

Multidimensional Analysis on Forming of Pepper's Eco-socialism

Yuanhong Lin

Marxism Department of China West Normal University,
Shida Road No.1, Shunqing District, Nanchong City,
Sichuan Province, China
Email: lyhok2001@126.com

Abstract

Pepper's Eco-socialism is an attempt to seek ways of solving ecological crisis, which has a significant effect on dealing with the ecological issues/ problems now confronting the global world. For a better understanding on thoughts of Pepper's eco-socialism, this thesis is written/ conducted from three aspects: the times background, the historical basis, and the theoretical foundation in forming of Pepper's eco-socialism.

Key Words: Pepper, Eco-socialism, Reasons of Forming

David Pepper's Ecological marxism does not grow from thin air but is formed on a historical background and realistic foundation. A multidimensional analysis on the underlying reasons for the forming of Pepper's eco-socialism not only leads to a better interpretation on his thoughts, but also is of theoretical significance and practical significance for dealing with the ecological problem of today's world.

1. Ideological Forming of Pepper's Eco-socialism - Background of the Times

1.1. The changes of modern ecological environment - Rising global ecological crisis

The latter half of the twentieth century is a period featured by high-speed development of industrial civilization and growing ecological crisis. While industrial civilization has created unprecedented powerful productivity, the development model of high expenditure, high input, high pollution and high consumption severely damaged the global ecological environment, also imposed huge crisis upon human survival and development. The global forest is disappearing at a rate of 18 million hectares per year. Continuous gas emissions produced by the factories to the atmosphere aggravate greenhouse issue and cause wide-area respiratory diseases. The industrial wastewater is a big threat to human health for it heavily pollutes domestic water. The overuse and excessive emissions of chemical fertilizers, pesticides, waste water lead to the soil degradation for a large number of land, in different degrees. The chemicals used in industries and nuclear leak is threatening human survival and development.

1.2. The Vigorous Development of the Green Movement

The capitalist's deepening eco-crisis made the western have a strong sense of urgency. The idea of "the fear of life" presented by Albert Schweitzer, Rachel Carson's *Silent Spring* and the Rome Club's *The Limits to Growth* offered human beings a wake-up call.

The pressure of eco-crisis, the enlightenment of the intellectual, triggered a vigorous development of the green movement. Massive environmental movements exploded. Simultaneously, Ecological Europe, Greenpeace, Friends of the Earth, Guardian of the World and other international organizations and ecological groups have been set up. The green movement fought against deforestation, atmospheric pollution, animal abuse, etc., for purpose of developing ecological economy, safeguarding ecological environment and equal rights, opposing nuclear proliferation, maintaining world peace.

Under the impetus of the green movement and the ecological organizations, western countries set up the green parties in succession for the issue of protecting the environment, such as the New Zealand Value Party, the British People's party, and the green political organizations of Germany, Italy, the Netherlands, Japan and other countries, etc. Green Party politics criticizes traditional politics for its ignoring the finiteness of natural resources and blindly pursuing economic growth, advocating that ecological problems can be solved via concept revolution and organization reform. In 1987, 300 delegates from around the world participated in the International Green Party congress held in Sweden. In 1992, the United Nations passed and issued Declaration of the Human Environment and the Agenda 21. In 1997, more than 150 heads of state, heads of government and environment ministers attended the conference on environmental protection in New York, marking the ecological environment protection a significant mission in establishing the new international order.

1.3. The hypocrisy of capitalist countries in solving the ecological crisis – their double standards

Since the industrial revolution, what the capitalist countries have achieved is at a cost of a large number of earth's resources. The developed countries, having 23% of the world's population, consumes 75% of the world's energy, where the emission of dioxide and CFCS accounts for three quarters and 90% of that in the whole world. These data fully illustrate the root cause for the deteriorating ecological issues facing today is that the rapid development of the capitalist countries, in a way that no matter whatever it takes. (at any price, at all costs) Therefore, the capitalist countries should bear the main responsibility.

The United States and other developed capitalist countries have gone through many big environmental pollution incidents, and they realized that the ecological problems are getting worse and worse even reached a quite serious degree, and they have taken measures to control, improve and compensate. But due to its inherent mode of production, it can't be truly and fully sincere to protect the environment. The Kyoto protocol requires the industrial developed countries should take the lead in cutting emissions, however, the United States, having one fourth of world's greenhouse gas emission, unilaterally withdrew from the agreement claiming that there is "fatal flaw" existed in the Kyoto protocol. In the 20th century, the destruction of the ecological environment causes Tremendous damage to humans, among which there are ten worst pollution events, and most of them occurred in the United States, Britain, Japan and other developed capitalist countries. Facing severe environmental pressures, they transferred industries with large pollution and high resource consumption, especially the low-end manufacturing, to developing countries. They even

transferred their waste exports to developing countries, which led to a globally ecological imbalance.

1.4. Traditional Socialist Pattern Fails in Practice

In the late 1980's and the early ninety's, Drastic Change in Soviet Union and East Europe revealed deficiencies in their socialist model. The socialist model of the former Soviet Union exaggerated "person's subjective initiative", regarded themselves as the master of nature, and believed that The ability of human's reforming the society is infinite. Guided by this one-facet ideology, they blindly expanded collective production on one hand, as a result, the agricultural practice encountered huge setback; On the other hand, in order to rapidly develop heavy industry, a massive pollution and serious environmental degradation occurred beyond human's expectation. Some capitalist scholars believe that this is the failure of socialism, communism, as well as the marxist ideology. Some western marxists believe that socialism in the former Soviet union is not the real socialism, and called it "authoritarian country", "national socialist society", or "bureaucratic socialist".

2. The historical basis for Pepper's Eco-socialism

2.1. Criticism on the capitalist mode of production - the capitalist mode of production is the root of ecology crisis and the capitalist system is unable to fully solve the ecological crisis.

The capitalist mode of production aggrandizes people's desires and fosters their nature of selfishness and greediness. When the distribution of wealth turns to be more and more difficult, the nature surely becomes an inexhaustible source of wealth. Despite the capitalist countries have recognized the worsening of ecological problems, their principles of "profit first" and "selfishness" made them hesitated in taking measures. Being unwilling to restrain the production and consumption and give up the profit, in order to protect their own economic interests, they refuse to fulfill their obligations of improving the global environment. What they have done deviated from the consciousness confirmed capitalist's hypocrisy on environmental protection, and fully demonstrated that, under the capitalist system bearing the nature of pursuit of high profits, ecological crisis cannot be truly and thoroughly solved.

2.2. Criticism of negation on Socialism – the Soviet Socialist model fails in practice has nothing to do with the deficiencies that Socialism has from birth.

Pepper thinks that the Soviet Socialist model is just a form of socialism when exploring its way of developing, and it cannot be regarded as the representative of the socialist system. On one hand, the environmental problems of the former Soviet Union yielded because they only focus on "usefulness" when developing the productivity, this is a revelation of their one-sided understanding of the basic principle of Marxism/ Marx doctrine; On the other hand, they did not behave well in dealing with the nature, which made the ecological environment be severely damaged; In addition, some people questioned and resisted the government by utilizing environment problem as an excuse. Pepper, therefore, believes that it is not the congenital defects of socialism that makes the failure. Ecological socialism guided by marxism, is able to avoid the deterioration of the ecology, for it rethink profoundly on the traditional socialism in the perspective of ecology.

2.3. Criticism of environmentalism – negation on how environmentalism, theoretically based on “liberalism”, treat nature in a way of anthropocentric and its conservative attitude toward social reform.

Pepper criticizes the view that environmentalism (based on liberalism) has insisted – “strong anthropocentrism”. Environmentalists believe that the value of the environment lies in that it can bring benefits to mankind, and that free-market under capitalist system guarantees individual’s unlimited freedom in pursuing interests. Therefore, they just legislate the environment, strengthen the administration or find causes and solutions in technical factors, as a result, only to adjust the relation and ease the tension between man and nature. Their pursuit of profits makes it impossible to resolve the contradiction between “controlling the nature” and “limiting the growth”, thus the aim to truly protect the resources becomes difficult to achieve. The needs of human beings are not infinite, they should be satisfied rationally and selectively by man.

2.4. Criticism of ecologism – negation on its view of Eco-centrism and its tendencies of anarchist politics.

Pepper thinks people can neither be the master of nature, nor do as what ecologists advocate – to give more concern to nature than human, for all is centered on ecology. He pointed out that human beings cannot be anthropocentric, humans could only observe nature from the perspective of human consciousness, and this kind of “weak” anthropocentrism is beneficial to human ^[1]. Pepper further criticizes the ecological ideas about causes of ecological crisis, pointing out that the ecological activists didn't realize it is capitalist mode of production that caused the ecological crisis. Instead, the ecological activists, they just blamed the social ruling structure formed in the historical process and human’s consciousness in ruling nature; they said no to the idea of “one nation”, and believed in local autonomy and decentralization, even they advocated an anarchist way of coping with environmental problems – “commune and cooperative, strike and boycott, non-violent demonstrations, violence against property not human beings” ^[2], and other forms of “direct action”. He stressed that the overall goal for human progress achieved through rationality, science, industry and social justice must be infused with a sort of ecological meaning ^[3]. Such a goal cannot be achieved in a capitalist society and an anarchy mode.

3. The theoretical basis for Pepper’s Eco-socialism

3.1. The ecological theory of Marxism

Pepper learned a lot from Marxist ecological thought, especially Marx's theory of man and nature and Marx's theory of reforming capitalist system. The ecological theory of Marxism is the main theoretical basis for the forming and developing of Pepper’s ecological socialism theory.

3.1.1. Marx's theory of man and nature is the starting point of Pepper’s Eco-socialism.

First, the relationship between man and nature, in essence, is taking on the relation of dialectical unification. Man is the product of nature. And nature is closely bound up with human’s survival and development. Human and nature are indivisible. Second, man's labor (the mode of production) transforms

natural resources into their own products, and throws waste emissions back to nature in the process of transformation. When human's plunder and destruction on natural resources and ecological environment is beyond the limits that nature can bear, ecological crisis is created and nature will backfire. Third, society, man and nature constitute a complete unity. As social quality is the basic quality of human beings, social relations gradually formed in the process of human's laboring and distributing the fruit of labor. As human labor is continuously acting on the nature, the "existing nature" transforms into the "humanized nature", the socialized nature. And Man can't survive and develop when separated from this socialized nature. "The nature interpreted as abstract or intentional substance, the nature being isolated from man, as a matter of fact, means nothing to our human beings." ^[4]

3.1.2. Marx's discussion about reforming the capitalist system is the cornerstone of Pepper's Eco-socialism.

Capitalism seriously hurts the relationship between man and nature in its industrial civilization. The private ownership production mode of capitalism drives capitalists to pursue profits, which therefore determines the capitalist system. The capitalist system maintains the capitalist mode of production, and ensures the capitalists get more profits. Under the capitalist system, they can plunder means of production as much as possible, which leads to severe destruction of natural environment. Under capitalist system, big central cities gather the motive force of social development. At the same time, these cities consume a lot of land, heaven the burden of nature, and worsen the environmental situation. The survival and development of human beings is hugely threatened during the process of 'intervening' nature. To solve ecological problems, therefore, the system of capitalism should be reformed. The capitalist system should be replaced by social revolution, then the capitalist nature of production can be completely uprooted. The communist society should be established, for the purpose of solving ecological crisis in a fundamental way. Thus, man, nature and society can harmoniously exist under the same roof.

3.2. The Critical theory of the Frankfurt school

Pepper learned from and carried forward the critical theory of the Frankfurt school, which has a profound significance for the formation and development of Pepper's ideology.

3.2.1. Scholars of the Frankfurt school criticized capitalism, believing that in capitalist society, relations between man and nature, man and man, man and society dissimilated. The human beings worship the high-speed development of science and technology, as a result, man became unable to make judgment on how nature can bring damage to the earth. Also, man became greedier and crazier plundering natural resources, which caused the global ecological crisis. Science and technology did not make human beings be the master of nature, otherwise, they were punished by nature due to their recklessness and misbehavior. Technical rationalism has failed to emancipate the mind, instead, making man the target enslaved by technology. The Frankfurt school advocated that for fundamentally preventing the ecological crisis, we should build an ecological socialist society where man and nature develop harmoniously.

3.2.2. Scholars of the Frankfurt school analyzed and criticized the technical rationality, claiming that the rapid development of science and technology has greatly improved the labor productivity and the gross fortune in the contemporary society, but also led to a new ruling form - the technical rationality. Thus, the science and technology, which should stand neutral, became difficult to maintain its tradition - being neutral, and it started to carry some characteristics of totalitarianism while it was being alienated. By constantly fulfilling man's material needs and providing a variety of entertainments, it eliminates the negativeness in man and their resistance to the society. Technology evolves from a phase of "power for man's liberation" to a phase of "shackle for man's liberation".

3.2.3. Scholars of the Frankfurt school further criticized Consumption Alienation. They think that, under the capitalist system, labor is alienated, so is consumption. People completely indulge themselves in material, then, material and money becomes the measurement for man's worth. The temporary joy existed in consumption let them feel the subjectivity in an alienated process of laboring, also, makes a compensation for their lacking of inner happiness. This kind of alienated consumption plunders and wastes natural resources, escalating the tensions between man and nature.

References:

[1] Foster. *Ecological Crisis and the Capitalism* [M]. Shanghai: Shanghai translation publishing house, 2006.

[1] [2] [3] [English] David pepper. *Ecological Socialism: from the Deep Ecology to the Social Justice* [M]. Jinan: shandong university press, 2005.41.325.11.

[4] Marx. *Economic and Philosophical Manuscripts of 1884* [M]. Beijing: people's publishing house, 2000.
116