

Value Orientation and Solutions in the Outlook on Sustainable Development

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Abstract. As a concept of social development, the outlook on development is not only closely related to specific times and their social practices, but also strongly associated with cognitive subjects' cognitive methods and ways of thinking. It is both a worldview and a methodology. The outlook on development affects the formulation and operation of development models, approaches, methods and policies. Whatever the outlook on development is, there is a specific development model. The outlook on development determines the development model and further influences the extent to which society develops as a whole. The concept of development varies at different stages of human history, manifested in different outlooks on development. Sustainable development, as a value pursuit of human beings, advocates the growth of material wealth while maintaining ecologically sound conditions. Furthermore, it advocates equality of opportunity in the utilization of available environmental resources and the equal rights of all people to ecological benefits. The key to sustainable development is to balance the relationship between population, resources and environment.

Keywords: Sustainable development; value orientation; ecological values.

Since the formation of human society with the subjective consciousness of human beings, the development of the world has been divided into several major pictures, namely, the overall development of nature, the development of individual human beings, and the overall development of human society. In this picture, society, nature, and human beings constitute the three fundamental elements of the theme of human development. Despite the differences in the connotation and extension of these three elements in different times, no theory of development can be separated from the inner connection between these three elements.

1. The Concept of the Outlook on Development

"Development means sustaining the improvement of people's needs and desires in terms of economic, social and civil rights [1]." Development is different from growth, and growth refers specifically to economic growth. Economic growth indicates the increase in productivity and quantity of material goods in material production, while development represents the progress and changes of society from a macro perspective, such as economic, social and environmental aspects. "The outlook on development is a radical perspective and fundamental view of social development. As a concept of social development, the outlook on development is not only closely related to specific times and their social practices, but also strongly associated with the cognitive methods and ways of thinking of cognitive subjects[2]." As the name implies, the outlook on development is the underlying view and fundamental perspective on the nature, content, and laws of development. It is both a worldview and a methodology. The outlook on development affects the formulation and operation of development models, approaches, methods and policies. Whatever the outlook on development is, there is a specific development model. The outlook on development determines the development model and further influences the extent to which society develops as a whole.

2. The Outlook on Development with the Simple Economic Growth as the Core Value

The outlook on the development of human beings has evolved through the ancient, modern and contemporary periods of history. In this long history, the ideas of development from the East and the West have contributed to the progress of society in different ways, and they have been learning from each other. There are marked value orientations in the outlook on the development of ancient Greece and Rome, the integrated outlook on the development of the modern West, and the Marxist theory of social organism and the theory of the all-round development of human beings. Moreover, they all carry the value elements given and manifested by the times.

After the end of World War II, with the collapse of the imperialist colonial system, many countries became new economies as they evolved from colonies to independent developing countries. These countries were faced with the common problem of revitalizing their economies after independence. Thus, development became an urgent issue, and development economics was established in this context. The Theory of Economic Growth by W. Arthur Lewis in the United States represents a typical example, proposing that the models of development may differ, but they share the same view. Specifically, they equate development with growth, social development with economic growth, and locate the system of social development indicators in the increase of gross national product (GNP) or gross domestic product (GDP). The pure growth of the economy became the only indicator of a country's progress. Guided by this concept of development, both developed and developing countries in the West are experiencing rapid economic growth, displaying a prosperous picture.

The outlook on development of purely pursuing economic growth has resulted in economic prosperity, but, as time goes by, it has revealed more and more drawbacks. In other words, although many countries have increased the total amount of material production, it is followed by a range of social problems, such as unfair distribution, polarization and other contradictions arising from social structures and institutions that are not appropriate at the time. In addition, there are a series of problems, such as the massive waste of resources and energy, the pollution of the environment and the destruction of the ecosystem. The practice has proved that the traditional outlook on development in the context of industrial civilization, in which growth serves for growth's sake and becomes the benchmark of national power competition, is unsustainable. It deviates from the value course of development, neglects the needs of human life, ignores the heavy damage to nature caused by economic growth, and fails to incorporate justice and equality, human beings and nature into its value objectives. Hence, it has been proved to be undesirable in practice.

3. A Comprehensive Outlook on Development with the Satisfaction of Basic Human Needs as the Value Center

In the 1960s, people began to reflect on and criticize the early theories of development. Researchers in development economics began to distinguish between growth and development. Moreover, economists became aware that development is not the same as growth, and that the two are different concepts. Growth is a purely economic phenomenon, while development involves overall progress and enhancement not only of the economy but also of politics, culture and society, and is a multi-faceted and coordinated concept. For this reason, growth cannot be mutually substituted with development. Michael P. Todaro, an American development economist, argues that "development is not purely an economic phenomenon. In its ultimate form, development encompasses not only the material and economic aspects of people's lives, but also other broader aspects. Development should therefore be seen as a multidimensional process that involves the restructuring and reorganization of the entire economic and social systems [3]." The French scholar Francois Perroux depicts a new connotation of development in his book "A New Concept of Development." He considered development as the process of comprehensive enhancement

including various factors such as economic growth, political civilization, scientific and technological progress, social transformation, and ecological balance. Moreover, he emphasized that development should be centered on satisfying the basic needs of human beings and promoting their development [4]. At this point, the value orientation of development has shifted to people, and the satisfaction of people's basic needs is included in the definition of development. By placing people at the center of development, development is a holistic and coordinated process that integrates human development with economic, political, cultural and social progress. The core of development is to satisfy people's basic needs. For the interpretation of basic needs, the International Labor Organization defined basic needs at the Tripartite World Conference on Employment, Income Distribution and Social Progress and the International Division of Labour in 1976. Basic needs were defined as the minimum standard of living that society should set for the poorest among the population. Meeting needs means receiving basic services such as clean water, sanitation, transportation, health care and education. It means that everyone who is able and willing to work has access to a reasonably well-paid job opportunity. It should also mean that needs are further met in qualitative terms. It also implies that people can live in a healthy, humane society and a satisfactory environment and be generally involved in decisions that affect their livelihood and personal freedom [5]. A comprehensive outlook on development is to shift the value orientation of development to people, and to abandon the GNP or GDP as a simple economic indicator to measure the degree of development, which is a substantial progress of the development concept. The shift of the comprehensive outlook on development in the concept of development means that the connotation of development is embodying the ultimate goal of value, representing the scientific combination of value concepts and development thinking. Nevertheless, the comprehensive outlook on development also has its shortcomings, such as emphasizing the development of the present generation without considering the development of future generations.

4. The Outlook on Sustainable Development with the Value Goal of Synergistic Development of the Present and Future Generations

With the rapid development of economy, people became more and more predatory in exploiting and utilizing nature, resulting in the waste of resources and environmental pollution. As a result, global problems, such as the energy and ecological crises, have arisen. As human existence was threatened, people came to think about the relationship between economic growth, social development and resources and the environment. The Limits to Growth: A Report for the Club of Rome's Project on the Predicament of Mankind" was presented to the Club of Rome by the Massachusetts Institute of Technology in 1972. The report stated that "the fundamental cause of these crises of limits is the gap between man and nature, which is widening at an alarming rate. To bridge this gap, people must initiate a new attitude toward nature, which must be based on a relationship of self-esteem and harmony rather than one of conquest [6]." In other words, people cannot engage in unlimited development, but should use and plan within the capacity of resources and the environment, and incorporate the relationship between human beings and nature into the development agenda. The idea of "sustainable development" was introduced in this context. The Declaration of the Human Environment was adopted at the First Conference on the Human Environment held by the United Nations in June 1972. It declared: "Protecting and improving the human environment has become an urgent goal for mankind for the sake of present and future generations, and it must develop in tandem with the goal of world economy and development [7]." In 1987, The World Commission on Environment and Development adopted the report entitled "Our Common Future," which illustrated the relationship between development and resources and the environment and marked the formation of the outlook on sustainable development. Its core is that development meets the needs of the present without threatening the ability of future generations to meet their own needs [8]. The outlook on sustainable development is a new outlook on

development based on the coordination and common development of economy, society, resources and environment. It takes the relations between human beings and the environment and between human beings and nature as the value basis and intergenerational relations between human beings as the value center. At the same time, the value of ecological environment is included in the value system. It believes that human beings are members of the ecosystem and can only sustain their presence and development if they maintain the balance of the ecosystem, utilize resources reasonably and protect the environment. Besides, human beings should live in harmony with nature, and respecting nature means respecting human beings themselves. The outlook on sustainable development extends the value objectives of development from people's basic needs to the needs and development of present and future generations. At the same time, it recognizes the presence of environmental values, which is a more scientific and reasonable reflection of the outlook on development. The outlook on sustainable development has been widely recognized in all countries worldwide. Countries have been actively committed to the specific practice of sustainable development in their own context, and are making continuous innovations in their practice.

5. Ecological Values in the Theory of Sustainable Development

The theory of sustainable development asserts that environmental protection should be synchronized with economic growth, and that the value of the environment should be incorporated into the value of material wealth. As a developing country, China must emphasize the growth of material wealth to fulfill its people's interests. However, such growth must consider the ecological environment's capacity, and advocate the growth of material wealth while maintaining ecologically sound conditions, which is the premise of sustainable development. Although China's industrial modernization has achieved remarkable results, it has paid a huge price for the environment. The ecological environment has been severely destroyed, resulting from the short-sighted behavior of some enterprises and individuals. Some companies and individuals disregard the interests of the country and the nation as a whole in order to achieve their personal interests. Moreover, they plunder resources to obtain huge economic benefits or maximize profits in a short time. Also, they dump their production waste into nature without any treatment, which, in essence, poses a fatal threat to the environment where human beings live. In this sense, China has incorporated the theory of sustainable development into its national economic philosophy and absorbed its rational core. Further, China advocates protecting the ecological environment while paying attention to economic development in order to achieve sustainable human development. Economic growth and environmental protection are intrinsically linked to the all-round development of human beings. Without economic growth, people's material needs could not be guaranteed. Without the protection of the environment, material wealth growth would be a fleeting event. For this reason, environmental protection is the foundation for the growth of material wealth. At the same time, it is also the foundation for the free and all-round development of human beings and the basis for sustainable human development.

The theory of sustainable development contains a wealth of ecological ethics, which also reflects the distinctive ecological value concept. Ecological ethics advocates intra- and inter-generational equity. Intra-generational equity comprises intra-generational social equity, interpersonal equity and international equity. It emphasizes that the survival of human beings in contemporary times involves not only a fair social environment and conditions, but also equal access to the available environmental resources and the equal ecological rights of all people. The earth provides limited resources for human beings, so human beings should have the principle of equity in enjoying resources and reject privileges. Intergenerational equity stresses the equity of rights among the present generation and the equality of rights between the present and future generations given the limited resources. Achieving intergenerational equity requires that the development of the present generation does not harm the interests of future generations. And it should achieve

intra-generational equity for the present generation while maintaining the sustainable carrying capacity of the environment.

6. Solutions to the Key Problems of Sustainable Development

Balancing the relationship between population, resources and environment is the key to addressing sustainable development. The survival and development of human beings require various resources from nature, and human beings are dynamic creatures, which are constantly satisfying their needs through practice and creating needs. It seems that there is no end to the demand for human beings. Therefore, the size of the population, the way and extent of resource intake, and the awareness of the environment constitute the main relationships of human existence. The complexity of this relationship is exacerbated by technology as a mediator of these relationships between the three. "The degree and intensity of human influence on the natural environment depend largely on its technology and scale. Technological progress is strongly related to the development of human society and, in some sense, signifies the development of human social productivity. The more advanced the technology is, the stronger the ability of human to transform and process the natural environment [9]." There are four academic theories on the relationship between the three. They are represented by classical economists and natural scientists, neoclassical economists, theorists and analysts. The debate between the theoretical schools of thought focuses on the causes of the formation of resource and environmental problems and the status and effects of demographic factors in them. A chart can more visually illustrate the difference in theoretical views.

Theory	Representative	Root cause	Direct cause	Outcome	Effect of demographic factors
I	Classical economist or natural scientist	Rapid population growth	Resource utilization	Environmental degradation	Independent effect
II	Neoclassical economists	Economic failure	Markets	Environmental degradation	Neutral effect
III	Theorists	Inequality and poverty policies	Political structure	Environmental degradation	Joint effects
IV	Analysts	Inequality and poverty policies	Social structure	Environmental degradation	Aggravating effect

Source: C. L. Jolly, 1994, "Four Theories of Population Change and the Environment," Population and Development, No.1.

All four theories analyze the intrinsic relationships among population, resources, and environment, but with different emphases. The relationships among the three are undoubtedly complicated, and may include elements from all schools of thought. An in-depth study of their relationships will also deepen the awareness of the relationship between man and nature.

The relationship between population, resources and environment is linked to the overall balance, stability and development of the ecosystem. First of all, human survival requires means of subsistence, which are derived from nature. Hence, a certain population size determines the number of means of subsistence taken from nature. The size of the population is proportional to the number of means of subsistence, which means that nature must constantly meet the needs of human beings. Secondly, human development also requires various resources from nature. Resources can be divided into natural resources and social resources. Resources are the general term for human, material and financial resources, and are the sum of all material elements. Natural resources also originate from and belong to nature, while human beings only take natural resources. Therefore, the way and degree of taking natural resources determine the degree of destruction to nature. Finally, human perceptions of environmental issues also significantly impact nature. The environment generally refers to the environment in which human beings live, consisting of natural and social environments. The relationship between humans and the natural environment concerns how humans

treat nature. If humans consider the presence of the environment solely from the perspective of self-interest and do not recognize the communal nature of the environment, it means that they are harming nature. The communal nature of the environment means that the natural environment is common to all living things, so it is incorrect to attribute the natural environment to human beings. Thus, population, resources, and environmental issues are intimately associated with the orderly and steady state of the natural ecosystem. If the relationship between the three is not handled properly, it will result in population expansion, resource depletion and environmental degradation. It also indicates that the energy flow and transformation of natural ecosystems encounter huge obstacles, and the ecosystem is no longer stable and at risk of collapse at any time. Subsequently, a full-scale ecological crisis may occur.

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