



Factors Impacting to Construction of Ecological Ethics in Vietnam Today

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Abstract

Ecological ethics include the views, ideas, emotions, norms that govern human behavior during exploitation and regeneration nature to serve human life, for the existence and continuous development of society in certain natural-social conditions. The development of ecological ethics in Vietnam is impacted by many objective-subjective factors, direct-indirect factors, favorable-difficult factors, in which the most important factors are: ethical values traditional ecology; demands for sustainable development, science-technology development and construction of a socialist-oriented market economy; viewpoint of the Communist Party of Vietnam on building ecological ethics.

Keywords: ecological ethics, impacted factors, Vietnam



1. Introduction

Today, the rapid development of the modern science and technology revolution has led to great changes in many fields, especially in economics. However, the miraculous successes in economics and science-technology have led to the downside of environmental pollution. While discussing the issue of the environment, people are often interested in the technology, economy, medicine and law aspects, while other aspects such as traditional culture, morality, lifestyle are largely ignored, although they are fundamental and very important in regulating human behavior in the exploitation, using natural resources and environmental protection.

In fact, environmental degradation is often confined to criminal liability, and is subject to judicial review, but is not condemned almost ethically. It proves that from the social perspective, the exploitation and rational use of natural resources and environmental protection is compulsory, not involuntary, the custom comes from the self-consciousness of the obligations and responsibilities of each citizen. That means the ethical issue of the humans to the natural environment - ecological ethics now needs to be more concerned.

In Vietnam, environmental pollution is a serious problem. Studying factors impacting the development of ecological ethics in Vietnam is a matter of practical significance.

2. Method

2.1. Ecological ethics

Living in a natural - human environment, human is always subject to constraints and regulations by relationships: 1- between human and human (between individuals); 2 - between human and society (between individuals with different small, big communities); and 3 - between human and nature (the environment). Ethic is formed and play an extremely important role in guiding and regulating human behavior to regulate those relationships. Ethic is directly related to the benefit, "*the right benefit is the principle of the whole of ethics*" (Marx, K & Engel, F, 1995). Or, the main benefit is the profound origin of ethic. Benefits, ethics, are not only satisfying the needs of the subject, but also satisfying the needs of the subject. The interests of the subject and object must be consistent with the development trend of the society and the movement of the era.

Firstly, it must be affirmed that *ecological ethic is a special form of social morality*, an ethic is expressed in the relationship between human and nature (with the around environment). As a special form of social ethics, *ecological ethics include the views, perceptions, thoughts, emotions, norms that govern human behavior during the process of changing and improving nature to serve human life, for the existence and continuous development of society in certain natural-social conditions*. Apart from the basic characteristics of social ethics, ecological ethics also have their own characteristics:

In ecological ethics, human is always subject, nature is always object. The subject and the object of social ethics interact with each other in accordance with ethical values. In ecological ethics, human as a moral subject always actively interact and influence nature in a conscious way, with the aim of bringing benefits to themselves. Meanwhile, the impact of nature on people and society is only blind, unconscious, or just "natural reflex". Thus, the unethical behavior of human to nature is "accumulated", the contradiction between human and nature is getting deeper and deeper, but human is not able to perceive, exactly is impossible to anticipate the catastrophe. By the time, human realizes the "revenge" of nature, it is too late and then human suffer the heavy consequences that they caused to the natural environment and for themselves.

Ethics are attached to value: In relation to nature, humans focus only on exploiting the practical values of natural objects to serve their needs and satisfy their higher interests but



forget their intrinsic value is life and service to life. With such "behaviors", humans have seriously violated ecological ethics. For example, the exploitation and use of wildlife all over the world over the centuries, especially in the past century, has brought enormous ecological disasters, one of the most dangerous disaster was the global climate change in the negative direction. These ecological disasters not only devastated nature, but also devastated the lives of human, the existence and development of human society. This proved that humans have not fully aware of the intrinsic value of plants and the forests to the life of all things, including human and society, but only exploiting their use is exhausted.

In ecological ethics, the relationship between human and nature is one-sided, meaning that only humans act on natural objects proactively, set their own rules, values for their benefit... through which, humans adjusts their behavior to nature. Therefore, to ensure the harmony between humans and natural interests, humans must have self-consciousness very high. To do this, on the one hand, humans must nurture and promote their inherent love for nature; on the other hand, it is necessary to have a deep understanding of the laws of existence, movement and development of nature and to have a proper understanding of the important roles, positions and responsibilities of humans in the relationship with nature.

2.2. Factors that affect to the development of ecological ethics in Vietnam today

***Traditional ecological ethical values**

In the notion of some traditional Eastern religions and philosophies, human is not opposed with nature which is always considered a component, a part of the nature. Confucianism believes that human lives in the middle of nature, so relations between human and the nature is "Nature-Human touch each other". Similarly, Taoism attaches great importance to the unity of human beings in relation to nature, to all things in the universe. The conception of harmony of Lao Zi also contains two main contents: human and nature (Heaven and Earth) rely on each other for survival, development (natural and human unification), harmony between man and man. With this conception, he gave a personal philosophy that he lived pure, beyond the natural, not unnatural. Zhuang Zi thought that between things and humans are equal, the nature and us are one. In Buddhism in the beginning, all things and phenomenon in the universe are closely related.

In Vietnam, the idea of harmony between human and nature has also appeared quite early. Along with the ethics, culture of Eastern, traditional ecological ethics of Vietnam brings certain values about the philosophy of life. The history of Vietnam was the harmony between human and nature, built on the basis a combination of oriental philosophies that were deeply influenced by Buddhism, Confucianism and Taoism with the practical mindset of working people that always stick with the nature. This philosophy of life is showed in three basic concepts that reflected in three different levels of human-to-nature relationship.

First is the concept the harmony of nature and human. This is the earliest concept of relationship of the human and the nature. Human and nature are a solid, integral part. With this concept, Vietnamese have gone through many difficulties, arduous still living in harmony with nature, rely on and follow nature. This concept is consistent with the agricultural life, low-level rice cultivation, dependent on nature.

Second is the concept of "Man proposes, God disposes". In an underdeveloped society, especially with the too outdated productive forces, humans do not have the capacity and conditions to exploit nature enough to earn full-living. This concept makes humans worship nature: "thank god for sunshine and raining enough," "please rain down". The name of the gods such as "Land has the gods land, rivers have gods river", mountain, forest, sea, sun, thunder, fire also have gods showing that not only Vietnamese love but also gratitude, respect, even depend on natural forces blindly. According to folklore, worshiping the gods is worshiping nature, protecting nature. And



customary law - which may be the human law of natural environment protection has appeared on the basis worshipping the gods, worshipping that nature.

Third is the concept of "The human wins the nature". Different from the previous two concepts, this concept gives humans certain dynamics in relation to nature, not waiting for natural gifts, but in a certain way they can overcome natural disasters by the themselves power. Humans fight natural disasters, win natural calamities to live in harmony with nature rather than away or opposite to it. That is the logical conquest of nature, within the limits of it and such conduct demonstrates an open love with nature.

Vietnamese love the nature, live in harmony with the nature because they understand the values, the great benefits that nature brings to them. Comparing nature as gold, as silver shows not only means rich nature but also proves that nature in the Vietnamese's heart is extremely precious, the source of life, the source of material things that humans need to respect and protect.

Vietnamese love the nature because the nature is the source of patriotism, in other words patriotism is rooted in the love of nature. Patriotism of the Vietnamese is the source of the birth and nourishment of the typical values of Vietnamese culture. Patriotism is rooted in the love of the homeland, from the roof of houses, the green fields, the wells to the great love of the nation.

Vietnamese love nature, closely associated with this beloved land. Therefore, from the earliest days they have learned step by step to improve and adapt gradually to it. Living by nature is the most appropriate way of behavior of Vietnamese to nature.

Humans have used natural products such as bamboo, wood, rattan to make home, food, especially famous products made from fish, shrimp, crab etc. In the architecture of houses: they have known the direction of the house, the direction of the land, have avoided the direction of the wind, have selected the direction of the sun, or have built houses near rivers, streams to take water for living, farming. A special feature in the architecture of houses is these buildings fit to feng shui. That is the harmony between the land position, the mountain position, the water source etc. It is very clear in the architecture of the royal city as Thang Long, the Ho Citadel, the Hue Aient Capital or the theory of "Heaven - Land - Human".

Cultural behavior of the human to natural environment is also reflected in the dressing of people. It is the appropriate behavior with each of seasons, wearing clothes in cool material in the summer, wearing clothes in the keep-heat material in the winter etc., or in experience production, water management, weather forecast, planting trees suitable for season etc. To be able to live on nature without being completely dependent on it, humans are forced to understand nature, grasp the operated laws of natural forces such as sun, rain, storms, floods, moon etc., to prevent and promptly respond to the abnormal changes of nature, minimizing the adverse effects of natural disasters. Through the process of living, labor, farmers by the accumulation of experience on the basis observation of the animals's activities (dragonfly flying low it is rainy, flying high it is sunny, on average it is cool), on the state of the winds, clouds, thunders, lightning have gradually formed a wealth of rich and diversified folk knowledge. Those lived experiences become the necessary knowledge for all generations, it guides, regulates the way of life, how to eat, wear and stay of the Vietnamese. Another obvious expression of traditional ecological culture is the way of using folk medicine. Vietnamese patients not only by medicine but also by eating. It is also a way of life based on the nature of the Vietnamese.

These traditional ecological ethical values of the Vietnamese are formed on the basis folklore concepts and philosophies and are influenced by Confucian, Buddhist, and Taoist ethics. In the present stage, it is necessary to inherit and develop traditional ethical values in accordance with the reality of the country, to build ecological ethical values in the direction of linking tradition with modernity, nation with internation, individual with society, human with nature.



Previously, in the relationship of human behavior with the natural world is only expressed at a low level, passive exploitation, using nature based on experience and the concept "*Heaven - Land – Human are unified*", "*Man proposes, God disposes*". It causes people to lose their dynamism, creativity, inhibit the development of society. In the present society, it is no longer appropriate to require a new ecological ethical norm that directs the behavior of human ecology ethics.

The problem is that we need to build new ecological ethics based on the selection, inheritance, development of traditional ecological ethical values in accordance with current development conditions. The philosophy of living in harmony with nature today is still valuable but its content needs to change. Today, people live in harmony with nature on the basis exploiting the natural resources to serve their lives and develop the country. It means that humans not only exploit so much, quickly use the values of nature with modern tools and techniques to satisfy their needs; they also need to recreate, maintain, protect the natural world, protect their life. In other words, humans need to know how to compensate for nature, to grasp the threshold of nature, to ensure the regeneration and recovery of nature. In addition, living in harmony with nature must follow the principle of sustainable development - a principle that we are aiming at in the process of science and technology development and building a socialist-oriented market economy.

***Demands of science and technology development, the sustainable development and the building a socialist-oriented market economy.**

Demands of science and technology development

Along with the trend of internationalization, globalization in the world, Vietnam is step by step integrating and striving in science and technology development to shorten the gap with other countries. So why science - technology is one of the factors to be considered when we build ecological ethics. Because "*technology emphasizes the positive attitude of human to nature, points out the direct production of human life and the conditions of their social life, as well as the concepts spirituality derived from these conditions*" (Binh, Nguyen Duc, Nghia, Le Huu, Tien, Tran Huu, 2003). This concept, which was presented in the Capitalist edition of Marx, has been still considered to be the most correct, most general definition about technology by many scholars. The above conception of Marx indicates clearly that technology exposes directly relationships between human with nature; the relationship between human and human and from that formed a dialectical relationship between nature - human - social ... The relationship of people and nature is manifested specifically in the ability to apply technology to promote the exploitation and transformation of available resources in nature into social resources suitable to the needs of human development, first of all is the need to eat, drink, stay, wear and travel. In this relationship, humans are forced to consider ethical factors.

In order to meet increasing needs of human, technology has always been improved, played an increasing important role in human economic-social activities; at the same time, it can be exchanged, traded and delivered for human purposes. The rapid development of technology has brought to tremendous effects that the first scientists who invented technology could not imagine. Technological highlights are found in almost every aspect of life, extensively used in agriculture, industry, medicine, and the vast cosmology. It is for this reason that Marx brought us to a conclusion, but it took thousands of years of human practice to realize that "*The hand-millstone brought to society has a feudal lord, the steamroller brought to society has a industrial capitalist*" (Marx, K & Engel, F, 1995). With this view point, Marx pointed out that technology is an important part of productive forces.

The process of technological development is humans grasp the natural laws and apply them to their daily activities, constantly "explaining the world", "transforming the world" to more



and more develop and not "opposition to nature", otherwise humans will pay the expensive price for the blindly activities violated objective rules. Thus, it forms "the behavior culture with the natural environment" and "the behavior culture with the social environment" of human. It has been pointed out that ignoring environmental issues when applying technology leads to potential risks to human health and the ecological environment. Environmental crises or degradation of habitat quality are occurring on a global scale, threatening the lives of humans. Ecological ethics should be built for human can go deep into the application of the basic achievements of science-technology while ensuring sustainable development requirements.

Demands for sustainable development

In the past development process, mankind focused on productive and social management to achieve high economic growth and social development without forgetting the protection of ecological environment, not consciously do to improve, make better ecological environment. Even then, sometimes we have mistakenly thought that, for economic growth, social modernization, the "sacrifice" ecological environment was inevitable. Facing the urgent problems of the ecological environment as well as concerns about the prospects for human development in the present and in the future, perceiving for the nature, the relationship between nature, people and society has made radical changes. More than ever, humans need to be aware that resources are not endless to be exploited as they want forever. In the process of natural extraction, human beings have emitted a large amount of waste in production and daily life, have overcome the regulated limits of animals and plants in the biological cycle, so humans need to live in harmony with nature; must pay attention to the common interests of the whole community, of future generations. Linking economic growth and social modernization with the protection and improvement of the ecological environment in the process of development has become the main principle of social life for all countries, including Vietnam.

Thus, considering the three pillars of socio-economic and ecological life, it is possible to see the period when the economy is separated from society and ecology, focusing only on the economy being overcome. The prevailing trend is that social and ecological issues are more focused on the overall relationship of the three. The most obvious manifestation is the emergence of new perspectives in human life - "sustainable development".

Sustainable development is a new concept that emerged after the environmental crisis. Since then there has not been a definition that is considered complete and consistent. The United Nations World Commission on Environment and Development (WCED) reported that "sustainable development" is defined as *"the development meets the needs of the present and without compromising the ability to meet the needs of future generations"* (World Commission on Environment and Development, 1987). Another concept holds that sustainable development is a transformation model that optimizes economic and social benefits in the present but does not harm the potential of similar benefits in the future. It includes two key contents: the human needs and the limited capacity of the environment to meet the human needs in the present and future.

Previously, *"in unsustainable development, humans believed mistakenly that natural resources were endless, production and consumption can grow according to human needs, science and technology can solve all issues in every step of human and social development, including waste, population growth or ecology problem"* (Hai, Luong Dinh, 2007). In contrast, in sustainable development, resources are considered limited, production and consumption must save resources, cannot grow beyond the limits that ecology creates; science also has definite limits and cannot always solve immediately human problems. Thus, in principle, the view point of sustainable development recognizes that economic development has certain limits, must pay special attention to the harmony between nature and human.



In Vietnam, this issue has been paid special attention by the Party and State, especially to the 9th Congress, the Communist Party of Vietnam put forward a leading point of view: *"Development to be fast, efficient and sustainable, economic development coupled with social progress, equal and environmental protection"* (Communist Party of Vietnam, 2001). The Law on Environmental Protection (Article 3) states: *"Sustainable development is developed to meet the needs of the present generation without compromising the ability to meet the needs of future generations on the basis of the close integration and harmony between economic growth, social progress and justice and environmental protection"* (Vietnam National Assembly, 2014).

On the basis of the general principle of international sustainable development and based on the specific conditions, circumstances of Vietnam, the strategic orientation for sustainable development in Vietnam has been selected by 8 principles:

1. Human is at the center of sustainable development.
2. Economic development must be considered as a key task, but it must be harmonized with the guarantee of social progress and equity, the use of natural resources and the protection of the environment.
3. Ensuring the environmental protection and improvement is an integral part of the development process.
4. Ensuring the development process meets the needs of the present generation and does not interfere with the lives of future generations.
5. Science and technology are the foundation and motivation for industrialization, modernization, rapid and sustainable development of the country.
6. Sustainable development is the responsibility of the entire people
7. Expanding international cooperation is important for the national development.
8. Combining closely socio-economic development with environmental protection, national defense and security, social order and safety (Prime Minister of Vietnam, 2004).

Strategic direction of sustainable development in Vietnam is a framework strategy, including the massive orientation on the basis of harmony between economic development, social development and environmental protection. It can be said that sustainable development from an ecological perspective is the balance between economic development and environmental protection. For the sake of socio-economic development, it is necessary to focus on effective exploitation of the natural environment while avoiding the destructive and long-term regeneration of the natural world.

For sustainable development, humans need to concern about both of ecological sustainability and social sustainability. Ecological sustainability is the need to utilize and regenerate renewable resources; it is necessary to have an effective way in exploiting and using the resources and ecologically balanced, avoiding the depletion of natural resources and environmental degradation and reducing minimum of environmental pollution. Social sustainability is how to not only achieve economic growth but also ensure social problems and build a healthy life. We can only do that when ecological ethical awareness is promoted, ecological ethical behavior is practiced, becomes a daily lifestyle in each of us.

Building a socialist-oriented market economy

Up to date, the market economy is one of the great and important achievements of mankind. When Vietnam fell into crisis, the Party and State decided to shift from a bureaucratic centralized economy to a socialist-oriented market economy.

Vietnam has been in the market economy for more than 30 years. That time is enough for us to recognize both its positive and negative effects. Market economy stimulates strongly the search for benefits, especially economic benefits. For the immediate economic benefit, it is easy to



ignore ethics and responsibility, especially in the relationship between the human and the nature. In the past, when said about the downside of a market economy, K. Marx pointed out that it was a free trade without conscience, which made the relationship between the human and the human "*sinking in cold water of selfish calculation*" because "*in addition to the naked benefit is the way money is given*" (Marx, K & Engel, F, 1995). Because the market economy always put benefits as motivation, as the development goal. The positive side of this factor is can stimulate human creativity in transforming the world. However, if absolutizing personal freedom leads to egoism, extremis, the ecological ethical values of the nation are at risk of erosion.

The indiscriminate exploitation of natural resources such as forests, minerals, precious metals, etc. has led to the depletion of resources, especially forests. Because of the money, the humans have deserved all ethical values. Current deterrent measures stop mainly at administrative sanctions. Social etiquette, ethical sense does not really play an important role in preventing unethical actions, affecting the environment.

*** The viewpoint of the Communist Party of Vietnam on building ecological ethics**

The Communist Party of Vietnam had many directives on environmental protection in the period of industrialization and modernization. The view of the Communist Party of Vietnam is reflected in some major contents:

Firstly, pollution, degradation of the environment is problems faced by mankind in parallel with poverty and AIDS. These problems are threatening the survival and development of the earth.

Secondly, it is necessary to have a harmonious combination between the three contents: economic development, social progress and environmental protection for sustainable development of the country. Environmental protection is an important, inseparable content in the economic development process.

Thirdly, environmental protection brings benefits to the whole society. This requires each of organization, individual, family to participate in environmental protection activities. Environmental protection is considered the culture and ethics of humans in civilized society.

Fourth, overcoming environmental pollution, degradation and incidents are difficult, costly. Prevention and mitigation of adverse impacts on the environment are the most effective and appropriate measures.

Fifthly, environmental protection must be carried out regularly, in the long term and it is necessary to have the Party leadership, the unified government steering and management, the involvement of the local authorities and the whole society.

Sixth, the State plays an important role in environmental protection, representing the people in management and environmental protection.

Seventh, it is necessary to step up the socialization of environmental protection and adopt mechanisms and policies to encourage individuals, organizations and communities to participate in environmental protection.

3. Conclusion

Building ecological morality is one of the requisite requirements for all countries, including Vietnam. We are forced to change gradually our perceptions of nature, position and relationship of human with nature, human responsibility and obligation in the exploitation and proper using of natural resources.

In Vietnam, with special characteristics, it is necessary to pay special attention to the ecological-humanitarian environment in the spirit of improving and reforming actively and effectively the sustainable development strategy. In the process of accelerating the



industrialization, modernization and implementation of the socialist-oriented market economy, we also need to pay attention in the protection and improvement of the natural environment. At the same time, it is necessary to promote the national tradition: human lives in harmony with the nature.

Essentially, building ecological ethics is changing the way humans think, perceive and behave with nature. We must build ecological ethics because humans are the main cause of ecological consequences. For solving ecological problems, individuals must create the right behavior for nature. Studying the factors that influence the development of ecological ethics in Vietnam will help us to propose appropriate solutions for the development of ecological ethics.

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