment; it must be examined and studied within the broader context of society. “The unique perspective of sociology of knowledge is to study knowledge in connection with society or, in other words, to study knowledge from a sociological perspective (Lin, 2011).

2. SOCIALIST CORE VALUES: A SOCIOLOGICAL INTERPRETATION

Socialist core values are the latest theoretical achievements of Marxist sinicization, a conceptual crystallization derived from the integration of socialist core values and the practice of socialism with Chinese characteristics. By enhancing the sociological interpretation of socialist core values, analyzing the social context, basic characteristics, and significant implications of the formation of socialist core values, we can gain a more comprehensive understanding and promote active engagement with socialist core values.

2.1 Social Context of the Formation of Socialist Core Values

The primary concern of sociological knowledge is that there are certain ways of thinking: if people are unclear about their social roots, it is impossible to precisely understand these ways of thinking. (Mannheim, 2000) Mannheim actually absorbed Marx’s theoretical achievements regarding the dialectical relationship

between “social being and social consciousness,” emphasizing the mutual construction of knowledge and society based on practice. From this perspective, it can be seen as an inheritance and development of Marx’s historical materialism. To fully understand the knowledge type represented by socialist core values, it is necessary to explore the social context or social roots in which socialist core values are formed. In general, the social background in which it was formed is inseparable from the development stage of China and the nature of the country.

2.2 Basic Characteristics of Socialist Core Values

2.2.1 Traditional Characteristics of Socialist Core Values

Socialist core values are nurtured and cultivated in the fertile soil of Chinese outstanding traditional culture. Chinese civilization, with thousands of years of accumulation, has developed a rich and gentle traditional culture, becoming an indelible cultural gene for the Chinese nation. This culture still invisibly influences the words, actions, and lifestyles of ordinary people today, nurturing indispensable core values in contemporary society. Many thoughts in traditional Chinese culture, such as “benevolence towards others,” “ritual, righteousness, integrity, and shame,” “harmony in diversity,” “loyalty and devotion to the country,” “do not do to others what you would not have them do to you,” and others align with the advocated values of socialist core values like “kindness,” “civilization,” “harmony,” “patriotism,” “freedom,” and more. Cultivating national and contemporary spirits can be seen as the inheritance of outstanding traditional culture and the innovative development of Marxist theory in the new era. Socialist core values gain more recognition and practice from the public based on the absorption and inheritance of outstanding traditional culture.

2.2.2 Restrictive Characteristics of Socialist Core Values

The restrictive characteristics presented by socialist core values are mainly influenced by the theory of “the dialectical relationship between knowledge and society.” As a type of knowledge, socialist core values are mainly influenced and restricted by the external social environment. Adhering to socialist core values requires a firm grasp of the distinct theme of socialism with Chinese characteristics, highlighting the value dimension of the essence of socialism, revealing the normativity of the essence of socialist values, and guiding the direction of the advancement of socialism with Chinese characteristics. Thus, the restrictive characteristics mentioned here can also be understood as class characteristics, serving the ruling class of the country and representing the fundamental interests of the vast majority of the people.

2.2.3 Dominant Characteristics of Socialist Core Values

The dominant characteristics of socialist core values are closely related to their restrictive characteristics. The dominance here mainly reflects the leading position of socialist core values in ideology. It is a crystallization of the combination of Marxist theory and the reality of China. As an important part of Marxist theory, socialist core values reflect people’s overall understanding of and ideal pursuit for real-life, playing a crucial role in determining people’s ideal beliefs and the orientation of their behavior. In the new era, it is essential to emphasize its leading role as an ideology.

2.3 The Significant Implications of the Socialist Core Values

The socialist core values, as a form of ideological content, should be recognized for their positive role in promoting social development. The socialist core values represent the “greatest common denominator” of values among builders of socialism. Discussing the positive effects of socialist core values must be understood in the context of the current social reality. The significant implications of the emergence of socialist core values are multifaceted.

On one hand, socialist core values can guide the ideological trends in society, consolidating social consensus and contributing to the promotion and development of Marxism in China. On the other hand, the socialist core values can be seen as the “soul of the nation,” addressing social contradictions, maintaining social stability, and uniting social forces.

3. THE APPROPRIATE EDUCATIONAL APPROACH TO SOCIALIST CORE VALUES FROM THE PERSPECTIVE OF KNOWLEDGE SOCIOLOGY

Knowledge sociology has a history of nearly a century since its formation and development. In the continuous development of knowledge sociology today, we need to keep pace with the times. By combining its theoretical achievements with the development of society in the new era, we can fully explore the theoretical results of knowledge sociology that can promote the construction of socialist core values. This is aimed at providing some ideas and methods for the construction of socialist core values in the new era. The appropriate educational approach to socialist core values from the perspective of knowledge sociology mainly includes the following three aspects:

3.1 Emphasizing Intergenerational Succession to Promote Cultural Inheritance

Mannheim summarized the factors influencing the development of thinking into two categories: generations

and competition, also known as metatheoretical factors. Here, we focus on analyzing the metatheoretical factor of “generations.” In Mannheim’s view, the issue of intergenerational succession is important and worthy of research. Intergenerational succession is also a very important social factor that constrains and promotes the development of ideological theories, just like competition. Especially if we want to understand more deeply the social changes of our time, it is necessary to study the issue of intergenerational succession. Therefore, in the new era, to promote the construction of socialist core values, it is essential to pay full attention to intergenerational succession and cultural inheritance, exploring the value of excellent traditional Chinese culture.

3.1.1 Protecting Outstanding Traditional Culture, Awakening the Excellent Genes of Traditional Culture

Manheim believes that generational turnover prevents the closure and narrowness of human thought. Although generational turnover may cause losses in cultural accumulation (Mannheim, 2002), “it also makes necessary reselection possible; it can reassess our assets and make us forget things that are no longer useful, pursuing what is needed” (Manheim, 5). This aligns with the current attitude towards traditional culture in our country: extracting the essence, discarding the dross, promoting outstanding traditional culture, and protecting the shared spiritual home of humanity. Manheim’s profound reflections on traditional culture provide valuable insights for the inheritance of excellent cultures today, displaying strong speculative thinking.

Chinese culture is extensive and profound, serving as the unique cultural gene of the Chinese nation, its identity card and identification code, and a spiritual home that we need to collectively protect. In recent years, China has vigorously promoted outstanding traditional culture through various measures and forms, awakening the excellent genes of traditional culture. The prevalence of Confucius Institutes, the rise of traditional Chinese culture, the emphasis on traditional festivals, the popularity of ancient rituals, and traditional cultural programs like “China Poetry Competition” are no longer limited to specific groups but have entered the eyes of ordinary people, sparking widespread discussions and praise.

3.1.2 Building Intergenerational Communication Bridges, Promoting “Vertical Novel Contacts”

Each generation, when transmitting social culture, must engage in “novel contacts” with it. In this new contact, significant changes can occur in people’s interests, ways of thinking, value orientations, etc. This results in marked differences in thinking between two generations, leading to what we commonly refer to today as “generation gap.” If the generation gap is too wide, and communication mechanisms are not smooth, it is not conducive to the inheritance and development of outstanding traditional

culture. Therefore, this novel contact between generations is not a compulsory and emotionless theoretical indoctrination but is cultivated from an early age, involving personal experiences. For example, a child who has been exposed to stages, witnessed face-changing performances, and listened to traditional operas since childhood may still be more interested in pop songs as they grow up. However, they will also appreciate the tone and charm of Chinese opera, and their act of listening to opera may influence the next generation. Some music creators have noticed this and combined traditional opera with current popular music, creating new cultural works that cater to market demand, promoting the development of the cultural industry. This involves intergenerational communication, cultural inheritance, as well as cultural innovation and development. In other words, on the one hand, through “vertical novel contacts,” intergenerational communication needs to be strengthened to promote cultural inheritance. On the other hand, we must combine the characteristics of the times, discard the old while taking in the new, and continuously add new and vital content to promote outstanding traditional culture as an important source of nurturing socialist core values.

3.1.3 Promoting the Spirit of the Chinese Nation, Cohesion of the Core Values of Traditional Culture

Ethnic culture is the root of the Chinese nation, and the national spirit is the soul of the Chinese nation. After experiencing five thousand years of trials and tribulations, the Chinese nation gradually formed a great national spirit centered on patriotism, unity, love for peace, diligence, courage, and the spirit of self-improvement. The Communist Party of China adheres to Marxist theory as its guide and has led people of all ethnic groups in the country to continuously combine the requirements of the times and social development in their long-term practices. This has added vitality and appeal to the vigorous national spirit, consolidating the foundation of the Chinese nation standing tall in the world. We must promote the national spirit through concrete actions and uphold the foundation of Chinese culture. Of course, both the national spirit centered on patriotism and the spirit of the times centered on reform and innovation must be developed, and one cannot be neglected over the other.

3.2 Improve the education system and shape a favorable external environment

The sociology of knowledge primarily explores the interactive relationship between knowledge and society, examining how knowledge is constrained by the social environment. It is evident that the external environment significantly influences knowledge. This insight encourages us to emphasize the crucial role of the external environment in the formation of socialist core values. We should focus on a combination of soft educational approaches and hard institutional structures. Measures such as creating a positive social and cultural atmosphere

and improving the social system should be taken to promote the construction of socialist core values.

3.2.1 Conduct activities for the creation of spiritual civilization to foster a positive cultural atmosphere

The cultivation of socialist core values should be carried out through specific activities to jointly create a positive social and cultural atmosphere. The focus should be on cultivating a new generation capable of undertaking the great task of national rejuvenation. Strengthening education guidance, cultivating practical habits, and ensuring institutional support are essential. The guiding role of socialist core values in national education, the creation of spiritual civilization, and the production and dissemination of spiritual and cultural products should be emphasized. Socialist core values should be integrated into all aspects of social development, becoming an emotional and behavioral habit for people. In the face of the impact of foreign cultures in today's world, promoting and cultivating socialist core values must be seen as a crucial task in cultural construction. It should be integrated into the entire process of national education and spiritual civilization creation. This is an important approach to socialist spiritual civilization construction and the development of socialist core values.

3.2.2 Establish a sound institutional guarantee system to regulate citizens' moral behavior

We need to treat the cultivation of socialist core values as a strategic task through institutional norms. The formulation of institutional content cannot be vague; it should be based on the current development of ideological and cultural fields in our country and practical circumstances. Relevant detailed regulations should be introduced, and a gradually established and sound supervisory mechanism is crucial. After all, the introduction of the system is only the first step; implementation is the key. Relying solely on soft education and public opinion constraints is far from enough. We must strengthen institutional guarantees, use laws to promote the construction of socialist core values, and further regulate citizens' moral behavior by establishing a sound legal system, which represents hard institutional measures.

3.3 Respect individual autonomous development, achieve mutual complementarity between educational subject and object

The educational subject and the educational object are merely two corresponding concepts, with no fixed and unchanging roles. The recipient of education, in turn, influences the educator, leading to deeper reflections by the educator, resulting in a change of roles. The former Soviet educator, Sukhomlinsky, once said, "Education that promotes self-education is true education." Therefore, we should respect the autonomous development of individuals and actively facilitate mutual complementarity between the educational subject and object.

3.3.1 Strengthen theoretical indoctrination, leverage the leading role of ideology

In his work "What Is to Be Done?," Lenin systematically explained the concept of "indoctrination" for the first time, primarily including two aspects: first, instilling in the working masses advanced proletarian consciousness that they fundamentally do not understand or possess; second, guiding the working masses to understand issues from the perspective of the working class. (Lenin, 1971) Therefore, discussing theoretical indoctrination is necessary, but we must also recognize that this indoctrination is not a forced, rote theoretical indoctrination but a scientific indoctrination based on understanding and comprehension. The forms of theoretical indoctrination can be diverse, such as theoretical preaching, thematic educational online platforms, etc. Socialist core values encompass three levels: the state, society, and the individual. We need to increase the general public's understanding and awareness of its connotations through theoretical interpretation and promotion, fully leveraging the leading role of socialist core values in shaping people's ideological beliefs.

3.3.2 Enhance conscious identification with values, avoid "collective unconsciousness"

Undoubtedly, as a value identification for modern Chinese society, it must provide rational value choices and behavioral evaluation standards for people engaged in modernization construction and socialist market economic development. It should fully reflect the spirit of the current era, social development trends, and have broad practical feasibility, operational practicality, and some future rationality. (Wang, 2006) Through the relevant interpretation of socialist core values, we should increase the general public's understanding, acceptance, and internalization of them as actions, making the whole process proactive rather than mechanically passive. People dominated by collective unconsciousness not only fail to grasp their true living conditions but also confuse the real situation of society. They habitually endorse or oppose certain things and lack conscious awareness of the deception they are subjected to. Analyzing social knowledge will reveal the true relationship between knowledge and society, prompting people to consciously reflect and criticize their thoughts and transform habitual forces that previously dominated them into objects of rational scrutiny and balance. (Mannheim, 2000) Therefore, we must continuously enhance conscious identification with values, reduce or even avoid the occurrence of "collective unconsciousness."

3.3.3 Integrate into national education, emphasize the practical cultivation of citizens

"Philosophers have only interpreted the world in various ways; the point is to change it." (Marx & Engels, 1995) To effect change, one must engage in practice and action. Socialist core values are not just a theoretical issue but a practical one. For a value system to truly

function, it must be integrated into social life, allowing people to perceive and comprehend it, truly internalizing it and externalizing it in their actions. Cultivating and practicing socialist core values must integrate them into national education, ensuring that everyone understands and identifies with these values, voluntarily putting them into practice.

In conclusion, in a modern society characterized by emerging ideological trends, cultural diversity, and conflicting values, without national beliefs and value identification, individuals and nations will become lost in this era, unable to find their true selves. This is true for individuals and even more so for a country. Socialist core values embody a systematic “Chinese solution” for transforming China and governing the world, outlining a complete picture of China’s and the world’s future development. In the new era, strengthening the cultivation of socialist core values is imperative. Through the sociolinguistic interpretation of socialist core values, we aim to provide valuable references for the development of mainstream ideologies in the new era. While promoting the cultivation of socialist core

values, we can further explore the treasures of Marxist thought, promote the application and development of Marxist sinicization theory. We can also anticipate that “the combination of semantic analysis and social context can achieve such a high level of precision that one day they may be comparable to the methods of natural sciences.” (Mannheim, 2000)

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