The Analysis of Ecological Ethics in the Low-carbon Economy

QIAN Tongzhou*

School of law, Henan University of Technology, China 450001

Abstract

The low-carbon economy, a major advance in human history, is required by the environment in which human beings inhabit. This economic development model, which centers on energy technology innovation, system innovation and the fundamental change of human survival concept, has an obvious orientation of ecological ethics and is in accordance with the requirements of ecological harmony in China's scientific development concept. The low-carbon characteristic of the scientific development concept is a systematic relationship reflected in the social, economic and ecological aspects of coordinated development. These three aspects are complementary with each other, and check each other based on social, economic, ecological sustainability. In a low-carbon economy society, the development of high-tech industry is considered as a strategic goal, enhancing the competitiveness of manufactured products. As a result, the nation should carry out low-carbon industry strategies and the citizens should foster the low-carbon awareness and lead a low-carbon life.

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Key words: low carbon economy; scientific development concept; ecological harmony; low-carbon life

1. Introduction

In Dec. 7th, 2009, environment ministers and officials from the world's nearly 200 countries and regions, held the United Nations Climate Change Conference in Copenhagen the capital of Danish. The meeting was called the last chance to save humankind and tried to reach a worldwide agreement and establish a global framework to control greenhouse gas emissions. Although the outcome of this meeting is not satisfactory, it will have a decisive influence on the Earth's future climate change, and will also cause more people to reflect on the current way of production and their life.

* Corresponding author. Tel.: E-mail: tongzhou@haut.edu.cn
2. A concern about low carbon economy in the new century

Low-carbon economy is often viewed as an important progress of economic development model in human society after the agricultural and industrial civilization. Based on low power consumption, low pollution and low emission, this model makes full use of solar, wind, hydrogen, biology energy. It intends to improve energy use efficiency and renewable energy structure. This model also regards energy technology innovation, system innovation and a fundamental shift of the concept of human survival and development as the sole core.

In China, the model of low carbon economy provides an operational interpretation for the purpose of energy saving, development of circular economy and the construction of a harmonious society. It is also a comprehensive creation and practice of the scientific development concept and a conservation-oriented society. Low-carbon economy is completely consistent with the development idea embodied in the Party’s Seventeenth Congress report and is the only way of sustainable economic development. It is also acknowledged as the global revolution of production model, lifestyle and values. Low-carbon economy is the "fifth wave of global industry", according to Lin Hui, a well-known scholar, whose intention of low-carbon includes low carbon society, low-carbon economy, low-carbon production, low-carbon consumption, and low-carbon life, low-carbon city, low-carbon communities, low-carbon home, low carbon travel, carbon culture, low-carbon philosophy, low carbon art, low-carbon music, low-carbon life, low-carbon living doctrine, and low-carbon lifestyle.


In China, in 2006, six ministries including the Ministry of Science jointly issued “the National Assessment Report on Climate Change” for the first time. In 2007, the low carbon economy and China's energy and environmental policy seminar was held in Beijing. In the same year, the National Development and Reform Committee issued “Long-term Renewable Energy Development Plan” to encourage and support the development of hydro and wind power and other renewable energy sources. In September 2007, Hu Jintao at IAELM proposed the four pieces of suggestion: energy conservation technology, environmental protection technology, low-carbon energy technology to cope with the global climate change. Just in the same month, Wan Gang, Minister of the National Science and Technology, called for great efforts to develop low-carbon economy at the 2007 annual meeting of Chinese Association for Science. In 2008, the United Nations Environment Program representative officer, Mr. Kunbao, also the chief director, at the First National Harmonious Urban Forum pointed out that sustainable urban development relies only on the development of low-carbon economy. In the same month, Qinghua University set up a low-carbon energy laboratory. Also in the same month, the National Development and Reform Committee and the WWF (World Wildlife Fund) jointly selected the Shanghai and Baoding (a city in Hebei Province of China) as low-carbon city development project pilot. China’s carbon network was established in China in 2008.

3. Low-carbon economy and scientific development concept: the analysis of ecological ethics orientation of social development

Low carbon economy, advocating low energy consumption and low pollution and low emission model, is in fact consistent with the scientific development concept in China. Both of them emphasize
scientific, economic, ecological and harmonious development. Scientific development concept pays special attention to ecological harmony, and thus is suitable for the low-carbon economy development. Scientific development concept, created by the new generation of collective leadership of the Party’s central committee, and based on accurate analysis and understanding of current situation home and abroad, carves out a new way of development and creates a new model of development. Scientific development concept can be regarded as an economic, comprehensive, harmonious, active, peaceful, innovative and ecological civilization development. Constructing an ecological civilization on the basis of socialist harmonious society is a challenge as well as an opportunity for China today. Scientific development concept is a humanistic value orientated concept, which answers a series of unavoidable questions like what and how and for whom to develop. Innovative development, ecological and harmonious development is nothing but low carbon development.

Scientific development concept is characterized by a coordinated systemic interrelationship of society, economy and ecology with the basis of social, economic and ecological sustainability. The core of this concept is human beings’ long-term interest. This is consistent with the low-carbon economy requirement and purpose. Moreover, scientific development concept is also consistent with low carbon economy in the value orientation of social development of human and ecological ethic concern.

In fact, Marxist founders proposed reconciliation between human beings and nature and between human itself as early as more than one hundred years ago. And these founders took logic as a starting point, studied the relationship among humankind, nature and society, and finally formed the Marxist ecological theory. Its basic part is the scientific idea about the relationship and co-existence between humankind and nature. The relationship that Marx and Engles revealed between the humankind and nature is the core of ecological theory of (maximum content?) and is the most distinct assertion, as it is the relationship between human and society, i.e. an interactive symbiotic relationship. People’s aesthetic views takes as the starting point and criterion the balance and stability and overall interests of the ecosystem, rather than the interest of human beings or any other species, or any local interests as the highest standard of value judgments. The idea of Revering All Life holds that an ideal man must revere the will of other living things the same way he does his own. Through his own life he understands other lives.

Through analysis of characteristics and requirements of low carbon economy and comparison of the ecological view of Marxist, we found that from the perspective of low carbon economy social development has the obvious ecological ethic dimensions. Using the scientific development concept to guide China's ecological ethics construction, not only has practical significance, but also has great theoretical significance. Scientific development treats the Western ecological ethics of the syndrome differentiation, and emphasizes the construction of ecological ethics on the basis of development. To develop the productive forces is the primary task. Ecological ethics construction is better to protect the ecological environment. Protecting the ecological environment of the ultimate purpose means developing the productive forces to promote the all-round development of society. Developing the productive forces is putting the ecological environment and economic construction together and is the transformation from the valueless environment to valuable environmental.

Ecological ethics advocates ecological benefits and it is basically also ecological benefits to human concerns. The ultimate purpose of concerning about ecological benefits itself is to be concerned about the long-term interest of humankind. In order to meet the constant interests’ needs, human beings once unrestricted access to nature, only from the economic interest without from ecological benefits, causing an ecological crisis. Every aspect in China’s development is to realize, maintain and develop the fundamental interest of the overwhelming majority of the people. Obviously ecological ethics construction must be fully embody the people-oriented values, and not let ecological ethics become the theoretical tool of depriving human interest.
Scientific development concept established harmonious perspective for the ecological ethics construction and pointed out the direction for the development of low carbon economic and social development and it is also the development direction for harmonious society. Harmony that scientific development view reveals has two dimensions. One is ecological nature, which pursues harmony between man and nature; the other is ecological humanities, which pursues harmony among human beings. Ecological ethics requires humans to recognize and respect the existence value and survival development rights of nature all its own, which also requires human to love and protect natural things, like loving and protecting the same kind, adhering to the overall interests than local interests and pursuing the ultimate principle of ecological humanities, which is an important perspectives of Chinese ecological ethics construction. The coordinated development between human and nature, generation equity and intra-generational fair constitute the sustainable development of civilization inside information together. Ecological ethics construction will strengthen ecological humanities content, unify the harmony of nature and humanity harmonious and make our ecological ethics construction for the realization of harmonious development of all mankind to contribute

4. Pressure and recriminations: low carbon economic perspective of ecological and harmonious analyse countermeasures

At present, energy conservation and emission reduction status is extremely severe in our country and is a difficult task. Energy utilization efficiency is low, and energy-saving pressure is stem. According to statistics, from 1990 to 2007 China’s GDP accounts for 6% off the world during rapid economic growth. At the same time, China’s energy consumption has reached 16.8% globally. At the energy consumption rate, by 2020, China's energy demand will reach 41.8 million ton. With industrialization and urbanization process accelerating and heavy industry and transportation of rapid development, energy demand will continue to increase. According to the Netherlands’s environmental assessment agency data released by the world in 2007, carbon dioxide emissions amounts to 276 million tons, while China is the world's largest of 67.2 million tons and is in increasing trend. Some people forecast some countries and regions concerning carbon dioxide emissions prediction in 2010-2030 (table 1). We can see China’s is bothered by pressure from low carbon economic. In the face of such pressure, the central government, viewing of the he obstacle of system, technology, financing, and the concepts, should first establish national low carbon economic development strategy, develop social economic development carbon emissions intensity evaluation, and guide and lead the governments, enterprises, residents action direction and behaviour.

<table>
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<th>Countries/regions</th>
<th>2010</th>
<th>2020</th>
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<td>6384</td>
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<td>Canada</td>
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<td>727</td>
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(Data source: Zhuang Guiyang, the analysis of the difficulties and obstacles of China’s development of low-carbon economy, Jiangxi social science, 2009,7)

Viewed from low carbon economy angle, development needs not only the harmonious social environment and conditions, but also the purpose and requirements of development, itself including social harmony, which include the broader field between man and society, man and nature of integral harmony.
How to overcome difficulties and obstacles, how to promote low-carbon economy and how to promote including ecological and harmonious society become our important tasks.

First, both in the present and future quite long period of time, fossil fuels such as coal as the main sources still are considered as China’s important component of energy structure. And with economic growth and energy consumption increasing, during a fairly long period, the total emissions of greenhouse gases will continue to grow. At present in the process of our country economy from "high carbon" to "low carbon" transformation, the biggest restriction is the overall backward technology level, and limited technology research and development ability. We should promote the traditional industry with upgraded high and new technology. According to the actual situation that traditional industry is predominant in our country’s industrial structure, on one hand, we should reduce consumption of resources, reduce pollution to the environment, promote it from extensive growth mode to intensive development mode, and gradually improve in cheap labour-intensive and resource-intensive products export with other countries excessive competition situation. On the other hand, in critical fields we should actively develop high-tech, utilize the international industrial structure adjustment and reconstruction of opportunity, through the digestion and absorption of the imported technology industrial technology innovation, through diligently developing the emerging markets with a green technological innovation as its core, and through carrying out the green trade growth strategies. Meanwhile, China must accelerate low carbon industry development such as the tertiary industry and modern service industry and so on, and create new poles of economic growth. The deepening and expanding of international division of labour extended to the third industry. To get more benefit in the international division of labour, it is particularly important to improve and upgrade the first and second industry structure. We should take hi-tech industry development universally, practice non-tariff low protection measures and moderate export incentives, pay attention to import strategic function, establish advanced equipment, advanced technology and low carbon technologies especially strategic resources import mechanism, and actively participate in international carbon trading.

Secondly, we should develop national low carbon awareness and low carbon morals. In December, 2009, Wen Jiabao attended a UN climate change conference in Copenhagen and delivered an important speech, which shows the Chinese people’s responsible attitude and determination. Low carbon economy and low carbon society have become a national strategic emphasis and universal education direction. Low carbon economic situation needs a future responsible attitude and vision that we will have, needs our immediate involvement into positive "low carbon action". Under the serious request of low carbon economy, cultivating national low carbon awareness and low carbon morals become a government important responsibility. There is no much need for philosophic speculative, but a need for future responsible attitude and immediate positive action. "Low carbon action" has transcended the discussion about environmental and economic growth and other aspects. It rises form ethical and moral level to social meaning, which has the obvious moral dimension. Let people know that low carbon and the quality of life are closely linked to our life. Let people know about low carbon meaning of life. We should strengthen make efforts to enable people know energy conservation and emission reduction through publicity and education, call on the people to have environmental awareness and sense of responsibility and improve their self-consciousness and the enthusiasm of their own low carbon life.

References