



PHILOSOPHICAL PERSPECTIVE OF MARXISM-LENINISM ON THE RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN BEHAVIORAL CULTURE AND THE NATURAL ENVIRONMENT

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Abstract:

Behavioral culture is an integral component of culture, comprising a system of values including knowledge, emotions, beliefs, attitudes, and behaviors of individuals towards the natural environment, social environment, and human interactions accumulated through practical activities. In this article, we clarify the concept of behavioral culture, cultural behavior towards the natural environment, and delve into the study of the relationship between behavioral culture and the natural environment based on the viewpoints of Marxism-Leninism concerning behavioral culture towards the natural environment.

Keywords: behavioral culture, natural environment, perspectives, Marxism-Leninism

1. Introduction

In the present day, the protection of the natural environment is considered an urgent issue not only for developed countries but also for developing ones around the world. Vietnam is actively promoting industrialization and modernization within the framework of a market economy and integration. However, in this market-driven system, economic entities are inclined to exploit natural resources to their maximum extent to fulfill their own needs and interests. This has led to alarming consequences for the natural environment, such as degradation, depletion, environmental pollution, loss of biodiversity, and climate change.

During the 13th National Party Congress, in the strategic development plan for the period of 2021-2030, the Communist Party of Vietnam laid out five development viewpoints, one of which pertains to the issue: *"promote rapid and sustainable development mainly based on science, technology, innovation, and digital transformation"* (Communist Party of Vietnam, 2021, vol.2, p.214). At the same time, the Party also emphasizes: *"maximize the advantages of different regions; achieve harmonious development between the economy and*

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culture, society, environmental protection, and adaptation to climate change; pay attention to creating favorable conditions for priority subjects, contributors, the poor, the vulnerable, and ethnic minority communities" (Communist Party of Vietnam, 2021, vol.2, p.251).

The Party's perspective on sustainable development is built upon the recognition and application of a harmonious relationship between nature, society, and humans, ensuring a balance between economic development and environmental protection. However, during the process of development, tackling the relationship between humans and the natural environment in our country still remains limited and has led to serious consequences such as depletion of natural resources, environmental pollution, and climate change. The control, prevention, and reduction of pollution levels, remedying environmental incidents, sustainable use of natural resources, and preserving the biodiversity of ecosystems have become more pressing issues than ever before.

2. Research Methodology

To achieve the aforementioned objectives, the fundamental research methods utilized in the article include historical, logical, analytical, and synthetic approaches. The primary sources of reference comprise original materials derived from the complete works of Karl Marx and Friedrich Engels, as well as official documents from the Communist Party of Vietnam. Additionally, insights are drawn from the works of several prominent political authors.

3. Research Content

3.1. The Relationship between Behavioral Cultural and the Natural Environment

3.1.1. The Notion of Behavioral Culture towards the Natural Environment

A. The Notion of Behavioral Culture

Behavioral culture is an integral and evolving aspect of human existence, particularly the behavior exhibited among individuals and between humans and the natural environment. *"Behavioral culture is an inseparable part of the culture in general, encompassing the ways in which humans interact with nature, interact with each other, and behave within the social environment"* (Dung, 2009, p.27).

According to the author Nguyen Viet Chuc: *"Behavioral culture encompasses the ways of relating, attitudes, and actions of individuals towards the natural environment, society, and others"*. (Dung, 2009, p.98). This means that behavioral culture is first shaped and developed within the relationship between humans and nature, but it also plays an extremely important role in relationships among individuals. Behavioral culture is formed as civilization advances to a certain level, aiming to express human behavior towards nature, society, and oneself. *"Behavioral culture always possesses specific historical characteristics, meaning that when the socio-economic conditions of an era change, it also undergoes necessary adjustments to remain relevant"* (Chuc, 2002, p.54). Building upon the definitions provided earlier, we assert that behavioral culture is an integral component

of culture; it constitutes a system of values, norms, attitudes, and behaviors that dictate the manner in which individuals and communities interact. It governs how people address the relationships between humans, the natural environment, the social milieu, and even their own selves.

B. Notions of Behavioral Culture towards the Natural Environment

Human beings are products of nature, and there exists a dialectical relationship between humans and the natural world. Throughout life, humans have interacted with nature, exploited its resources, and utilized its elements for survival and development. The unity of nature and society is manifest in the essence of human beings: "*The natural essence of humans only exists in relation to social humans, because only within society is nature a point of connection among human beings... it is only within society that nature emerges as the foundation of human existence with human characteristics*" (Marx and Engels, 2004, Vol.42, p.131).

The behavioral culture of humans towards nature is shaped by specific historical contexts, with human behavior contingent upon the level of societal development and the conditions of the natural and social environment. Different periods manifest distinct characteristics in cultural behavior towards the natural environment. Consequently, we believe that behavioral culture towards the natural environment entails the harmonious conduct of humans with nature. It involves adapting to the living environment to regulate one's own pace of life, with the aim of protecting and enhancing the environment.

3.1.2. The Perspective of Marxism-Leninism on Behavioral Culture towards the Natural Environment

Marxism-Leninism shows great interest in the relationship between humans and nature. As early as the 1840s, Karl Marx addressed the relationship between humans and nature through his works and presented scientific arguments about this connection. Similarly, Friedrich Engels, in his work "Dialectics of Nature," analyzed the dialectical relationship between humans and nature (Chuan, 2002, p. 69-73).

Indeed, the philosophical thoughts of the classical Marxist-Leninist thinkers regarding behavioral culture towards the natural environment are reflected in their perspectives on the relationship between humans and the natural world. The unity between nature and humans is an essential concept; humans are both products of nature and an integral part of it. Consequently, human activities must adhere to the laws of nature, as failing to do so could result in experiencing the consequences of nature's "vengeance." Since the late 19th century, Friedrich Engels warned: "*We should not be too proud of our victories over nature. For each victory, nature takes its revenge on us. Indeed, every victory at first brings us the results we constantly desire, but as it comes around for the second or third time, it generates entirely different effects, often unpredictable, which can negate or even destroy all the initial results.*" (C. Marx and Ph. Engels, 1994, Vol 20, p.654). The current state of the ecological environment has proven the deep and accurate warnings of

Friedrich Engels. The environmental issue has now become a global, complex, and urgent matter (Bao, 2005, p.36).

Behavioral Culture towards the natural environment forms the foundation of the relationship between humans and nature. With the assistance of science, technology, and increasingly sophisticated tools, humanity's power to conquer nature has grown, disrupting the inherent balance of the natural world. As a consequence, nature has, is currently, and will continue to "take revenge" on humanity for the unconscious impacts humans have inflicted upon it.

The impact of human production activities on nature not only results in immediate and direct consequences but also leaves behind long-term effects. Friedrich Engels warned about the potential serious consequences that could arise in the future, stating: *"If we have had to expend thousands of years of labor to acquire the kind of understanding that can at least in some measure foresee the remote natural consequences of our production activities, then we will have to expend much greater effort in order to comprehend the remote social consequences of those activities"* (C. Marx and Ph. Engels, 1994, Vol 20, p.655-656). In the process of productive labor, thanks to their understanding, people grasp natural laws and correctly apply natural laws, then they will take advantage of nature and actively dominate nature. From these accurate viewpoints, Friedrich Engels put forth a summarizing argument regarding the relationship with nature: *"We do not dominate nature as a conqueror dominates a foreign people, as someone situated outside of nature. On the contrary, we, with all our flesh, blood, and minds, belong to nature; we are within nature, and all our dominance over nature resides in the fact that we, unlike any other creatures, understand the laws of nature and can accurately utilize those laws"* (C. Marx and Ph. Engels, 1994, Vol 20, p.654-655). The domination of humans over nature is not infinite, not absolute. We need to be aware of the laws of nature and be able to accurately utilize these laws to transform nature positively. As a result, nature will return to serving the needs of humans.

At the same time, alongside the development of the social production system, humans have discharged a significant amount of various forms of waste into nature through production and daily activities, distorting the environmental landscape, intensifying pollution, and directly affecting the quality of human life. The advancement of science has provided evidence that the regulatory mechanisms, unity, integrity, and dynamic equilibrium of the entire biosphere form a biological cycle. Hence, humans are actively seeking effective solutions to manage and minimize the amount of waste entering the environment, especially hazardous waste and long-lasting solid waste. All these positive changes in human perception and behavior signify that the cultural approach to the natural environment is engaging in shaping the practical activities of humans towards increasing "respect" and "friendliness" towards the natural environment.

In other words, environmental protection awareness plays a role as the foundation for regulating the relationship between humans and nature. The relationship between humans and nature is closely intertwined and is further governed by the relationships between humans themselves. In the work "The German Ideology," Karl Marx and

Friedrich Engels affirmed that "*certain relations of men to nature, arising from the specific form of society, are in their turn reactions upon nature and depend on it...*" (C. Marx and Ph. Engels, 1995, Vol 3, p.44). This means that how humans and society interact with nature depends on the nature of the social system. Humans can control the relationship between humans and nature. Karl Marx and Friedrich Engels assert that humans are products of nature, a distinct part of nature: "*The realm of nature is the inorganic body of man... The material and spiritual life of man is linked with nature inextricably; it is nothing other than the nature's connection with itself, for man is a part of nature.*" (Marx and Engels, 2004, Vol.42, p.91-92). It means that humans and nature are dialectically united, serving as premises for each other's existence. When humans protect nature, they are essentially protecting their own lives. If humans do not behave in harmony and friendliness with nature, nature will retaliate in return. The relationship between humans and nature is further affirmed by Karl Marx in his Economic and Philosophic Manuscripts of 1844: "*The realm of nature - namely, nature within its own limits, which does not itself consist in the human body - is the inorganic body of man. Man lives by nature. That is to say, nature is his body, with which he must remain in continuous interchange if he is not to die. If we declare that the life-activity, even under its alienated form, is intimately connected with nature and determinable by it, we are declaring that the nature which is immediately linked to life is also life's immediate nature; that nature is life's immediate being, or that nature is the nature of man.*" (Marx and Engels, 2004, Vol.42, p.135)

Friedrich Engels was one of the earliest thinkers of humanity to take note of the process of conquering and transforming nature in the course of social production, of the impact of humans on the natural world, rather than just nature dominating humans. The unity between humans and nature is also expressed through the process of productive labor to create material wealth. Through labor, humans have the ability to conquer and alter natural processes for their purposes. In the process of production, through labor, humans have transformed nature, even exerted control over it for their own ends, as the distinction lies in the fact that "*animals produce only themselves, while humans reproduce the entire realm of nature*" (Marx and Engels, 2004, Vol.42, p.137). Humans not only utilize all that nature provides but also actively alter nature to suit their needs. However, in the process of modifying nature, humans have made significant mistakes, and the consequence is that nature has been and is currently "taking revenge" on humans and human society (Bao, 2005, p.39). The reciprocal relationship between humans and nature is manifested as: "*if cultivation is carried out spontaneously without conscious guidance, it will leave behind fallow land*" (Marx and Engels, 2004, Vol.42, p.80). From the consequences of human impact on nature, we need to change our behavior towards nature - this is the embodiment of human's cultural approach to nature. Through this, we should comprehend and apply the laws of nature to practical activities. Therefore, in the dialectical relationship between humans and nature, humans must recognize the laws of nature and apply those laws to both production and daily life. Only through this can humans maintain a harmonious, friendly, and sustainable relationship with nature.

3.1.3. The Relationship between the Issue of Behavioral Culture and the Natural Environment

Humans are a product of nature, and there exists a dialectical relationship between humans and the natural world. Throughout their lives, humans have interacted with nature, exploiting and utilizing it for survival and development. The unity between nature and society is immediately expressed in the essence of humanity: "*The essence of human nature exists only in relation to social humans, for only in society does nature relate to humans... it is only within society that nature appears as the foundation of human existence with its human characteristics*" (Marx and Engels, 2004, Vol.42, p.131).

The behavioral culture of humans towards nature bears a specific historical context, where the manner of human interaction depends on the level of societal development and the conditions of both the natural and social environment. Different periods exhibit varying expressions of cultural behavior towards the natural environment. During the phase before the distinction between Eastern and Western cultures, humans lived in dependence on nature, and their interaction with the natural world was characterized by harmony. The unified approach to nature in both Eastern and Western cultures reflected a sense of unity, coexistence, and harmony with the natural world.

In the phase marked by the differentiation between Eastern and Western cultures, the natural environment became the object of human exploitation, and the distinct ways of life gave rise to differences in human behavior towards nature. In the East, due to a natural production mode and a lifestyle closely intertwined with nature, there was reverence and protection of the environment. Meanwhile, in the West, characterized by agricultural and nomadic practices, humans developed a sense of dominance over nature. They sought to control and subjugate nature, gradually becoming detached from it, disregarding its laws of existence and development. Exploitation and utilization of natural resources reached an extent that led to the depletion of natural resources, environmental pollution, and a global ecological crisis.

In the face of the environmental pollution and climate change consequences caused by human activities, it is essential to establish a culture of interacting with the natural environment. Within this framework, humans should genuinely live in harmony with nature, respecting its essence with inherent humanistic and compassionate values. Cultivating a culture of environmental behavior constitutes a subject of study within environmental philosophy, exploring the relationship between humans and the natural environment, as well as examining the connection between humans and ethical values and standards concerning the environment. One of the most emblematic ideologies regarding respect for nature and the preservation of the natural world is presented by Ph. Engels in his work "Dialectics of Nature." He asserts that the advancement of 19th-century natural sciences, while enhancing humans' precise understanding of natural laws, concurrently emphasizes humanity's growing awareness of its interdependence with the natural world. Engels posits that human nature relationship embodies an

inseparable unity, where humans and nature are intricately interconnected (C. Marx and Ph. Engels, 1994, Vol 42, p.129).

4. Conclusion

The culture of interacting with the natural environment is a part of culture in general a "second nature" created by humans. In their process of survival, humans are compelled to engage with nature, to transform and modify it to serve their essential needs. Through the process of interacting with nature, humans have gradually uncovered its inherent laws. As a result, they've taken on an active role in their relationship with nature, no longer passively dependent as in primitive times.

Moreover, in the process of interacting with and transforming this "second nature" to create material and spiritual values, humans need to behave in a transparent, healthy, and harmonious manner with nature. This involves creating values that are true, good, and beautiful in their relationship with nature. Hence, the issue of culture in interacting with the natural environment has become urgent and is of concern to humanity as a whole.

On the other hand, societal development often does not go hand in hand with the development of the natural environment. There are cases where even economically and socially advanced countries experience negative environmental impacts that directly affect the survival and development of humanity in general.

Currently, due to the impact of the market economy and diverse cultural influences, the culture of human interaction with the natural environment is undergoing profound transformations. While incorporating the progressive and modern achievements of other advanced cultures, traditional behavioral norms are also undergoing shifts, at times negative in nature. The once esteemed traditional ethos of positive engagement with the environment has witnessed erosion and, in some cases, disregard by the very creators of such values. These shifts have imparted substantial implications for societal advancement. Consequently, the imperative of researching and constructing a contemporary culture of harmonious interaction with the natural milieu holds critical significance, encompassing both theoretical underpinnings and pragmatic imperatives.

From an ideological perspective, the leadership, directives, policy formulations, and operational initiatives of the Party and the State have been instrumental in steering and orchestrating the establishment of a culture that embraces ecological harmony. These endeavors have yielded commendable accomplishments. To realize such achievements, beyond the contributions of specialized agencies and organizations vested in this endeavor, the citizenry's active engagement, characterized by national pride, environmental consciousness, and an escalating comprehension of the natural world, has been indispensable. Nonetheless, despite these attainments, lingering constraints and certain deficiencies persist in the cultivation of a culture predicated upon symbiotic coexistence with the natural environment. These limitations are contingent upon a nexus

of diverse objective and subjective factors, necessitating due consideration and resolution in the forthcoming trajectory.

Conflict of Interest Statement

The author declares no conflicts of interest.

About the Author(s)

Le Trong Hung is working at University of Economics, Ho Chi Minh City, Vietnam. Current and former research interests are the fields of political science and history. <https://orcid.org/0009-0007-9612-2553>.

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