

Original Paper

China's Response to Green Development: The Theoretical Characteristics and Significance of the "Two Mountains"

Theory

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Abstract

The severe ecological situation has become a global issue, which concerns the fate of mankind. At present, in order to comply with the trend of green development, change the development mode and build an ecological civilization-oriented country, the "two mountains" theory was conceived. The theory establishes the ecological goal of a Better Life, has a distinct ecological consciousness, and coalesces the dialectical wisdom of Marxist eco-philosophy. It is a new height of The Communist Party of China's ecological civilization theory. Therefore, sorting out the historical logic of the birth of the "two mountains" theory and examining its essential provisions are of certain value and significance for deepening the understanding of the relationship between human beings and nature, steadily promoting economic ecology and ecological economization, and opening up new horizons for the study of Marxist Eco-philosophy.

Keywords

"Two Mountains" theory, Eco-philosophy, environmental protection

"Lucid waters and lush mountains are invaluable assets", that is, the theory of "two mountains" is an important thesis and achievement of The Communist Party of China in the construction of ecological

civilization. It is a contemporary response to the widespread predatory development model and has become the “Chinese wisdom” of global ecological governance. The term “invaluable assets” refers to the green development and economic benefits obtained by human beings through the development concept of respecting and responding to nature. The “two mountains” theory is a product of the times, based on the green development, and ecological development of China’s needs of the times, adhering to the important theoretical achievements of the Chinese road.

1. The Historical Logic of the Birth of the “Two Mountains Theory”

“Theoretical thinking in every era is a product of history. (Note 1) The “Two Mountains” theory was born as a product of exchange and dialogue with global development based on China’s reality. It embodies the trend and spirit of the times and is China’s response to the current situation of resource depletion and ecological crisis. There are two main socio-historical foundations on which the “Two Mountains” theory was born.

First, the trend of the times of green development. The impact of modern science and technology is two-sided: first, modern science and technology support the huge modern industrial system and make human beings a powerful power “over” nature, and under the hostage of capital and modern science and technology, the powerful power of human beings is transformed into an effective means to plunder natural resources, and cause three global crises that seriously affect human survival and development. The global problems of environmental degradation and resource depletion prove that “our war against nature has shattered the planet. (Note 2) So in the face of the issues of the times, countries must respond to the times: for example, the White House is pushing for green agriculture (Note 3); The EU has set stringent environmental standards and carbon neutrality targets based on the European Green Deal (Note 4); Korea has made “green growth” one of its national strategies (Note 5); Japan even introduced strict waste separation policies (Note 6); This shows that the wave of the times of “green development” is overwhelming. The birth of the “Two Mountains” theory is a Chinese response to the trend of the era of “green development” and a proactive move to provide a Chinese answer to the question of “modernity”.

Second, the development model contradicts with scientific development. In the initial stage of economic development in China, in order to create huge economic benefits, it is inevitable to consume resources and pollute the environment at any cost, thus giving rise to a series of ecological problems. Especially after the reform and opening up, my country’s economy ushered in a stage of take-off, and environmental issues were ignored to a certain extent under the joy of gaining huge material wealth, so several environmental issues were superimposed, and finally broke out in a concentrated manner at this stage, which shows that my country’s development model is at the same time Contradictions in scientific development are prominent. Therefore, it is necessary to improve the outstanding contradictions between the two and achieve green development. First of all, China’s traditional economic development model is in urgent need of transformation. This model does not rely on the

efficiency improvement brought by technological innovation, but simply relies on the expansion of resource input to achieve efficiency improvement. Such an approach is bound to harm the ecological environment and cause resource depletion. So establishing the “green development” concept, and promote the optimization and upgrading of industrial structure has become a necessary measure. Secondly, the environmental problems that are concentrated at this stage need urgent treatment. Resources provide a guarantee for economic development, but if resources are exploited and used unreasonably, irreversible damage to the environment will be caused. The impact of a “scarred” ecological environment on economic development is continuous, and its destructive consequences on the economy are foreseeable in the long run. So, “Do not revel too much in our victory over nature. For each such victory, nature has retaliated against us. (Note 7) Thus, it is urgent to improve the development model and the outstanding contradiction of scientific development, to establish a long-term development of the overall situation, and to achieve “green” development. It can be seen that at this stage, the shortcomings of China’s traditional development model have been highlighted and have a negative impact on sustainable development. The “Two Mountains” theory was born as a response to the current situation in China, exploring the dialectical relationship between the development model and ecological environment, forming a strategic idea of ecological civilization and providing a reasonable path for the construction of ecological civilization in China.

2. The Connotation of the “Two Mountains” Theory

2.1 The “Unity” of Man and Nature

The theoretical connotation of the unity of man and nature is expressed in the phrase “both lucid waters and lush mountains and invaluable assets”. Lucid waters and lush mountains represent ecological factors, invaluable assets represent the economic factor, and the harmony of the two is also the harmony of economy and ecology. Under the guidance of the “two mountains” theory, it is possible to achieve the harmonious development of economy and ecology: First, nature as a pre-existing thing provides both the necessary conditions for human existence and the necessary resources for economic development; Second, with economic development, people have reasonable demands on the comfort level of living environment and green area, and a good ecological environment is the basis for meeting human needs; Third, a good ecological environment can lead to the aggregation effect of high-quality talents, so that a benign interaction can be achieved between economic development and environmental protection. This shows that good economic development and ecological protection can go hand in hand, and protecting “lucid waters and lush mountains” to maintain their sustainability does not mean giving up economic benefits. To change the new economic thinking, vigorously develop green economy, ecological economy, and build a new economic system is a necessary move in line with the times, that is, “both lucid waters and lush mountains and invaluable assets”. The thesis reflects a further deepening of the understanding of the relationship between man and nature, which shows that the economy cannot develop alone, but must take into account the quality of the ecological environment. Therefore, the

green development model that respects the unity of both economy and ecology becomes an effective way to achieve its unity.

2.2 The "Priority" Theory of Nature Conservation

The phrase "lucid waters and lush mountains rather than invaluable assets" urgently indicates the necessity and "priority" of environmental protection in China. The conflict between man and nature has become increasingly prominent in recent times, especially during the first and second industrial revolutions, in order to get brutal economic growth, countries adopted a highly predatory development model on nature, which destroyed ecological advantages to a very high degree. In developed industrial societies, there is a real possibility that man and nature cannot be reconciled, and the risk to the ecological environment remains unabated. It can be seen that environmental protection has become an important task for contemporary economic development, preferring to sacrifice part of the economic benefits to maintain the good state of the ecological environment, i.e., "preferring lucid waters and lush mountains to invaluable assets" in development. Its aim is to solve the current situation that ecological and environmental issues have been neglected for a long time in China for economic development. However, satisfying the higher needs of human beings and enhancing their sense of well-being cannot be achieved through rigid economic growth indicators, but must be achieved through the coordination of economic and social development, especially by taking into account factors such as "resource indicators and environmental indicators". However, it must be clear that the ecological economic benefits of a good ecological environment are a long-term process, and the focus on ecological protection is bound to slow down local economic growth in the short term. Thus, the "two mountains" theory has become a new idea for the construction of ecological civilization in China, which shows that China is cautiously handling the relationship between man and nature and taking the road to green development. In the face of the conflict between man and nature, we must insist on the "priority" of "lucid waters and lush mountains" and must not plunder nature as a means to make the "golden mountains" look rich and the "silver mountains" overflowing. "Pollution before treatment" is by no means a good policy, and its historical limitations have been exposed through practical tests. The purpose of development is the good life of the people, if development must be at the cost of destroying the ecological environment of all people, then this development has long departed from the original purpose of development. It can be seen that the "two mountains" theory emphasizes the "priority theory" of nature protection, the essence of which is "people first", and the road of green development is the fundamental road based on the needs of the people.

2.3 The "Transformation" Theory of Natural Advantages

The phrase "lucid waters and lush mountains are invaluable assets" essentially illustrates the close connection between the economy and nature, and that "lucid waters and lush mountains" are the strongest natural advantage that man has. Nature, as a pre-existing thing, provides man with both the means and the object of his labor, especially since "great industry incorporates great natural forces and natural science into the production process" (Note 8), the result is a steady stream of natural advantages

transformed into economic dividends and a gradual increase in the scale of production. As the most valuable asset, the process of transforming natural advantages into economic benefits must be a process of benign interaction between man and nature, while the traditional development model of plundering nature will undoubtedly only intensify the conflict between man and nature. Thus, it is clear that adjusting the industrial structure, vigorously developing a green economy and making the development mode of unification of economy, and nature become the inevitable choice. Only by leaving the “lucid waters and lush mountains” to future generations can they continue to enjoy good economic development.

Natural benefits are transformed into economic benefits, and the two are in essence the same. Protecting “lucid waters and lush mountains” is a way of maximizing the advantages of nature and long-term economic development, which reflects the return of the essential value of nature to man. Thus, nature has two types of action on man: On the one hand, nature assumes the fundamental role of the reproduction of all things, i.e., natural productivity; On the other hand, natural resources as a factor of labor are a part of economic development, and natural resources as capital are used by people to make labor create higher economic benefits, i.e., social productivity. This shows that in the process of green development, it becomes possible to transform natural advantages into benign economic advantages. In summary, the “unity” theory of man and nature, the “priority” theory of nature protection, and the “transformation” theory of natural advantages constitute the theoretical connotation of the “two mountains” theory, which is a major theoretical creation of China’s development path and has distinctive theoretical characteristics.

3. Features of the “Two Mountains” Theory

3.1 The Ecological Goal of a Better Life

The main goal of Marxist Eco-philosophy is to reconcile man with nature (Note 9). In developed industrial societies, where capital becomes the dominant force of production, it ignores the inevitable negative effects of plundering nature and destroying ecology. There, the right of man to a long development is denied and the conflict with nature is gradually deepened. The “Two Mountains” theory satisfies the ecological need for free and comprehensive development of human beings, devotes to the reconciliation of human beings and nature, and makes it possible for people to have ecological happiness.

“People’s desire for a better life, is the goal of our struggle” (Note 10). The destruction of nature and the deterioration of ecology threaten the physical and mental health of people and endanger the sustainable development of future generations. The “Two Mountains” theory is the wisdom of responding positively to people’s concerns and contains the philosophy of putting people first. Its aim is to make people live in a good ecological environment, enhance people’s happiness and give them a good life. The ecological goal of a good life established by the “two mountains” theory is the most intuitive embodiment of people-oriented thinking, and creating a good ecological environment is what

the people want. Only with the support of the people can the road of green development in China be long and smooth.

3.2 A distinct Awareness of Ecological Issues

“The power of a right idea far exceeds the rhetoric of many politicians (Note 11)”, the “two mountains” theory, as the “right idea” to respond to the needs of the times, is the product of reflection based on the serious ecological situation of our time. The crude economic development model of “eating ancestral food and cutting off the road of future generations” has profoundly affected the ecological advantages of our country, and the failure to adopt new development ideas is destined to intensify the contradiction between man and nature, and will eventually be punished by the depletion of natural resources, stagnation and regression of economic development, and deterioration of the ecological environment. This shows that in the practice of economic development, it is necessary to always adhere to the people-oriented approach, protect and restore nature, and create a good ecological environment to achieve long-term economic development.

Therefore, the “Two Mountains” theory has a distinct awareness of ecological issues and is a manifestation of China’s determination to change its economic development model. The unreasonable development model of plundering natural resources and destroying the ecological environment must be resolutely resisted, always bearing in mind that the path of “development before governance” cannot gain the support of the people. Therefore, the rapid awakening of ecological awareness is the inevitable result of China’s economic development, and it is the ardent expectation of the people to adopt new ideas of green development, maintain the maximum ecological advantage, and leave “lucid waters and lush mountains” for future generations.

3.3 The Dialectics of Eco-Philosophy

As an important theoretical achievement of Marxist Eco-philosophy, the “Two Mountains” theory has given new contents to the materialistic dialectic. Therefore, the “Two Mountains” theory has become the guideline for the relationship between human beings and nature in contemporary China, which consists of three main aspects:

First, the dialectic of environmental protection and economic development. As the saying goes, “Birds choose good trees to live in”, people also pursue a livable ecological environment. In contemporary times, good natural conditions and livable ecological conditions have become the core indicators of the comprehensive competitiveness of the region, both of which have the important function of attracting investment, gathering talents, and enhancing the brand of the region. Therefore, dealing with the dialectical relationship between environmental protection and economic development is the key to solving the contemporary ecological dilemma, and is also the theoretical interest of the “two mountains” theory. Natural advantages can be transformed into huge economic benefits, and economic development provides financial and modern technology support for environmental protection and reduces the consumption of resources, and protects the ecological environment by improving the efficiency of natural resource use. The “Two Mountains” theory emphasizes the harmony between man

and nature, and stresses that in the long run, environmental protection will not cause economic development to stagnate or regress, and that creating a new situation where environmental protection and economic development are mutually coordinated and supported becomes the primary condition for green development.

Second, the dialectic of economic ecologization and ecological economization. The serious situation of contemporary ecological problems mainly stems from the plundering of nature and the destruction of ecological environment by economic development, so it is urgent to explore new ideas of economic development. The so-called ecological development of the economy refers to green, sustainable, resource-friendly development and the realization of ecological development of the economy. Therefore, in order to ensure the ecological development of the economy: on the one hand, to maintain the good momentum of economic development and reduce the damage of the economy to nature and ecology. On the other hand, we should be alert to the influence of consumerism and instrumental rationality on people, avoid extravagant and predatory consumption, raise people's awareness of environmental protection, reconcile people with nature, and build an ecological culture in which the two develop in harmony. Ecological economization means grasping the productivity nature of ecological advantages and transforming them into economic advantages to enhance the happiness of residents and build an ecological environment for a better life. Tourism has become the primary way to transform ecological advantages into economic advantages, and the beautiful natural scenery carries the people's aspiration for a better life and deeply attracts the toiling people. Thus, it is necessary to give full play to ecological advantages and turn them into economic benefits of tourism, and the trend of living "under the eastern hedge of chrysanthemums" becomes possible in the context of promoting ecological economy. Secondly, a livable and green ecological environment can trigger the gathering effect of quality talents, and at the same time, a good ecological environment can also cause the linkage effect of investors. Capital and skilled personnel can bring qualitative improvement to local economic development. However, in the process of ecological economization, we must be wary of the old way of consuming resources for economic growth, and establish a natural resource management system to regulate the use of natural resources and realize "green production".

Third, the dialectic of Person's nature and Natural person. "The human being (meaning the real individual) creates the environment, and likewise the environment creates the human being (Note 12). The "Realistic individual" is as much a product of nature as the animal; it is a gift of nature; it is an element of nature. The existence of nature fulfills the conditions of its existence as a natural being, i.e., the conditions of material life. Thus, we can say that a real individual is a living (animate) individual who depends on nature to provide the necessary material and energy. However, nature and the real individual are mutually fulfilling. Nature provides the real individual with the necessary material and energy to live, and nature changes as a result of its sensual activities. Thus, the part of nature that is included in the realistic scope of individual sensual activity becomes "Person's nature", and the part of nature that remains in a certain original state becomes "Natural nature". "Self-nature" is the potential

object of sensual activity, and “Person’s nature” is the product of sensual activity. The former contains the potential essential power of the real person, while the latter is already the manifestation of its essential power, and together they embody the essential provisions of the real person. It can be seen that the whole history is the history of dialectical development of humanization of nature and humanization of nature, and the “two mountains” theory understands the relationship between the two and pursues their balance and harmony, i.e., “lucid waters and lush mountains are invaluable assets”. In the process of pursuing development, it is necessary to maintain the dialectic between Person’s nature and Natural person without favoring either nature or human beings, and to achieve green development.

4. Conclusions

The theoretical significance of the “Two Mountains” theory is fully reflected in the fact that the theory is an important creation of Marxist Eco-philosophy, which broadens the scope of Marxist Eco-philosophy and reflects the change in the ruling philosophy of The Communist Party of China that the evaluation system oriented solely on economic benefits is seriously flawed and that a beautiful China must be built on the ecological basis of reconciliation between man and nature. Thus, the “Two Mountains” theory has become the action guide for the construction of the overall layout of “Five-in-One”, and the propagation of the “Two Mountains” culture is beneficial to the cultivation of Green development consciousness and ecological responsibility consciousness must be consciously integrated into its theoretical spirit to achieve green development in the general pattern of ecological civilization construction, which is the practical significance of the “Two Mountains” theory. Therefore, the “Two Mountains” theory has become a new height of theory and practice for China to follow the green development trend and build the Beautiful China initiative.

Notes

Note 1. Bureau of Compilation of the Works of Marx, Engels, Lenin and Stalin of the Central Committee of the Communist Party of China. Selected Works of Marx and Engels. Volume IV [M]. Beijing: People’s Publishing House, 2012, 284.

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