

The Basic Connotation and Value Orientation of Ecological Culture

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Abstract - Human beings must constantly create culture to fit in with the needs of the living environment and develop culture to promote the social progress during the process of their adaptation and innovation to the natural ecology. The traditional culture has made its gigantic achievement, meanwhile it has also obviously contributed to the ecological crisis. The ecological crisis has forced the human beings to look for a sustainable way to living with the ecological environment, and ecological culture is a new way to tackle this crisis through adapting themselves to the ecological environment. In the present work, based on the perspectives of ecological and cultural issues, the connotation, framework and value orientation of the ecological culture have been analyzed. Some new aspects and mode for the ecological culture development were proposed and discussed.

Index Terms - ecological culture, connotation, framework, value orientation, developing mode

1. Introduction

Ecology, firstly introduced by the Germany ecologist Ernst Haeckel in 1886, a branch of biology, is defined as the study of the relationship among organisms and their environment [1-5]. Since the 20th century, the principle of ecology was applied to the area of anthropology and sociology, and infiltrated into all aspects of human life, such as politics, economy and culture. As a result, it has gained a rapid development and became a comprehensive subject of the rich connotation. With the expansion of the ecology research area, ecologists expand their sights from natural ecology and social ecology to human cultural ecology and spiritual ecology. The global world is considered as a complex dynamic ecosystem comprising of human beings, society and nature [6,7]. Based on this understanding, the assessment of the progress and development of a society cannot simply consider people or nature, but should include the harmonious relationship between man and nature, which is the criterion of ecological society. Therefore, the so-called "ecology", no longer seems to be a specialized study only, but has become an idea, which is a rational comprehensive concept of living with nature, society, life, environment, material, culture and spirit. With the deteriorating of the global ecological environment in recent years, the ecology has attracted more attention from the entire society, and infiltrated organically and integrally into natural science, social science and humanities fields with its unique life consciousness, and affected all aspects of people's social life and practice [8-10]. It has become an important learning

branch of contemporary society. In 1962, the publication of the book "Silent Spring", written by the American ecological litterateur Rachel Carson (1907-1964), marked the advent of modern ecological view. Modern ecology becomes a link between culture and nature, and ecological culture is the preferred mode for human development in the new century [11-17].

2. Perspectives on Ecological and Cultural Issues

Culture is that human is adapted to environment on social ecology by using ecological thinking to think. Man is a biological person, and also a social person. As biological people, humans were divided into different races and groups who have different characteristics of the physical morphology, physiology and biochemistry [1]. As social people, humans with different production modes and life styles, create all of their material wealth and spiritual wealth to realize social ecological adaptation to the environment. So far, the development of human culture has experienced three main stages, i.e., natural culture, humanistic culture and scientific cultural.

A. Natural Culture Stage

This stage refers to that humans lived in ancient times, used stone as their main technical tool, engaged in hunting and gathering, and directly got food and other survival materials from nature. During this period, the human just survived and moved in natural ecosystem, did not create artificial ecosystem. Natural ecosystem was based on certain social relations consisting of blood relationships, low productivity; the social life had the natural properties of equality and share. Nature played a strong role in the relationship between human and nature, and became the object of adoration and respect for people. Human life had "naturalness", because it is not natural but integrated with nature, and man's production and life were restricted by natural conditions.

B. Humanistic Culture Stage

This stage was based on agriculture as a community centre industry, with bronze and iron as the main technical tool, and began a large-scale development of natural resources such as land and living beings, and created a splendid ancient civilization. Humanities had reached a very high level in this

period. Compared with natural culture that emphasized on nature, the humanistic culture paid attention to human relations or personnel. In the humanities culture stage, humans first attached themselves to nature to get rid of the nature and to intervene in the natural, formed a human-centric culture.

C. *Scientific Culture Stage*

Culture in this stage regarded industry as the centre industry for the society, and the progress of science and technology as the core. Increasing the exploitation and utilization of nature, humans created unprecedented wealth. With the rapid development of industrialization, humans moved towards modernization in aspect of production and living, created a new natural world – the nature of anthropology and the new brilliance of human civilization.

However, with the development of humans society, human increased the exploitation of nature at the same time when they created a glorious culture. In the creation of culture, humans not only asked for more and more natural resources, but also regarded the nature as a garbage dump for discharging waste material.

Therefore, with the development of the industrialization process, humans realized their own cultural values by immoderately damaging the natural, so the traditional culture reached its highest achievement, at the same time also caused an ecological crisis of environmental pollution, ecological damage and shortage of resources. It is also humanity's cultural crisis.

The emergence of ecological crisis is the result of gradual deterioration of the relationship between humans and nature. Accordingly, humans began to introspect patterns of behaviour and ways of thinking, began to seek a new culture in order to solve the calamity currently faced by humans. Thus, the formation of ecological concepts and infiltration of ecological theory became the major dimensions of humans to search for the future development.

Using an ecological thinking method to interpret culture, the culture can be said as the whole process of a regional culture to adapt to socio-ecological environment, can be interpreted as three dimensions process of geography, space and time. It was because humans and the environment should be co-evolve. Humans use culture to adapt to the environment, also use culture to transform the environment. With the historical process of human society, the environment has evolved from the original nature to the complex environment of natural, artificial and cultural environment. Humans adapting to social ecology is evolving, thereby result in the human cultural evolution. If a culture in the process of development is not cooperatively coevolution with environment, it will lead to ecological crisis, resource depletion, as well as a variety of social ecological crisis, such as war, disease, etc. Man finally unable to use culture to adapt to the new environment, resulting in the environmental degradation and the decline and fall of civilization. For instance, the disappearances of the Ancient Babylon

civilization and the Mayan civilization are considered to be the result of no-adapting of the human culture to the environment.

Culture and ecology are interdependent and interactive, therefore, they have dialectical unification relations. Human beings create culture in a certain natural ecological environment, meanwhile, transform natural ecological environment in the process of social production and practice. The understanding and exploration of the relationship between ecology and culture, are helpful to the continuous development of human civilization, because the ecological ideas and the protection of ecological environment have become the first problem for the survival and development of humankind in today's society.

3. **Connotation of Ecological Culture**

Ecological culture is the core of the ecological value concepts of religion, philosophy, science and art. Ecological culture is a kind of culture involving the relationship between human and nature, and it is a kind of overall culture views about scientifically dealing with and coordinating the relationship between human and nature [1]. The "overall culture views" is a culture that material production and spiritual production are highly developed, their natural ecology and human ecology are unified, which require humans to free themselves from the development concept of people-centeredness, and to create a harmonious relationship with nature. This culture from generation to flourish and prosperity, will create an incomparable happiness for the mankind in the past and promote the development of human culture to a new stage [2].

Ecological culture is moving forward because the culture makes the human and the nature in a state of completely opposite after the industrial revolution, and humans immoderately ask for nature to let mankind face with severe survival crisis. Thus, the construction of a new existing ways for a harmonious development between human beings and nature according to ecological values oriented has become new cultural choices of human development in the 21st century.

The essential content of the ecological culture is to set up a cultural system with ecology, to establish value idea, thinking mode, economic law, the life style and management system according to the principle of ecology, to change the previous bad ideas, to know and see the world with ecology thoughts and methods. The ecological culture is consistent with the requirements of the new era. Obviously, this culture is in accordance with the overall interests and long-term interests of human culture, and embodies the way, process and result of harmonious coexistence between human and nature, human and society.

A. *New Aspect of Culture Development*

Ecological culture is put forward in the face of challenges against the ecological crisis. It is a new kind of existence form of human civilization which thinks about the value of relationship between human and nature from the visual angle of ecology and cultural anthropology, is a dynamic culture

which bases on the harmonious relation between man and nature. It has the characteristics of globalization, is the selection of the future development of human culture, the humanity's common cultural wealth, and the world's culture. Ecological culture changes the traditional way of thinking, establishes global ecological safety awareness, abandons the lifestyle which wrecks the relationship between human being and nature, forms the positive ecological psychology and ecological behaviour and realizes the transition of values.

The generation and development of human culture are always in harmony with natural ecology, and so culture closely relates to natural ecology. From the various periods of human cultural development, whether "primitive culture" around nature in early stage, or "humanistic culture" in the period of the agricultural civilization, or today's "ecological culture", all indicated that the natural ecology and cultural development are interrelated. It can be said that human culture is the product of the interaction between man and nature. In the face of today's global ecological crisis, people proposes "eco-cultural" concept more directly to explore cultural form from the dimension of "man and nature", and wants to build a culture model of harmonious development between man and nature.

Therefore, under the guide of the ecological science, the ecological culture as a new cultural form, its consciousness has gradually penetrated into all aspects of society, such as politics, economy, education, science, philosophy and ethics, etc., which shows the coordination of "man and nature" and promotes the sustainable development of society since the 1970s.

B. New Mode of Culture Development

The impact of culture on humans is different from the social politics and the economic systems. The political and economic system of a society often provides a standardized framework for society to run and people to act with an explicit and conscious way, but culture pattern with an inherent, unknowing and subtle way. Although the influence of culture unlike politics and economy is direct and intense, is more durable and stable. It can leap times and transcend the political and economic system, daraus can control people's actions, and then affect the political and economic activities and the course of history [15].

From the history of human culture, the development of culture has selectivity of its subject. In a period of history, the development of a country and region culture is connected with the local people's mindset and natural ecological conditions, and thus forms different cultural models. However, the cultural developments of different countries and regions have their intercommunity, which is objective regularity, and it reflects the objectivity of cultural development in an era. In our age, although there are differences in selecting the modern cultural patterns in different countries and regions, but the humans face with the same ecological degradation and sustainable human development problems when they pursue the world common development goals. Therefore, the construction of a sustainable cultural pattern to help all mankind is common

choice of all humanity. The ecological culture has become a new choice of future human cultural patterns to coordinate the harmonious development of human and nature.

Ecological culture is the deep exploration of development of human civilization, and it pursues a better living condition for humans. The transition of the human culture to ecological culture will show a harmonious prospect for mankind's future.

4. Framework of Ecological Culture

As a new cultural selection, the ecological culture, which is conducive to the sustainable development of ecological environment and natural resources, is the survival mode of mankind, and it is a fundamental change of human society. It is generally believed that the development of the ecological culture expresses on three levels, namely the institutional level, the material level and the spiritual level [1].

A. Ecological Culture of Institutional Level

Through the social relations and social institutional reform, it reforms and perfects the social system and norm. According to the principle of justice and equality, it establishes a new community of humans, as well as a partner community of man and nature. It makes the society in mechanisms consciously to protect the interests of all citizens, environment and ecology, to achieve the overall progress.

B. Ecological Culture of Material Level

According to the view point of the natural value theory, the ecological culture with the goal of the harmony between man and nature transforms the mode of production and life style, develops the "ecological" production technology and craft, both protecting natural value and realizing the cultural value, provides enough products for the society.

C. Ecological Culture of Spirit Level

Ecological culture in this level establishes a viewpoint that the life and nature have value, abandons "the anti-nature" that comes from the traditional culture, constructs the culture of "respect for nature". In accordance with the values of "harmony between man and nature", a series of ideals such as science, economy, ethics, and philosophy in the spirit field are transformed.

5. Value Orientation of Ecological Culture

Value belongs to the category of philosophy. Value is the essential connotation of culture. Cultural value orientation directly affects people's practical activities, and value level is an intermediate link of cultural concept and social practice.

Chinese traditional ecological value examines the connotation of value from a perspective of human and nature being integrated. The traditional ecological value mainly has four aspects of characteristic. The first, it is certain that the value of human and all things on earth are rooted in the whole evolution process. Nature and its evolution have natural purpose which embodies in the natural evolution process itself having the inherent law and order, reflects the life of nature. Second, it must be the value of all things themselves.

Traditional philosophy affirming the value of all things isn't based on the use of nature, but the value of the intrinsic nature which is virtue. Third, it discusses about human values. It focuses on the ontology view of human and nature being integrated, thinks the realization of human value lies in "and heaven and earth meet their virtue". The fourth is reflected in the relationship of human and nature. The traditional philosophy emphasizes the integrity value of nature and society, but does not human value, in particular, it is the individual subjectivity of value [3,9].

The value orientation of ecological culture considers human, society and nature as a compound ecosystem of interrelated, interaction and coordinated development, and pursues human and nature, human and society, human and their coordinated development, so as to promote the progress of social civilization. The value orientation of ecological culture is a complex of natural values, and it is the integration of the ancient culture and modern culture factors. On the one hand, it inherits and develops the perspective the ancient culture which is based on regarding nature and society as a whole, fully sees human as an organic part of ecological system, and fully understands the ecological nature restrict human's practical activity. On the other hand, it inherits the perspective of the modern culture which is based on human, affirms human being subjectivity, initiative and creativity.

Culture itself always means the surpassing of the manner of animal instinct to survive. In the development of modern civilization, sustainability becomes the primary issue. The problem that whether or not the form of cultural existence, whether or not is in harmony with earth's ecological system turns into an issue in the 21st century what humankind must fully explore. The change of all levels of modern culture must take the relationship of human and nature as dimension, reflect the ecological crisis caused by modern culture.

The development of ecological culture and the process of ecological civilization are not just transcending the animal kingdom, but inevitably developing from simple to complex process. Therefore, from the modern civilization to the ecological civilization, a higher level of civilization must inherit all the positive achievements of modern civilization, and avoid the fatal flaw.

In generalized culture, the idea plays a crucial role in ecological culture. Because the people's beliefs are different, the life pursuits are also different. The idea is the value

connotation of ecological culture. The most outstanding value of Chinese traditional culture involves "union among heaven, earth and human" and the harmony between human and nature. According to the development ideas of entire overtaking nature, the ecological culture forms a way of living in harmony with nature based on modern civilization, guiding the production and economic development with ecological system theory. The ecological culture mainly adapts to the current social development, and meets the requirements of the progress of social civilization.

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