Economic growth is generally measured by the rate of increase in gross domestic product (GDP) at the national or global level. Increases in GDP are still important for developing countries. In striving for expanded GDP since the 20th century, however, most countries have ignored the associated ecological and environmental damage. As a consequence, many natural resources have been quickly exhausted or wasted, creating not only an extensive pattern of economic growth but also more fierce competition and environmental conflict among nations. In addition, to some extent, these growth patterns have fueled territorial conflict.

The growth paradox may be represented in different ways. Briefly speaking, economic growth is not equal to economic development. The traditional outlook on development is based on expanding physical production, which takes for granted that all economic growth is a good thing and ignores social development. It argues that GDP is the sole benchmark for evaluating different countries’ economic performance. Based on a theory of value and a theory of fairness, producing more material objects is neither the goal of human society nor the ultimate value in human development.

The shortcomings of traditional outlooks on development are as follows: issues concerning proper objectives, value, and justice, such as “why development” and “how to evaluate development” are ignored, while issues such as “how to push development” are widely discussed. Such an outlook reflects an overemphasis on instrumental rationality and the neglect of human values. On the contrary, a scientific outlook on development, based on Marxist economics, could be taken as a positive response to the shortcomings of the traditional outlook. Its core goal is people-oriented, coordinated, and sustainable development, thereby promoting comprehensive economic, social, and human development. It argues that scientific economic development should serve the people, and as a consequence, economic development should enhance comprehensive human development and elevate the well-being of the people, eventually improving the livelihoods of people worldwide and the fairness of economic development and income distribution.
We summarize our advice as follows:

First, all countries should put more emphasis on qualitative, not just quantitative, changes in the economy and consider the basic purpose of economic growth. Ends and means of economic growth should be placed under effective control, and sustainable development with respect to natural resources, the environment, and population should be undertaken.

Second, we argue that “A Fair Development” plan is much more far-reaching than the development plans promoted by the World Bank. The following arguments are compatible with the standpoint of “A Fair Development” plan:

1. Public (or social) ownership should be dominant, while the role of other forms of ownership should be decided based on the conditions in each country. Privatization of public enterprise and public goods should be opposed.

2. Distribution according to work should dominate distribution according to ownership, and unjust gaps in wealth and income should be opposed. Distribution according to need should be implemented for some goods and services, and for some recipients, when it is appropriate.

3. State regulation, based on the scientific consensus, should be the major mechanism for addressing environmental issues, and marketization as a major mechanism should be opposed. Various policies including self-reliance and foreign aid should be implemented. Unjust economic globalization controlled by the new imperialism should be opposed.

4. Capitalism destroys not only the natural environment but also human capacities. We support an economy that promotes the development of workers’ capacities, which is possible only through their own activity, and an economy that aims to eliminate the separation between mental and manual labor that is fostered by capitalism.

Last, we argue that new measures of economic well-being should be developed to replace the emphasis on GDP.