



## Happiness View in Ecological Civilization Age

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### Abstract

With the advent of ecological civilization age, we are left with no choice but to redefine the values and principles of happiness that underlie our relationship with the nature. Over the course of history, we can easily find that there have been great changes in our lifestyles and the concept of happiness, and we have made tremendous progress in economic growth and material wealth. These changes have improved the quality of people's life for some, but have decreased it for others. We also have lifestyles which have detrimentally affected our surrounding natural environment. With the development of global industrialization, today, ecological crisis has become a global crisis that made people woke up from industrial civilization age sense of achievement, calling upon the arrival of the ecological civilization age. The concept of happiness is people's outlook on life and world view to the problem of happiness, view on happiness is for guidance and motivation. Happiness is the unity of subjective and objective, the unity of logic and history. The concept of ecological happiness is a new idea of evolution of Chinese and western philosophical views on happiness and it are a reflection of the characteristics of our times. Ecological civilization age decided to people's view on happiness is ecological happiness view. First, ecological happiness is

a kind of real happiness which is based on the scientific outlook on development and kind of human groups shared happiness. Second, Ecological happiness is a kind of happiness which based on human overall survival benefit and ecological rational belief. Finally, ecological happiness is a kind of happiness which reflects the intergenerational justice of human long-term sustainable happiness.

**Key words:** Ecological civilization age; Ecological happiness view; Turn

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### INTRODUCTION

In industrial civilization for hundreds of years, people created enormous material wealth at an alarming rate, In place of universal inter-dependence of people in the pre-industrial era, people are overdue matter-dependence; accordingly, it creates more and more resource consumption and environmental damage at an amazing speed. But, nature took fierce revenge on people that might be beyond our expectation or control. "Even if there were no future population growth, consumption patterns cannot go on escalating on a finite Earth. There are three problems: over-population, over-consumption, and under-distribution (Holmes, 2003)." Faced the ecological crisis, namely, the existential crisis, human woke up from the sense of achievement in industrial civilization era, calling upon the arrival of the ecological civilization era. In recent years, facing the direct threat to human survival, scholar's at home and abroad deep reflection on the pursuit of human value, to rethink and build happiness view. Happiness view is part of the outlook on life; reflect the

value pursuit of man, insisting scientific happiness view is the premise to get happiness. Based on Marxist, happiness view consists of material happiness, mental happiness, interaction of happiness, ecological happiness and so on. Ecological happiness both means and purpose happiness is part of perfect happiness, is both for itself and as a whole and has its absolute value for perfect happiness, but in terms of perfect happiness is achieved by it, it is a valuable means. Therefore, it is significant theoretically to construct ecological happiness concept and make the transition from traditional happiness concept to ecological happiness concept.

## 1. THE HISTORICAL EVOLUTION OF THE TRADITIONAL HAPPINESS VIEW

Based on the different philosophy basis, the concept of happiness theory in the western traditional philosophy can be divided into rationalism and empiricism happiness. Socrates, Plato, Aristotle and Kant are the representatives of rationalism happiness, disdaining material enjoyment and satisfaction, they believe that the happiness is the person's spiritual pursuit, and will be happy only in accordance with the logos. Socrates believes that knowledge (reason) is the premise to obtain happiness, moral (virtue) is the way to happiness, and happiness is the ultimate goal of intellectual and moral. "Knowledge - moral - happiness" is the path of happiness that is proposed and practiced by Socrates. Plato's "the summum bonum is happiness" is the inheritance and development of Socrates' happiness. Idealism is the basis of the Plato's concept of happiness, "the summum bonum" is the highest level of Idealism, and the pursuit of "the summum bonum" is the fundamental purpose of life. The pursuit of perfection with wisdom and virtue, restrained passion and enjoyment, can obtain the true happiness. Aristotle inherited the thought of Socrates and Plato's view of happiness, but also breaks through the framework of two teachers and puts forward the unique view of happiness. *Nicomachean Ethics* is Aristotle's the important ethics works, in which his happiness theory is mainly discussed. First, he used a realistic and specific "good" instead of Plato's general "good" in the abstract. "Good" has realistic diversity of human activity objective, "the summum bonum" is the purpose of other purposes, is the last and highest good. "Only the highest good is the last something. If only one thing is the last, it is what we are looking for 'good'. If there are multiple final purpose, so the final, is what we seek is 'good'. Can only be called happiness is absolutely the last. It seems that we choose only to itself and its forever, not because of what other else (Aristotle, 1990)." Secondly, happiness is the spiritual activities to be in conformity with virtue, and put the spiritual activities into practice. "Is in the possession or display of virtue, namely according to the quality to hold

the highest good, or in the performance of the quality of practical activities to hold the highest good (Aristotle, 1990)." Aristotle emphasized that happiness is not in entertainment but in activities to be in conformity with virtue. Happiness life contains serious and hard activities and life in accordance to virtue.

Medieval religious theology rose disdaining material enjoyment of rationalism happiness view to a lofty position, even pushed it to the acme. Thomas Aquinas believed that "people in the happiness of earthly life, its purpose is concerned, is our guide hope to enjoy paradise in the happy life ... (1963, p.86-87)" "another fate after the earthly life ; this is he waiting in after the death of the last happiness and joy (1963, p.83)." In view of this, the earths all are just means and step to reach the afterlife happiness in paradise.

The enlightenment destroyed the asceticism of religious ethics, perceptual happiness view rose in response to the proper time and conditions, which paid attention to material enjoyment, therefore, happiness came from heaven to the earth. Kant criticized perceptual happiness concept of modern philosophy. Happiness concept is an important issue in Kant's critique of practical reason. Kant held a negative attitude to the ancient Greek philosophers' emphasis on virtue and happiness identity, but, in fact, Kant is still inherited the tradition of ancient Greek rationalism happiness concept, the rational go so far as to soared to an unprecedented level. From Kant's point of view, the summum bonum is the highest realm of morality, is the combination of virtue and happiness, but cannot reach in this side of the world.

To sum up, the rationalism happiness concept is always happiness to obey the moral; which does not allow with the slightest desire, emotion experience, impulse and other perceptual content, will be away from the experience of the world and become the pure concept of hyperspace.

Perceptual happiness view thought that pursuit of happiness and avoid suffering is the nature of man, the pursuit of sensual pleasure is happiness. Representatives have Epicurus, Helvetius, Rohrabacher and Feuerbach etc. Epicurus was the father of hedonism. Happiness is the supreme of life, is no pain of the body and soul without distractions, morality is the means to achieve happiness. People must seek happiness by trying to create; the experience of happiness also comes from the process. He not only attaches great importance to the people's basic material comforts and sensual pleasures, but also puts a high value on the spirit of joy and happiness. Helvetius put forward that joy can bring happiness; the man has the tendency of hedonism, utilitarianism.

Feuerbach's view of happiness represents the highest achievements of modern perceptual happiness, which is the direct source of Marx's thought of happiness. Feuerbach's happiness view take the "perceptual person" as the starting point, naturalness is the essence of man,

no life, no happiness, health is the premise of happiness, and happiness is life itself. "A larva has experienced a long period of time after unsuccessful search and tension of stray, finally rested on its expected and suitable plant. What drove him to take action, what made it such suffering stray? That is the pursuit of happiness (Ludwig Feuerbach, 1984, p.535)." To meet the needs of the individual, to pursue their own happiness is man's natural rights. He thought that moral principle should be measured by sensory, physical satisfaction is the basic condition of development and maintain moral; and advocated to resolve the conflict of personal happiness and social well-being by obligation and conscience, the pursuit of happiness in the rational egoism.

## 2. THE ECOLOGICAL TURNING OF HAPPINESS CONCEPT

Since the enlightenment in the industrial age, the idea of people maintains the tension of rationalism and empiricism. On the one hand, people thought that human as subject give to world order rather than god, marched against mother nature with "the power of knowledge", created huge material wealth with "rational tools"; on the other hand, they thought that the subject is pursuer and carrier of happiness, as a result, perceptual happiness showed strong gradually in people's idea, which was man's lust for the release of one thousand years of repression and on behalf that bourgeois in the growing period were moral blessing for the interests and happiness. But that, unfortunately, people addicted to luxury and pleasures of the senses slide into the trap of the anthropocentrism. Because they paid more attention to material interests, for relying too much on material lead to the loss of subjectivity." It is exactly as Michel Foucault said, "the times of the death of God" was replaced by "the times of the death of human", namely human alienation of nature power.

Happiness thoughts of Chinese traditional culture reflect two themes of the perceptual happiness and the rationalism happiness, but due to the constraints of feudal system, rationalism happiness, especially asceticism happiness was the ethics thought in the mainstream. After the reform and opening up, China in decades passed through the industrialization road for hundreds of years in the west, achieved rapid development and remarkable achievements, but ecological problems as the the associated problems of industrialization quietly arrived. The 15th Party Congress put forward the strategy of sustainable development, the 16th CPC National Congress made the "ecological civilization construction" as one of the goals of building the well-off society in an all-around way, the 15th Party Congress wrote the ecological civilization into the Party Constitution, the 15th Party Congress wrote a single articles to discuss

the ecological civilization for the first time, and took the "beautiful China "as the grand goal of ecological civilization construction. all parts of the country answered the call, advocated that people's happiness was achieved by the construction of ecological civilization. Along with the ecological turn of era's theme, happiness concept as a permanent topic of philosophy is showing its ecological dimension. It is obvious that the ecological happiness concept is a new form of evolution of Chinese and western philosophical outlook on happiness, embody profoundly the characteristic of the times. But, in recent years, international scholars on the construction of ecological happiness were only preliminary attempt.

The Frankfurt school's ecological civilization thought was produced along with critique of the enlightenment, which criticized that cultural spirit was dominated by industrial civilization. The Frankfurt school's criticism of the enlightenment rationality always runs through the think about the relation between man and nature, contains rich thought of ecological civilization and has done a lot of thinking about the happiness.

Marcuse thought that industrial civilization made mankind into crisis and the trouble, the alienation of relationship between human and nature, man and man, man and society, is typical characteristic of the dilemma of modernity (Herbert Marcuse, 1991). He has carried on the profound reflection on the modern people. Tool rational controls the natural, which means control of the allocation of resources, then control of the people. Therefore, to achieve the liberation of nature is the premise to realize the liberation of the people, change the capitalist system and the mode of production, remove technical control of nature, overturn the production system to meet the false demand of people, avoid ecological destruction from technology application, to realize the true liberation of nature of human (person's own perceptual impulse) and man's external nature. Nevertheless, Frankfurt school just criticized the "one dimensional "of modern civilization within the scope of capitalism system, by contrast, ecological socialism showed more revolutionary of rebellion against the capitalist system.

## 3. ECOLOGICAL HAPPINESS VIEW

Attentions to ecological problems in Ecological socialism (including Ecological Marxism) began from Frankfurt school, especially from *One Dimensional Man* by Marcuse. The essence of Ecological Marxism happiness view is ecological happiness view. The ecological socialism happiness view can be seen in some representative monographs, we can analysis and summary the theory about happiness view. *The Belem Ecosocialist Declaration* begins with the rebellion against capitalism order, "Capitalism's need for growth exists on every level, from the individual enterprise to the

system as a whole. The insatiable hunger of corporations is facilitated by imperialist expansion in search of ever greater access to natural resources, cheap labor and new markets. Capitalism has always been ecologically destructive, but in our lifetimes these assaults on the earth have accelerated. Quantitative change is giving way to qualitative transformation, bringing the world to a tipping point, to the edge of disaster (*The Belem Ecosocialist Declaration*, 2009)." Through a critique of the ecological crisis and human's unfortunate course by capitalism, the hope for people's survival state and happiness view give expression to the ecological concept. As Gorz said, ecology should be performed as a lever to promote civilization and fierce criticism of the society, and reach the ultimate happiness of human beings finally. It emphasizes that green creation is the source of happiness, and it strongly opposed that consumption is equal with happiness. "Capital logic" springs up the real rise of consumerism concept of happiness. With the impetus of the capital strength, the purpose of consumption has been changed from meeting the needs of men to gain greater profits with the capital. Ecological socialism critique capitalist society of its consumerism happiness view, think that it is alienation of consumption and sensual pleasures. Only with the idea that to gain satisfied from non alienation creative labor rather than the endless consumption of goods by using advertising as media. Man can own the true human happiness and abandon the alienation of happiness. "It is capitalism that expends production for its own sake, driven by the competitive pursuit of profit---the expansion of exchange value. Marx was arguing that outmoded social forms stand in the way of the further development of society's powers to answer people real needs---the expansion of use value. This kind of development of the productive powers would mean an improved ability to produce useful things and useful states of affairs, which, unlike the process of capitalist development, does not entail that more and more things are produced in each round of production (Chris Williams, 2010, p.74)." So, the representation of real social happiness is economic sustainable development, man and nature living in harmony, social fairness and justice, and also people can work with dignity and consume rationally. The ecological socialism happiness view advocates "less consumption, better life", "getting satisfaction from creative labor", "realizing the liberation of natural and human". All this reflects the unity of material and spiritual in happiness dimensions.

In conclusion, those exploration of human happiness took by ecological socialists do has profound theory significance and practical value, but at the same time, there are obvious defects. For example, how to realize the "free labor" to replace the consumerism happiness view? Also at the present time, how to realize "democracy" and "non bureaucratic" in the process of the production management? That is to say, although ecological socialists

profoundly analyzed the causes of the alienation of man's happiness, but there is no specific practice and theoretical demonstration.

"Somewhat ironically, just when humans, with their increasing industry and technology, seemed further and further from nature, having more knowledge about natural processes and more power to manage them, the natural world has emerged as a focus of ethical concern (Holmes Rolston III, 2003, p.528)." Environmental ethics is established in response to global environmental pollution and ecological crisis. The main purpose it describes the concept of happiness is to demonstrate the ethical holism of ecological communities, and "natural goodness" of wild nature. The thought of environmental ethics alert people who lost in the material world, and is full of longing for the spirit of happiness given by the nature, it also represented the dimension of ecological view of happiness.

In *Environmental Ethics*, J. R. Des Jardins put forward that Environmental problems put forward a basic problem, how we live our lives (Des Jardins, 1997). This kind of problem is the philosophy and ethics problems. Thus, we ask, what is the essence of man? What is happiness? What is the basic value of human? How our life style like? Etc. Only after we answer the reasons of action, can we take some means to achieve the goal. Environmental problems put forward the basic problems of ethics and philosophy, make clear of our pursuit. The development of science and technology, possession of material wealth are only means to achieve the goal. If we took the methods as the purpose, we would have the order reversed. He criticized that consumerism may or may not run out of natural resources, but material possessiveness is the most important of this kind of life, and it replaces self-esteem, beauty, compassion, humility and value. Today, People are more easily to lost in spiritual sense in nature (rather than in geography)...and lost the direction in where is considered a blank of morality. Holmes Rolston III, the United States environmental ethicists, said that the outstanding ability of contemporary people can not only make him down to the level of substance, but also make him separated from substances. People indulging in material comfort will "down to the physical level", but they separate from nature, "separate from substances", lost the happiness of coexist harmoniously with nature. Furthermore, such substances enjoy is just about surface or regional, though the more developed science and technology, and higher the utilization rate of resources, more people suffered from hunger. This paradox is enough to alarm people; the pursuit of richer substance to gain happiness will only make more people suffer from misfortune.

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## CONCLUSION

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Happiness view is an important component part of philosophy system. It is an internal, stable, systematic

concept system of value selection. Specifically, the so-called happiness view refers to the concept system about the attitude of goals, motivations, means, standards and effects of happiness, etc. It is also one of the ultimate goals of life value, and a powerful force for social development. In general, the view of happiness is a reflect of men's outlook on life and the world, and it is the orientation and dynamics to get happiness, too. Meanwhile Happiness is the unity of subjective and objective, logic and history. Ecological happiness view is proposed under the background of the construction of ecological civilization. In order to realize the transition from industrial civilization to ecological civilization, we must implement the convention of the happiness view from the traditional to ecological. Ecological happiness view use the concept of ecology as its core, it is an idea system formed by men's l goals, motivation, means, standard, effects of ecological happiness. Ecological civilization determines that human's view of happiness is ecological happiness view.

Ecological happiness is a kind of real happiness which is based on the scientific outlook on development and kind of human groups shared happiness. First, the highest realm happiness must not be individual, national or country's happiness, if only in this sense, the understanding and definition of ecological happiness is not the original meaning and the true meaning of happiness; historically, true happiness based on ecological care, must be in the sense of all humanity. "Earth's Whole-life-system refers to a totality in which human beings, together with other life forms, nature elements and forces, co-exist interdependently as a cohesive and inseparable body.....All human decisions ought to be made and implemented on the vital assumption that the existence of all life, including human life, can be sustained only when the integrity and well-being of the Whole-Life-System is preserved (1997 *Seoul Declaration on Environmental Ethics*, 1997)." And second, ecological happiness is a kind of happiness which based on human overall survival benefit and ecological rational belief. Usually, people with the ecological rational, their behaviors are not for the purpose of personal interests, but considering the factors

of whole ecological environment, social and economic development, to standardize and restrain their behavior, they can evaluate conformance to the ecology on all things related to the environment evaluation, with the ecological self-consciousness to protect the ecosystem, to achieve the common interests of all humanity. Finally, ecological happiness is a kind of happiness which reflects the intergenerational justice of human long-term sustainable happiness. As true happiness must be based on the subjects of all humanity, ecological happiness as human rational action objectives in the whole of 21st century, even in the remote future of mankind, and ecological cultural values, needs the joint efforts of global society to construct it.

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