

Brief Analysis of Foster's Ecological Marxism

Xinquan Fu^{1,*}

¹College of Marxism, Communication University of China, Beijing 100024, China

*Corresponding Author

Abstract: In the era of industrial civilization, the economy and society are highly developed and a large amount of social wealth has been accumulated, but at the same time, it has brought about irreparable ecological trauma. Foster in his book *Marx's ecology*, talk about "Marx's ecology" for the first time, he puts forward "ecological Marxism" point of view, and stood in the perspective of Marxist ecological theory and the nature of capitalism from the Marxism reveals to criticize capitalism, dedicated to social and ecologically sustainability, building ecological theory system of its own.

Keywords: Forster; Ecological Marxism; Materialism; The contemporary value

1. Introduction

"As man creates his environment, so environment creates man." Human beings are closely related to the environment. Perhaps within the next decade, rapid melting of the West Antarctic and Greenland ice sheets, pink-white snow in the Arctic, and permanent disappearance of glaciers in the Himalayas and elsewhere will be seen... In the midst of great changes in climate and ecosystems, we are facing a massive and the rapid transformation between man and nature -- the ecological revolution. Forster is a leading figure in contemporary Western Marxist ecology. In many people's opinion, Marx's works lack the elaboration of ecological thought, but Forster started from the study of Marx's doctoral thesis, analyzed the ecological thought contained in the 1844 Economic and Philosophical Manuscripts, the Communist Manifesto, and Capital, and considered ecology and Marxism from a new dimension. The materialist view of nature, the thought of "metabolism" in Marxist theory, and the thought that the contradiction and opposition between private ownership and ecological environment in the capitalist system can be resolved through the balance between man and nature provide a new way of thinking for the frequent occurrence of natural disasters and the transformation of social ecology in the current world.

2. Marx's ecological thought is the theoretical origin of Foster's ecological Marxism

Marx and Engels did not directly point out the "ecological philosophy", but their philosophical theories contain abundant ecological thoughts, which are mainly reflected in the "Dialectics of Nature", "Capital" and other books. Marx believed that to alleviate the ecological crisis, we should adhere to the materialist historical view. In "economic and philosophical manuscripts of 1844", Marx believed that "must rely on the natural life, human nature, whether it was man's inorganic body" that is, the human spiritual world and material life and nature is a unity of symbionts, man and nature are inseparable, Marx thought between man and nature is a kind of abstract sense of the social relations. In every historical process, there is an abstract internal connection between man, nature, and society. The development of human society cannot be separated from nature and human, labor or development, natural ecological cycle development, and so on. The connection between man, nature and society are only shown in different forms of existence. In the Manifesto of the Communist Party, Marx pointed out that the profit-seeking of the capitalist mode of production in the capitalist society accelerated the waste of natural resources and the destruction of the natural environment. Marx and Engels did not directly from the ecological crisis level criticized the capitalist system, is already aware of the human and the nature and the contradiction between the capitalist system, independent lifestyle under the capitalist system of production is bound to endanger the ecological environment, accelerate the arrival of the ecological crisis, socialism will replace capitalist society.

3. The main contents of Foster's ecological Marxism

The traditional view of nature is in essence the abstract view of nature, can't image the specific fundamentally solve the contradiction between man and nature, ecological theory of Marx and Engels is not clear but in his book "dialectics of nature", "das kapital", such as the book, using empirical scientific research from the root deeply analyze the cause of the deterioration of the ecology of capitalism. On this basis, Forster reinterpreted the ecological civilization thought of Marx and Engels, reflected on the capitalist mode of production and life, and explored a new road of sustainable development.

3.1 Construction of ecological materialism

Most western scholars think that Marx's "Prometheanism" reflects that Marx was an anti-ecologist, but Forster argues that western scholars essentially confused mechanical materialism with Marxist materialism. Foster's emphasis on Marx's view of nature thought is originated from his materialism and the main content of Marx's materialist view of nature and history, "Marx materialism is the issues of concern are the relationship between mankind and nature", and he walked along with the 17th - 19th-century materialism and scientific theory of natural ideas in the path, From Feuerbach, Darwin's evolution, Epicurus and other people's thoughts to elaborate and demonstrate, and then find the impact of these thoughts on Marx, and gradually demonstrate Marx's materialist view of nature.

Forster's systematic reconstruction of Marxist ecological theory is that he found some reasonable factors in the system of Epicurus' philosophy in Marx's doctoral thesis. In his inferences of infinite space and the finite world, Epicurus described that a world composed of atoms existed in the void world because of their different sizes, shapes, and sizes, which made them combine and separate in different forms and there were uncertainty factors and contingency factors. This idea, which was triggered by atomism, got rid of god's interference with man and nature, even mechanical materialism, but somehow got rid of determinism by explaining human birth, aging, illness, death, and changes in the sky through the motion of atoms. Marx gave high credit to Epicurus, who went beyond Democritus determinism to express a view of nature and dynamics.

In addition, Forster also said that in the Philosophy of Feuerbach in the System of Marx's philosophy, "the relationship of material practice between human and nature" also plays an important role. Hegel's view that "nature" exists as an absolute spirit, Feuerbach is opposed to his view, that his philosophy system depends on the objective idealism of a mechanical existence is not valid, is the philosophy of right and wrong, Feuerbach pointed out that the material world is real. Under the influence of Feuerbach, Marx realized that political economy could also solve the problem between man and nature. Forster believed that Marx established the theory of "the mutual relationship between human labor and nature" in the economic and Philosophical Manuscripts of 1844.

With the deepening of the research, Marx put forward the view of dialectical materialism on the basis of the theory of Hegel and Feuerbach, that practice is the most basic view of historical materialism, "the focus of materialism from nature to history -- without denying the former in the sense of ontological preexistence." Along with Marx and Engels in the "Communist Manifesto" discussed the materialism of history, at the same time also put forward about the ecological problems: ecological crisis and protection and land alienation caused by capital ecological problems. Forster took the time view of ecological materialism in Marxist materialist philosophy as the basis of his research and analyzed the close relationship between man and nature and the transformation of matter.

Forster also believed that the rapid development of modern natural science revolution promoted the development of Marx's ecological view of historical materialism in a sense, especially Darwin's evolution and Morgan's anthropology, which broke the view of "anthropocentrism".

3.2 The theory of "metabolic disruption"

"Metabolism" began in biology, proposed by Liebig, a German physiologist, and was later applied to agricultural soil fertility and extended to the whole organic world through the Journal Of Animal Chemistry, which was also studied by Marx. Under the capitalist system, the relations of production between urban and rural areas are in opposition to each other, which forms the alienation between man and nature, and then leads to the alienation of labor. "Metabolism break" exposes the nature of capitalist society alienation in essence, further proves that communism must replace capitalism, and also expounds the ecological thought in it.

First of all, starting from the ideological connotation of Marx, the development history of human society and the historical process of transforming nature in the development process of human society is comprehensively and systematically expounded. On this basis, the relationship between them is demonstrated to be interconnected, that is, human beings regulate and control the metabolic process between nature and labor activities. Whether manual labor in the agriculture society or the industrial age the mechanization of production, or the interconnectivity of entering the information age, collaborative work, all of this reflects our subjective initiative transformation and utilization of human nature to meet the needs of their own survival and development, it is precisely that each completed the process of metabolism between man and nature. The force of human labor acts on nature, and the effect of force is mutual. In the process of transforming nature, nature also acts on humans itself, changing the inner nature of human beings, and the cycle repeats.

In the capitalist system, land ownership and use rights are separated. In order to achieve the maximum return rate of land utilization, capitalists increase the use and development of land, but reduce the investment in land improvement. Landlords get differential land rent, leading to the "metabolic fracture" between people and land. In differential rent cause metabolism of "rupture", Anderson describe capitalism developed countries seek to maximize economically benefits, less environmental consequences, arbitrary waste, abuse, plundering natural resources, environmental pollution and serious waste phenomenon, thus produce regional disparities between urban and rural, urban produced by natural fertilizer could not return to rural land conversion, Instead, it was digested within cities, cutting off the normal metabolism between man and nature, and the capitalist state even expanded this greedy embrace of capital to the world.

Forster has been aware of this ecological metabolism rupture between man and nature, and further pointed out that the solution to eliminate the dissimilar state between man and nature is to eliminate the disjoint state in the process of material transformation, that is harmony between man and nature.

3.3 Ecological crisis theory

Forster believes that neoliberalism is the core value form of the 21st century, which is a kind of indoctrination of the ruling class to the society. Forster critically analyzed the Malthusianism of the time, the population may not be the most deadly threat to the biosphere, he further pointed out that the main source of the ecological the crisis is capitalism under the neoliberal policy, and the capital market is a very important source of ecological disaster.

"The capitalist system does not reverse the path of development and the structure of development with capital accumulation and industry is disastrous for the environment." Foster is very sure that the establishment of a harmonious and sustainable relationship between humans and the earth is not far-off. The way out for human society in the future is to start a long-term ecological revolution aimed at protecting the earth, in order to create a world that is essentially equal, ecologically sustainable and meets public needs.

Forster proposed that the 21st century will also be an era of ecological socialism. Forster believed that neoliberalism in western society was a form of value embedded in the capitalist market subconsciously by the state. In his revolution or Destruction? The art proposes two ways of ecological crisis: one is to set off a long-term ecological revolution to protect the earth and revive socialism. Human beings cherish the natural land, regard nature as an indispensable part of life, and complete the harmonious and sustainable development of man and nature; The other is a revolution against the absolute capitalism of the capitalist and the state, which is not yet clear.

Of course, Forster's ecological Marxism also has its limitations. For example, the theoretical system of Forster's ecological Marxism is not perfect yet, and the assumption of the innovation of the mode of production under the capitalist system is relatively idealistic, so it cannot solve practical problems from the practical point of view.

4. Conclusion

Foster combined the solution of ecological crisis with the reform movement of capitalist social system. High-quality ecology promotes high-quality products, and only high-quality products can meet the needs of high-quality life. Forster pointed out novel and important views when analyzing and exploring capitalist society, which will help us to further understand the causes of the natural crises and find solutions suitable for social development and national conditions of our country, so as to better

deal with the relationship between economic development and ecological protection.

References

- [1] K. Marx and F. Engels (1960). *Complete Works of Marx and Engels*. Beijing: People's Publishing House, vol.3,p.43.
- [2] K. Marx and F. Engels (1979) .*Complete Works of Marx and Engels (Vol.42)*. Beijing: People's Publishing House, vol.42,p.95.
- [3] X. M. Chen (2019). *Looking for the Theoretical Basis of Constructing Ecological Civilization -- Comment on J.B. Forster's revelation of the connotation and contemporary value of Marx's Ecological Theory*. *Red Flag Manuscript*, no.20, p.24-27.
- [4] J. R. Guo (2008). *Ecological criticism: A study of Foster's ecological Marxism*. Beijing: People's Publishing House, p.210-211.
- [5] John Bellamy Foster(2006). *Marx's Ecology -- Materialism and Nature*. Beijing: Higher Education Press, p.79.
- [6] Y. M. Xu (2007). *Research on Ecological Marxism*. Beijing: Social Sciences Academic Press.
- [7] Y. C. Wang (2006). *A review of Forster's Ecological Marxism theory -- the reconstruction of ecological materialism philosophy and ecological political philosophy*. *Marxist Studies*, no.12.
- [8] J. B. Foster(2006). *Ecological crisis and capitalism*. Translated by Geng Jianxin, Song Xing. Shanghai: Shanghai Translation Publishing House, p.13.
- [9] W. J. Yu and X. M. Chen (2002). *New Schools of Foreign Marxist Philosophy: Western Marxism volume*. Shanghai: Fudan University Press.
- [10] Y. P. Yu and X. M. Wu (2005). *Introduction to Classical Texts of Marxist Philosophy*. Beijing: Higher Education Press.
- [11] R.S. Liu (2004). *Ecological thought of Frankfurt School*. *Jiangxi Social Sciences*, no.10.
- [12] X. J. Du (2007). *On Forster's defense of Marxist Ecological View*. *Journal of Northeastern University (Social Sciences)*, no.7.