

Brief Introduction to the Integral Axiology of Human Environment

Chengxiao Zou and Xiaoqing Heng

Institute for Science, Technology and Society, Changzhou University

Changzhou 213164, Jiangsu, China

Tel: 86-519-8633-0778 E-mail: xiaoqing1317@sina.com, h123xq@163.com

This paper is financed by National Philosophical and Social Science Fund Project (08BZX026), the "11th Five-Year" National Educational and Scientific Project (EIA090399) and Jiangsu Social Science Project (09ZXD012).

Abstract

The central idea that the integral axiology of human environment differs from other relevant theories is the unification theory of its human environment value and the integral value of ecology. This unification theory provides establishment of ecological civilization with important axiology foundation and methodology guidance.

Keywords: Integral axiology of human environment, Ecological civilization, Green technology

1. Integral axiology of human environment is a sort of axiology which claims that human environment value and the integral ecological value are unified.

Viewpoints of Integral axiology of human environment indicate that, the environmental value of human beings is a sort of "category" integral environmental value and realization of the value depends on the integral value of ecological value. The integral ecological value is a sort of value of "completeness", "harmony", "stability", "balance" and "persistent existence" of the ecological system of "human-nature-society". Maintenance and conservation of this value is a sort of integral ecological value which includes "interests of human beings". In this value system, there are two implications to "the integral human environment": one is the integral human environment, namely, the integral environment in which human being is a sub-system of the ecological system of "human-nature-society", and the other is integral ecology, that is, link between the integral human environment and the ecological system is a sort of integral link and essentially the integral human environment is a sort of ecological integrity. Major claims of the integral axiology of human environment can be generalized as follows: the environmental value of human being is value on the basis of integral ecological value; integral environmental value is the integral value which includes "interests of human beings"; environmental value of human beings is unified with the integral ecological value. It can be said, the ideological core of integral environmental value of human being is the unification theory of human environment value and the integral value of ecology. As for understanding of this axiology, we can prove that in a comparative sense using the typical behavior supported by the value standpoint of this axiology. That is, if there is a forest, then people may have different typical behaviors based on different value standpoints. One is a typical behavior supported by the value standpoint of "ecological holism" based on "regarding the integral interest of ecological system, but not interest of human being" as the highest value" --- "prohibition to lopping"; the second is a typical behavior supported by the value standpoint of "anthropocentrism" based on "human orientation", "starting out from interest of human being" and "service for interest of human beings" --- "lopping without restraint"; the third is a typical behavior supported by the value standpoint of "integral anthropocentrism of ecology" or "integral phonocentrism" based on "unification between environmental value of human being and integral ecological value" --- "lopping on one hand and planting trees on the other hand". The concept of value which dominates the third sort of value standpoint and its typical behavior is the integral axiology of the environment of human beings.

The integral axiology of the environment of human being has its own theoretical foundation and value principle, which can be proved in comparison of theories related with this value, such as, "Ecological Holism", "anthropocentrism" and "regional phonocentrism", etc.

"Ecological holism" is a kind of value concept which "regards the whole interest of ecological system as the

highest value” and “takes it the fundamental measurement of measuring everything whether it is helpful to maintain and protect completeness, harmony, stability, balance and sustainable existence of ecological system. As John B. Cobb says, only when human beings are helpful for the ecological system, can they have their own value. “If everything protects the completeness, stability and perfectness of the biocenosis, then it is correct. Otherwise, it is wrong.” It can be seen, the theoretical foundation of the value concept of “ecological holism” is naturalism, and its value principle is that “everything is the measurement of human being”. Differently, the integral axiology of human environment advocates the unification of value of human environment and the integral value of the natural ecology. When faced up with conflict and contradiction of interests of human beings and the whole interests of the natural ecology, the integral axiology of human environment is in favor of resolving immediate contradiction and conflict with the concept of unification and coordination between the value of human environment and integral value of natural ecology, and its theoretical foundation and value principle will “absorb” the rational component of naturalism in the value concept of “ecological holism” and “input” the rational core of humanism in the value concept of “anthropocentrism”.

“Anthropocentrism” is a sort of value concept which holds that “all is centered with human being or everything takes human being as the yardstick and serves for interests of human being. And all starts out from interests of human being.” This sort of value concept likens the nature to “the natural dining table” and even “a prostitute”, and advocates that “we, have no means, need to pay our loyalty to such a prostitute; we have no means to establish moral communication with the whole of the nature, but we can exchange freely with any component of the nature. It depends on us whether to abide by or destroy different parts of the nature.” “Anthropocentrism” takes the nature as the “place” to realize desire of human being. Thus, the theoretical foundation of “anthropocentrism” is humanism and its value principle is that “human being is the yardstick of all things on earth.” On the contrary, the integral axiology of human environment advocates the coordination between realization of interests of human being and maintenance of integral value of the ecology, and opposes to sacrificing the integral interest of the ecology for realization of interests of human being. However, it should be pointed out, in face of the global ecological crisis, those who support “anthropocentrism” also continue to reflect upon themselves and begin to transfer to “weak anthropocentrism”. And they propose that something should be done to limit demand of human being and advocate that human kind ought to adjust their own perceptual will according to their rationality and satisfy their own needs with choice. However, integral axiology of human environment, likewise, differs from “weak anthropocentrism” in the theoretical foundation: the theoretical foundation of “weak anthropocentrism” is still humanism; its respect of the nature still merely serves interests of human being and its protection to the natural environment is still just a kind of “tactics” based on need of interests of human themselves. By contrast, the theoretical foundation of the integral axiology of human environment is a kind of natural humanism, which is distinguished from the theoretical foundation of “ecological holism” --- naturalism and also differs from the theoretical foundation of “(weak) anthropocentrism” --- humanism. According to the statement of an ideal society in the future by Marx about “actual resolution of contradictions between human kind and the nature and between human themselves”, the theoretical foundation of the integral axiology of human environment is a sort of “accomplished naturalism”, or a kind of “accomplished humanism”, that is, a sort of nature-humanism. Then, they are different in terms of the principle of value in that, the value principle of “weak anthropocentrism” is still that “human being is the yardstick of all things on earth”, and the value principle of “ecological holism” is that “all things on earth is the yardstick of human being”, whereas the value principle of integral axiology of human environment is “the yardstick of unification between value of human environment and integral value of ecology”. Of course, the integral axiology of human environment and “weak anthropocentrism” are interlinked in terms of the most fundamental philosophical foundation. That is, they coincide with such a sort of philosophy --- it is confirmed that, a universal connection exists between all things and every thing in the nature has its value, since there is nothing that can not exert an influence upon the entirety in which it is placed.”

As a matter of fact, “regional centrism” is a kind of “centrism of regional community”, a sort of value concept that evaluates the integral value of human environment based on the standard of interests of regional community. In other words, “regional centrism” refers to “hegemonism” replaces need of interest of the whole human kind with need of interest of regional community or directly regards need of one’s own local interest as need of the entire interest of human being. Nowadays, it can be said that, “regional centrism” refers to “western centrism” to a large degree, and it reflects the deficiency phenomenon that different subjects (including “contemporary” and “posterity”) of the contemporary society should enjoy equal right to survive. What is different, in the process of pursuing unification between value of human environment and integral value of ecology, the integral axiology of human environment includes the integral environmental harmony of sub-system of human being by taking it as a due obligation. “If we are not able to coordinate well internal survival conflicts of contemporary people, then it

is unlikely that we can deal with the survival conflicts between contemporary people and their later generations, and neither can we coordinate well the contradiction and conflict between the entire human being and the nature.”

2. Integral axiology of human environment has significant theoretical value and realistic meaning.

It offers the new idea of ecological civilization construction. Ecological civilization is a sort of new high-level civilization about harmonious co-existence and coordinated development of human being and the nature and the society which is constructed consciously by human kind in the ecological system of “human kind --- nature --- society. The most fundamental point that it differs from all traditional civilizations of human being can be said to be the value concept about harmony between human kind and the nature and about harmony and coordinated development between human being and the society. As a kind of unification theory about the value of human environment and the integral value of ecology, the integral axiology of human environment internally includes the value appeal and orientation of harmony between human being and the nature and between human being and the society. That is, without the harmonious co-existence between human being and the society, it is unlikely to maintain the “integral value of human environment”; without the harmonious co-existence between human being and the nature, it is unlikely to realize maintenance of “integral value of ecology”. On the contrary, only if we insist on the harmonious co-existence and coordinated development of human being and the nature and human being and the society, can we really realize the unification between value of human environment and integral value of ecology. Thus, on the level of the value concept, the integral axiology of human environment offers a new idea of ecological civilization construction.

The integral axiology of human environment also provides new methodology for ecological civilization construction --- guidance of green technology theory. According to the internal value appeal of the integral axiology of human environment, the green technology theory of ecological civilization construction guided by it can only be understood in its broad sense. That is, to understand green technology as “a sort of technical system in which coordinated development of human kind and the nature and the society is the principle, environmentally friendly natural technology is the foundation and the coincided and interactive environmentally friendly social technology is the backbone.” This understanding indicates the two major “features” which green technology “constructed” under the new idea of integral axiology of human environment should have, and they are respectively: in terms of the value concept, green technology takes ecological civilization idea --- the integral axiology of human environment as the value orientation and in terms of structure, green technology is constituted by natural technology series and social technology series. In the former feature, the idea of ecological civilization idea contains different understanding and resolution strategies on contemporary environmental issue. That is, contemporary environmental issue is a “synthesis of contradictions” between human kind and the nature and between human kind and the society, and the fundamental strategy to resolve this “synthesis of contradictions” is to insist on harmonious co-existence and coordinated development of human kind and the nature and human kind and the society. In addition, the idea also contains value guidance to realistic activities of human beings. That is, to provide all-round guidance to people’s invention activities, production activities and consumption activities with the idea of harmonious co-existence and coordinated development of human kind and the nature and the society. In terms of structure, green technology is constituted by natural technology series and social technology series. the former is technology series used to deal with relationship between human kind and the nature and is mainly natural technology series based on such scientific knowledge as ecology and environmental science, etc, and takes the nature as the target of action. The latter refers to technology series used to deal with relationship between human kind and the society and is mainly social technology series constituted by environmental policy, environmental rules and their interaction based on definite environmental ethics, which takes activities of people as the objective of governance. These two major technology series are dispensable. Without green social technology series, green natural technology series will lose social standardization and support; without green natural technology series, green social technology series will lose its realistic basis and foundation. Furthermore, the benign function of green technology rests with coincidence and benign interaction of the two major technology series.

Interaction between the integral axiology theory of human environment and the green technology practice it guides will “mould” for us a new future prospect. This is because the ecological civilization construction idea of integral axiology of human environment determines the core value orientation of green technology, that is, environmentally friendly. The two major series of structures of green technology determine that the core value of environmentally friendly lies in the technological construction of the two primary activities of human beings, namely, activity of relationship between human being and the nature and activity of relationship between human being and the society. Under the overall influence of the above “features”, the function features of the new future

prospect “moulded” will be gradually exhibited in operation of the green technology system. That is to say, the environmental issues caused by certain natural technology level and activity means of human being promote green social technology to make new design and arrangement with the method of “problem propelling”, so as to enable green social technology level to attain a new height and level of environmental justice to be improved accordingly. This new design and arrangement of green social technology will then enable green natural technology level to attain another new height with the method of “institutional guidance”, and then the harmony level between human kind and the nature will be improved accordingly. This coincidence and benign interaction between the two major technology series of green technology will make “green level” generated from natural technology improved continuously. At the same time, the design and arrangement of green social system will also go towards appropriateness and rationality. In such a way, supply of green social technology and advancement of green natural technology will continue to bring their increasing ecological and environmental effects in a dynamic “balance” and “coordination” and “mould” for us a civilized prospect in which human kind and the nature are harmonious and human kind and the society are harmonious and developed in a coordinated way.

References

- (1972). Karl Marx and Frederick Engels (Vol. 42). Beijing: People's Publishing House, 122.
- John B. Cobb & David Griffon. (1995). Process Theology --- Leading Introduction. David Griffon. *Post Modern Science --- Representation of Scientific Magic*. Beijing: Central Compilation & Translation Press, 125.
- Peter Singer. (1999). *Liberation of Animals*. Beijing: Guangming Daily Publishing House, 131.
- Rolston Holmes. (2000). *Philosophy Gone*. Changchun: Jilin People's Publishing House, 39.
- Wang, Nuo. (2004). Dispute on Ecological Holism. *Reading*, (2).
- Yu, Mouchang. (1995). *Disenchantment for Chastisement --- Going towards Ecological Theory*. Guangzhou: Guangdong Education Press, 185.
- Zou, Chengxiao & Hu, Zhigang. (2009). Green Technology in the Perspective of Ecological Civilization Establishment. *Guangming Daily*, August 12, (7).
- Zou, Shipeng. (1999). Pursuit of Mature Anthropocentrism. *Jilin University Social Science Journal*, (6).