

Philosophical Reflections on “Low Carbon”

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Abstract: In the environmental system, human beings are not only the existence of pure natural attributes but also the existence of social property. It is the thinking of dialectical materialism to treat the nature, human and society as a unified system and grasp the natural environment issues from the moving of the fundamental social contradictions. Human beings’ practice in the environment is: human beings’ object consciousness; human beings’ practice and appropriate behaviour. The ultimate thinking of human beings: the two basic problems that people faced. That is “human beings’ reconciliation with nature and with themselves.

Keywords: low carbon; natural properties; social properties; humanized nature

1. THE STATUS OF HUMAN BEINGS IN THE ENVIRONMENT

Environment refers to the surrounding conditions. The contents of the environment are different among different objects and different subjects. From a macroscopic point of environmental protection, it refers to the earth. People think about the status of human beings in the environment from different aspects. The relation between human society and the environment is multidimensional. It involves human beings’ practical value and future value. This is a problem about the ultimate goal of human development. According to Marxism, the ultimate goal of human society is the liberation of mankind, and if we want to achieve this goal, we have to solve the two relationships: relations between human and nature, and relations among human beings themselves. These two relationships always accompany with the development of human society. People are dual existences relative to the environment. In the environmental system, human beings are not only the existence of pure natural attributes but also the existence of social property. In this way, people can do something in the environmental system, although this has to be positive or negative.

1.1 The status of human beings in the nature

Human beings have natural properties. The founder of Marxism has helped us to confirm our status in the natural world. He stressed that “man is a part of nature” (Marx and Engels, 1965, p.95). “Man is the direct natural existence” (Marx and Engels, 1965, p.169). “People themselves are the product of nature, they develop in the environment and together with the environment, (Marx and Engels, 1965, pp. 38-39)

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* Received November 15, 2009; accepted January 2, 2010

because “people live by the nature” (Marx and Engels, 1965, p.95). According to the natural properties, human is the creation of nature. Human’s activities inevitably restricted and controlled by the laws of nature. The survival and development environment for human beings is established and human must remain in awe of attitude in the natural environment. As Engels said, the interactions among the inanimate objects in the nature contain harmony and conflict; the interactions among the zoetic objects contain both the conscious and unconscious cooperation and the conscious and unconscious struggle. Therefore, we are never allowed to only stress struggle in the nature (Engels, 1984, p. 291). In this way, when human beings have a consciousness, we should take the conciliatory attitude on nature and get on well with nature. Even when people have to transform and make use of nature, we should remember, as Engels said “we together with meat, blood and brain are part of nature and exist in it” (Engels, 1984, p. 305).

1.2 The status of human beings in the society

Specific people, as part of nature, his limbs structure adapt to nature and have obtained the ability to exist as natural objects. At the same time, nature gives human a great brain so that they have consciousness of subject and object, which makes the separation of nature. The structure of limbs (except the brain) is generic and human’s brain is advanced. This is a pair of beautiful contradictions: the brain produce advanced needs with diversity and forward-looking, this conflicts with implementing these requirements all by human’s limbs.

Nature gives human the great potential brain. It has the ability to do complex thinking and can be unlimited upgraded. Human’s brain is the most magical substance in the world and it has huge advantages comparing to other animals. This has been proved by modern science. When we rejoice that nature has given us a wonderful brain, we also have to recognize that our other limbs have no advantage than other animals except the brain. Also, the speed of evolution between the brain and the limbs are not synchronized. The gods only create people on the half way. But luckily we have wonderful brain which can make up the deficiencies. Tool is a kind of compensation. In other words, people are inherent imperfect and they don’t have the ability to respond to the challenges of nature, so they have to resort to the tools. They have to change their surrounding environment into a world with man-made tools. People choose tools and use them to work, which makes people lead different lifestyles from other animals. Nature has given human unparalleled brain, and it has unlimited room for development. Meanwhile, the body (except brain outside) is not advanced, and the pace of development is relatively slow. Nature has created the magic conflicts on people. The greatest role of human’s brain is that it produces consciousness. It can produce both high demand which cannot be finished by his body (except the brain) alone and the desire of the comprehensive development for the future. At the same time, it has designed the way to achieve the high-level needs and desires, that is, the tools manufacturing and social lifestyle. These two paths make people going beyond the existence of natural things which are kind of preformed, monotonous, closed and fatalistic through their own creative activities. People are no longer a limited presence, but the existence of preformed, uncertain, open and creative. Because the essence of human is classic features which are built on social features—the nature of the life activities involves all characteristics of species, the characteristics of its class, and the free activity is just the characteristics of the class of human” (Marx, 1979, p.50). In fact, Marx tells us that survival is the basic issue. Different species have different forms of existence due to the differences of life structure and function properties. People developed from animals, so human and animals have extraordinarily similar characteristics of biology. However, the life structure of human is quite different from other animals. People don not have an organ specifically adapted to a particular environment, which resulted in inherent scarcity of their life functions.

In order to maintain its own survival and to keep the continuation of human life, human has to overcome the weaknesses of its own life structure, exert the benefits brought by the life structure, go beyond the biological survival style and survive and develop through this. This leads to the formation of the two features which have important influence on the development of human: the manufacturing and use of tools and sociality.

Marx and Engels said: "We live not only in nature, but also in society" (Marx and Engels, 1965, p.

322). People are conscious, purposeful and dynamic natural existence. This fundamental difference lies, "We are better than all other biological beings, because we are able to recognize and use the laws of nature correctly "(Engels, 1984, p.305). This is the difference and the opposite side between man and nature. There are many natural beings in nature, animals and plants, also non-living matter. If you cannot distinguish man from other natural materials properly, you cannot understand human's position in nature correctly. The differences between people and plants and lifeless materials are very easy to distinguish. The crux of the problem is the difference between human and animal, which often cause some controversies, because animals are also capable of producing, as some animals could build the nest. However, the animals only use the external nature, causing the change in nature. While people adopted the changes he has made to make the natural world service for their own purposes, to control nature. (Engels, 1984, p.304). In other words, people are different from animals. They are conscious, purposeful and dynamic natural existence. Labor is the concentrated expression of human's initiative. Labor has a social need and needs mutual cooperation, thus forming a certain social relations. So, human is also a social being, having social property. As Marx said: in the production, people have relationships not only with the nature, but also with themselves. If they do not combine in a certain way to take common actions and exchange their activities, they will not be able to produce. In order to carry out production, people have certain contact and relationships. Only with these social ties and social connections, people have their relationship with nature and they can carry out production. (Marx and Engels, 1965, p.486). Marx also said: society is the completed and essential unification of man and nature, it is the true resurrection of nature and it is people's realizing naturalism and nature's realizing humanitarianism (Marx and Engels, 1965, p.122).

1.3 Nature, people and society is an entirety

It is the thinking of dialectical materialism to treat the nature, human and society as a unified system and grasp the natural environment issues from the moving of the fundamental social contradictions. Mankind should recognize that the contradictions between man and nature close to the contradictions among people, they condition each other and help each other forward. We cannot recognize and solve the relationship between man and nature apart from social relations. The details of the disputes on the Copenhagen meeting have many aspects, but generally speaking the causing of the controversy is looking at environmental problems merely. Grasping human's double properties and dual status in the environment can avoid the two extreme recognizing in dealing with environmental problems: one extreme recognizing is they cannot see the close relationship between people and nature and treat nature as the enemy. They only want to ask for wealth from nature but do not want to protect nature. Or they are arrogant and conceited and believe that people can do whatever they want in nature, they are not affected by the natural law. With knowledge, technologies and tools, they exploit nature unbridledly, waste natural resources, destroy ecological balance and pollute the living environment, causing the development of human society is not sustainable. The other extreme recognizing also has a certain representation. They have seen the serious consequences of environmental crisis and have a certain understanding on the importance of environmental protection. But they ignore human's social properties and think that people are the same as normal animals. In their opinion, people can only obey the arrangement by the nature and they should return to the original state. They advocate the "zero growth" of human development.

2. PEOPLE'S PRACTICE IN THE ENVIRONMENT

With the development, people began to separate themselves from nature consciously, so the subject and object consciousness appeared. Also, they began to make their actions act on the object consciously, so the concept of practice appeared. Practice is the subject's act. When the subject discover that the object has impact on them, they deal with these influential things, phenomenon, the environment, contradictions and problems under the consciousness of practice, so that they can treat the object's

effects and implement the goals for the survival and development. This process is the practice. The things, phenomenon and the environment which are under the process of moving and changing often make some requirements on the subject. The subject has to make efforts to meet the needs of the object and solve the contradictions and problems of survival and development in order to achieve the goal of survival and development. People are the subject of practical action. Human is not only a thinker, a cognitioner, but also a practitioner.

2.1 Human beings' object consciousness

Before human realized that they can separate from the animals, human is a part of nature. The difference between subject and object is not exist. The consciousness about the relationship between subject and object is a product of the development of human's brain. Human's brain is stimulated constantly during the labor and practice. Also, through the labor and practice, the brain recognized that it is the subject and the other things are the object. The subject and object relationship between human and nature is formed during the process of labor and practice. Therefore, basically speaking, human's subjectivity is the also the practicalness, and people shoe their own independent, disengaged and free characteristics during the practice. Marxians thought practice is the process that human (the subject) take actions to transform the outside world (the object). Animals can only adapt to the environment passively, while people can change the world dynamically. In the relationship between man and nature, we must hold the Marxism opinion that human is the subject and nature is the object (Marx and Engels, 1965, p.22). People always in the thematic position in the interconnected and interactional network of relationships between human and nature. In addition, the relationship between man and nature is not only the relations between the subject and object, but also the value relations that the object meet the needs of the subject. Nature is the target of using for human. People's theoretical understanding of the independent law of nature itself just shows the cunning, the purpose is to make nature (whether as consumer goods, or as means of production) subject to the needs of human" (Marx and Engels, 1965, p. 393).

2.2 Human beings' practice

When people recognize they have destroyed the environment, they also recognize they can optimize the environment. We should not only see nature acts on human, but also have to see human's positive and dynamic reactions. Engels has criticized Feuerbach on this issue, he said: Feuerbach worships nature passively and he is prostrated before nature's splendor and omnipotence (Marx and Engels, 1965, p.360). Engels thought, in Feuerbach's opinion, nature and human are both abstract, rather than specific, therefore, Feuerbach's view of nature is also an abstract view. This view dissevers the unification of nature and social history. Marx also said: Feuerbach has grasped nature and human closely, but in his opinion, nature and people are just empty words. He cannot tell us any certain things on the real nature or the real human beings (Marx and Engels, 1965, p.334). Marx inherited the basic principles of materialism in Feuerbach's natural view and the reasonable parts of people's initiative in Hegel's idealistic view of nature. He proposed human beings' practice in the environment, that is, humanized view of nature. Marxism holds that the process of the formation and development of the relationship between man and nature is also human's naturalization process and nature's humanized process. Human's naturalization means people adapt to nature, it is also the process of human beings' evolution while transforming nature. Nature's humanized process means the process that people transform nature through labor and practice to make it adapt to people. Nature provides people with the possibility of survival and development, but to make this possibility into reality, we have to transform nature by production practice. Marx said: philosophers only interpreted the world in various ways, but the problem is to change it (Marx and Engels, 1965, p.6). Here, Marx reviewed the relationship between man and nature by practice view and drew the important conclusions of humanized nature. Humanized nature, also known as artificial nature and the second nature, is the part of nature which has been changed during human's practice. Humanized nature and natural nature constitute the so called natural environment together. And, the range of humanized nature is becoming larger and larger with the development of science, technology and productivity. Marx recognized that nature has been changed by people's practice since the appearance of human in his time. Aiming at Feuerbach's old materialism on nature viewpoint,

he said: the perceptual world around him is not existed since the beginning and it is not the consistent thing, it is the product of industry and social conditions, also the product of history. It is the outcome of the activities by generations (Marx and Engels, 1965, p.48). About humanized nature, Engels also pointed out that: people have changed not only the location of the plants and animals, but also the appearance and climate of the places where they live. They have even changed the plants and animals themselves, leading to the results of their activities can only disappeared along with the death of the earth. (Engels, 1984, p.18). However, human's practice to transform nature has both positive and negative effects since the very beginning. The practice can improve the living environment in the local in the near time, but it also causes the damage of environment and pollution. Especially with the development of science, technology and productivity and the continued increase in population, the situation becomes worse. Just as Engels said, "people receive the retaliation from nature." Therefore, people must face their various mistakes during the process of transformation and coordinate the relationship with nature. When we transform and develop nature, we also have to protect it and keep the harmonious development with it. Marxist practical humanized view believes that: nature formed in human history, also we can say formed in the course of the emerging of human society is the nature of reality. Therefore, nature formed by industries, despite the alienation form, is the true, anthropological nature (Marx and Engels, 1965, p.128). In other words, only after people's participation by practical activities, nature becomes the existence of people's object. Nature which has not been transformed by people's practice is meaningless to human beings. Therefore, when we talk about nature, it is neither the nature before the birth of human, nor the nature of other planets in the universe which we have not reached yet, it is the real nature of the earth which has been modified by people.

Therefore, the opinion, which thinks the pure nature, without human's intervention is the best, and advocates human beings should not interfere the natural environment is to cut off the relations between human and nature. If we do so, we will pay no attention to the hard living conditions, the frequent natural disasters, lack of medical treatment and transport facilities, behindhand education and other issues. Marx and Engels pointed out in the "German Ideology": at first, nature opposites to human as a completely dissident, it has unlimited and non-controlled power. The relationship between people and nature completely the same as the relations between nature and animals, and people have to obey its authority like cattle (Marx and Engels, 1965, p.35). If people give up the transformation of nature, they cannot build any object consciousness and the view of nature, even the existence as people themselves is disappeared.

Therefore, when we face environmental problems, we should not simply adapt passively or return to nature. We should follow the environmental rules and protect the environment actively in the development and transformation process. Ecosystem is the object of use and transformation. Human's activities are bound to change it. The important prerequisite is that people transform the environment under the premise of maintaining the balance of the entire ecological system and try to make it develop under the direction of higher biological productivity and more rational optimization. For those ecological systems which are not conducive to human's development, we should change it into a healthy ecosystem which is benefit to the development of human and environment. For example, the improvement of desert land, saline land and the land which is the source of natural epidemic. These all can improve the ecological environment in these areas, and help to build a new ecological balance.

2.3 Human beings' appropriate behavior

Marx regards practice as an intermediary to explain the relationship between man and nature. He believes labor leads to the connection between the subject and the object and the interaction between man and nature. In fact, it is the material exchange process between human and nature. Marx summed up this process as the material change between human and nature. He said: basically speaking, labor is the process between man and nature, it is a process that people cause, adjust and control the material change with nature by their activities (Marx and Engels, 1965, pp.201-202). The material change between man and nature includes the process that human get the resources from the natural world, and then make them into new forms, that is, the products, to satisfy the needs of human. Also, it includes the process of releasing the waste generated in the process of production and the wreckages of the productions after use

to the nature. This material change theory reveals the relationship between man and nature profoundly. All the contradictions between man and nature appear, develop, and settle in this process continuously. The extent and the scale of material change become larger and larger with the development of science and technology and productivity. Also, as time go by, the number of it becomes bigger and bigger. So, one day, it will exceed the limits that nature can bear. Especially with today's highly developed science and technology, the styles of production and life are mass production, mass consumption and a large number of obsolete. This makes either the scale or degree of material change between human and nature are beyond the historical record and reach the earth's carrying limit. Maybe this situation is unexpected by the founder of Marxism. Nevertheless, the underlying cause of this situation is that the material change between human and nature hasn't receiver reasonable control and adjustment.

Now, people have realized the essence of environmental problems is human's irrational development and utilization on nature and waste of resources. The irrational development and utilization on nature and waste of resources has not only destroyed the ecological environment and make the valuable resources becomes more and more scarce, but also change these resources into pollutants and poison human's survival environment. It can be said that where there is irrational and wasteful use of resources, there are also environmental problems.

Marx said: people should adjust the material change with nature reasonably and place the change under human and nature's common control, instead of looking it as the blind power to govern ourselves. People should carry out the material change by consuming minimal power and under the most worthy and the most suitable conditions to themselves (Marx and Engels, 1965, p.926-927). If human can do what Marx said, a variety of environmental problems will get solved fundamentally.

3. THE ULTIMATE THINKING OF HUMAN BEINGS

Human beings face two basic problems, also we can say, our world faces two major changes, they are human's reconciliation with nature and with themselves (Marx and Engels, 1965, p.603). "Human's reconciliation with nature" here refers to the relationship between human and nature, also we can say it refers to the relations between heaven and man, that is the environmental problems we are facing today. And "human's reconciliation with themselves" refers to the relationship among people, also we can say it refers to the social relations. One side is the relationship between heaven and man, the other side is the social relations; one side is the natural history, the other side is social history. Then, what's the relationship between the two questions? If we see these two questions separately and don't pay attention to the intrinsic link between natural history and social history, we cannot find the right way to solve the problem. Marx analyzed this situation and pointed out: all the previous conception of history either ignore the realistic basis of the history, or just see it as the incidental factors that have nothing to do with the history. This take the relationship between human and nature excluded from history, resulting in a confrontation between nature and history (Marx and Engels, 1965, p.44). Different from this point of view, Marxism believes that: history can be examined in two ways, it can be divided into natural history and human history. But these two are closely linked; as long as people exist, natural history and human history constraint on each other (Marx and Engels, 1965, p.20). Human's narrow relationship with nature constraints of the relationship among themselves, meanwhile, their narrow relationship with themselves also constraints of their relationship with nature (Marx and Engels, 1965, p.35). Therefore, the relationship between the two "reconciliation" is bound to be check each other and supplement each other. Treating the conflicts between human and nature and considering the causes of environmental problems proceeding from this point of view, we should see that the causes of environmental problems are not only the lag of the level of human's knowledge and practice, but also the unreasonable social relations and human activities. Therefore, the harmonious development between man and nature can only be accompanied by the change of the social relations among people. Another way is to say that people's control of natural ecology is essentially the control of their own human ecology. Therefore, to maintain the coordination of the ecological environment, first we must proceed from the fundamental interests of human to adjust human's social relations and improve the human ecology. That is to say, in order to solve

the environmental problems fundamentally, we have to bring it into the overall framework of the solution of social problems. Marx found the environmental problems of the capitalist society from the analysis of capitalism, he said: capitalist production makes the urban people in major centers become more and more preponderant, so on one hand, it gathers the social historical power, on the other hand, it undermines the material change between human and nature. That is to say, the component of the land which are consumed by the people with the form of food and clothing cannot return to the land again, which causes damage to the eternal natural conditions of the land's lasting fertility. In this way, it undermines the urban worker's health and the rural worker's spiritual life at the same time (Marx and Engels, 1965, p.552). Marx believes that the development of capitalism promotes the development of urbanization. The development of urbanization has destroyed the material circulation between human and nature in the agricultural society, resulting in environmental degradation. This harms the health of the workers greatly. Related to this, in the capitalist society, the predatory use of resources and the unequal distribution of wealth have increased the seriousness of the contradictions between man and nature, making the environmental problems more prominent. That's because, in capitalist society, the capitalists control and dominate most of the means of production. Their greatest pursuit is profit and they won't care the life and death of the working class and the environmental problems causing by the production activities, especially when the result does not appears directly. As Engels said, the minority capitalists who dominate production and exchange only care about the most direct beneficial effects about their behavior. The behavior's impact on the nature is the same. The Spanish owner of the plant factory burns the hillside forest in Cuba and finds the fertilizer in the wood ash which can be used for a generation for the highest profitable coffee trees. Later the tropical rain will wash away the humus without any protection, leaving only the bare rocks. But that has nothing to do with them. (Engels. 1984, pp.308-309). Marxism theory of thinking the environmental and social issues together has great significance for us to understand and deal with environmental issues. When we examine the relationship between man and nature, we must notice that the root of the incompatibility between human and natural environment is the disharmony of the relations among people themselves. Human's influence on the nature is actually carried out by specific subjects of society. These subjects of society put influence on the natural world in order meet their own interests. But other members of society have to bear the consequences of destruction and pollution of the environment. Therefore, to truly solve the contradictions between man and nature, we must first solve the contradictions among people. We cannot solve the conflicts between man and nature well if we do not eliminate the disharmony among people themselves.

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