

Ethical Thoughts on Energy Dilemma from the Perspective of Ecological Civilization

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Abstract: *From the perspective of ecological civilization, energy is not only the source of power in the physical sense, but also the fundamental bond for maintaining the life network. Energy ethics demands intergenerational justice, guarantees the temporal and spatial fairness of energy distribution, and focuses on the sustainability of energy storage between generations. However, under the overall perspective emphasizing economic development, the predicament of energy ethics highlights the cognitive limitations of human beings in energy utilization, namely, excessive focus on rational calculation and economic benefits, which has an obvious conflict with the value rationality of the ecosystem. Moreover, there is a profound contradiction between the energy liberation effect brought about by technological progress and the limited carrying capacity of the ecology. The dialectical relationship between the right to development and the right to survival has always plagued the progress of human society. These paradoxes expose the limitations of the linear development concept since the Enlightenment and also reveal the ethical predicament that humanity faces in the process of reconstructing the energy order. Based on this, this paper explores the construction of energy ethics from the perspective of ecological philosophy. View energy usage as a way to participate in natural symbiosis and promote the transformation of energy ethics from utilitarian calculation to responsible value. Incorporate the ecological perspective of non-human life into energy decisions, promote the integration of energy systems into the broader context of ecological circulation, and achieve "harmony between man and nature".*

Keywords: Energy ethics Ecological development Energy equity Ecological civilization.

1. INTRODUCTION

Energy is the driving force for the development of the national economy. The development of energy can greatly unleash various productive forces and promote the progress of human society. Up to now, human beings have been exploiting and utilizing energy for more than ten thousand years. Whether it was the ancient firewood age, the modern Western Industrial Revolution, or the subsequent Second Industrial Revolution, all have been revolutionary processes centered around energy [1]. Since the Industrial Revolution, the speed of human energy development has increased, and creating wealth by consuming energy has become the most important way for economic growth. But at present, along with the depletion of fossil fuels, humanity is continuously trapped in an energy crisis. Since the beginning of the 21st century, energy issues have involved various fields such as global security, economy, politics and culture. They also reflect the sustainable development issues of human beings, natural persons and social systems, and are even more related to the continuation of human civilization. From the perspective of ecological civilization, with a true academic attitude, systematically analyzing the root causes of the energy predicament and dissecting the ethical issues therein can provide a new perspective for humanity's future energy utilization and survival and development, and promote the sustainable development transformation of human society.

2. THE PROMINENCE OF CONTEMPORARY ENERGY ISSUES AND ETHICAL PERSPECTIVES

Energy is the material source in nature that can provide human beings with some form of energy. Throughout the vast history of human development, the main form of energy utilized by humans has been fossil energy. Since the Western Industrial Revolution, under the logic of economic determinism and anthropic centrism, humans have extensively exploited fossil energy for economic production, leading to the current radical depletion of fossil energy and the increasingly disharmonious ethical relationship between humans and energy. At the end of the 20th century, the American scholar Laszlo once pointed out that in the past 200 years of human development history, humans have consumed about 50% of the world's total mineral energy, which is equivalent to the energy products accumulated by 300 million years of solar radiation. In the past 20th century alone, the energy consumed by human society has exceeded the total amount of energy consumed by humanity throughout history. From the perspective of ecological civilization, it can be seen that the natural environment is an organic system, and the relationship between human beings and energy is in a state of dynamic change [2]. Human destruction of natural systems,

especially the endless exploitation of energy, can bring about a chain of ethical negative effects. Among them, the extensive burning of fossil energy has already led to the greenhouse effect in nature. It has caused global warming, the rise of sea levels and various natural disasters. If this phenomenon is not curbed, the snow-capped mountains in the poles and the Earth's plateaus will continue to melt in the next few decades, and most human coastal cities and low-lying areas will face a catastrophic disaster. With the rapid advancement of industrialization, urbanization and modernization in our country, real estate development, road traffic design, commercial street construction, night lighting projects and the creation of entertainment and leisure facilities all consume a large amount of energy. Meanwhile, with the continuous improvement of the living standards of urban residents in our country and the increase in the number of private cars, petroleum resources are constantly being consumed, intensifying the global energy crisis and causing conflicts in the relationship between humans and nature. Under the circumstances of air pollution, noise pollution, urban traffic congestion, and the fast-paced life and work competition, humans are often in a state of irritability and anxiety, emotionally alienated, morally indifferent, trapped in a crisis of trust, mentally aging, and psychologically sub-healthy. This has also led to an unprecedented tension in the ethical relationship between people and themselves. It can be said that despite the significant economic growth brought about by energy consumption in modern society, people's sense of happiness and security has not increased significantly. This puts humanity on the verge of losing its paradise and hinders people's pursuit of happiness.

3. THE ROOT CAUSES OF THE ENERGY DILEMMA AND ETHICAL REFLECTIONS

3.1 Crises in the Relationships between People and between People and Themselves

The tension between human and natural ethics essentially reflects the crisis of ethical relations among people and between people and themselves. The fundamental concept of Chinese philosophy emphasizes the unity of heaven and man, advocating that human beings are part of all things in nature and are the products of the natural world. Human behavior also has an impact on nature. "All things are created by nature, and all things are different." Humans are not the masters above nature. Nature is the soul and spiritual home of human beings. Humans should love nature and live in harmony with it. The ethical and aesthetic values reflected in it cannot be ignored by humans. The energy issue directly reflects this relationship between human beings and nature, and when fed back to human beings themselves, it reflects the problems of the relationships among people and between people and themselves. Marx's historical materialist view of history holds that the entire world was not born through human labor, and nature is an objective existence for human beings [3]. The world created by human beings in the process of production is intuitive and irrefutable. Therefore, for human beings, human beings are existences in nature, and for human beings, nature is also an objective existence. The relationship between human beings and nature, as well as human efforts to control nature, has brought about shocking conflicts among civilizations and a series of terrifying consequences. Human beings' desire to control nature and their efforts to exploit natural resources have all become heavy shackles for their own interests. The one-sided value rationality that merely emphasizes economic development has led to a crisis of human nature, as well as the loss of human subjectivity and creativity. This has further intensified the sense of loss and loss in human psychology, and people have become one-dimensional individuals. In his work "The Legitimation Crisis", Habermas also indicates the ecological crisis faced by modern humanity, which encompasses both the crisis of the natural ecosystem and that of the internal human ecosystem. The former leads to the disruption of the natural ecological balance, while the latter leads to the disruption of anthropology and the personality system among people. Therefore, this kind of disruption is more fundamental. When people no longer hold a natural awe for nature but regard it as an object that can be conquered, utilized and possessed, human beings are unfortunately alienated. It can be seen that the energy crisis brought about by the massive consumption of energy and the negative reactions caused by environmental deterioration directly reflect the tension and conflict in the ethical relationship between human beings and nature. However, in essence, it is still an imbalance in the reasonable relationship between people and between people and themselves.

3.2 The Subversion of Economic Rationality on Value Rationality

From the perspective of ecological civilization, there exists an eternal tension between anthropocentrism and the holistic view of ecology. Since the Enlightenment, the philosophy of subjectivity established by mankind has completely objectified nature. Human beings regard nature as an infinitely accessible resource pool. Therefore, the development of energy by human beings has broken away from traditional moral constraints and has purely become a technological conquest. This epistemological approach of subject-object dichotomy has led to the unlimited expansion of human desires, making energy fully serve human development, while ignoring the

essential attribute of energy flow as an objective material existence in the construction of life networks. The simplification and efficiency improvement of this energy theory reflect the maximization of human economic rationality, and its inherent intergenerational justice has been unrestrictedly ignored and obscured [4]. Industrial civilization equates energy liberation with human freedom, but fails to fully foresee that the myth of progress driven by fossil energy is being dissolved by its own ethical flaws. This has led human society to increasingly fall into moral dilemmas as it develops. This means that humanity demands both the expansion of energy to achieve universal social equity and well-being; However, due to the limited carrying capacity of society and nature, it is doomed to self-denial. Since modern society, human beings have shown an exponential growth in demand in the field of energy consumption, which also exposes the irreconcilable contradiction between the individual and the collective caused by human utilitarian ethics and one-sided economic rationality. From the perspective of value order, the energy predicament reflects the colonization of value rationality by economic rationality. When energy efficiency becomes the sole criterion for economic development and even human happiness, metaphysical dimensions related to human development, such as the dignity of life and ecological integrity, are excluded from the system of human decision-making. This subversion of economic rationality on value rationality has led to the flattening of value in the process of human natural resource development and has also plunged energy policies into deeper ethical dilemmas. For instance, at present, when humans replace fossil energy with clean energy sources such as wind and solar power, they have not yet broken away from the qualitative value thinking of instrumentalizing nature. The real ethical deficiency does not lie in the energy structure itself, but in the fact that humanity has always failed to establish a moral connection between energy use and the meaning of life, and has always failed to balance the conflict between economic rationality and value rationality. When the endless material desires are shaped by economic rationality into moral legitimacy, then the ethics of energy conservation becomes empty preaching. This collective unconsciousness also exposes the crisis of humanity's deeper existentialism. That is, humans attempt to fill the vacuum of meaning in the spiritual world through energy consumption, but conversely, they exacerbate the dual desertification of ecology and spirit.

4. THE POSSIBILITY OF TRANSCENDING THE ETHICAL DILEMMA OF ENERGY FROM THE PERSPECTIVE OF ECOLOGICAL CIVILIZATION AND EXPLORING COUNTERMEASURES

4.1 Move from Controlling Nature to Following Nature

Russell once predicted in his research that for the first time in human history, we have reached a moment when the continuation of the human race has begun to depend on the extent to which humans can learn to be dominated by ethical thinking. The prophecy indicates that the solution to the energy problem is significantly correlated with the continuation of human society, and humanity must emerge from the predicament of natural energy through ethical awareness.

First of all, humans need to rebuild their understanding of energy and reinterpret the energy system as an organic component of the ecological cycle rather than an economic factor independent of nature. Human beings need to establish a cognitive framework for energy education, implant the holistic view of ecology in the education system at all levels, cultivate young people's understanding of the connection between energy flow and the life grid, establish a new cognitive model, incorporate ecological carrying capacity as a basic parameter of economic development into the assessment system of energy technology, and reconstruct the energy governance system. Human beings need a decision-making mechanism based on ecological democracy to enhance the correct understanding of ecological red lines. Reorganize the energy management institution and establish an ecological ethics review committee to conduct specific assessments of the community of life impact on all energy projects. Based on the development of energy technologies in ecological rhythms, an ecologically friendly energy conversion system is developed, shifting from the pursuit of absolute control to simulating nature, allowing energy to flow again within the natural world. Any energy device needs to prove its ethical legitimacy throughout the entire energy cycle before it can be promoted and used. Human beings still need to cultivate a new type of conservation ethics culture throughout the society, eliminate energy waste driven by consumerism through cultural reengineering, and rebuild the value recognition of moderate consumption. Replace economic rationality with value rationality and transform energy-saving behaviors into a lifestyle with moral charm.

Secondly, to transcend the energy crisis, it is also necessary to strengthen the reflection on organizational ethics and highlight the responsibility of organizational ethics. For a long time, it has been widely believed that ethics and morality are personal matters, and that collectives, entities and organizations inherently possess "goodness". This

wrong perception has caused the most profound cultural disaster of the 20th century. Ethical entities such as states and organizations have escaped from the ethical perspective. When organizations such as countries and enterprises lack moral self-awareness, the organizations themselves will become immoral existences. Therefore, to eliminate and transcend this paradox, it is necessary to strengthen the ethical responsibilities of organizations and collectives and achieve the dialectical unity of internal ethics and external morality within the organization. Further enhance the constraints on the ethical and moral behaviors of organizations, promote clean production, popularize low-carbon technologies, require organizations to introduce new production processes and equipment, increase investment and costs, overcome excessive expansion under economic impulses, guide the organizations themselves to take active actions with organizational ethics, and strengthen the ethical responsibilities of enterprises. The government must control the impulse of power and interests, play a good role in guiding, coordinating and other functions in ecological and environmental protection, and prompt enterprises to achieve the transformation of production value orientation as soon as possible.

4.2 Take Scientific Development as the Practical Orientation

From a practical perspective, modern society should transcend the ethical dilemma of energy under the guidance of the Scientific Outlook on Development. According to the survival and development of human beings, Marx divided human history into three stages or three forms of civilization, that is, the naturally occurring human dependency relationship is the initial form of existence of human society. The independent development stage of an individual based on the dependence on things is the second form. The freedom and individuality of social wealth based on these two forms of social development constitute the third form of human society. Under the guidance of the Scientific Outlook on Development, humanity needs to continuously overcome the constraints imposed by nature and itself on people, highlight the realm of human freedom, and form a union of free people in accordance with Marx's train of thought and under the guidance of the Scientific Outlook on Development. At the epistemological level, it is necessary to go beyond the narrow perspective of anthropocentrism and establish a dialectical and unified view of energy exchange between human beings and nature. Reunderstand the energy system as an organic link for maintaining the dynamic balance of the community of life, rather than a one-way material resource. By establishing a comprehensive evaluation mechanism for energy and ecology, it is ensured that technological progress and the capacity for natural restoration are enhanced simultaneously. The philosophical wisdom of taking a holistic approach strikes a balance between contemporary demands and intergenerational justice, as well as local interests and global responsibilities in energy policies. Cultivate a new ethical consensus on energy, and transform energy conservation and carbon reduction from external constraints into an internal value pursuit. Establish an energy consumption early warning mechanism based on ecological carrying capacity to achieve a dynamic balance between development speed and the rhythm of natural regeneration. Build a global energy governance framework that takes into account both fairness and efficiency. Ultimately, a new form of civilization will be formed in which human energy activities interact positively with the Earth's life support system.

5. CONCLUSION

To sum up, the predicament of energy ethics actually reflects the relationship between people and between people and themselves. In the future, the construction of our society and the development of individuals themselves should be based on the perspective of ecological civilization, forming a more three-dimensional support network, enhancing the correct understanding of energy, and fostering value rationality. Reconstruct people's correct understanding of energy. Under the guidance of the Scientific Outlook on Development, strengthen the rational behaviors of different levels such as the government, enterprises and individuals in energy application, so as to promote the sustainable development of energy, overcome ethical dilemmas and achieve breakthroughs in cognitive paradigms.

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