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Dong Jinming, man, was born on July 1964, director of Social Sciences Department of Shanghai Maritime University, associate professor. Mainly engaged in the research of Marxist economic system theory, the ecological economy theory, etc. Once published papers such as “Marxist Economic System Theory and its Practical Significance”, “Comparison of the Two Economic Globalization Paradigm”. Recently research subjects include: Interaction Mechanisms of fair and efficient Property Rights, Resources and Environment, System Analysis of the ecological economy, and so on.

Analysis of Enterprises' Ecological-economic Activities On the Basis of “New Economic Man”

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Abstract : The “new economic man” hypotheses of Modern Marxist political economy have provided a new pattern for the analysis of the motivation and behavior of enterprises' ecological-economic activities. Therefore, this paper explores the diversity and complexity of enterprises' ecological-economic activities from the perspective of “new economic man” so as to demonstrate the limitation of economic rationalism both in the theory and practice of ecological economy. Through the analysis of the mutual relationship between enterprises' ecological-economic activities and the system restraints, this paper points out that the socialist market economic system is significant in regulating enterprises' ecological-economic activities and realizing the sustainable development.

Key Words : New economic man enterprises' ecological-economic activities

Enterprises are the basic units of social production and operation which determine or influence the ecological-economic relationships. As a result, the scientific analysis of enterprises' ecological-economic activities has become one of the most important issues in the research of sustainable development of ecological economy. However, with the disparity between the theory hypotheses and its corresponding analysis methods, there is difference on the perspectives, ideas, and focuses in the research of enterprises' ecological-economic activities, thus the system or policy recommendations is not exactly the same.

In recent years, the “new economic man” hypotheses proposed by modern Marxist political economics have provided us with new ideas in our observation and analysis of enterprises' ecology economic activities. Therefore, this paper is to carry on a more systematic and thorough inspection to it.

I. Enterprises' Behavior in the "New Economic Man" Hypotheses

The research of economics must adopt abstract methods, and different methods may lead to different understanding and grasp of person's nature. In Western economics, "economic man" is an abstract concept which cast aside person's behavior or other social characteristics. Similarly, in Marx's view, participants in capitalist economies are also abstract, who are the personification of economic category, as well as the benefit undertaker of certain social class relations. With this abstract concept, Marx explained the law of Capitalist production mode. In the dialogue with the Western theory system of economics, Marxist economical scholars in contemporary China such as Professor Cheng Enfu, Professor Meng Jie, has gradually established a "new economic man" theory through theoretical deconstruction or criticism of "Economic Man" hypotheses in the traditional Western Economics.(1)

Professor Cheng Enfu has carried on a systematic induction and analysis to the three elementary propositions contained in the "economic man" hypotheses and their theoretical mistakes which affected the Western economics till now, thereby come to the conclusion that the "old economic man" hypotheses considered self-interest as an inherent and irrevocable character, regardless of the function of specific economic relationships and systems to person's economic behaviors and psychologies, thus made "self-interest man" abstract, eternal and absolute while ignoring the time.

Professor Cheng made it clear that as an innovation of modern Marxist political economics, "new economic man" hypotheses contains three elementary propositions: 1st, man in economic activities has two tendencies——self-interest or altruism ; 2nd, the man has two conditions——rational or non-rational; 3rd, a good system may enable the man to achieve his personal interest to a reasonable maximization based on the promotion of collective or community interests. Meanwhile, he further pointed out that altruistic acts existed not only in units, families and communities, but also in different fields such as economy, military, culture and politics, and so on. As to the question which of the two features, selfish or altruistic, was prominent or dominant in society, Professor Cheng believed that it depended on various environmental and social system, for selfish and altruistic interact with each other in the social network to pursue a balance of the internal mechanism, connecting with the specific or the overall social environment.

Professor Meng Jie did not use the "new economic man" explicitly. But he affirmatively pointed out that Professor Cheng Enfu's "new economic man" hypotheses originated from Marxist economics. Professor Meng believed that Marxist economics advocated specific economic analysis of the relationship between man's behavior and target

model, rather than deducing the existence of economic relations from some kind of prior human nature, as neo-classical economics did. Professor Meng Jie also pointed out that the scope of self-interest came from the activities of those participants in capitalist production. Unlike neoclassical economics, Marx always understood “economic man” as an abstract concept originated from specific activities of those participants in the concrete capitalist economies (Marxism replaced it by “participants in capitalist production”). As the undertaker of specific production relations, they could only be clarified after the corresponding productive relations were stipulated. Moreover, it was necessary to go beyond the personification in economic category when analyzing the major reform and diversity of the specific capitalist economic systems, considering effects of culture, politics, and many others in explanation of man's behavior mode.

What must be clearly pointed out here is that “new economic man” hypotheses believes that economic rationalism is a reflection of specific economic relationships, rather than deny it or consider it as a general prior principle about man's behavior.

The “new economic man” hypotheses has developed a new field of vision on the analysis of enterprises' behavior, based on the overall and dialectical methodology of analysis. Traditional enterprise theory in western economics believed that in the economic system, enterprise was the “economic man” in the pursuit of maximum profit. However, based on “new economic man” hypotheses, behaviors and motivations of enterprises could only be understood and grasped correctly in the dialectical unity.

II. The Diversity and Complexity of Enterprises' Ecological-economic Activities

In essence, social production and reproduction is a material transformation process between mankind and nature. The social economy system and the ecosystem interweave and interact mutually in this process, thus coupling a multiplexed system of ecology economy.

In this paper, enterprises' ecological-economic activities refers to enterprises' productive, operational and management activities in the multiplexed ecological-economic system. Under the market economic condition, the dominant motive of enterprises is the pursuit of profits. But its exterior constraints are the country's environmental legislation and policies, the public's consumer psychology and culture, as well as the public's environmental awareness and action.

They may maintain performance of an extreme selfishness by totally disregard the productive conditions of ecological and economic relationships, or of mutually beneficial activities which pay proper attention to the productive conditions of both ecological and

economic relationships, or of a state between the above two.

In reality, the motive and mode of enterprises' ecological-economic activities presents diversity and complexity under certain social constraints. Generally speaking, it can be divided into three basic types:

(1) Enterprises adopting ecological environmental strategies positively. In the short term, ecological protection expenditures may increase enterprises' costs and reduce their profits, but in the long run, they are conducive to the creation of a good image on economical, social and cultural aspects so as to gain the favor of consumers, government and social welfare associations. These potential benefits are extremely advantageous to enterprises' long-term development. Main ecological environmental strategies enterprises may take include: reducing the waste of production and changing from pollution-control to pollution-prevention; improving technology and implementing eco-production; changing the traditional operating mode and advocating green consumption and green services; investing to the natural resources.

(2) Enterprises adopting green management strategies passively. In the field of environmental protection, enterprises are supervised by so many units such as media, government, non-governmental organizations that their social images may seriously affected for any of their negligence. Therefore, enterprises do not dare neglecting environmental protection policies. But their environmental strategies are often strategically. Some for subsiding public's criticism, some for setting up an "environmental friendly" image and prestige. All those efforts are to obtain lenient punishment in case of environmental accident.

(3) Enterprises ignoring or resisting environmental protection policies for their own sake. Typical cases of this kind include US Carbonization Company's ecological disaster, as well as US government's resistance to the "Kyoto Protocol" under the pressure of US industrial organization, and so on.

III. The Limitation of Economic Rationalism in Theory and Practice

The "new economic man" theory claims to understand the characteristics and shortages of economic behavior not only through pure economic rationalism, while opposing to take the individual economic rationalism (self-interest) as an absolute and transcendental motivation or behavior mode. During the development of ecological economy, the enterprises' economic rationalism, an inevitable outcomes of capital systems and market competitions, has faced serious limitation, reflecting in two essential aspects:

Firstly, it's essentially precondition is that material value overwhelms ecological

protection, which is the root of modern ecological crisis. Marxist Ecologists have gone deep into this subject. Gorg Andre once pointed out that the production of enterprises must be controlled by goods exchange and be driven by free market exchange principles under the instruction of economic rationalism. Since production aims at exchange, the more products, the better. Therefore, economic rationalism adopts principles of “calculation and computation”, efficiency supreme, and “the more the better”. (2) Thus, it considers investment in non-pollution energy patterns as inefficiency due to its simple economic standards. On the contrary, it is willing to take the risks of long-term climate fluctuation, habitat changing, as well as threaten to biodiversity.

Secondly, it leads to difficulties in calculating the ecological damage and environmental threats of enterprises' operation, if not go to an absurd conclusion. With the establishment of market's status, each kind of cargo's value is defined as the currency. According to the logic of economic rationalism, ecological damage must be transformed to the pollution-control cost and income analysis and be calculated in the form of currency. However, due to ecosystem's complex inner links and mutual dependence, the ecology crisis is uncertain, changing with the condition of nature. And the most important thing is that such loses as health, life, aesthetics, and entertainment can never be calculated by currency.

In view of the prominent contradiction of economical rationalism, ecologists proposed ecological rational principle tit-for-tat. Ecological rationalism is based on the attention and respect of all forms of life in widespread universe philosophical principle, which assumes life system's interconnection as a unified system. This basic principle means that whatever is good for keeping biological community's integrity, stability and aesthetic sense is correct, or vice versa.

In Marx's view, ideal state of rational principle on ecological-economic relations goes like this: the socialized persons, the united producers, adjust their material transformation with the nature reasonably, placing it under their control, rather than be blindly controlled by it. And during the process, materials should be transformed under the most worthy and appropriate condition with the slightest material force which are suitable to man's nature.(3)

IV. Enterprises' Ecological-economic Activities and the System

Restraints

The “new economic man” theory advocates grasping the psychology and motivation of enterprises' economic behavior in the specific economic relationships and system constraints. It stresses the interaction between external conditions and economic behaviors. As previously stated, enterprises' ecological-economic activities become diverse and

complex along with the development of environment and the improvement of social system. However, compared with the existing power of political, social, legislative and economic institutions, environmentalists are still too weak to impact enterprises' ecological-economic activities enormously in the realistic social systems. Similarly, the impact of altruistic characteristics (to external environment protection) is also limited and indefinite, which is not able to fundamentally ease the tensional relationship between enterprises' behavior and ecology.

As to the legal restraints, laws are social regulations resisting illegal activities through penalty or threat. But laws are impossible to decide or change society's political and economic system or the social culture. On the contrary, laws belong to the superstructure of the community and are decided by social economic basis. Capitalist legal regime is the inevitable reflection of capitalist political and economical system, especially property system. Therefore, its adjustment to the enterprises' ecological-economic activities is limited and restricted by its property system.

Concerning the prospect of contemporary ecological-economic problems and its connection with socialist movement, Forster believed that socialism advocated common control of democracy in the greatest degree, and that the majority of ordinary people should have their rights to suggest how to use the collective resources. It is our way forward if we want to change our relationship with nature to achieve a true sustainable development.

It is just such analysis that enables us to consider the practice of socialist market economy in China as a kind of new exploration to the sustainable development of ecological economy. In the restraint of socialist politics and legal systems, enterprises' public ownership system and their ecological-economic activities, which is a kind of "new economic man" practice, can coordinate the specific and the overall benefit well, thus fundamentally standardize enterprises' ecological-economic activities and construct the microscopic foundation of ecology civilization.

Yet, the practice of "new economic man" still faces many challenges in reality, for the principle of public ownership system and the construction of concrete enterprises' systems are still on practice on the one hand; democracy system and the legal regime acting as the living environment of enterprises are still immature and imperfect, some local government departments tend to deviate the strong interest group trend including enterprises, plus the public is insufficient neither in consciousness nor in power to maintain rights of environment protection on the other hand.

Notes

- (1) Main papers on the "new economic man" theory include: "Four Theoretical

Hypotheses of the Political Economy of Modern Marxism ” by Cheng Enfu, published in the 1st issue of “Social Sciences in China” in 2007; “New ‘Economic Man’ Theory: One Basic Hypotheses of Economics of Shanghai school” by Cheng Enfu, published in the 11th issue of “Teaching and Research” in 2003; “ The Hypotheses of Economic Man and Marxist Economics ” by Meng Jie, published in the 1st issue of “Social Sciences in China” in 2007.

(2) XU Yan-mei, “Eco-Marxist Studies”, 2007 edition, published by the Social Scientific Literature Press. Page 294,295.

(3)“The Collected Works of Marx and Engels” (Volume 25), 1974 edition, published by the People's Publishing House. Page 926-927.