

Research on Sustainable Development of China's Environment from the Perspective of Harmony between Man and Nature

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Abstract. The idea of Harmony between Man and Nature and the Marxist thought on ecology both advocate the respecting of nature and the pursuing of harmony between man and nature. The two theories throw light on our sustainable development, i.e. to respect the laws of nature, to build a resource-saving and environment-friendly society, to promote the harmonious coexistence of man and nature, and to take the road of sustainable development. The building of socialism with Chinese characteristics is inseparable from the excellent culture of the Chinese nation. The building of ecological civilization is inseparable from the inheritance and development of the ecological idea of the Chinese civilization. The Chinese traditional thought on Harmony between Man and Nature has rich ecological wisdom and connotation. It is of great significance towards the realizing of sustainable development and the building of ecological civilization that we fully understand and correctly evaluate the ecological ethics of Harmony between Man and Nature under the guidance of the Marxist ecological outlook.

1. Introduction

Over the past 40 years of reform and opening up, China's social building has undergone tremendous changes, but its rapid development has also caused environmental degradation. The problem emerged theoretically from our neglect of the idea of Harmony between Man and Nature from ancient China. Harmony between Man and Nature is the essence of the harmonious development of man and nature in the Chinese traditional culture. [1] The ecological outlook of Harmony between Man and Nature includes rich ecological awareness, which is mainly derived from the understanding of human dependence on nature and elaborates that man can survive and develop only by relying on nature. [2]

The idea of Harmony between Man and Nature has enriched the Marxist ecological outlook. The outlook conforms to the development trend of human civilization, and it is a strategic choice to overcome the dilemma of human existence in industrial civilization, to cope with the ecological crisis of contemporary man and to solve the problem of human social development. [3] The Party General Secretary, Xi Jinping attaches great importance to the enlightenment and application of the traditional ecological thought on Harmony between Man and Nature in solving the present ecological crisis, forming the practical outlook of modern ecological civilization and the concrete practice of building Beautiful China. [4]

2. Current Environmental Crisis in China

2.1 Serious Pollution of Fresh Water and Shortage of Water Resources

With an increasingly higher level of urbanization, economic development and populous density, China's demand for freshwater resources is also increasing, which leads to the shortage of freshwater resources. Many cities in China are faced with the problem of insufficient water resources. Besides, there are also problems of water pollution. Many enterprises discharge toxic and harmful pollutants into rivers. That leads to serious pollution of freshwater resources found available in rivers. The shortage of water resources and water pollution seriously restrict sustainable development in our country.

2.2 Constant Deterioration of Air Quality

Air quality is closely related to human life and human production. In both of them, we continuously discharge pollutants into our atmosphere. Carbon oxides, nitrogen oxides and sulfur oxides as well as some suspended particles and organic volatile matter, lead to increasingly worse air quality and serious air pollution, which is not conducive to sustainable development.

2.3 Shrinkage of Land Area, and Salinization & Desertification of Land Resources

China's land area is shrinking due to the effects of water-logging and subsidence, pollution and salinization, and soil and water erosion. In addition, there is a problem of land desertification. According to relevant researches, hundreds of millions of people in China have been affected by land desertification. The degradation of land area and the desertification of land resources have greatly reduced China's grain production and also posed a considerable threat to its sustainable development.

2.4 Shrinking of Forest Area, and Declining of Biodiversity

At present, the process of urbanization is accelerating. Although it has promoted the building and development of rural areas, the urbanization has reduced the area of forests and arable land to a certain extent. Environmental pollution and destruction are serious, and natural areas are becoming smaller and smaller, leading to the loss of habitats and the reduction of biodiversity.

2.5 Excessive Consumption and Extravagant Waste

The current prevalence of consumerism makes many people excessively indulged in luxurious packaging, huge residence space and luxurious innovation rather than the value of their use. Such irrational consumption aggravates the pollution of environment and the waste of resources. Toynbee, a famous historian, once said, "The greed of modern people will deplete precious resources and deprive their descendants of the right to exist." Therefore, if we want to control pollution and continue to exist, we should not only stop stimulating greed, but also curb it. [5]

3. Unity of the Idea of Harmony between Man and Nature and the Thought on Sustainable Development.

The ecological value found in the idea of Harmony between Man and Nature conforms to today's thought on sustainable development.

3.1 Unity of Value Orientation

The core of the idea of Harmony between Man and Nature is to pursue harmony between man and nature and its sustainability. It embodies the Confucian value-orientation of harmony between man and nature. Taoism believes that it is perfect human existence to grasp the human status in the natural world, to know the limits of nature itself and to use resources wisely. Only in this way can all the things in the world continue to develop circularly. It is very necessary that, while advocating the outlook on sustainable development, people should seek the wisdom of Harmony between Man and Nature. People's constant demand from nature is unfavorable to the efficient use of resources. We must protect our environment and curb our greed.

3.2 Unity of Connotations and Requirements

The connotation of a sustainable development strategy is to develop economy on the basis of dealing properly with the relation between man and nature, attach importance to both the present and the future, and create good conditions for development to come.

The idea of Harmony between Man and Nature advocates harmony and between man and nature and advocates human rational use of natural resources. Confucianism regards people as the mind of nature, and human thought is connected with all the things in the world, and people have an inescapable responsibility for everything in the world. Therefore, people should not only love themselves, but also take care of all the things. Wang Yangming pointed out, "Benevolence creates all the things between heaven and earth as a whole, and if there is anything missing, that is what he has not accomplished." That shows that man has a high status in nature, and he is responsible for taking care of all the things in nature.

3.3 Unity of Knowing the Relation between Man and Nature

The Chinese traditional idea of Harmony between Man and Nature holds that man should recognize his status in nature and not be self-centered, and that the relation between man and nature is one of harmonious coexistence. People have put forward the plan to solve the current problems of man and nature and achieved the transformation of their idea from conquering nature to adapting to and utilizing nature. The change not only satisfies human interests, but also reflects the value of human survival. Engels pointed out, "Man himself is the product of nature, and he develops in and along with the environment. We, including our flesh, blood and mind, belong to nature and exist in nature." [6]

Marx stressed, "People can live only on these natural products physically, whether they appear in the form of food, fuel, clothing or housing, and people live on nature".[7]Therefore, the outlook of Harmony between Man and Nature is consistent with the idea of sustainable development as far as knowledge of the relation between man and nature is concerned, and it is the transcendence of anthropocentrism. Nature exists before man. Man is a product from the development of nature to a certain stage.

4. Enlightenment from the Idea of Harmony between Man and Nature upon Environmental Sustainable Development

4.1 Respect the Laws of Natural Ecology and Promote Harmony between Man and Nature.

Upon relying on, utilizing and transforming nature, people should cautiously mind their acts, respect the laws and be focused on both overall interests and long-term ones. Xunzi said, "There is certain laws regarding the movements of nature. They neither exist because of the holy light of Yao nor disappear because of the tyranny of Jie." Xunzi's famous saying emphasizes the objectivity of celestial movements.

People should transform and utilize nature and overcome its own weaknesses and defects on the premise of following the laws of nature. Marx explicitly opposes human acts to destroy the natural world, and he warns, "A human plan that is not based on the great natural laws will only bring about disasters." [8] Engels repeatedly stresses, "Man should not be too intoxicated with his victory over nature".[9]The idea of Harmony between Man and Nature provides reference for the solution to China's current environmental crisis. If the world can be regarded as a unified whole according to the idea of Harmony between Nature and Man, ecological alienation can be overcome and the harmonious coexistence of man and nature can be achieved.

4.2 Build a Conservation-oriented Society and Implement Resources Recycling

The ecological ethics of Harmony between Man and Nature advocates frugality, which has important implications for us to change the past consumption modes. Excessive consumption modes, on the one hand, satisfy human desires, and on the other hand, they also cause the waste of resources and the destruction of environment. To achieve sustainable development, we must change the consumption modes, avoid the waste of resources and build a conservation-oriented society. That is also the

inspiration from the ecological ethics and the idea of Harmony between Man and Nature. To achieve sustainable development, we must realize the new transformation from relying mainly on increasing material resources consumption to relying mainly on scientific and technological progress.

Marx is the first great thinker who puts forward the idea of using scientific and technological means to realize the circulation of materials and reduce industrial waste. He said, "Chemical industry provides the most significant example of waste utilization. It finds new ways to make use of not only industrial waste but also other industrial waste." [10] Marx also advocates the use of scientific and technological means to invent and adopt new green production tools to reduce the generation of waste, reduce the consumption of resources and realize resources recycling.

4.3 Build an Ecological Society and Implement Sustainable Development

In order to protect nature, the ancient Chinese society formulated etiquette and regulations as well as policies and laws. Many scholars regard that as an effective way to practice Harmony between Man and Nature and fully affirm its ecological significance. [11] The idea of Harmony between Man and Nature provides a holistic way of thinking for sustainable development to maintain a dynamic balance of natural ecosystems and reduce environmental damage. The idea of Harmony between Man and Nature teaches us to practice temperance and not to violate the laws of nature, so as to achieve harmony between nature and man. Marx put forward the idea of building an ideal society with harmonious coexistence of man and nature, where man will reasonably regulate material transformation between man and nature.....By consuming the least natural resources possible, people can achieve the goal of harmony between man and nature. [12]

Both ancient Chinese philosophers and Marxism are exhorting us to love nature, be friendly to nature, and not demand excessively from nature. Sustainable development is the Chinese interpretation of Marxist ecological ethics. [13] To achieve sustainable development, we should not only deal with the relation between short-term interests and long-term ones, but also better coordinate the relation between economic development and environmental protection so as to coordinate between economic development and resources and environment.

5. Conclusion

Xi Jinping's Report at the 19th National Congress of CPC pointed out, "The building of ecological civilization is a millennial plan for the sustainable development of the Chinese nation. We must set up and practice the idea that lucid waters and lush mountains are invaluable assets. We must adhere to the basic state policy of saving resources and protecting environment. We must deal with ecological environment as we do with our life. [14] When it comes to achieving sustainable development, we should keep in our mind both the happiness of contemporary people and the possible destruction of natural environment. The idea of Harmony between Man and Nature in ancient China includes the ideas of unity of man and nature and harmony between man and nature. That is the important content of thought for achieving sustainable development. [15]

The wisdom found in the idea of Harmony between Man and Nature is consistent with modern ecological ethics. The idea is the philosophical foundation of thought on sustainable development. The studying and utilizing of the idea of Harmony between Man and Nature is conducive to the building of an ecological order for our contemporary society that meets the needs of both human and social developments. [16] To do a good job in protecting natural environment, we need to be filled with awe of and love for nature. Only in this way can we achieve sustainable development. This way is also the best inspiration to us from Harmony between Man and Nature.

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