

## A Summary of the Research on Ecological Ethics of Chinese Enterprises

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**Abstract:** Enterprise ecological ethics is the integration of enterprise economy, ethics and ecology. Its core lies in the enterprise's ecological responsibility. Domestic scholars have carried out research on Enterprise Ecological Ethics from four aspects: concept, empirical, reality and countermeasures. The focus of their debate is whether "profit precedes ethics" or "ethics precedes profit". Domestic research on corporate ecological ethics has achieved certain results, but there are certain deficiencies. Further research is needed on the issues of corporate ecological ethics practice, the acceptance of corporate ecological ethics values, multidisciplinary intersections, corporate employment methods, and the formation of corporate ethical values.

### 1. Introduction

In recent years, the quality of water, soil and air in China has been deteriorating. Haze has become a part of weather forecast. These are caused by our traditional economic production mode. The traditional production mode of enterprises takes environmental pollution as its cost and profits as its ultimate goal rather than human beings themselves. To change this crude mode of production which does not conform to the sustainable development of human beings, it depends not only on the improvement of science and technology, but also on the degree of fulfillment of enterprises' ecological responsibility. The concept of "ecological civilization" was first put forward in the report of the 17th National Congress of the Communist Party of China. In the report of the 18th National Congress of the Communist Party of China, the "ecological civilization construction" strategy was put forward. The report of the 19th National Congress further emphasized "accelerating the reform of the ecological civilization system." General Secretary Xi Jinping repeatedly mentioned in his series of speeches that it is necessary to vigorously promote the construction of ecological civilization, "building a beautiful China, and working hard to create a new era of socialist ecological civilization." It can be seen that for the increasingly serious environmental pollution, enterprises as the main force of economic construction, attention and solution to the environmental problems in production is an urgent task.

### 2. Economic, ethical and ecological aspects of the enterprise

An enterprise is first and foremost a formal organization of organizations or interests, which is aimed at pursuing profits. Professor Ouyang Runping believes: "Enterprises are cooperative organizations that use interests, contracts and obligations as a link to obtain appropriate profits through the creation and operation of commodities and capital." It can be seen that the goals of enterprises are all related to the pursuit of profits, although this is not necessarily the only goal of enterprises. But it is certain that the basic nature of enterprises includes economy.

The ethical nature of an enterprise is embodied in the ethical norms of enterprise management in its business activities, or in the guidance of its own behavior by the sense of corporate responsibility, corporate conscience and corporate values. Economy is the basic characteristic of an enterprise, but it is not the only one. Enterprise production can not be separated from morality. The reason lies in that economy is human economy in the final analysis, and it is an economy with moral connotation. As Professor Wang Xiaoxi mentioned in his book *Research on Moral Capital*: "Real economy" is an economy with moral connotation. Economy is an economy that pays attention to human and human development, morality and coexistence with morality. The essence of economy is not only the

problems of input, output and benefit, but also that economy must be an economy with moral connotation. It is not only an obligation but also the right of the enterprise to comply with the moral requirements put forward by the society. Enterprise development is inseparable from ethics, because morality is also an intangible capital that can be invested. A true human enterprise should not separate economics from ethics. The production and operation of an enterprise cannot be solely for profit, but should have an ethical pursuit of exceeding profits. "Enterprise ethics is integrated into corporate strategic decision-making, systematically managing the performance of enterprises in the natural environment, social participation and financial indicators, which is conducive to enterprises to win core competitive advantages." The ecological nature of enterprises, standing in anthropocentrism. The position lies in the sustainable development of the corporate economy. That is, how to meet the needs of the people at the same time, without sacrificing the development of other areas and future generations to meet the demand. Or how to maximize the use of natural capital while maintaining the normal operation of enterprises. Eco-environmental justice in practice mainly involves three issues: intergenerational fairness, domestic fairness and international fairness. What we call enterprise ecological ethics mainly refers to the general term of moral consciousness, moral norms, moral relations and moral practice embodied in the efforts of consciously coordinating and balancing the triple value pursuit of enterprise economic construction, social development and environmental protection in the process of developing enterprise ecological economy. Or mainly refers to the general term of moral consciousness, moral norms, moral relations and moral practice needed by the development of enterprise ecological economy. The goal of enterprise ecological ethics is to obtain sufficient per capita welfare and to maximize the number of people who can obtain such living conditions over time. As Herman E. Daley said in his book *Beyond Growth*, "Sufficiency, emphasizing that the goal of per capita wealth is to live a good life that meets basic needs rather than maximize material consumption. Efficiency means that the effective use of natural capital can allow more people to live in a sufficient state of life. Fairness is emphasizing that enough of such a state of life should be owned by all."

### **3. Research Status of Enterprise Ecological Ethics**

The ecological ethics of Chinese enterprises was first proposed by Professor Chen Zehuan as the concept of "ecological economic ethics". He pointed out in the book "Analysis of utilitarianism, dedication, ecology, culture and economic ethics": "The industrial economy ethics natural view replaces agriculture. The economic ethics natural view is a fundamental change. Then, the current development trend towards the eco-ethical ethics natural view is a sign of another fundamental change in the human economic ethics natural view." Professor Chen Zehuan's knowledge tentatively discusses the concept of ecological nature in economic ethics. In his view, the complete pattern of contemporary Chinese moral life should be based on utilitarian ethics, dominated by dedication ethics, expanded by ecological ethics and sublimated by cultural ethics. Professor Wang Zeying defined eco-economic ethics in his article "Several Theoretical Issues on Eco-economic Ethics". He believes: "Eco-economic ethics is the product of the combination of eco-ethics and economic ethics. It takes eco-economic ethics or eco-economic ethics as its research object. The so-called eco-economic ethics refers to the ethics of development formed in the process and pattern of eco-economy. It is a synthesis of certain social morality and moral factors of ecological economic phenomena under the effect of social development and ecological economic development. It is the sum of moral consciousness, norms and practices used by a certain society or class to regulate the relationship between ecological balance and economic development, to stimulate the rational behavior of economic subjects and to evaluate good and evil with good and evil." In short, this is a practical, comprehensive and marginal subject. Research is carried out on the level of combination of ecology, economy and ethics. Based on the principles of ecology, focusing on human economic activities, focusing on ethical and moral orientation. Research is carried out around the ethical and moral issues between human economic activities and natural ecology.

The core of enterprise ecological ethics lies in corporate ecological responsibility, that is, the ethical norms that enterprises should abide by in order to maintain the ecosystem in economic

production. The ecological responsibility that should be undertaken is mainly based on whether “profits precede ethics” or “ethics precede profit”. At present, the research of domestic scholars mainly focuses on four aspects: First, the theoretical basis and basic connotation of corporate ecological responsibility are studied from the conceptual level. In terms of theoretical basis, scholars have initially formed two theories: the theory of stakeholder maximization of wealth and the unity of ecological responsibility and corporate profit. In terms of basic connotation, scholars mainly carry out a large number of analysis from the perspectives of the voluntary degree, dynamic basis, target level and specific objects of the enterprise's fulfillment of ecological responsibility. The second is to study the influencing factors and impact effects of corporate ecological behavior from the empirical level. On the one hand, scholars explore the economic pressures, cultural pressures and internal characteristics of various environmental regulatory factors from the perspectives of environmental economics, organizational sociology and organizational management, such as the size of enterprises, the nature of enterprises, and enterprises. The impact of population, etc. on the ecological behavior of enterprises. On the other hand, scholars have launched a heated discussion on whether the improvement of enterprise environmental performance can bring about the improvement of enterprise economic performance. The third is to analyze the current situation, problems and reasons of enterprises' ecological responsibility from the realistic level. Scholars agree that the externality of enterprise ecological behavior is the internal reason for the lack of enterprise ecological responsibility. On this basis, scholars have explored the external reasons for the lack of Corporate Ecological Responsibility in China from the aspects of social ecological value orientation, government environmental policy and internal ecological measures. On the surface, enterprise pollution brings about environmental damage. Because of the low level of productivity and imperfect external laws and regulations (government intervention has externality). Environmental protection is in the operation mechanism outside the market, and can not really improve the enthusiasm of enterprises. The reason is not the low level of productivity development, but the judgment of moral value. "If our enterprises do not have the ecological awareness of resources, value and environmental responsibility. Without the ethical belief that nature and society should be equally responsible, we can't realize that only when people and nature live in harmony, can enterprises obtain the motive force of sustainable development. Well, it is true that we take all kinds of hard measures on the unethical behavior of business operations, which are external. Even if it is effective, it is a temporary one, and it is a temporary solution [8]." The fourth is to analyze the specific measures to promote the implementation of ecological responsibility by the countermeasures. Some scholars have analyzed the conceptual basis of the promotion mechanism, and some scholars have proposed the specific model of the promotion mechanism. More scholars are discussing the government incentive system, and Various specific countermeasures such as the enterprise ecological management system. “In order to do a good job in ethical management, enterprises must first ethically pursue corporate decision-making and clarify the core values of the enterprise. Consider the motives, effects, interests, and virtues of corporate decision-making behavior. Decision making is the key to management and can ensure that management practices are ethical at the source [9].” The corporate ecological ethics and corporate ecological responsibility have the same goals and the same content. They all evaluate the social ecological responsibility and corporate performance of the enterprise, and finally realize the unification of the economic goals and ecological goals of the enterprise. But the mode of action of the enterprise ecological ethics It is a two-way, researching and expanding to the theoretical level on the basis of studying the ecological responsibility content of existing enterprises, which in turn improves the content of corporate ecological responsibility.

#### **4. Problems in the study of corporate ecological ethics**

The enterprise ecological ethics has carried out a large number of arguments on the connotation and its significance. The research is relatively in-depth, but the ethical practice involved in the enterprise is relatively weak. In terms of theoretical discussion, on the one hand, Chinese corporate

ethics mostly adopts the philosophy of “top-down” research. Although the completeness of the theory has been maintained, the theory based on purely theoretical speculation is difficult to put into practice, and once it involves practical problems, it is difficult to parry. On the other hand, it should also be noted that some scholars have also proposed some coping strategies for various problems in society. But scattered, has not yet formed a complete system, need to be refined to make it more practical guidance. Drawing lessons from the new production technologies in the West, we have found a new way of industrialization with high scientific and technological content, good economic benefits, low resource consumption, less environmental pollution and full play of the advantages of human resources. As the executor of environmental protection, the government often forms special interest groups with enterprises and serves interest groups. This is related to the moral responsibility consciousness of enterprises and the public, which seriously hinders the implementation of various rules and regulations.

In the content of enterprise ecological ethics research, there are not many discussions on how to make enterprises and their participants accept the values of enterprise ecological ethics. The premise that a policy can be implemented and achieve the desired results is to get the general recognition of the actors. This requires the government to vigorously promote the people's understanding of the economic and ecological values, at the same time, enterprises which have more and more influence on society and economy. On the basis of recognizing the ecological values, we can also create a brand-new corporate image, and promote the people's understanding of ecological values while promoting the new green development path. Thus, not only the new enterprise growth model that promotes sustainable growth, but also the traditional thinking formula that only uses profit as the sole criterion for economic growth. Advocating the ethical and ecological nature of enterprises as a new standard for measuring corporate growth.

As an interdisciplinary subject in ecology, economics, and ethics. The research and solution of enterprise ecological ethics issues requires three disciplines and even multidisciplinary intersections. The economics of ignoring ethics can only be turned into the knowledge of "things". Non-human science, away from economics, ethics can only become an unrealistic utopian hollow theory. Economic ethics with ecological and environmental care is more humanistic and inclusive. In addition, the new era brings new opportunities as well as new problems. The complexity of a problem determines that its solution often requires cross-disciplinary and interdisciplinary cooperation. For example, the solution of enterprise ecological problems involves not only ecology, economics and ethics. At the institutional level, it also involves law, politics and even international relations. Nowadays, it is precisely the lack of such comprehensive talents who can truly integrate multiple disciplines.

Enterprise eco-ethics requires enterprises to be inclusive of the interests of those close to themselves or beyond their blood relationship. However, in traditional China, it is difficult to really appoint talented people because they are relatives-oriented. This way of employment is not suitable for the long-term development of enterprises, which is contrary to the trend of economic globalization. The practice of ecological ethics needs not only to abandon the concept of portal. If we want to go to the world, we need the joint efforts of enterprises all over the world. "There is no doubt that family-based trust is difficult to adapt to the requirements of economic globalization. It will inevitably limit the development of enterprises. The trend of globalization requires people's trust to be based only on the economy, different blood, and different regions. People and enterprises are treated equally and give equal trust." It can be seen that China has limited space and resources. If China does not self-innovate, change the existing dominant production methods. The economic development will eventually lose the economic follow-up force due to the scarcity of resources, the shrinking of space, and the deterioration of the environment.

Corporate ecological ethical values are not abstract and eternal. It is historical and concrete. It is the product of the social situation of the times. “People consciously or unconsciously, in the final analysis, always derive their own ethical values from the actual relationship in which their class status is based—from their economic relations of production and exchange.” Therefore, first the promotion of corporate ecological ethics is also related to the level of modern science and

technology development. With the development of science and technology, it is not impossible for low-pollution, low-cost waste purification and reuse devices to enter enterprise production and even people's daily lives. Second, environmental regulation will promote technological innovation to a certain extent. In the long run, scientific and technological innovation can bring enterprises the advantage of backwardness and more substantial benefits. Compared with developed countries, developing countries benefit more from this mode of production. However, this requires short-term investment of enterprises. Although government subsidies can solve the urgent need for a moment, only when enterprises completely abandon their burdens and put scientific and technological innovation into market competition can they form a virtuous circle in a real sense. Third, new technology will bring about new environmental ethics problems. Only from the perspective of development, concrete analysis of specific problems, constant attention to practical problems, put forward practical moral strategies. Only in the true sense can we achieve the ultimate goal of Ethics - practice.

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