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## **THE ECOLOGICAL CONCEPT AND ENLIGHTENMENT –THE “UNITY BETWEEN HEAVEN AND MAN”**

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### **ABSTRACT**

*In the process of the development of more than five thousand years, the Chinese nation has created a glorious history of civilization, gradually forms the traditional values with The “Unity between Heaven and Man” as the core. It systematically expounds the relationship among “Heaven, Earth and Man”, establishing the ecological concept that “Heaven, Earth and Man” must be in harmonious coexistence, “Humanity” must abide by “Providence”, and Man must treat Nature with the heart of “benevolence”. It is a kind of brand-new universe view, world view, life view and moral values, and also a kind of lofty ideals pursued by the human society since ancient times. It has very important practical significance and enlightened function for the construction of contemporary ecological civilization, and the maintenance of human overall interests.*

### **Keywords:**

*Unity between Heaven and Man, ecological civilization, Heaven, Earth, Man.*

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### **1. INTRODUCTION**

In the process of the development of more than five thousand years, the Chinese nation has created a glorious history of civilization, gradually forms the idea of the “Unity between Heaven and Man” as the core of the traditional values. It has established the relationship among “Heaven, Earth and Man” to study the problems of the universe, society and life. It is to achieve the harmony and development of the human society through the harmonious coexistence between Man and Nature, Man and society, Man and Man, Man and himself, which is a kind of lofty ideals pursued by the human society since ancient times. It is also a kind of brand-new universe view, world view, life view and moral values.

The “Unity between Heaven and Man” thinks that “Heaven, Earth and Man” are an indivisible organic unity of the whole. “Heaven” is mainly refers to “Providence”, namely, the celestial

bodies and their operation rule; “Man” is mainly refers to “Humanity”, namely, the human society and its law of development. Though Man is the only owner of the Earth, Man is not the master, the conqueror, and the occupant of Nature, but the respecter, the protector, and the responsible of Nature. “Humanity” must follow the example of “Providence”, Man must treat Nature with the heart of “benevolence”, and maintain the dynamic balance between Man and Nature, to promote the prosperity and progress of the human society.

Since the human beings enter the industrialized society, people's material desire and possessive desire expands continuously with the rapid development of modern science and technology. In order to seek to the rapid development in social economy, and the rapid increase in production efficiency, humankind has made a lot of things in violation of the laws of Nature, and in destruction of the ecological balance, to result in the blind depredation of Nature. “The people scoops the water in the pool to catch fish”, [7] “he is anxious for success and immediate interests.”[8] Although these behaviors have achieved a certain economic benefits, they are serious damage to the balance between Man and Nature, which have brought a series of ecological problems to the future generations.

How to realize the modern civilization in the industrial society, how to evaluate the development of humankind himself, how to solve the survival crisis faced by the human beings, which have become serious problems that the people have to think about. The construction of ecological civilization is in pursuit of the integral balance of ecosystem, it must at the same time maintain the harmony between Man and Nature, Man and society, Man and Man, Man and himself. It emphasizes the relationship of close link, coexistence, and co-prosperity between Man and Nature. As the body of the independent personality, everyone has to set up the self-consciousness, to respect the laws of Nature as the highest standard. Otherwise, it will destroy the balance of the survival of the human society, and lead to the happenings of catastrophe.

The “Unity between Heaven and Man” uncovers the thought foundation of the immortal, brilliant Chinese civilization until today. It emphasizes the comprehensive harmony and common coexistence between Man and Nature, Man and society, Man and Man, Man and himself. It has a profound historical influence and practical guiding significance to the people's daily behavior, the way of thinking, values concept, and moral consciousness. It also provides a useful theoretical guidance and practical exploration for the construction of ecological civilization, sustainable economic development of the contemporary human society.

## 2. CONTEXT

*A, the idea of the “Unity between Heaven and Man” has established the ecological concept that “Heaven, Earth and Man” must be in harmonious coexistence.*

The “Unity between Heaven and Man” thinks that it is able to achieve the harmony and development of the human society through the harmonious coexistence between Man and Nature, Man and society, Man and Man, Man and himself. As the human society is an important integral part of Nature, every country and nation is an important member of the “global village”, Man and Nature are dialectical relations of “sometimes-complex mix-and-match, I in you”.

Namely, it is the dialectical relations of mutual dependence and common interaction, and those of mutual influence and common development.

The “Unity between Heaven and Man” originates from the “Book of Changes” in ancient history which first discusses the mutual relations of “Heaven, Earth and Man”. The Confucians represented by Confucius do detailed analysis and research on the “Book of Changes” during the Periods of the Spring-Autumn and Warring States. “Qian is Heaven and is called the father. Kun is Earth and is called the mother.” [3] “Heaven in its motion gives the idea of strength. In accordance with this, the superior man nerves himself for ceaseless activity.”[3] “Earth in its sustaining gives the power of capacity. In accordance with this, the superior man supports all things with his large virtue.”[3] “As in a mold or enclosure he comprehends the transformations of Heaven and Earth without any error, by an ever-varying adaptation he completes the nature of all things without exception.” [3] They think that Heaven and Earth are the roots of all things, they are in mutual connection and influence, advocating the spirit of vigor and energies, and that of tolerance and magnanimity, and it is certain that there is an inseparable inner link between Man and Nature.

Lao Tzu in the period of the Spring-Autumn States, the originator of Taoism puts forwards the point of view of “Heaven and Earth are permanent”. “Heaven and Earth are able to exist forever because they are not for their own existence, so they can live forever.”[4] “Providence is great, Heaven is great, Earth is great, and Man is also great. The universe contains the four greatness, and Man lies within one of them. Man follows the example of Earth, Earth follows the example of Heaven, Heaven follows the example of Providence, and Providence follows the example of Nature.” [4] The process of the generation of all things between Heaven and Earth is that “Providence is unique, from which produces the Positive and Negative Forces, from which (the Positive and Negative Forces intersect to) produce a third party, and from which (a third party) produces all things in the world. Everything contains the Positive and Negative Forces, they interact each other to achieve the harmony and unity.” [4]He believes that Providence is the general rule of the Celestial movement in the universe, and also the root of the emergence and development of all things in the universe, so Heaven, Earth and Man can get along for a long time.

Confucius in the period of the Spring-Autumn States affirms that Heaven and Earth are mutual unity. “Great indeed was Yao as a sovereign! How majestic was he! It is only Heaven that it is great, and only Yao corresponded to it.”[5] He says “Heaven produces the virtues to me, what can Huan Tui (an officer of Song State) do to me?”[5] “While Heaven does not let the cause of truth perish, what can the people of Kuang State do to me?”[5] “I do not murmur against Heaven. I do not grumble against Man. My studies lie low, and my penetration rise high. But there is Heaven that knows me!”[5] Confucius thinks that Man and all things in the universe are as a whole, the majesty of Heaven and Earth is beyond doubt. He is appointed by Heaven to do, and any trouble is helpless to him, so he can found the private school for the dissemination of knowledge, and travel through all the kingdoms with high virtues.

Chuang Tzu in the period of the Warring States puts forwards “Heaven and Earth are the parents of all things.”[6] “Heaven and Earth live at the same time with me. All things are as a whole with me.”[6] “Heaven and Earth have the biggest merit, but not speak; the four seasons have clear

rules, but not talk; all things have the sense of natural generation, but not talk. So the sage is the man who is capable of probing into the merit of Heaven and Earth, and is accessible to the generating reason of all things. So the sage has nothing to do, the great sage is indifferent to do everything. That is to say, they can take the law of Heaven and Earth to the state of inaction.” [6] He has established the harmonic relationship between Man and Nature, and confirmed that Heaven, Earth and Man are the organic parts of the universe. Everything between Heaven and Earth is mutual connection and dependence in order to survive and develop according to the inherent law.

Mencius in the period of the Warring States thinks Heaven and Earth can communicate with each other. “What is done without doing of Man are from Heaven, what happens without causing of Man are from Providence.”[7] “Wherever the superior man passes through, the transformation follows; wherever he abides, his influence is of a spiritual nature. It flows abroad above and beneath, like that of Heaven and Earth. How can it be said that he mends the society but in a small way?”[7] “All things are already complete in us. There is no greater delight than to be conscious of sincerity on self-examination.”[7] As long as Man can cultivate his original nature, and put “Heaven and Earth” as the root of the heart, he can not only “know Heaven and Earth”, but also communicate with them.

Hsun Tzu in the period of the Warring States affirms the independence of Heaven and Earth. He stresses that “Heaven does not stop the arrival of winter because the people dislike the cold, Earth does not stop its broad masses because the people dislike the remote, the superior man will not suspend his merit because the nonsense of the hypocrite. Heaven has the enduring law, Earth has the enduring rule, and the superior man has enduring principles.” [8] “Heaven and Earth are matched with each other, and all things are created. The Positive and Negative Forces are combined with each other, and the kaleidoscope will happen. The unity of human nature and artificial processing can govern the world.” [8] “A meteor falls, and the trees rustle that are the effect of changes of Heaven and Earth, and the function of the Positive and Negative Forces, which is a kind of phenomena that appears less frequently. It is right to be strange to it, but it is wrong to be afraid of it.” [8]He thinks that Heaven and Earth are not subject to any other things to exist independently, and to move according to its law. So Man should correctly realize the generation and changes of natural phenomena, not to be full of mystery to Nature, then to maintain the harmony Man between Heaven and Earth.

Buwei Lv in the Qin Dynasty advocates Heaven and Earth are corresponding with Man. “The coverage of Heaven is no favoritism, the bearing of Earth is no favoritism, the shines of sun and moon is no partiality, the running of four seasons is no partiality. They perform their virtue, so that all things are to grow up.”[1] “When Heaven and Earth are at the start, that Heaven is formed by the rise of slight pure contents, and Earth is composed of the sink of heavy polluted things. The intercourse of Heaven and Earth is the root of generation.”[1] “Clouds on mountains take on the shape of the populist, clouds on water take on the shape of the scales, clouds are like a burning fire when it is droughts, clouds are like the ripples of water waves when it rains. Those are all dependent on what they produce to show Man.”[1] He thinks that Heaven and Earth have the same nature with Man, they all develop according to the inherent law, and so are human's all activities.

Zhongshu Dong in the West Han Dynasty puts forward the theory of “the induction between Heaven and Man”. “Heaven also has the heart of anger and sorrow corresponding with Man. Mixed them together with the classification, Heaven and Man are the same.”[2] “All things are in the name of fame, fame is in the name of Heaven. Heaven and Man communicate with each other, and are integrated into a whole.”[2] “What is the root? Answer: Heaven, Earth, and Man are the origin of all things. Heaven born Man, Earth raises Man, Man achieves himself. Heaven has endowed Man with the filial piety of quality, Earth provides Man with food and clothing, Man cultivates himself with the ritual. These three are interdependent, integrated, and indispensable. ” [2] He thinks that Heaven and Man have the same characteristics, they all bear a due sacred mission, and can sense each other to carry out their duties.

Zai Zhang in the Northern Song Dynasty believes that all things are closely relative to theirs. “Qian says that the mystery of the creation of Heaven is called the father of all things; Kun says that the principle of the production of all things is called the mother of all things. I am so small, but mixed between Heaven and Earth. So the gas filled between Heaven and Earth is my colorful form; and the change led to all things is my natural nature. ” [9] “Because of sensibility the Confucian can be sincere, because of sincerity he can be sensible, so that he can reach the realm of the Unity between Heaven and Man. Studying the knowledge, he can be a sage; and learning from Heaven, he will never leave the innate things.”[9] He is filled with love for Nature, and thinks that Man is an integral part of Nature, Man and the universe are as a whole. “The truth is not in Man but in all things, Man is just a matter of all things. This kind of understanding is comprehensive.”[10]

Many contemporary scholars agree with the “Unity between Heaven and Man”. Such as, Dainian Zhang, a famous philosopher, thinks “the ‘Unity between Heaven and Man’ as mentioned in the Heaven-Man relationship in Chinese philosophy, there are two meanings: the one is that Heaven and Man are interlinked, the other is that Heaven and Man are similar.”[11]Xianlin Ji, the master of Ancient Chinese Literature, thinks that “.....the ‘Unity between Heaven and Man’ is that Man and Nature are to be united, and be in peaceful coexistence, not to speak of conquest and subjugation.” [12] They put the harmonious relationship between Man and Nature as the main melody of life to pursue, to try to explore a golden mean to solve the plight of human survival and development.

The essence of the ecological crisis today is that Man violates the harmonious relationship between Man and Nature, but the underlying reason is caused by the moral degeneration of Man himself. To solve the ecological crisis, to promote the all-round development of the society, and construct the ecological civilization, we must first deal with the relationship between Man and himself, to chase constantly the self-perfection of high Humanity, to edify his lofty sentiments, and realize the self-value of life. We also must advocate the harmony between Man and Man with equal intercourse, to improve people’s ideological and moral cultivation, to see his holy heart and coexist harmoniously. Meanwhile, we also must correctly handle the relationship between Man and Nature, to understand the law of the world, to comply with the laws of nature. Only in this way can it be fundamental to solve the relationship among “Heaven, Earth and Man”, so that the human society and Nature can live in harmony and enjoy the lasting peace.

*B. the idea of the “Unity between Heaven and Man” has established the ecological concept that Nature must be treated with the heart of “benevolence”*

The “Unity between Heaven and Man” thinks that “Heaven, Earth and Man” is an indivisible organic unity of the whole. Man is the most important part among them. However Man is not the conqueror and the occupant, but the protector and the responsible of Nature. Man must respect and protect Nature as his highest criterion, to treat Nature with the heart of “benevolence”. As the main body of the independent consciousness, everyone has to set up the self-awareness in the construction of ecological civilization, and consciously pursue the full harmony of Man and Nature under the premise of giving full play to the role of the individual subject.

The ideological foundation of Confucianism is based on “benevolence”. Confucius thinks that “to subdue oneself and return to propriety is perfect virtue. If a man can subdue himself and return to propriety for one day, all under Heaven will ascribe perfect virtue to him.” [5] The harmony of all things is in benevolence, and so is the inner harmony between Man and Nature, Man and society. He says “The wise find pleasure in water ; the virtuous find pleasure in hills.”[5] Confucius links benevolence, wisdom and other virtues of the people with natural mountains, water and other attributes together. He reveals his respect and love for the natural world, and ultimately achieves the highest state of life of the “Unity between Heaven and Man”. Confucius thinks that all things “to go beyond is as wrong as to fall short.”[5] “What you do not want to do by yourself, do not do to others.”[5] “If it is not a suitable season for logging and hunting, it is the lack of filial piety.”[13] “Not killing in spring, it is to comply with the truth in life; not breaking the growing trees, it is already pushing transitive benevolence.”[14] “Confucius goes angling, but does not use a net; he shoots, but not at birds perching.”[5] “Let the states of equilibration and harmony exist in perfection, and a happy order will prevail throughout Heaven and Earth, and all things will be nourished and flourished.”[15] Confucius thinks that there is the uniformity between personnel matters and Providence. He puts the attitude of the people towards the natural environment up to the rational height of morality.

Mencius further puts forward that “the benevolent man love others, the man of propriety shows respect to others.” [7] “The superior man is kind to inferior creatures, but not loving. He loves for the people generally, but not affectionate. He is affectionate to his parents, and lovingly disposed to the people generally. He is lovingly disposed to people generally, and kind to creatures.”[7] “Now your (the king Xuan of Qi) kindness is sufficient to reach to animals, and no benefits are extended from it to the people. How is it?”[7] “Therefore, if it receives its proper nourishment, there is nothing which will not grow. If it loses its proper nourishment, there is nothing which will not decay away.” [7] He puts “loving creatures” into the basic connotation of “benevolence”, and puts it up to the status of moral duty of the superior man.

Hsun Tzu puts forward the viewpoint of “the system of the majestic empire” [8]. “Rivers and lakes are the places where dragons and fishes live; mountains and forests are the places where birds and animals inhabit; states and home are the places where the Literati and ordinary people dwell.”[8] “Mountains, forests, lakes and dams are closed and opened on time without taxes.”[8] “Fishing in ponds, pools, rivers, and lakes are strictly prohibited within a prescribed period of time, so fishes and turtles could be abundance and various, and the common people will have extra wealth. Deforestation, cultivation and conservation for trees do not miss the season, so the

forest could not be bare, and the common people will have redundant timber.”[8] “Heaven runs with the eternal law, do exist not because of the Holy Spirit of Yao, and do disappear not because of the tyranny of Jie. It is auspicious to adapt to the measures which lead to the stability. It is dangerous to adapt to the measures which lead to the confusion.” [8] The human beings only recognize and respect the laws of Nature, to avoid natural disasters that may occur. It reflects the ecological ethics with the combination of “system” and “love”.

Buwei Lv is more specific to the protection of natural resources, known as the “ban on the four seasons”. “In unsuitable seasons, it shall not cut down trees of the forest on the mountains, and not mow grasses and burn ashes in the water area, capturing snares shall not be brought out of the door, fishing nets shall not be thrown into the water, sailing boats shall not be made an excuse except for the officers in charge of the ships. Because of these things will hamper the farming season.”[1] “Pounding over the birds' nest, destroying their eggs, then Phoenixes will not come back. Sectioning the beasts' abdomen, eating their embryos, then Kirin will not come back. Drying the pool to go fishing, then dragons and turtles will not go. It is difficult to make out all things like those from the similar situation.” “So Heaven is running for four seasons, but it does not help the farming against farming seasons.”[1] “Fishes and turtles will swim to deep wells of water, birds will fly to flourishing trees, beasts will rush to thick grasses.” [1] He emphasizes to abide by the laws of Nature, rational utilization of natural resources, and achieve harmonious coexistence between Man and Nature.

Zhongshu Dong expands the “loving people” to care for birds, insects, and other natural creatures. “It is good faith to care for the people, and the following as for the birds and insects were not without care. Do not care them, how enough is it to be called ‘benevolence’ ?”[2] After that he repeatedly stresses the ideology of “loving things”. “Extensively caring for all creatures, it is not to make reward and punishment with the emotions of joys and sorrows, so as to show benevolence to them.” [2] He believes that the human beings should actively protect Nature, and widely cherish all living things, so that “everyone can raise all things downwards, paying homage to Heaven and Earth upwards”, [2] Human beings only keep in harmony with all things of the universe in order to show the essential attribute of “benevolence”.

Zai Zhang treats “the people” as “the things” equally. “The people is my compatriots, the things are the same with me.”[9] “Nature is the root of the universe and is not unique to me alone, only a virtuous man can know the secrets of Nature. So he is going to conduct himself that all the people can do by themselves, his wisdom shall be broadened to everything, his love shall be spread to all the people and all things, his achievements are not personal own ones alone.” [9] “Expand his mind, one can understand all things of the world because they do not know their forms, but the breadth of mind has his external range. Ordinary people only limit to what he heard and saw in his mind. ” [9] The people must try to take care of all things of life where they are, do not make them destroyed. He expresses the idea of the love of Nature, the cherishment of life, and the pursuit of harmony.

Yi Cheng and Hao Cheng extend the object and the border of “benevolence” to the universe and the whole nature. “The scholarship must know benevolence. Who recognizes benevolence can naturally achieve an organic whole with all things. Righteousness, propriety, wisdom and trust are all benevolence.”[16] “The benevolent takes all things of Heaven and Earth as a whole,

which are one of his parts.” [16] “The benevolence of the sage is feeding the creatures without harming them.”[16] Through the expansion of the nature of people's inherent benevolence, they believe that the people can thoroughly unify the interpersonal ethics and the moral of Nature, and complete the power of the “genesis” of Nature to achieve the universal state of a selfless “higher self”.

The “Unity between Heaven and Man” thinks that Nature is an organic whole in accordance with its objective laws of development. Only pay attention to the beauty of “harmony” and the virtue of “stopping”, and promotes the spirit that “Man is the most expensive in the world” [8], can he consciously protect our living environment, realize the harmony between Man and Nature, and promote the orderly, coordinated, and harmonious development of the society in an all-round way.

### 3. CONCLUSION

The civilization of the human society is the development and progress in the constant replacement and reflection from the developing trend of the human history. However, the ecological civilization is another new selection of the form of civilization after the human society enters the agricultural civilization and industrial civilization. It is also the sum of cultural achievements that human beings has already formed the harmonious unity and the sustainable development between Man and Nature, Man and society, Man and Man, Man and himself in the history of the development process. Its key is the transition from “the conquest of Nature and the rule of Nature” to “the complying of Nature and the protection of Nature”. It is a worldwide upheaval related with the mode of production, lifestyle, social structures, and values. That is to say, it is the concrete expression of the “Unity between Heaven and Man” in the construction of the contemporary ecological civilization.

Nowadays, the continued deterioration of the ecological environment forces the people to begin to reflect on their own thinking and behavior, to re-examine the relationship between Man and Nature, and find a good way to solve the ecological problems from the aspects of theory and practice. The status of the human beings is the unique in Nature. However, he is not a natural or biological existence but the only master of living groups of Earth. Human intelligence is that Man is able to rationally control himself, consciously abide by the principle of "Heaven", and constantly pursue the perfection of “Humanity” in order to maintain the long-term interests of human survival. It is because of the requirements of Nature for humankind is that “Man who accords with Heaven can be preserved, Man can who rebels against Heaven can be perished.”[5]The development of the human society can only be under the premise of respecting objective laws, and strictly follow the laws of Nature to act, in order to ease the tension relationship between Man and Nature, to reduce the occurrence of various natural and man-made disasters, and protect the living environment of the human beings from the source.

The governments and the people of all over the world today recognizes that the human society is a whole of the alternation of interest, and the survival predicament faced by humankind is global. Humankind has only to re-absorb the essence of Chinese excellent traditional culture, to better understand the ecological concept of the “Unity between Heaven and Man”, and recognize that Man is an important part of Nature, firmly establish the concept of the overall harmony and the



integration of all things. It also treats natural environment in a more civilized and rational way, consciously safeguard the overall interests and the development benefit of the human survival, better promote the harmonious development of the relationship among “Heaven, Earth and Man”, protect the living environment of the human beings from the source, and can ensure the interdependence, the dynamic balance, and the sustained lasting of the human society and ecosystem.

Moreover, humankind has only to fully understand the importance of the protection of ecological environment, to constantly rise the consciousness of symbiotic coexistence, to strengthen the understanding of the natural law and the laws of Nature, to formulate feasible laws, regulations and policies, to consciously restrain their own thoughts and actions, and gradually form the survival way of energy-saving, environmental protection, and green development. Simultaneously, humanity has also to strengthen the propaganda on the construction of ecological civilization, to promote the comprehensive, coordinated, and sustainable development of economy and society, and rebuild the ideal social pattern of ecological civilization, which is every country and people have to face and think about , and is also a problem to be solved urgently.

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