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The Basic Category of Sustainable Development: Reasonable Survival Pattern

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Sustainable development has rich meanings. In report *Our Common Future* (1987), United Nations world environment and Development committee defined sustainable development as follows: the development not only meets the contemporary needs, but do no harm to the development of the future generations' ability of meeting their needs. This definition has reached mutual recognition all over the world, which indicates that the core of sustainable development is to ensure the human beings to survive healthily generation by generation, and to develop their own capability. Only by adopting reasonable survival pattern generation by generation could the human beings make sustainable development come true. In the author's opinion, I think we should take Historical Materialism as guidance to understand sustainable development, make it clear that its basic category is reasonable survival pattern. To understand this basic category fully will avail we thoroughly apply the guidance idea of sustainable development self-conscientiously in economic practice from the height of the survival and development of human beings.

There're two basic conditions for human beings to survive, one is to exploit and create material necessities for maintaining lives and developing capabilities, the other is to be in natural ecological environment which can survive. Each one is dispensable. The continual satisfaction of both the two aspects depends on the adjustment of material circulation between human beings and the nature. The former one depends on material productive work, as "perpetual natural inevitability for the realizing of the life of human beings", it can be summed up as "the material transformation process between man and the nature, which

is evoked, adjusted and controlled by human beings' own activities"¹. According to the Matter Immortal Theorem, the creativity of productive work will not produce any material element from nothing, it can only change the shape of nature material, thus, the process of create material survival conditions as cloth, food, house and vehicle is the process of taking some materials from the nature and giving back some other materials. These activities may reduce some advantageous natural material resources, so man put forward the issue of compensating or substituting these natural resources. The taking and giving back of the natural material ingredient, reducing and compensating or substituting reveals that survival of human beings cannot leave the adjustment of material circulation between human beings and the nature. The realization of the latter condition also needs the adjustment of material circulation between human beings and the nature. Because practices prove that productive work and any other survival activities will influence natural ecological environment to some extent, they may reduce natural room for the survival of human being, and lower down the natural ecological quality. Thus man put forward the issue of maintaining survival room and improving ecological environment. The reducing, lower down, maintaining and improving are all following the movement of material, which manifests that human beings cannot leave the adjustment of material circulation between human beings and the nature from the aspect of survival environment. Obviously, the essence of human being's survival pattern is the adjustment of material circulation between human beings and the nature by some way.

Men are born from nature. The pattern of human being's adjusting the material circulation between themselves and the nature, maintaining and reproducing, and developing their own capability is the precisely the survival pattern of human beings. In order to guarantee the sustainable development of society, improving of the survival

1 <complete works of Marx and Engels> volume 23, page 56,201—202.

material condition generation by generation, enjoying natural ecological environment suitable for the healthy development of human being, and the improving of their own capability continually, human beings should adopt reasonable survival pattern, adjust and realize benign circulation between man and the nature self-conscientiously. The concept of reasonable survival pattern reflects basic process and its interior relations of sustainable development concisely and comprehensively, so it can be used as the basic category of sustainable development.

The simplest and most fundamental circulation form between man and the nature is the unification of the two circulations: nature→ man→ nature, man→ nature→ man. In the primordial period of human society, this circulation form is very clear. In natural economy society, the return of straw stalk and excrement to farmland, prohibition of hunting and fishing seasonally and so on are simple practices of man's pursuing for reasonable survival pattern. With the development of the human society, for the increasing of links in the circulation, the recognition of circulation between man and the nature must be adjusted reasonably has become more and more fuzzy. Until man's survival activities lead to vicious circulation, do harm to natural resources of matter produce and natural ecological environment of daily life, and threat man's survival do we recognize that reasonable survival pattern combines together with benign circulation between man and nature, we couldn't destroy this benign circulation any time.

Human beings realize their survival pattern in the process of material circulation between man and nature, from the aspect of continual survival of man generation by generation, the unfolded link can be depicted as follows:1. Primitive natural resources and ecological environment: primordial survival of human being---material production plus population production and life expense (direct impact of man to nature) →2.the changed natural resources and ecological environment(the change of survival condition of human being): survival of human being---material reproduction plus population reproduction and life re-expense(direct and indirect impact of man to nature) →3.re-change of natural resources and ecological environment(re-change of survival condition):re-survival of human being..... Human being's survival pattern goes through the whole process of this circulation, which contains links human being influence natural resources and ecological environment, as material production, population production and life expense, and the change of natural resources and ecological environment also influence the change of human being's survival condition inevitably. Now we can see from this that survival pattern is a more generalized and more fundamental category than material production pattern. And we can come also say that material production pattern must obey reasonable survival pattern.

The performance of unreasonable survival pattern is, man's activities don't abide by the rules during the internal links, and they don't restrain themselves from taking a lot from

the nature and using up a lot, without compensating or improving. As in the process of material production, we carry out extension type production pattern with high-consumption, low-efficiency, in order to pursue microscopic economic profit, we emit waste gas, sewage and waste residue willfully, without considering safety, we mining, hunt and fish, use lands and cut trees to an extent of depletion. Because of ignoring macroscopic management, we have built redundant project, surplus production and resource wastes and so on. In population production or consumption process, we have children blindly, contempt education, pursue the life enjoys in advance, and litter trash and so on. These patterns will lead to misuse and destroy of natural resources, pollute and devastate ecological environment, do harm to natural resources and environment base which is necessary to human, and these will also lead to vicious circulation between man and nature, hinder sustainable development of the society.

Reasonable survival pattern requires human being to adopt the pattern which could prompt human's re-survival quality to improve continually and their own capability to develop consistently, the goal of which is to realize the benign circulation between man and nature. In a word, in material production process, what we should do is to implement intensive type production pattern with low-consumption, high-efficiency, which coordinates micro-economy and macro-economy well; and in population production or consumption process, to carry out the policy of birth control, implement moderate, frugal consumption survival pattern which is wholesome to man's physical and moral health, and in these processes, to try to compensate and substitute the lost natural material ingredients, to save and improve the contaminated natural ecological environment.

Marx criticized Capitalist Production Pattern to destroy "material circulation between man and the land", and named the circulation as "laws adjust social production"¹. The

1 <On Capital>(translated by Central Committee of the CCP Translation Bureau according to French edition, 1st volume which is revised by Marx), China Social Sciences Publishing house,1983,

“land” here can be understood as “nature”, and “circulation” as benign circulation. Combines with the recent practices, which must be supplemented is that this type of material circulation not only means material circulation between man and nature, but also saving, restoration and improvement of natural resources and ecological environment destroyed by man’s activities; this type of material circulation is not only the discipline we should abide by in social production activity, but also the discipline we should obey in all kinds of survival activities of human being. The law of benign material circulation between man and nature is precisely the basic law of sustainable development. Reasonable survival pattern of human being is the deference of this law self-conscientiously.

In accordance with this law, we can generalize guidance thought of reasonable survival pattern practice as two basic principles: the first is principle of maintaining and compensating. As the elaboration above, this manifests objective requirement of benign circulation. The second principle is obedience to the whole interests of man’s survival and development. We all should make clear that the highest main body of survival pattern is human being. We now confront with global problem of population, resources and environment, it is imperative for all countries, nations, communities and persons to act from the aspect of whole interests, cooperate friendly, help each other, coordinate well to make benign circulation between man and nature come true. Thus egotism, selfish departmentalism, narrow nationalism and hegemonic value which are contrary to this principle should be opposed and criticized; collectivism, patriotism, socialist and internationalist value which are in accordance with human’s endowment of sociality should be honored and proposed. Socialist production pattern is a kind of production pattern coordinates social common interest, people’s fundamental interests and long-term interests well, so it contains the advantageous condition for material transformation law between man and nature, as a result, it can prompt the formation of reasonable production pattern.

The issue of survival influences each person's vital interest, and survival pattern goes through every aspect of people's activities. So the erection of reasonable survival pattern idea is helpful in organizing and evaluating value of their activities in accordance with practical principle of reasonable survival pattern. This will have important and profound significance to improving people's self-consciousness of implementing the strategy of sustainable development.