The Historical Inevitability of the Chinalization of Marxist Ecological Thoughts

Ya-chun GAO¹, a,*

¹Ideological and Political Department, Beijing Wuzi College, Beijing, China

aEmail: gaoyachun_369@163.com

*Corresponding author

Keywords: Marxism, Ecological Thoughts, Chinalization, Historical Inevitability.

Abstract. The emergence of ecological issues compels people to find out theoretical solutions. Profound ecological thoughts abound in Marxist view of nature, history and practice, and therefore Marxist ecological thoughts are the primary source of the formation and development of the present ecological civilization ideology. Of course its chinalization can’t be separable from changing the epochal theme, corresponding with traditional Chinese ecological culture and instructing Chinese ecological civilization construction at present, all of which co-construct the historical inevitability of the chinalization.

The emergence of ecological issues compels people to find out theoretical solutions. Profound ecological thoughts abound in Marxist view of nature, history and practice, and therefore Marxist ecological thoughts are the primary source of the formation and development of the present ecological civilization ideology. Since 1960’s, western scholars have begun to change from ignoring Marxist ecological thoughts to re-scrutinizing Marx and Engels ecology and its values. “Marx’ Ecology: Materialism and Nature”, written by John Bellamy Foust, and “Natural Causes Essays in Ecological Marxism ”by James O’Connor, are both devoted entirely to reconstructing the theory system of Marxist ecological thought and recognizing its significance of the times.

We, however, can’t copy word for word their ecological thoughts interpreted by Marx’s and Engels’ works, which requires us to discuss the chinalization of Marxist ecological thoughts theoretically. As someone points out, the chinalization of Marxist view of ecology is one important part of Marxist chinalization, which means that we should persevere in Marxist view of ecology in building the ecological civilization in China.[1] The article thinks that the thoughts chinalization can’t be separable from changing the epochal theme, corresponding with traditional Chinese ecological culture and instructing Chinese ecological civilization construction at present, all of which co-construct the historical inevitability of the chinalization.

Changing the Subject of the Times Calling for the Chinalization of Marxist Ecological Thoughts

Any thought theory that wishes to retain vitality should keep abreast of the changing situation, reflecting features of the times and answering vital and realistic issues. The researchers of Marxist philosophy have long used to expound the classic historical materialism and dialectical materialism but neglected Marxist ecological thoughts. As Iwasa Shige, a Japanese scholar, states, socialist countries have paid such little attention to Marxist ecological thoughts that environmental disasters and problems are the inevitable result of this attitude. [2] Certainly, many factors contribute to the
phenomenon. In practice, Marxist chinalization not only consists of that of revolutionary theory, political theory and economic theory but also comprises that of ecological thoughts, which requires us to rediscover Marx’s and Engels’ works, especially ecological thoughts, and restore their due status and significance. Marxist chinalization means combining Marxism with China’s actual situations. It is one course of history and embodies so many evident stage features, which is determined by epochal themes and their transformation. To give an impetus to Marxist ecological thoughts chinalization, therefore, must be combined with China’s actual situations, reflecting the spirits of the times and responding to time themes and leading the trend of the times. Only in this way can we make the most of Marxist ecological thoughts to guide and promote our practice.

In the historical course of Marxist chinalization, we should master so exactly the features of the times as to establish its topics and contents. Nowadays, we are faced with the times subjects of peace and development as the ecological environmental problems bear upon whether our development can be sustained or not, with environmental destruction, ecological crisis, over consumption and resource depletion becoming the most complicated problem confronted with people all over the world, all of which implies that solving the ecological problems which concern all of us is of paramount importance. Accordingly, the subjects of Marxist chinalization must be changed and meanwhile it’s the transformation of the times characteristics that propels the chinalization development forward. Without doubt, we should give a new connotation to Marxist theories with the development of the times and annotate a completely new Marxist theory from an ecological perspective. For now Marxist ecological thoughts need to be excavated and constructed logically. As far as the chinalization of Marxist ecological thoughts is concerned, it may broaden our horizons and provide us a broader theoretical perspective and enrich and perfect propositions of Marxist chinalization. We shall keep pace with the times in studying and applying Marxist ecological thoughts because Marxist thoughts possess the characteristic of keeping abreast of the times. It’s necessary to carry forward the chinalization from China’s actual conditions and not to copy the thoughts mechanically. Only in this way can the thoughts be used to guide China’s practice.

Corresponding with Traditional Chinese Ecological Culture Demanding the Chinalization of Marxist Ecological Thoughts

Mao Zedong had emphasized that national characteristics should be integrated into Marxism and it should possess national forms. [3] Fortunately, ecological thoughts are plentiful in the traditional Chinese culture such as Confucianism and Taoism both of which advocate that men should be compatible with each other, nature and society. Chinese culture has throughout one basic kernel transcending time and space which is unity of heaven and man, [4] which is a masterly generalization of ancient Chinese ecological thoughts while the harmonious development between man and nature is also the heart of Marxist ecological thoughts. Consequently, it is agreement of unity of heaven and man with the harmonious development between man and nature that is the prerequisite for the chinalization of Marxist ecological thoughts.

In respect of the relationship between man and nature, Lao-tzu, as representative of Taoism, said that man must conform to the earth, earth to heaven, heaven to Tao and Tao to nature, which reminds that while transforming nature, we should correctly grasp the natural law and deal with the relationship between man and nature in order to
achieve nature of law. And Chuang-tzu advised the idea of the unity of nature and man (Chuang-tzu, Mountain Forest), meaning that man is integrated into nature. And Confucius, representative of Confucianism, thought that the wise find pleasure in water, the virtuous find pleasure in hills; the Wise dynamic, the virtuous static; the wise happy, the virtuous long-lived,[5] all of which remind us to love nature and live in harmony with nature and become kindhearted. Likewise, Xun Zi also said that heaven and earth are the root of life, meaning that nature is fundamental to our survival. It is on the basis of the thoughts of the above-mentioned sages that Tung Chungshu advanced that heaven and man combine into one, (Chunqiu Fanlu) which is the thought of unity of nature and man that is the major belief of the Confucian and Taoist sages. Although Confucianism is different from Taoism in expression, both of them emphasize that man and nature are interdependent and inseparable and that nature is fundamental to us. If people want to survive and develop, it’s necessary for us to live in harmony with nature.

In respect of the relationship between man and society, peace is the supreme value in ancient China. Confucius said that a gentleman seeks harmony but not uniformity and a villain seeks uniformity but not harmony. As Confucius disciple, You Ruo also expressed that no matter what it is, harmony is what matters. (Analects of Confucius) At the same time Mencius held that Heaven's favorable weather is less important than Earth's advantageous terrain, and Earth's advantageous terrain is less important than human unity. (Mencius) As a consequence, Confucius disciples held that the key to the enforcement and application of rites is to insist that harmony is most precious. On the one hand Lao-tzu also advocated harmony and held that everything has the negative in and contains the positive and they are in the harmony, which affirms the significance of harmony; on the other hand Lao-tzu repeatedly emphasized the idea of non-contention in Dao De Jing. Lao-tzu said he had three treasures, namely kindness, thrift and no dare for the world first, [6] the last of which is to warn people not to compete, and to grasp and conform to natural laws while dealing with the relationship between man and nature. After thousands of years of accumulation and deposition, this sense of human unity has imperceptibly been rooted and constituted the keystone of Chinese culture.

In summary, the thought of unity of nature and man in ancient Chinese culture, which is interlinked with Marxist ecological thought, is the foundation of the chinalization of the latter. As a result, it’s necessary for us to promote these excellent ancient Chinese ecological thoughts to Marxist ecological thought in order to enrich and develop the latter and strengthen Marxist ecological thoughts with Chinese characteristics.

**Instructing Chinese Ecological Civilization Construction Requiring the Chinalization of Marxist Ecological Thoughts**

Although great achievements in the construction of socialist modernization in China are unprecedented, the worsening deterioration of ecological environment is a high price for them. In 600 cities in China, more than 300 cities are lacking in water and over 100 cities seriously lack water. Throughout the country, 300000000 rural people have no standard water to drink and every year water shortage causes the loss of 350 billion Yuan to our industry and agriculture. [7] Nowadays in China, the ecological situation is becoming more and more serious, which indicates that it’s extremely urgent to protect environment and improve ecology and that constructing ecological civilization is the inevitable choice for China. However, for a long time, the whole nation’s ecological awareness and ecological civilization needs to be enhanced and people are less aware of the need for ecological protection. At the critical moment, the importance of Marxist
ecological thoughts chinalization is self-evident. The chinalization, as the system project which combines basic principles of Marxism with China’s practice, can’t be separable from the chinalization of Marxist environmental thoughts which is a significant enterprise to be developed. Whether we push forward the project of Marxism innovation of modern China or construct the environment-friendly society, the chinalization of Marx’ environmental thoughts is urgently needed.[8]

The chinalization of Marxist ecological thoughts can provide the theoretical instruction for currently constructing the ecological civilization in China. As Engels pointed out in Anti-Duhring, man, who lives in the environment and depends upon it, is the product of nature. [9] We shouldn’t cope with the relationship between man and nature in the way we conquer different nations, as if we were onlookers. All of our power of dominating nature relies on our being more capable of properly applying the law than other animals. [10] The statement of the relationship between man and nature of Marx and Engels shows that man is the product of nature at a certain historical stage, is only one part of nature and can’t be separated from nature. Man must properly handle the relationship and live in harmony with nature.

The chinalization of Marxist ecological thoughts also points out the objective of struggle for our current ecological civilization construction. Marx demonstrated that history can be reviewed from two different aspects and it may be divided into natural history and human history both of which are inseparable and interactive as long as humans have existed.[11] This communism, which as the completed naturalism, equals to humanitarianism and as the completed humanitarianism, equals to naturalism, is the real resolution to the contradictions between man and nature, man and man, and to the conflicts between being and essence, objective and self-confirmation, liberty and certainty, man and man.[12] So we engage in the economic construction and the ecological civilization construction, the ultimate aim of which is to realize communism rather than the construction itself.

For the first time, the report of the Eighteenth National Congress of the CPC dwells mainly on the ecological civilization to which great importance is attached in view of overall layout. It shows that the CPC and the Chinese Government consciously endeavor to cope with and get rid of the ecological crisis and that the chinalization of Marxist ecological thoughts possesses the character of keeping pace with the times. As David Geriffin, an famous American post-modern thinker, comments, the Chinese Government is the first one to regard the ecological civilization as the main goal of the government. Although there is still a big gap between announcing the goal and actually taking measures to realize it, the announcement is in itself an important step.[13] The chinalization of Marxist ecological thoughts not only helps to promote the process of the chinalization but also contributes to the early realization the ecological civilization in China. The theoretical achievements of the chinalization will play a big role in solving China’s real issues. In a word, contemporary China urgently needs Marxist ecological thoughts and calls for its chinalization.

References