

Marxist Ecological Theory and Its Innovative Development in China

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Abstract: Marx and Engels founded in the process of Dialectical Materialism, from two aspects of material first and practicality, illustrates the relationship between human and nature, thus, it formed the Ecological Thought of Marx and Engels. Ecology Marxism schools of Western Marxism, think of the capitalist mode of production in the economic crisis at the same time, also caused serious ecological crisis, only replacing capitalism with socialism, in order to thoroughly solve the problem of ecological environment deterioration, make the person and the nature harmonious get along. After the Marxist Ecological Theory was introduced into China, it was combined with the reality of socialist construction and reform in China and formed a series of theoretical achievements of sinicization. In socialism with Chinese characteristics into the new era under the background of establishment of Xi Jinping's Thought on Ecological Civilization, is a Marxist Ecological Theory of innovation and development in contemporary China, to enrich and develop Marxist Ecological Theory made original contributions in China.

Keywords: Marxist Ecological Theory; Ecological Marxism; Xi Jinping's Thought on Ecological Civilization

1. Introduction

Marxism scientifically reveals the general laws of nature, society and human thinking. The relationship among nature, society and human thinking is that nature is the source of all things, society is bred from the mother of nature, and human cognition is the dynamic reflection of nature and society. For the survival and reproduction of human beings and the development and progress of society, we cannot leave nature for a moment. Therefore, it is of vital importance to properly handle the relationship between human beings and nature. In the process of establishing the scientific theory system of Marxism, Marx and Engels deeply thought about the relationship between man and nature, made a series of important exposition which still has guiding significance, and formed the Ecological Thought of Marx and Engels. An academic schools of Western Marxism, using the Marxist stand, viewpoint and method of analysis and research of global ecological problems, put forward a higher theoretical value of the solution to the problem of modern and contemporary ecological environment, formed the Ecology Marxism, and with the Greens of some countries to carry out the Ecological Socialism. With the progress of industrialization in China, the phenomenon of serious destruction of ecological environment has attracted high attention, the realistic environmental problems need scientific theory and innovation theory to answer, combining the Marxist basic principles with China's concrete practice process, also formed achievements of sinicization of Marxism theory in the field of ecological civilization construction, As socialism with Chinese characteristics has entered a new era, Xi Jinping's Thought on Ecological Civilization has become an action guide for the CPC to unite and lead the people of all ethnic groups in building a beautiful China.

2. The Ecological Theory of Marxism

Marx and Engels were Germans in the 19th century. In the era of the two great revolutionary mentors, machine industry replaced agriculture and handicraft industry as the dominant mode of production, and the industrialization of western countries accelerated, greatly liberating and developing the social productive forces. But at the same time, the industry for the destruction of the ecological environment function has not been fully reflected, so, at first, Marx and Engels discuss the dialectical

unification relation between human and nature only from the angle of philosophy, and criticize capitalism from the plunder of natural resources, by the end of the 19th century, Engels according to the development and change of the situation at that time, put forward the important proposition of "reconciliation between man and nature" and enriched Marx's Ecological Thought.

In the 20th century, two world wars caused great waste of natural resources, also caused serious destruction to the ecological environment, in the process of healing war wounds, recovering economic and achieving prosperity after the war, capitalism exploited the global natural resources piratically, at the same time, unsustainable production mode of capitalism are also global expansion, In the 1970s, in the face of the global ecological crisis, the Green Movement in western countries began to rise. Ecological Marxism is people who are dissatisfied with the existing capitalist system and want to find a way to fundamentally solve the problem of ecological environment deterioration. It combines the basic principles of Marxism with the social practice of the Green Movement.

2.1. The Ecological Thought of Marx and Engels

Marxist Philosophy, especially the Dialectical Materialism, is critically inheriting and development of German Classical Philosophy represented by Hegel and Feuerbach, the Dialectical Materialism, respectively, to absorb the Feuerbach's materialism world outlook and Hegel's dialectics methodology, abandoned Hegel's idealist world outlook and Feuerbach's metaphysical methodology. Engels pointed out in "Ludwig Feuerbach and the End of German Classical Philosophy" : "The major basic problem of all philosophy, especially modern philosophy, is the problem of the relationship between thought and existence."^[1]Marxist Philosophy holds that existence is the source of the world, matter is the primary, and spirit is the secondary. From the perspective of the relationship between man and nature, nature exists before man, and man is the product of the development and evolution of nature and the result of biological evolution. Materialism can only be upheld if we recognize the fundamental and original status of nature. In Marx's outline about Feuerbach, said: "once upon a time all materialism (including Feuerbach's Materialism) are the main disadvantages of: to the object, reality, perceptual, only from the objective or intuitive form to understand, not them as perceptual activity, to understand as a practice, not from the aspects of the subject to understand."^[2]In Feuerbach, the matter was isolated and static. He did not see the interconnection between human society and nature, nor did he find that man could actively transform nature. Marxist Philosophy emphasizes practicality and thinks that practice is the basis of distinguishing and unifying natural existence and social existence. On the one hand, human beings have created the human society that has their own special development rules in practical activities, which is different from nature, and human beings have mainly become social beings. On the other hand, through labor practice, man harmonizes the relationship between himself and nature to achieve harmony and unity. Only by acknowledging the practical and active role of man can we stick to dialectics.

The Ecological Thoughts of Marx and Engels attach great importance to the fundamental and original status of nature. Marx put forward in his Manuscript of Economics and Philosophy in 1844: "Nature, so far as it is not human body, is the inorganic body of human. Man lives on nature. That is to say, nature is the human body with which man must be in a continuous process of interaction in order not to die. The connection of man's physical and mental life with nature is nothing more than the connection of nature with himself, for man is a part of nature."^[2]This important statement makes people realize that without the natural world, without the physical world constantly evolving according to the laws of nature, there would be no human beings; If human beings were separated from nature, they could not survive.

The Ecological Thoughts of Marx and Engels not only emphasize the practical and active functions of human beings, but also attach great importance to coordinating the relationship between human beings and nature. The relationship between man and nature is an exchange relationship of matter and energy, formed in practice, always in a certain social relationship and brought into the social process. In the third volume of *Das Kapital*, Marx described the relationship between man and nature in the socialist society: "Socialized men, united producers, will reasonably adjust the material transformation between them and nature, bringing it under their common control, instead of letting it rule them as a blind force; And by exerting the least exertion, under conditions most worthy of and most suitable to their human nature."^[3]In *Dialectics of Nature*, Engels warned human beings, "Let us not be too intoxicated with our victory over nature. For each such victory, nature takes revenge on us. In each case, it does at first produce the desired result, but in the subsequent and subsequent periods an entirely different and unexpected effect often cancels it out again."^[4]In the *Outline of Critique of National Economics*, he proposed the "reconciliation between human beings and nature". These important

expositions point out the direction for man to make rational use of nature, treat nature correctly, and realize the harmony between man and nature.

Although Marx and Engels lived in the era when the contradiction between man and nature was not yet obvious, and the global ecological crisis was still in the latent period, the two great teachers were keenly aware of the damage to the natural environment caused by the capitalist mode of production. In their view, the capitalist mode of production leads to the possession of nature by private owners, which is unprecedented in history, which leads to the sharp opposition of the relationship between human and nature, thus leading to serious environmental crisis. As Marx pointed out in *Das Kapital*: "Capitalist production to make it converge in the center of the city population is more and more dominant, so that it gathered the historical power of the social on the one hand, on the other hand, the material transformation between people and land is destroyed, which is consumed in the form of food and clothing of the land of the part can't return to the land, so as to destroy the land lasting fertility under natural condition of the eternal. In this way, it destroys both the physical health of urban workers and the spiritual life of rural workers."^[5]thus, Marx and Engels think that the destruction of natural conditions and worker health is an indictment of capitalist production bears, in their eyes, only to eliminate the means of production (natural resources is a very important means of production, such as land) private possession, can eliminate "conquer" consciousness of nature, so as to avoid the natural to the person's "revenge", and realize the "reconciliation" between man and nature.

2.2. Ecological Marxism

Ecological Marxism is a relatively representative academic school of modern and contemporary Western Marxism, which comes into being with the vigorous development of ecological movement in western society after World War II, and reflects the development trend of Western Marxism. From the 1960s to the 1980s, the theoretical system of Ecological Marxism was gradually formed and perfected, and its influence in the whole western ecological movement was increasingly strengthened. Since the 1990s, although the upheaval in Eastern Europe, the collapse of the Soviet Union to make the international communist movement is low, but Ecology Marxism has got a further development and become one of the most influential faction of Western Marxism, Yugoslavian Milos Nikolic in its compiled "eve in the 21st century socialism" in the evaluation, Ecological Marxism "undoubtedly represents a new stage in the development of Marxism in the final years of our century"^[6].

According to Ecological Marxism, the basic contradictions of capitalism have taken on new and more complex forms under the background of the further development of social productive forces, economic globalization and the realization of modernization in major western countries. Among them, the contradiction between the tendency of limitless expansion of capitalist production and the limited natural resources is particularly prominent. As the capitalist system expands around the world, a series of global problems that reflect a serious ecological imbalance, such as resource depletion, environmental pollution and climate change, have emerged, affecting the common destiny of mankind. American scholar Alvin Toffler wrote in *The Third Wave*: "It is no exaggeration to say that no civilization has ever created such a means to destroy not only a city, but the entire planet."^[7]It can be said that the postwar self-adjustment and self-improvement of western capitalism was based on the predatory exploitation of global resources and the sacrifice of the environment, while the vast majority of the world's population was poor and backward while the minority was rich.

In the face of two kinds of popular view of nature in contemporary green movement, the Ecocentrism that emphasizing the nature is higher than human and the Technology Centralism that emphasizing human is higher than nature, Ecology Marxism thinks that when human dealing with ecological crisis and the relationship between man and nature, shall be in accordance with the "human scale" of Marx based on the harmony of man and nature at the same time. Because man and nature have both the same nature and the same social nature, man is in a special position in nature and moves towards unification in the interaction with nature. Ecological Marxism points out that contemporary ecological problems are not natural problems, but social problems, and the treatment of environmental pollution should not be regarded as a purely natural process, but as a solution to social problems.

Ecological Marxism clearly points out that the capitalist system is the social root of the ecological crisis. In order to solve the problem of ecological environment deterioration, the criticism must be directed directly at the contemporary capitalist mode of production. This is because the ecological crisis is the inevitable result of capitalism's unlimited pursuit of profit maximization, excessive production and consumption, and the guarantee of profits at the expense of the environment. It is also the inevitable result of the global expansion of capitalist mode of production and the direct or indirect

ecological plunder of developing countries. Capitalist mode of production not only realizes the domination of man and science and technology, but also realizes the domination of nature, and the domination of nature is the condition of the domination of man. The core of the theory of Ecological Marxism and the most shining point of its proposition lie in correctly elucidating the fundamental cause of the contemporary worldwide ecological crisis -- it is the inherent contradiction of the capitalist mode of production that causes the global ecological crisis. Ecological Marxism puts forward that the main contradiction of contemporary capitalist society has been transformed into ecological contradiction, and ecological crisis has become the main crisis of contemporary capitalism, which is a new manifestation of the crisis of contemporary capitalism. Therefore, the solution to the ecological crisis must be closely combined with the struggle against capitalism. Only socialism can truly realize a green, ecological modernization and an all-around development society.

In discussing social change, Ecological Marxism proposed the requirement of natural revolution, and believed that intellectuals with "ecological consciousness" and mastery of Marxist methods, who were keen on ecological movement and concerned about the future of socialism, would become the leading force in the future social revolution. The working class, which accounts for the vast majority of the population and has direct contact with nature and thus is most heavily polluted by the environment, is the main force to participate in social change. The main way and strategy of social change is to adopt "non-violent" methods such as education and demonstration life.

Ecological Marxism is a social trend of thought arising from the modern and contemporary western ecological movement. It is an important part of Western Marxism, and also one of the theoretical schools with the most vitality and the best development prospect. Ecology Marxism reveals the intrinsic inevitability between capitalism and ecological crisis, to strengthen the criticism of the capitalism, according to the new change of the contemporary international pattern, the new exploration and prospect the future of socialism, it shows the inner relationship between social development and progress and the solution of ecological problems from the theoretical level, and emphasizes that ecological good is the indispensable connotation of socialism.

However, Ecological Marxism also has obvious historical limitations. This theory replaces the "economic crisis" with the so-called "ecological crisis", and replaces the basic contradiction of capitalist society with the contradiction between human and nature, thus downplaying the class contradiction between the proletariat and the bourgeoisie. In the leadership of struggle for socialist, Ecological Marxism hopes on intellectuals who can "enlighten thoughts" rather than the working class as the "gravediggers" of the bourgeoisie. The way to achieve social change is to oppose violent revolution, which is almost indistinguishable from social democracy.

3. The innovative development of Marxist Ecological Theory in China

Marxism is a scientific, comprehensive, extensive and profound theoretical system. The October Revolution in Russia in 1917 sent Marxism-Leninism to China. It pointed out the way forward for the independence of the Chinese nation and the happiness of the Chinese people, and opened the historical process of the sinicization of Marxism. Sinicization of Marxism is not only the Marxist Philosophy, Political Economics and Scientific Socialism, the basic principle of the three components of the process of combining with China's actual, or all aspects of the Marxism theory, including Ecological Thought, in the land to realize the process of nationalization, age and popularization.

Since the founding of the People's Republic of China, Comrade Mao Zedong has called for "greening the motherland" and "gardening the earth", Comrade Deng Xiaoping has put forward the initiative of "planting trees", Comrade Jiang Zemin has led the implementation of "sustainable development strategy", and Comrade Hu Jintao has led the promotion of "ecological civilization construction". All these are the achievements of the sinicization of Marxist Ecological Theory. It has laid a solid theoretical foundation for the formation of Xi Jinping's Thought on Ecological Civilization in the new era.

Since the 18th National Congress of the Communist Party of China, the CPC Central Committee with Comrade Xi Jinping at its core has answered profound theoretical and practical questions about why, what kind of ecological progress we should promote, and how we should promote ecological progress, and put forward a series of new ideas, thinking and strategies. In September 2013, at Nazarbayev University in Kazakhstan, Comrade Xi Jinping elaborated on the "Two Mountains Theory" : "We need both clear waters and green mountains and mountains of gold and silver. Better clear waters and green mountains than mountains of gold and silver, and clear waters and green

mountains are mountains of gold and silver."^[8]In October 2015, the Fifth Plenary Session of the 18th CPC Central Committee proposed a new concept of development, among which, green is a necessary condition for sustainable development and an important embodiment of people's pursuit of a better life. In October 2017, the report to the 19th National Congress of the Communist Party of China called for speeding up reform of the system for promoting ecological progress and building a beautiful China. Xi Jinping's Thought on Ecological Civilization was established at the National Conference on Ecological and Environmental Protection held in May 2018, which is the biggest highlight and the most important theoretical achievement of this conference.

The National Conference on Ecological and Environmental Protection summarized Xi Jinping's Thought on Ecological Civilization as the six principles of harmonious coexistence between man and nature, clear waters and green mountains as gold and silver mountains, a good ecological environment as the most universal well-being of people's livelihood, mountains, rivers, forests, farmland, lakes and grass as a community of life, the strictest system and the strictest rule of law to protect the ecological environment, work together to promote global ecological progress, and the construction of ecological culture and ecology economy, target responsibility, ecological civilization system, ecological security "Five Systems".^[9]The "Six Principles" are the theoretical core, and the "Five Systems" are the specific deployment of the implementation of the "Six Principles", as well as the countermeasure system to fundamentally solve ecological problems. Thus it can be seen that Xi Jinping's Thought on Ecological Civilization, with the "Six Principles" and "Five Systems" as its main contents, is logically consistent with the "Eight Clarifications" and "Fourteen Insistence" of Xi Jinping's Thought on Socialism with Chinese Characteristics for a New Era.

The Ecological Thought of Marx and Engels explains the relationship between man and nature in the general sense. Western Ecological Marxism, deeply criticized the modern and contemporary capitalism, put forward the solution to the ecological crisis under the condition of socialism; Xi Jinping's Thought on Ecological Civilization is based on inheriting the wisdom of ecological civilization in traditional Chinese culture and drawing on the useful experience of other countries in environmental governance. It is summarized and refined through the practice of building an ecological civilization in socialism with Chinese characteristics. It is an innovative development of Marxist Ecological Theory in contemporary China. It also provides Chinese wisdom and solutions for global ecological governance.

To fully implement Xi Jinping's Thought on Ecological Civilization, we need to put people first. In the new era of socialism with Chinese characteristics, the people's desire for cleaner water, fresher air and a better environment is an important part of what we need for a better life. Therefore, we need to provide more quality ecological products to meet people's growing needs for a beautiful ecological environment. As Comrade Xi Jinping said, "A sound ecological environment is the fairest public good and the most universal benefit to people's lives."^[10]The purpose of promoting ecological civilization is to enable our people to live and work happily in beautiful homes where the sky is blue, the land is green and the water is clear, and to have a richer and more sustainable sense of gain in a beautiful environment where we can see mountains and water and remember our homesickness. Just as Comrade Xi Jinping said, "Environment means people's livelihood, green mountains mean beauty, and blue skies mean happiness."^[11]In promoting ecological progress, we should also ensure the principal role of the people, and fully stimulate and mobilize the enthusiasm, initiative and creativity of the people. Natural resources are precious assets owned by the whole people. We must safeguard and make good use of them with a strong sense of ownership, so that all the people can work together to build a beautiful China and share in its ecological benefits.

To fully implement Xi Jinping's Thought on Ecological Civilization, we need to change our development model and old thinking. For a long time, a large number of people have held that economic development and ecological and environmental protection are opposites, and that they cannot have both. If you want rapid economic development, you must sacrifice the natural environment. If you want the environment to improve, the economy will slow down. Comrade Xi Jinping has stressed that the relationship between environmental protection and economic development is not one of contradiction and opposition, but one of dialectical unity. We should be fully aware that protecting the ecological environment means protecting the productive forces, and improving the ecological environment means developing the productive forces. We must resolutely abandon the development model that damages or even destroys the ecological environment. The previous extensive development model is no longer sustainable. We must abandon the practice of seeking temporary economic growth at the expense of the ecological environment. While focusing on the present, we must also take a long-term view. All localities and departments need to take concrete measures to protect environment,

create more green GDP, and make a sound ecological environment a source of growth in people's lives, a source of support for sustained and sound economic and social development, a source of strength for projecting a good image of China, and a bright green name card for China in the new era.

To fully implement Xi Jinping's Thought on Ecological Civilization, we need to implement the strictest system for ecological protection. Since the 18th National Congress of the Communist Party of China, under the leadership of Comrade Xi Jinping, we accelerate the top design and system construction of ecological civilization, strengthen the construction of the rule of law, the revision of the environmental protection law, further defined the government on the supervision and administration of environmental protection, improve the basic system of ecological protection such as the red line of environmental protection, strengthen the enterprise responsibility, for the prevention and control of pollution it has increased the legal sanctions on environmental violations, significantly increased the cost of pollution, and significantly enhanced the enforceability and operability of the law, which is known as the "strictest environmental protection law in history". We establish and implement a central environmental protection supervision system to ensure that leading officials and persons responsible for environmental damage are held to account, and that they are held to account throughout their lives. We have worked hard to promote green development, issued the "Ten Measures on Air Pollution," "Ten Measures on Water Pollution," and "Ten Measures on Soil Pollution," and implemented three action plans for pollution prevention and control. Ecological and environmental protection has undergone historic, watershed and overall changes. At present, ecological progress is in a critical and challenging period of mounting pressure and moving forward with heavy burdens. It is also a window period in which we have the conditions and ability to solve prominent ecological and environmental problems. Under the strong leadership of the Party, we must strengthen our confidence to win, consolidate our achievements, face difficulties head-on, and work hard for the people's aspiration for a beautiful ecological environment.

4. Conclusions

Engels said: "The people of Mesopotamia, of Greece, of Asia Minor, and of other places, in order to get the cultivated land, destruction of the forest, but they never think of, these places today has thus become unproductive."^[4]In China, the Loess Plateau, the Wei River Basin and the Taihang Mountains, where vegetation is scarce now, were once rich and beautiful places with forests everywhere, clear mountains and beautiful waters, fertile land suitable for planting and water and grass for animal husbandry. As a result of destroying forest, deforestation, the local ecological environment were serious damage, make today we can see more desolate scene. With the spread of the Taklimakan Desert, the once prosperous Silk Road has been annihilated, and the once prosperous ancient trade route is now only a long sand. The ancient city of Loulan declined because of reclamation and blind irrigation, which led to the diversion of the Kongque River. The once glorious civilization of the western regions was cut off, leaving people with deep regret. Therefore, Comrade Xi Jinping has made a profound conclusion: "Ecological prosperity means civilization prosperity; ecological decline means civilization decline."^[10]Protecting the ecological environment is not only for the sake of a better life for the present generation, but also for the sake of leaving a production and living environment with blue sky, green land and clear water for future generations. This is a cause that benefits the present generation and will benefit the future generations. Under the scientific guidance of Xi Jinping's Thought on Ecological Civilization, let us respect, conform to and protect nature, make our generation's efforts to protect the ecological environment, and contribute our wisdom and strength to building a beautiful China.

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