

Analysis of Marx and Engels' Views on Man and Nature

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Abstract: In recent years, environmental problems are particularly prominent, especially in the context of the global epidemic, the thinking about the relationship between man and nature has been raised to a new height. How to understand the relationship between man and nature is a question that idealism and materialism should answer, and it is also the starting point of Marxist philosophy. Marx and Engels put the relationship between man and nature into human practical activities to carry out research, and investigated the relationship between man and nature in various social and historical periods, especially the relationship between man and nature in capitalist society. On this basis, they foresaw the road of harmonious coexistence between man and nature, forming a complete and scientific theory of the relationship between man and nature. Marxist view of nature is a scientific truth that has been proved by practice. At the moment when the global ecological crisis is deepening, the only way to solve the ecological crisis is to constantly learn and adhere to Marxist view of nature. Therefore, this paper tries to discuss Marx and Engels' view of man and nature from the classic works of Marx and Engels, in order to better understand the relationship between man and nature and provide useful reference for the construction of ecological civilization.

Marx and Engels' discussion on the relationship between man and nature is one of the important components of Marxist theory. It has realized a revolutionary change in the relationship between man and nature, and has epochal significance for the reconciliation between man and nature, the liberation of man and the promotion of sustainable social development. In the face of the spread of the global ecological crisis, foreign scholars have also turned to the study of Marxist concept of nature, and learned from the theory and achievements of China's ecological civilization construction. Starting from the classical exposition of Marx and Engels, it is the theoretical logic to solve the contemporary ecological crisis and the practical approach to the construction of ecological civilization to deeply explore the relationship between man and nature.

1. Marx and Engels' definition of "Man" and "Nature"

In order to better understand Marx and Engels' view of man and nature, first we need to understand Marx and Engels' definition of "man" and "nature". "Labor, this life activity, this production life itself, is nothing more than a means for man to meet his needs, that is, to maintain the survival of his body. Production life is essentially a kind of life. This is the life that produces life. The full characteristics of a species, the kind characteristics of a species, lie in the nature of life activities, and the kind characteristics of a person are precisely free and conscious activities." [1] Marx believed that "human

characteristics" are free and conscious activities, and "free and conscious activities" are productive labor that human beings are engaged in different from animals. This productive labor is a direct reflection of human subjective initiative. Human beings have formed various relations of production and social interaction in the interaction with nature. It is precisely in the interweaving of relations of production and social relations that the essence of human beings is established, that is, the essence of human beings is the sum of social relations, and productive labor is the essential attribute of human beings. Marx overcame the defects of idealism and mechanical materialism, applied the viewpoints of historical materialism and dialectical materialism, and put human beings into the interaction between man and nature to examine the essence of man and his essential attributes, thus correctly understanding the relationship between man and nature, forming a scientific view of man and nature.

In a broad sense, nature refers to the objectively existing material world, including human society, inorganic world and organic world. In the broad sense of nature, man and consciousness are the highest products formed in the development process of nature. The narrow sense of nature refers to the natural world: inorganic world and organic world. The nature referred to by Marx and Engels includes human society and the natural world. "The whole nature we come into contact with constitutes a system, that is, the totality of various objects, and the objects we understand here refer to all physical existence." [2] Marxist view of nature is a view of nature that looks at the interaction between man and nature under the guidance of dialectical materialism and historical materialism, including nature in itself and humanized nature. The nature in itself includes the nature before the emergence of human beings and the nature that has not been developed and transformed by human beings after the emergence of human beings. The natural world is independent of human practice, and its movement is blind and uncertain.

Marx and Engels put human beings into production practice, which is the result of interaction between human beings and nature. Human beings change the natural world in practice, and the natural world also affects human activities and the development process of human society. From the perspective of the development process of the great nature, human beings themselves are a part of the great nature. In the process of transformation, the nature in itself gradually becomes a humanized nature. With the transformation of human beings, the scope of the nature in itself gradually shrinks, but it will not disappear. It always exists as the premise and foundation of human production and practice. In the production practice activities, human behavior has subjective initiative, and human beings give play to their subjective consciousness to transform the natural world. Marx and Engels' view of man and nature realizes the dialectical unity of man and nature, breaks through the defects of the old materialism and idealism on the relationship between man and nature, and is of great significance for the development of the current era. The Marxist view of nature puts forward that the reconciliation of the relationship between man and nature is the prerequisite for the realization of the all-round and free development of human beings, that is, the realization of a communist society.

2. Dialectical relationship between man and nature

First, the position of human beings in the great nature. From the perspective of the development process of the great nature, human beings and other animals and plants all come from the natural world. Engels wrote: "Human beings are generated by the differentiation of nature." [3] Both human beings and animals and plants are part of the great nature. The reason why human beings can be separated from the animal kingdom is that human beings have subjective initiative, accumulate experience and skills in the interaction with the great nature, and can inherit and pass them on. Human beings are part of the great nature, but they are not the masters of the great nature. Human production and life rely on the natural world, and they obtain the material materials needed for survival and development from the nature. As Marx said, "Nature is the inorganic body of human beings, human

beings live by the natural world, and human beings are part of the nature." [4]It is an objective fact that human beings come from the great nature, thus getting rid of the wrong view that God created human beings.

After the emergence of human beings, human society has been formed. In production activities, human beings play a subjective role to continuously understand and transform nature, so that nature can serve the development of human society. Although human beings can transform nature, it is by no means that they are the masters of nature, and they can try to use and rule nature at will. Proceeding from the objective fact that the means of production and life of human beings depend on the great nature, we should soberly realize that human beings and the great nature are a unity. Human beings should not arbitrarily grab too much resources from the great nature. We should establish a sense of common destiny and seek sustainable development with the great nature. Engels warned people: "We should not be too intoxicated with our victory over nature. For every such victory, nature has retaliated against us." [5] Facts have also proved that every self-righteous conquest of the great nature has resulted in the deterioration of human living environment and the constant extinction of animals and plants, which ultimately threatens the survival and development of human beings.

Second, the great nature is the basis for human survival and development. After human beings are separated from the great nature, they give play to their subjective initiative to engage in practical activities of material production. The great nature is the source of all material materials, providing mankind with rich means of production and life, as well as providing inspiration for artistic creation. "The nature and the external perceptual world are the materials that the worker uses to realize his labor, launch his labor activities in it, and use it and use it to produce." [6]The great nature is a resource supply station for the existence and development of human beings and human society, which continuously nourishes human beings. In the interaction with the great nature, human beings acquire material wealth and spiritual wealth to promote the progress and development of human society. The great nature is also the supply station of human spiritual food and spiritual wealth, as well as the inorganic world of human spirit. "Plants, animals, stones, air, light, etc., are part of the object of natural science and part of the object of art. They are part of human consciousness and the inorganic nature of human spirit." The changes of the sun, the moon and the stars, the vicissitudes of life, and the rise and fall of flowers and trees all inspire human thinking. The nature world provides material satisfaction and spiritual enjoyment for human beings in its unique form of expression.

Third, man and nature interact and develop harmoniously. The great nature and human beings are a unity. The endless demands of human beings on the nature are equivalent to the consumption of their own bodies. "We should not be too intoxicated with our victory over nature. For every such victory, nature has retaliated against us." If people realize this, they will understand that there is an interactive relationship between man and nature. From this point, it can be concluded that man and nature should develop in harmony. On the premise of respecting and protecting nature, we should seek the permanent and sustainable development of human society and the harmonious coexistence of man and nature. Promote the ecological development of nature with the achievements of human civilization, and promote the development and progress of human society with the rational use of the rich resources of nature. Adhering to the unity of man and nature is the basic viewpoint of Marxist view of nature.

Fourth, the relationship between man and nature and the development of human history. Marx divided human social history into three forms according to the relationship between man and nature. He pointed out: "The dependence of people is the initial social form. The independence of people based on the dependence of things is the second major form. The free personality based on the overall development of individuals and their common social production capacity as their social wealth is the third stage." [7] In a human dependent society, the level of science and technology is very low, and the ability of human beings to conquer and transform nature is relatively weak. In this case, the

possibility of ecological crisis is very small. The relationship between man and nature is in a primitive and unified state, and there is basically no contradiction between man and nature. This stage corresponds to slave society and feudal society. With the rise of humanism and the development of science and technology, the ability of human society to transform the great nature has been constantly improved. In the independent social form of human beings, the development of productive forces has led humans to mistakenly believe that they can conquer nature. At this time, there is a contradiction between man and nature, breaking the trend of peaceful coexistence between them. The great nature is constantly destroyed by human society and gradually evolves into an irreconcilable contradiction. This stage corresponds to the capitalist society. In the free personality form of human beings, human beings gradually realize that the two are a unity, and the great nature is the premise of human development. Human beings use the earth resources protectively, and human beings and the great nature are in a state of harmonious coexistence. At this time, human's moral, intellectual, physical, beauty and labor have been developed freely and comprehensively, and this stage corresponds to the communist society. In the process of labor, human beings affect the material exchange between themselves and nature through their own activities. The whole history of human society is the history of the continuous expansion, deepening, and development of human relations with nature. The relationship between man and nature is intrinsically related to the development of human society.

3. The implicative value of Marx and Engels' outlook on Man and Nature

The enlightenment of Marx and Engels on the relationship between man and nature, "the relationship between man and nature does not exist in isolation, it is related to the relationship between man and society and is manifested through the relationship between man and society; the relationship between man and society affects the relationship between man and nature, and the uncoordinated relationship between man and society will inevitably lead to tension in the relationship between man and nature." [8]Man and nature are a community of common destiny. They share weal and woe, and both prosper and lose. The Marxist concept of man and nature is a scientific guiding ideology, which has guiding significance and practical value in solving the contemporary ecological environment crisis, dealing with the development of man and nature, economy and society, and helping human beings build a beautiful homeland.

First, we should help mankind establish the value concept of ecological civilization. Since the emergence of human beings, in the interaction with the great nature, human understanding of the nature has been changing and developing. At first, human beings surrendered to the nature and remained in awe of the unknown natural phenomena, even superstitious. With the progress of productive forces and the development of science and technology, human beings began to ask for more resources from the great nature, and even tried to conquer the natural world by virtue of the so-called advanced technology. In many battles, although human beings have won temporary victories, they have also suffered from the wild retaliation of nature, resulting in a serious ecological crisis. In the successive disasters and reflections, human beings rethink the relationship between man and nature. They are neither masters and servants nor conquerors and subjugators, but a community of shared destiny and a harmonious symbiotic relationship. To establish the concept of ecological civilization, we need to reverse the dualistic opposition in our minds. While fully affirming our own capabilities, we also need to recognize the infinity and vastness of the great nature. We need to be respectful and caring, and love the earth as we love our eyes. When dealing with economic development and environmental protection, we should set up the development idea of giving priority to ecological protection, and develop the earth's resources in a controlled manner on the premise of conforming to nature, respecting nature and protecting nature.

Second, the construction of ecological civilization needs to take the Marxist concept of nature as

the guiding ideology. The report of the 20th National Congress of the Communist Party of China pointed out that respecting, conforming to and protecting nature must be planned and developed at the height of harmonious coexistence between man and nature. The symbiosis and common prosperity of the relationship between man and nature. In the process of achieving the second centenary goal, we should establish the concept of "man and nature are a community of life" from the perspective of ideology, fully protect nature in production and practice, comply with the laws of nature, appropriately obtain resources, achieve the development state of harmonious coexistence between man and nature, promote green development, and promote harmonious coexistence between man and nature. In practical activities, we should establish the development concept of respecting nature, protecting nature and conforming to nature, and regard nature as a part of human body. In the process of obtaining the means of production and living from the nature, we should follow the natural law, maintain the principle of moderation, and not be greedy. Marxism believes that human's subjective initiative and passivity are unified. The improvement of science and technology and productivity does not mean that human beings can transform and dominate nature without limitation. On the contrary, human's subjective initiative is restricted by objective natural laws. Therefore, human beings should give proper play to their subjective initiative, and their production and practice activities should conform to nature, natural laws, and the principle of moderation.

Third, it provides value guidance for coping with the global ecological crisis. Ecological crisis is the most direct manifestation of the contradiction between man and nature, which is in a state of opposition. Everything is changing and developing, and the opposition between the two can also be reconciled. To solve the ecological crisis, we need to establish an ecological concept of respecting nature, appropriately obtain means of production and life under the premise of protecting nature, change the development model, establish a development concept of the unity of man and nature, link the development of productivity with the protection of nature, and form a natural concept of integration of nature, man and society. The ecological crisis is not created by one or several countries, but the result of the joint participation of all countries in the world. Therefore, to effectively respond to and solve the global ecological crisis, all countries in the world need to jointly assume corresponding responsibilities and work together to achieve the goals of carbon peaking and carbon neutralization at an early date. Looking at the development level of all countries in the world, the development status of each country is different. In particular, developing countries have much room for improvement in achieving high-quality development goals. There is still a long way to go in dealing with economic development and environmental protection. Developing countries tend to take an extensive development path, sacrificing the environment for faster economic growth in a short period of time. This development model is undoubtedly killing the goose that lays the golden egg, and the consequences are the deterioration of the ecology and environment, and the unsustainable development of the economy. Marxism tells us to look at the development of science and technology from a dialectical perspective. The progress of science and technology can not only benefit human society, but also bring disasters to the earth. In response to the global ecological crisis, all countries should establish the concept of a community of shared future and work together to solve the ecological crisis.

4. Conclusion

With the progress and development of science and technology, the ability of human beings to transform the great nature is becoming more and more powerful, and the ways and means are becoming more and more diversified. The ensuing deterioration of the relationship between man and nature is also becoming more and more intense, especially since the COVID-19, which urges human beings to look more closely at the relationship between man and nature. "The more impossible it is

to realize the unity of oneself and the nature, the more impossible it is to establish the absurd anti natural view of the opposition between spirit and material, human and nature, soul and body." [9] Human beings come from nature and have an integral relationship with nature, co-existence and common development. Marxist view of nature adheres to historical materialism and dialectical materialism, sublates the thought of binary opposition, and looks at the position of human in nature from the perspective of human production and practice. The reconciliation between man and nature is a long-term development process. With the enhancement of practical ability, the enrichment of human nature and the improvement of ideological realm, man and nature will gradually reach a harmonious coexistence state. Marx and Engels' discussion on the relationship between man and nature is not limited to man and nature itself, but focuses on the cause of human liberation and the realization of communist society. Marx and Engels' view of man and nature is comprehensive and systematic, which provides theoretical guidance and practical reference for us to fully understand the root causes of ecological crisis and solve ecological crisis, and has practical guiding significance for building a beautiful China.

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