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Labor, Behavior, and Alienation in Modern Life: An Interdisciplinary Philosophical Approach

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Abstract

The article aims to analyze the problem of alienation in modern life by examining the relationship among labor, behavior, and social norms, thereby clarifying the mechanisms of its formation and people's ability to overcome it. The study uses an interdisciplinary philosophical methodology, combining qualitative analysis, critical approaches, and the method of transforming opposing pairs to consider the human being as a dynamic whole in the interaction between conditions, competencies, and behaviors. The results of the study show that alienation not only occurs in labor but also extends to behavior and

social relationships, when money and norms shift from means to ends, causing people to lose their ability to identify themselves. Labor is turned into forced activity, behavior becomes artificial, and social values are separated from real life. However, research also shows that the ability to overcome alienation persists as people re-establish the relationship between needs, abilities, and behaviors. The conclusion affirms that the restoration of man as a real subject, and the return of labor and norms to the role of means, are conditions for achieving freedom, creativity, and a sustainable human life.

Keywords: Labor, Alienation, Behavior, Freedom, Standards

1. Introduction

In the context of globalization and the rapid development of technology, especially artificial intelligence and the data economy, human life is facing a series of structural problems. Labor is increasingly standardized and automated, disrupting the relationship between the individual and the product. Social norms, rather than supporting life behavior, tend to impose and detach from real needs, leading to a phase shift between ability and behavior. At the same time, currency and exchange value expand their role from means to purposes, distorting the dynamics of life and undermining human autonomy. These transformations not only pose economic or technological challenges but also create a profound moral and existential crisis. It is increasingly difficult for people to identify themselves in terms of behavior, labor, and social relationships. The problem does not lie in the lack of standards or resources, but in the breakdown in the relationship between objective conditions, subject capacity, and practical behavior. On that basis, this article aims to analyze current problems through an interdisciplinary philosophical approach, thereby clarifying the mechanisms of formation and the means to overcome alienating states in real life.

2. Overview of the research situation

In modern studies, the issue of labor, alienation, and social structure has been approached from a variety of theoretical directions. A classical approach that sees labor as human nature and, at the same time, points out that when the product is separated from the worker, alienation appears as an inevitable structure of modern life (Marx, 1978) ^[6]. On this basis, later studies expanded the analysis of control and discipline in society, showing that human behavior is increasingly regulated by invisible institutions and norms (Foucault, 1977) ^[33].

In the field of contemporary social theory, many works emphasize the transformation of capitalism into more flexible forms where labor is dismantled not only materially but also emotionally and cognitively (Sennett, 1998) ^[23]. At the same time, the development of consumer society has heightened the symbolic value of goods, making people increasingly dependent on exchange value rather than real demand (Baudrillard, 1998) ^[1]. These studies indicate that currencies and social norms are no longer neutral means but become forces that shape personal behavior and identity.

In addition, recent interdisciplinary approaches have incorporated technology and data into analysis, suggesting that artificial intelligence and the digital economy are restructuring the relationship between people and labor (Zuboff, 2019) [26]. In this context, humans are not only confronted with traditional alienation but also with new forms of control through data and algorithms. Some studies also emphasize the role of subjective competence, arguing that cognitive, emotional, and reflective abilities are important factors in people's efforts to re-establish freedom under conditions of constraint (Giddens, 1984) [4].

However, the majority of current research still tends to decouple objective conditions from subjective behaviors, or to emphasize either structural or individual dimensions. Therefore, there is a lack of an integrated theoretical framework that can explain the dynamic relationship among conditions, capacities, and behavior as a continuous ethical-existential process. This article aims to fill that gap with an interdisciplinary philosophical approach, in which ethics is understood as an open process of movement tied to the real life of the human being.

3. Research Methods

The paper employs an interdisciplinary philosophical methodology, combining qualitative analysis and a critical approach to clarify real-life problems (Human Philosophy, 2026) [25]. The focus of the method is to consider the human being as a dynamic whole, formed by the interaction among objective conditions, subjective capacities, and practical behavior. On that basis, the study implements analytical, synthetic, interpretive, and generalizing operations to identify the structure of labor, behavior, and forms of alienation in the current context. At the same time, the article applies the method of transforming and reversing opposing pairs, such as freedom and inevitability, individual and society, means and purpose, to clarify the dynamics and internal contradictions of human life. This approach does not stop at describing the phenomenon but also aims to explain the mechanism of formation and the ability to overcome alienating states. In addition, research integrates knowledge from the social sciences, economics, and technology to ensure the problem's relevance and up-to-dateness. The results of the study are not intended to build fixed norms, but to propose an open theoretical framework in which ethics is understood as a process of continuous movement associated with truth, creativity, freedom, and human responsibility.

4. Discussion and Results

4.1 Individual, Labor, and Freedom

Man does not exist separately from nature, but is one with nature in a living whole. Nature is not only the external environment but also the inorganic body of human beings, where needs are formed and satisfied. It is in this relationship that man does not stand outside the world but lives in constant exchange with it. That exchange is not only biological but also cognitive, in which freedom emerges as the ability to understand and implement nature's necessity. In this structure, people do not need objects alien to them. Every object is only meaningful when associated with the needs of life. Viewed from the depth of realist humanistic philosophy, life is not a static state, but the process by which human beings perceive, design, and create their own conditions of existence. As has been asserted: "Life is the

value that becomes the value of the product that is perceived, designed, and created during the evolution of 'human' society" (Lam & Quoc, 2025, p. 877) [5].

Basic human needs are universal, but differences among individuals arise from how each person organizes and satisfies them. The individual is not a separate entity, but a difference in the common nature of human beings. It is this difference that makes each unique and creative. The individual is not only a product of nature but also a product of society. In the process of life, the individual is both influenced by external conditions and creates himself through behavior. The individual is the subject of creation, but at the same time can also become a slave to the conditions of life. These two aspects complicate human life, in which freedom and constraint are always intertwined. In the modern context, this intertwining becomes increasingly intense when the individual is placed within mechanisms of organizing life beyond his or her ability to exercise self-determination. Therefore, the personal problem is not only psychological or moral, but a structural problem of the whole of social life. This corresponds to the statement that "in the context of the modern commodity economy, the individual is no longer the center of creativity but is increasingly pushed into a position of dependence on the institutions of production, consumption, and social norms" (Chien, Minh, & Quoc, 2025, p. 1506) [2].

The product that the individual creates is not only the result of labor but also the expression of the individual himself. Each product is unique, reflecting the capacity, qualities, and way of life of its creator. When products are exchanged, personal values are revealed, and in the process, the individual becomes stronger through natural discovery and transformation. Labor plays a central role in this process. Humans use the body as a means to transform the world, but at the same time, transform themselves. The body is not only the biological foundation, but also the unity between the individual and behavior. Each behavior is not only aimed at achieving an external goal but also contributes to the individual's formation. When viewed in this way, labor cannot be understood simply as the creation of wealth, but rather as the process by which man manifests his nature, capacities, and responsibilities in the world. Therefore, education, training, and labor orientation are always associated with the formation of living subjects. As an important suggestion, "authentic education is inseparable from human beings who are creative, ethical, and capable of organizing their own lives" (Nhung & Quoc, 2025, p. 709) [19].

When the behavior is repeated and becomes subconscious, it ceases to be the means but becomes the purpose of life. It is in this process that the human right to life is expressed. The right to life is not an abstract concept but the ability to engage in activities such as eating, drinking, resting, working, and creating. When these needs are satisfied, the human being exists as a living entity. When they are not satisfied, deficiencies arise, forcing people to be creative or change their living conditions. In scarce conditions, people not only reduce their needs but also adjust their behavior. They eat less, rest less, work more, not because it is the ideal, but because it is the condition for survival. It is in this adaptation that habits and skills are formed. However, adaptation is not synonymous with liberation, because if people live only to cope with scarcity, then labor risks being reduced to a mere survival response. The problem is to

move from passive adaptation to the conscious organization of life, in which individual freedom is associated with social responsibility. In that sense, "life requires a balance between personal freedom and social responsibility, that is, faith in oneself and in fellow human beings, i.e., faith in humanity" (Pham & Quoc, 2025, p. 798) ^[20].

When labor is trained, it becomes a need, no longer a means but the purpose of life. When labor becomes the goal, man no longer works to achieve something external, but works to fulfill himself. Labor becomes a pleasure, an expression of freedom. In this state, the means of living are no longer the goal but the inevitable result of labor. Labor both creates the individual and the conditions of living, and it is in this unity that man attains freedom. The development of demand leads to a variety of forms of labor. When a need is satisfied, it can lose its meaning, and a new need emerges. This process creates a division of labor, making the professions rich. Each individual can reveal his talents through different forms of labor, and it is this diversity that enriches life. However, this richness is only really meaningful when labor retains its humanity, that is, when people still recognize themselves in the product and in the behavior of labor. When occupational diversity is only a functional fragmentation, people can be dispersed from themselves. This is why it is necessary to emphasize that "man is the subject who becomes the product of money" (Toan & Quoc, 2025, p. 404) ^[24] if labor is no longer organized based on creative freedom.

The human body is not perfect. It has limitations such as not tolerating high temperatures, a lack of strength, susceptibility to disease, and eventually death. These limitations are not the end point, but the motivation for people to create. When the body has defects, humans create products to compensate for them. It is in this process that nature is introduced into the body and the body is brought into nature. Humans not only use their bodies to transform the world, but they also use the world to transform their bodies. Tools such as machines, robots, microscopes, or medical devices not only support but also expand human capabilities. This objectification makes the human being an open whole in which the senses and organs can be expanded and perfected. Here, the body is not only the material basis of labor but also the starting point of all creative possibilities. Because labor takes place in a finite body, all theories of freedom must start from the specific limits of the living body. The statement that "labor cannot be reduced to an abstract 'input'; it is a series of biological transformations that take place in a finite body, with very specific limits in terms of heart rate, endurance, fatigue accumulation and resilience" (Quoc, 2025g, p. 3) showing that freedom is not about escaping from the body, but about organizing the creation of life on that very finite basis.

This development also brings risks. As products become popular, people may become dependent on them. What was initially the product of the individual becomes the product of society, and when widely disseminated, it can cause people to lose their individuality. Labor, in this case, can become alienated when man no longer controls his product. It is in this dependence that the ability to pass persists. Humans can bring nature into the body by selecting suitable objects, or bring the body into nature through labor. These two processes are not opposites, but complement each other. When people know how to organize this relationship, they not only survive but also thrive. From this perspective,

alienation should not be understood as an inevitable fate, but as a possibility that history can be criticized and overcome. When man restores his role as a subject, the product is no longer the dominant force but returns to its proper position as the means of life. This is especially important in an era when many fields are being commercialized, politicized, and deviating from their humanistic foundations. Because "in the context of globalization, religious life is undergoing profound changes, from a pure belief in human values to forms of commercialization, politicization, and moral degradation" (Nam & Quoc, 2025, p. 333) ^[7]. This statement can also be extended to think about labor and spiritual life in general.

Acts such as building houses, making tools, domesticating animals, or caring for crops are not only survival activities, but also expressions of creativity. Humans not only adapt to nature, but also transform it to suit themselves. It is in this process that the world becomes marked by people, and people become attached to it. The core problem does not lie in perfecting the body or conquering nature, but in re-establishing the relationship between the individual, labor, and life. When the individual lives in accordance with his abilities and needs, labor becomes an expression of freedom. At that time, the product is no longer a strange object but an extension of the person himself. Only when people live in unity between nature, body, and behavior can they overcome alienation. At that time, labor is no longer a burden but a joy; freedom is no longer a concept but a reality; and humans not only exist but also live as creative subjects, responsible and engaged with the world they create. In that spirit, it is necessary to reaffirm that "money is a means of competition, while morality is the goal of sustainable development" (Quoc & Van Y, 2024, p. 4080) ^[22]. This affirmation helps emphasize that the true value of labor lies not in external accumulation but in whether it expands freedom, creativity, and the dignity of human life.

4.2 Labor, alienation, and freedom

Human beings are not only biological entities but also creative, free, and happy subjects in labor. Labor is not an auxiliary activity of life, but the intrinsic strength of the human person, where the individual expresses himself through the product. When people work, they not only create external objects, but also create themselves. It is in the unity between workers and products that human life reaches its reality. However, this unity is not an immutable state of nature but one that must be maintained through conscious behavior. If the relationship between man and product is disrupted, then the very foundation of freedom is shaken. This suggests that morality and freedom are inseparable from the conditions of human survival and social structure, because "human ethics are rooted in the need to survive and maintain the species, are universal and non-discriminatory" (Quoc *et al.*, 2024, p. 1660) ^[21].

This relationship does not always remain united. When labor is corrupted, the power of man no longer belongs to them but is transformed into the power of the product. The product is no longer an expression of human beings but becomes an opposing force to them. At that time, people are no longer employers but become slaves to what they themselves create. In this state, the relationship between workers and property is no longer the relationship between the subject and the product. However, the relationship between the inside and the outside is separated. Although

the product still bears the imprint of its creator, it no longer belongs to them. Man faces his product as if he were facing an alien entity, and in this alienation, alienation is formed. This alienation is not only personal but also reflects a broader mechanism where power, legal, and economic structures interfere with the labor process. As has been pointed out, modern social relations are often "dominated and corrupted by power, money, and legal institutions" (Quoc & Van Y, 2026, p. 22), thereby increasing the distance between people and their own products.

Labor, by its very nature, is a need, is a purpose, is freedom, and is happiness. However, when corrupted, labor becomes coercion, becomes a means to achieve a goal outside of man. Labor is then no longer an expression of freedom, but a denial of man himself. Man no longer finds himself in labor but loses himself in it. Labor alienation not only distorts behavior but also distorts products. The products of alienated labor do not serve the real needs of man, but become the tools of foreign forces. When a product is separated from humans, it can turn against its creator itself. This is not just an individual phenomenon but a social structure in which the whole of life is dominated by corrupted products. In this context, goods are no longer merely products of exchange but become an accumulation of human life in a detached state. According to this understanding, "goods are not only objects circulated in the market, but also concentrated forms of human life" (Nguyen, A. Q., 2025f, p. 3) ^[16].

In such conditions, labor is no longer a creative activity but a programmed process. Man no longer works according to his abilities and needs, but according to imposed patterns. Labor is no longer a place of expression of competence, qualities, and virtues, but becomes a mechanical activity, like the operation of a machine. When labor loses its creativity, people also lose their humanity. They no longer live as free subjects but as tools of the system. They work not for pleasure or growth, but to meet needs that do not belong to them. It is in this state that people become one-sided, lame, and lose themselves. This reduction of human beings to function is not only an economic problem but also a cognitive one. When perception is standardized and framed, people lose the ability to reflect on their own lives. As a warning, "modern science has built itself up an ideal image of cognition, while at the same time concealing a fundamental blind spot" (Nguyen, A. Q., 2026, p. 3) ^[18]. This is also reflected in the way people understand and organize labor.

This alienation occurs not only in labor but also throughout life. When the products of alienated labor become commonplace, they are not only opposed to the worker but also to the whole person. These products can be inhumane, destroy the environment, upset the ecological balance, and even threaten the very existence of humanity itself. It is in this alienation that the ability to perceive and overcome still exists. When people face their products honestly, they can recognize the nature of labor. They can see that their competencies, qualities, and virtues are expressed in the product, thereby re-establishing the relationship between them and their workers. This process requires a profound transformation in the way people understand freedom, not as an escape from conditions, but as mastery of those conditions. This corresponds to the statement that "each thing cannot be understood separately from the interaction in which it participates; it is the universal and dynamic

connection between them that is the foundation of existence" (Nguyen, A. Q., 2025a, p. 3) ^[11].

Free labor, in this sense, is not the absence of labor, but the unity between labor and man. When people work with their intellect and hands, they are not afraid of power, do not need to deceive, and are not governed by external standards. They live honestly with themselves, and in that honesty, they reach freedom. Free labor not only creates products, but also people. It reveals health, knowledge, will, and reason. It creates courage, sharing, empathy, and solidarity. Labor is not only an economic activity but also the foundation of all human values. In that depth, labor must be understood as a process of forming humanity, where man not only adapts but also creates his own world. Therefore, "learning is not only a means to adapt to the environment, but also a way for people to create humanity and shape the world they live in" (Nguyen, A. Q., 2025, p. 3) ^[10].

On the contrary, when labor is deprived, man is separated from himself. They no longer see themselves at work and only feel themselves when they are not working. Labor becomes a burden, a sacrifice, a form of self-denial. At that time, man no longer lives as a human being but as a forced entity. In this state, basic behaviors such as eating, drinking, sleeping, and resting are no longer creative but purely biological. In contrast, labor, which is the highest creative activity, is reduced to animal activity. This upheaval causes people to lose their essence. However, this divergence is not the endpoint. When people realize that alienated labor is a denial of themselves, they can begin to re-establish labor as a need and a purpose. At that time, labor is no longer a means but a form of life. This re-establishment does not lie in the elimination of products or the rejection of labor, but in the restoration of the relationship between man and labor. When people are employers, products are no longer alien forces but extensions of themselves. The core problem is not in technology, products, or systems, but in people. When people live in accordance with their abilities and needs, labor becomes free. When labor becomes free, man becomes the subject. Only when people re-establish the unity between labor, product, and self can they overcome alienation. At that time, labor is no longer a burden, but a joy; the product is no longer a strange object, but a human expression; and life is no longer a coercion, but a continuous creative process, where man lives as a free, creative, and responsible subject.

4.3 Conduct, norms, and facts

Human life begins with basic needs such as food, water, and shelter, but it does not stop there. It is in the process of satisfying needs that people create generations, form societies, and develop different forms of life. Every state of happiness or unhappiness is not in the need itself, but in behavior and labor. Labor becomes the central element of life, but at the same time, it is also the source of alienation when it is separated from the free and creative nature of man. When labor is corrupted, man no longer owns his behavior, but is governed by products and social structures. It is in this process that private property emerges as an inevitable consequence, not from natural needs, but from the separation between people and their products. From the perspective of social philosophy, ownership is not only an economic relationship but also a power structure that shapes human behavior, because "ownership, for a long time, has not only been an economic issue but also a pillar of social

order and power relations" (Nguyen, A. Q., 2025d, p. 80) [14].

Labor is no longer a means of living, but becomes a force that objectifies people, making them objects of their own creation. Alienation not only distorts labor but also distorts behavior in general. When behavior no longer derives from real needs and abilities but from external standards, it becomes alien to humans. Behavior, which is the means to exercise the right to life, is turned into a tool that serves non-human purposes. It is in this state that unhappiness, helplessness, and deception appear as common manifestations of life. Standards such as morality, law, and currency are no longer means of support but have become universal spiritual needs. These needs do not come from real life, but from the self-sacrifice and sacrifice of generations. When humans follow standards without being aware of their origins, they abandon freedom, creativity, and personal responsibility. This reflects a deeper state of awareness, when "truth is no longer obvious, readily available, or immutable, but is often replaced by layers of simulations, images, data, and reports" (Nguyen, A. Q., 2025e, p. 159) [15].

It is in this structure that laziness and diligence are defined as opposing values. Diligence is a virtue, while laziness is a bad habit. However, neither reflects the nature of labor, but the relationship between people and norms. Laziness is not a lack of action, but a product of alienated labor, when man no longer finds meaning in his work. As society develops and the division of labor becomes antagonistic, individuals begin to appropriate products through behaviors alien to themselves. Behavior, which is part of nature, is turned into an instrument of power. The body's power is no longer used to engage in free behavior but to perform imposed behaviors. When the behavior is trained to perfection within this framework, it ceases to be a means but becomes a false purpose. The perfection of behavior under conditions of alienation does not lead to freedom, but to unconsciousness. This suggests that when behavior is absolutely standardized, humans lose their ability to reflect and become part of the mechanism of operation. As pointed out, "building people based on stereotypes and norms makes people confusing" (Nguyen, A. Q., 2024b, p. 9) [9].

Humans act as unconscious entities, following patterns instinctively. At that time, the standard is no longer the norm of life but becomes an unconscious instinct, like the instinct of animals. This makes people lose the ability to perceive the necessity, and knowledge is no longer associated with life. In that state, spiritual needs such as justice, money, and norms become universal. However, these needs are not a sign of growth but of unhappiness and helplessness. When people cannot meet their real needs and abilities, they create abstract values to compensate. These values do not solve the problem but make it more complicated. Behavioral alienation is also evident in human relationships. When relationships are no longer based on need and sincerity but on standards and money, they become artificial. Help is no longer a voluntary act but an obligation. Connection is no longer a pleasure but a non-human need. In this context, norms no longer play a guiding role but instead serve as an alternative mechanism for addressing shortages in real life. It shows that moral values cannot exist independently of the foundation of human life, because "respect for the diversity of individual life is essential to building a harmonious and sustainable society in the context

of globalization" (Pham, K. D., & Quoc, N. A., 2025, p. 798) [20].

In the field of sexuality, the difference between humans and animals becomes clear. In animals, sex is an unconscious instinct, not associated with responsibility. In humans, sex is free, creative, and responsible behavior. When sex is corrupted, it ceases to be a human expression, but becomes a form of exchange, where suffering and coercion appear. Sexual alienation also leads to contradictions in social norms. Standards such as loyalty or nobility can mask helplessness and unhappiness. At that time, values no longer reflect life but false forms. In this case, the family is no longer a living space but a structure that covers contradictions. This suggests that social institutions do not carry value on their own, but their value depends on how they are tied to people's real lives. When institutions are separated from that foundation, they become instrumental in perpetuating artificiality. As an important suggestion, "philosophy does not promise easy answers to complex problems, but constantly raises fundamental questions – about the purpose of life, about the meaning of freedom, about the nature of happiness, about the responsibility and power of each person before the community and the world" (Nguyen, A. Q., 2025c, p. 278) [13].

The problem is not in the behaviors or institutions themselves, but in the relationship between them and people. When behavior comes from real needs and abilities, it becomes an expression of freedom, creativity, and happiness. When behavior is detached from this foundation, it becomes alienated. The re-establishment of the human being as a real subject requires restoring the relationship among needs, behaviors, and knowledge. People do not need standards to connect, but they need sincerity. True connectivity is not based on regulation but on the match between ability and need. When people are honest with themselves, they do not need intermediate values to define behavior. They do not help out of obligation but out of ability and need. They do not connect for the sake of standards, but for life. In this state, behavior becomes free, and freedom becomes the foundation of life. The core problem is not in eliminating norms, but in deconstructing their power. When norms return to the position of means and people become purpose, life is restructured. At that time, behavior is no longer a conformity but a choice. Only when people live in unity between needs, behaviors, and responsibilities can they overcome alienation. At that time, the truth is no longer hidden but becomes life itself. Moreover, in this state, man not only exists, but also lives as a free, creative, and responsible subject in the real world.

4.4 Currency, norms, and alienating behavior

In real life, people are not miserable because of a lack of needs, but because of the mismatch between needs and abilities. When individuals go beyond their living conditions to pursue money and standards, they do not expand their lives but lose themselves. The sacrifice of one's whole life to achieve external values is not a sign of success but of profound alienation, in which behavior no longer derives from real needs but from society's abstract pressures. In that state, human behavior is no longer an expression of freedom but a means of appropriating wealth. Behaviors are standardized not to reflect the truth, but to hide it. This shows that when the value of exchange replaces the value of life, people lose the ability to identify themselves in life. As

an important observation, "the monoetic nature of concepts makes mathematics a coherent, coherent theoretical system recognized by mathematicians" (Nguyen, A. Q., 2024a, p. 20) ^[8], which suggests that when life is reduced to simple norms, it loses its inherent richness and multidimensionality of human beings.

Subtlety, politeness, humility, or reverence are no longer qualities of life but have become covers for falsehood. When words are no longer consistent with actions, people not only deceive others but also deceive themselves. This alienation gives rise to a paradox. Those who create lowliness in labor retain a part of their humanity, while those who live by that lowliness are more deeply corrupted. This suggests that the problem is not in the behavior itself, but in the relationship between people and behavior. When behavior is detached from needs and abilities, it becomes an opposing force to the human being. It is under these conditions that social evils such as laziness, deceit, greed, and envy arise. These phenomena are not human nature, but rather the manifestation of a deviated living structure. Humans are not hateful; They are just living in conditions that cause them to act alien to themselves. This is consistent with the statement that "when investigating the causes of crime, legal science must go beyond individual behaviors to reflect on the social conditions that create criminal subjects critically" (Nguyen, A. Q., 2025b, p. 3) ^[12], thereby showing that individual behavior is always tied to the broader social context.

Hatred between individuals does not stem from nature but from the opposition between corrupt acts. Alienating behavior is not natural behavior, but behavior that exceeds needs and abilities. When a person has a need but is not capable, they fall into helplessness. When they have the ability but no need, they fall into misfortune. When behavior does not match both needs and abilities, it becomes artificial. It is in this mismatch that people must hide themselves, must repress, must act in order to survive. Falsehood manifests itself not only in personal behavior but also in social relationships. When people are unable to help each other practically, they show sympathy, kindness, or love as alternative forms. When there are no conditions for living freely, they meet the standard required to receive recognition. These behaviors are not a manifestation of growth, but a sign of deficiency. This shows that moral values, if separated from real life, will become abstract forms, losing the ability to liberate people.

In economic life, alienation reaches its highest level when people begin to "sell" themselves. They not only sell products, but also behaviors, emotions, and sincerity in exchange for money and status. Courtesy becomes a commodity, enthusiasm becomes a strategy, and patience becomes a tool. People adjust their behavior according to each object, each customer, each situation, not to live, but to exchange. It is in this process that money and standards become universal equivalents. They are not only the means but also the purpose of life. Freedom, creativity, and happiness, which are human nature, are relegated to the means of attaining money and standards. This upheaval makes man no longer alive as a human being but as a valued entity. This corresponds to the statement that "money has become a tool for measuring value and power in modern society" (Quoc & Van Y, 2024, p. 4080) ^[22], thereby showing that money is not only a medium of exchange but also a mechanism for defining human value.

This valuation creates a deep segregation in society. Human values are no longer universal but depend on historical conditions and interchangeability. People become commodities, and the market determines their prices. At that time, man is no longer the purpose but the means of a system of exchange. In this state, money becomes a universal spiritual need. The entire society is caught up in the vortex of money, where every behavior is directed towards its accumulation and protection. Money cannot bring happiness, because it does not satisfy real needs. Greedy people are never satisfied, and discontent becomes their permanent state. Dependence on money and standards makes people slaves to what they themselves create. They no longer control their lives but are dominated by external forces. This reflects a profound paradox of modern life, where the more people accumulate, the more distant they become from themselves.

Deception exists not only in behavior but also in the social structure as a whole, where values are built on unreal foundations. However, alienation is not the endpoint. When people are aware that alienating behavior is the source of their unhappiness, they can begin to reestablish the relationship among needs, abilities, and behaviors. This re-establishment lies not in rejecting money or standards, but in resetting their position. When money and standards return to the role of means, people become the purpose. When behavior comes from real needs and abilities, it becomes an expression of freedom, creativity, and happiness. At that time, people do not need to act or hide, but live honestly with themselves. The connection between people in this state does not require standards or money; it is based on sincerity. People help each other not out of obligation, but out of ability. They do not exchange to accumulate but to live. It is in this simplicity that life becomes rich.

The core problem is not to change the form of society, but to change the way people live. When individuals abandon alienating behavior, they not only free themselves but also the relationships around them. At that time, the truth is no longer hidden but becomes the foundation of life. Only when people live in unity among needs, abilities, and behaviors can they overcome the alienation caused by money and standards. Freedom is then no longer a concept, but a reality; creativity is no longer a privilege, but an essence; And happiness is no longer a distant goal, but the very life that people are living.

5. Conclusion

The article clarifies that labor, behavior, and social norms are not separate factors, but components that constitute human life in a process of continuous movement. When the relationship among needs, abilities, and behaviors is broken, alienation emerges, causing people to lose themselves in products, norms, and social relationships. However, alienation is neither inevitable nor insurmountable. The possibility of liberation lies in the re-establishment of the human being as a real subject through the restoration of the unity among labor, behavior, and life. When money and norms return to their role as means, and man becomes the purpose, freedom ceases to be an abstract concept and becomes a living reality. On that basis, building a human life requires placing people at the center of all development processes, as creative, responsible subjects capable of organizing their own lives.

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