From Plato to Platform: Political Philosophy and Algorithmic Governance of Labor in the Middle East and Africa

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Abstract

This study examines the future of labor in the Middle East and Africa from a political philosophy angle, concentrating on the emergence of algorithmic governance and its effects on justice, autonomy, and regulation within platform-driven economies. Historically, political philosophy has influenced labor markets by incorporating ethical concepts into labor regulation, from *Plato*'s idea of fair hierarchies to *John Locke*'s argument for property and freedom, and *Karl Marx*'s analysis of exploitation. These concepts led to significant developments like *Britain's Trade Union Act of 1871* and labor reforms after colonialism, converting normative principles into organizational frameworks. In today's digital labor landscape, algorithms increasingly substitute human managers, reshaping employment terms without democratic accountability. Drawing on a diverse philosophical canon-including classical, liberal, socialist, and postcolonial thought-this paper explores how such transformations challenge foundational concepts of fairness, responsibility, and political agency. It interrogates digital labor trends in MEA-such as automation-driven skill shifts, gig-based precarity, and opaque platform control-through a normative analysis informed by *Rawlsian* distributive justice, *Arendtian* action, and *Fanon*'s resistance ethics. Methodologically, the study combines philosophical inquiry with regional policy analysis, highlighting how these traditions can inspire concrete labor reforms. It aligns with the *International Labour Organization*'s evolving mission to regulate algorithmic labor, proposing actionable frameworks including worker data rights, algorithmic audits, and rights-based governance models tailored to MEA realities. By bridging political theory and pragmatic policy, the study positions itself as a forward-looking contribution to equitable labor futures-where platforms are governed not solely by code, but by values rooted in justice and human dignity.

Keywords: Algorithmic Governance, Political Philosophy, Digital Labor, Automation and Justice

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