

## Feature 5

# The Significance of “Humanism” in Green Development

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Based on many theoretical points from the **Economics of Human Development**, which I have studied for many years, and also the empirical clues provided from a perspective of “macro history,” and the recently released Research Report on Chinese **Human Development Strategy**, which says that we should be integrating today’s “low-carbon green development” background and many of the newer future trends. In this thesis, I will bring forth the opinion that “humanism’s low-carbon development” namely, human civilization and its progress is taking a course of freedom as the axis and is continuously improving the all-round free development of humankind. Also a low-carbon green development course is constantly getting rid of external material constraints and gradually returning to the spiritual free homeland. Thus, we can infer that China is a developing agricultural country, who faces major concerns in terms of human health and safety protection, as well as the educational issues faced in its growing population. How is China going to achieve the multiple social and economic transformations needed to establish a strong institutional security system based on the natural order and in line with all of the public interests, in order to get rid of the plight of black industry-oriented education system? This will be a difficult and complex historical and strategic task that will be confronted by all Chinese people as they move forward pursuing a new green low carbon development plan.

### 5.1 A Macro History: The vision of Green Development. Human-Orientation Returns to a More Nature Way of Life and Rational Thinking

From a purely liberalistic point of view, the essential historical process in human development is a means in which all human beings pursue freedom in a relatively restrained manner of reality. Rousseau said, “... (the) human is not only a

particular species that has free will, but also the ability to help create a great nature. Since the birth of human civilization, humans have been in a type of 'bondage' for all time. The whole process of human development is essentially a course of human beings making an attempt to get rid of the shackles of nature." He further states, that the "currently popular thought of 'green (economic) development' still belongs to the historical background, in which a human's negation on the 'black development' of an industrialized society, and 'white development' in the pre-industrial society, are formed from each individuals own interests under the context of a post-industrial era. Under a macro horizon of the evolution in nature, green development has endured and developed within humanism connotation."

The human, as an animal species in the natural world, has evolved from a far lesser advanced mammal known apes. This evolution, which happened over thousands of years, developed the species into an animal with the ability to work, think, and understand the world, and is what we know today as the real human being. In the long history of primitive society, the human being's existence was mainly used for meeting the living and production requirements, based on that human's tribal units needs. They developed used simple stone tools for to collecting plants, flowers, and fruits from nature, even using these same simple tools for hunting animals for food. In the later periods of development, human's gradually developed a "slash and burn" technique in primitive agriculture and engaged in a small amount of sporadic animal domestication. These barbaric times can be characterized as "parasitic in the nature," where human being's were entirely dependent on the ecosystem. As a relatively end link of the food chain, the human being and other organisms, are "dependent on each other" in the race of life. Groups formed together conduct collective labor activity. Many of these groups, or living units, formed by taking blood lines as a unit, while still others were considering the idea of a higher power such as God, where beasts or totem worship, as spiritual bond were the valued standard to unify and constrain the harmonious relationship between the human being's and nature. Human being's would "instinctively" join in the natural cycle and order, that these groups offered, and learned that they could depend on the groups resources and the conditions provided by nature, to prosper and survive in the most "economic" way, thus maintaining the most desirable lifestyle.

For the period starting 5,000 years before the industrial revolution, human being's lived in the farming era for subsistence, where people were dependent on the cultivation of land. With the development in plant cultivation, animal husbandry and metal smelting technologies, a human being's living status gradually shifted from nomadic tribesmen to civilianized settlement. This development in living was followed by a rapid growth in population and a higher demand for consumable goods. This development further expanded the production scale and gradually increased the deepening social division of labor. On this basis, animal husbandry, fishery, handicrafts and business, were all, separated from agriculture. The social organization had changed from a patriarchal clan system into one that favored slave owners and feudal land ownership society. Therefore, an agricultural

civilization whose basic characteristics and ideals lied within an agriculture-based, decentralized management system of self-sufficiency, with ample food, clothing, and shelter, has become the sign of the times of the human being’s social development.

In the agrarian age, a human being gave way to the law of nature, also known as “natural selection.” With their special intelligence, wisdom from understanding and transforming the nature around them, human being’s once created a series of brilliant ancient agricultural civilization. This civilization is often characterized by its richness in natural products and the flourishing of men and livestock within nature. After a certain period of time for development, the agricultural civilization will move into its prosperous period and have to face the obvious contradiction between population and land use issues, as well as, the increasingly tense relationships between the civilizations food supply and a demand, or need, for that supply. Consequently, the human beings were forced to burn forests for land reclamation. This over-exploitation often resulted in soil erosion and a further decline in land productivity. In order to save the declining situation, human being’s often resort to, what Arnold J. Toynbee once said was a “suicidal force” or predatory way of waging war on other civilizations. The resulting action may cause an accelerated decline in an aggressor civilization or another nations’ civilization, or even extinction of one of the civilizations forever. However, with all the ups and downs of any civilization, with all the transformations and the many vicissitudes of the human being, the farming era would have limited utilization and impact on nature and its destructive effect is minimal.

In 1784, Watt invented the steam engine, marking mankind’s farewell to the agrarian age and its step into the grand new era of industry known as the time of machinery. Some 200 years later, the development of human productivity successively experienced the three major industrial technological revolutions known as, mechanization, electrification and electronization. Driven by the technological revolution, human being’s gradually broke away from the living state which featured a dependence on nature, the passive use of nature, and solely relying on plant fuel sources as powered energy source. This transformation into the new era, known for its social large-scale machinery production, was characterized by its conquering of nature by transforming and controlling the human’s natural surroundings. The rapid development of nuclear energy, microelectronics, molecular biology, and space technology, the humans were relying on powerful supernatural material and technical strength. Doing so, the humans not only completely changed the natural appearance of the earth, but also broke through the restrictions of earth’s biosphere. Human technologies broke through all the boundaries, reaching its tentacles into the boundless magic macro universe and microscopic worlds they discovered. Meanwhile, humans have also undergone a profound global change in its relationship to production, lifestyles, and social systems they established. Capitalism “roundabout” way of large-scale production, has not only created the wealth accumulation miracle that was once difficult for human society to achieve over the past thousands years, but it also created a production relationship characterized by the antagonistic relation between both

“capital” and “labor.” The widening gap between rich and poor, as well as the aggravated benefit conflict, depletion of resources, and extravagant consumerism lifestyle, were all realized by the new push towards a more capitalistic society. In a modern industrialized society, the direct interdependence relationship where people are relying on nature to provide their needs has been substituted by an indirect contact relationship where people are relying on the market as intermediaries. Individual labor and working significance are split and alienated by the specialization-based mass flow production system. Personal needs and the meaning of life are driven and overwhelmed by the constantly expanding “materialistic” market demands to meet these sane human needs. At the same time, the expanding size of the population, an increasingly larger labor force, the infinitely stretched production and marketing chain, and the increased urbanization development which facilitates the continued gathering and stacking of elements, brought about increasing pressures and challenges to social infrastructure, natural resources, and ecological environment.

In summary, by examining the macro-perspective of nature evolution, we draw a basic conclusion that the human being not only considers himself in the right, but also considers himself to always be in the “shackles” of nature. Human’s think of themselves as the master of others, but far too often remain as greater slave than they desire. Amartya (2002) When a human being gives into his rationality of the extreme and believes in the realization of freedom, constraints imposed by nature will become more intense and bring new human disasters that could have been avoided. Therefore, if the currently advocated “green development” theory is the inevitable future for the development of human civilization, its essence lies in giving up and opposing the “Anthropocentric” view and returning to the more natural and rational “Humanism” philosophy with an understanding on the basis of the natural philosophical sense of values, a world view, and a universal outlook, all having a rich connotation of humanism.

## **5.2 Humanism Orientation of Low-carbon Green Development: Expanding Freedom and Achieving the Comprehensive Development of Human Being’s**

From a strictly liberal point of view, the so-called “development” is essentially a historical process in which human being’s are rational in the pursuit of “freedom” in a “non-free” reality. According to the viewpoint of development as freedom, Amartya Sen said that the extension of “freedom is the primary aim of development, and also the main means for that development. What composes development is to dispel various constraints in which the human being will hardly have his own choice and is also faced with almost with no opportunity to apply the function of reason.” Blaise (1985) Specifically speaking, the real meaning and process of development can be summarized in the following manner:

Under the “certain” frame of natural order, which is not free for all humans, and by the nature-gift of “reason,” or free will, the human being can set new strategies in balancing, compromising, and inter-action, known as the means for freedom, in different situations via a series of tortuous struggles and efforts, known as the pathway to freedom, thereby continuously approaching an ideal state and realm of freedom, which is a human being’s ultimate goal.

But as the main objective and means of development, freedom has multiple levels. It does not have the real means to generally speculate or explain “freedom” on a single abstract level. According to Marx’s “all-round development” theory, we can start from three angles, i.e. natural attributes, social attributes and cultural attributes, and divide freedom into three levels, i.e. survival freedom, social freedom and spiritual freedom. Li (2006) The extension of the three levels of freedom constitutes the primary purpose of the main means for green development, and reflects the human orientation of green development.

First of all, looking from the natural attributes of the human being, freedom means:

To gradually reduce the absolute oppression, restrictions, and limitations on humans, from both natural resources and the ecological environment, in which struggling for existence in the nature world gets an ever-increasing level in material productivity. Amartya Sen says about “capability,” in the example of a human’s ability to get the basic means of subsistence from nature through the material production activities thus being able to live comfortably or have the feeling of “well-being,” within a full rich life, with sufficient clothes and food. Since a human being is one of nature’s “creations” with free will, the most direct opposite to a human’s freedom is, of course, from his “creator,” nature. Therefore, man is born free, but he will always remain in the shackles of nature, and the shackles are first imposed on the human being, by nature. In order to break away from the shackles naturally and externally imposed on a human by nature forces, the human understand its specific position in nature by virtue of his rationality, the first of these is “intellectuality.” The human must then think and decide, using his rational intellectuality, what kind of state to adapt to. The human can use natural forces when the rational, or “free will,” is given into play. To a certain extent, the human being will forget that nature is limited in its own rationality and walk towards an irrational state, making all attempts to replace the position of God. As the result, mankind’s relationship with nature will become “deadlock” and even “out of control.” Such relationships between contradictions and conflicts, do not only limit the development of the contemporary human being, but also affects the survival and continuity of future generations. Therefore, on a survival level, human beings learn to “rationally” adjust their relationship with nature. Humans do this for themselves and their future generations, in order to win a deserving share of “freedom” within the “permission” scope of nature, and this is the basic starting point for advocating more green development.

Secondly, viewing from the social attributes of a human, freedom means that a human will gradually surrender their natural state of ignorance, as featured by their survival competition among other social animals, in the course of social activities

that are gradually defined, standardized, and coordinated. Relationships between people are established through the act of gradually resorting to a continuously improved social contract, in a particular legal system, so as to ensure that every member of that society can get a real and personal freedom of equality and fairness, in the social order, to their greatest possibility. Human beings are social animals, but different from the many general social animals. Human society is composed of individuals with free will and social order. New systems and rules are gradually formed and consummated, by people, in the pursuit of “freedom” after a long and complex struggle and compromise with each other. Freedom issues on this level mainly involve two aspects. The first aspect being the interpersonal freedom, of the human being, within social interaction, or how does a person treat and deal with the freedom of others in a social interaction, while still achieving his own freedom. Secondly, the public freedom in a national political life, for example, what procedures and rules should be adopted in social public activities to ensure the consistency between an individual’s rational choice and the rational choice’s of social groups? As the green economy has clear spillover effect, individual green consumption, green production of enterprises, and a national green development program, are faced with the inconsistency between an individual’s rational choice and the collective’s rational choice. Therefore, on the level of social freedom through institutional innovation and change, while building a natural order to provide a system guarantee for all individuals’ to spontaneously practice green development, serves as the basic premise for achieving green development.

Thirdly, viewing this from the spiritual attributes of a human, freedom means that a human has gradually detached from meeting the limited social needs of life and social existences to transcend into the truly free realm of continuing to pursue an unlimited spiritual need centered on the full realization of self value. A human being is a thinking animal. As the 17th century French thinker Blaise Pascal said, “Man is to himself the most wonderful object in nature; for he cannot conceive what the body is, still less what the mind is, and least of all how a body should be united to a mind. This is the consummation of his difficulties, and yet it is his very being.” Li (2011) Therefore, a human’s greatest idea of freedom and also the dream of freedom, are capable spiritually to “fly freely” in the infinite universe. He struggles with how to “rescue” his soul from the non-free state that it is inexplicably associated with it. The human being is always under the “control” of his physical emotional needs. In an industrialized society, the main body of human significance has been alienated, and more levels, more important spiritual pursuits, have often been overlooked resulting in that human’s interest is a limited “materialistic” whirlpool where he is unable to free himself. Therefore, on the level of the spiritual freedom, through the dominant role of spiritual production and reproduction, especially using education and cultural enterprises and development, mankind can thereby obtain unlimited enjoyment and spiritual culture, on the basis of a limited physical need that can be met. This is the ultimate goal of green development.

In short, the expansion of the above three levels of “freedom” is the three realms of a human being’s pursuit of rationality, together with the three basic objectives to achieve green development and the means of its implementation. However, in the process of emphasizing development, we should not just focus on the “survival freedom” field. The humanism orientation to green development is the general trend for achieving human freedom and comprehensive development. The human being must use a continuous improvement process when developing from one form of freedom to another, starting with the survival freedom, moving on to social freedom, and then ending with the spiritual freedom.

### **5.3 Tough Challenges for Green Development in China: Weak Economic Fundamentals, Lack of Institution and Culture**

Today, people can really feel the “non-green” issues in the development of China. The so-called “China miracle” or “China rise” is just a rapid economic growth based in a small economic base. Without “humanism” and “green” development concept as a guide, such a rise would become “weak” and cannot be sustainable. This can even lead to increased conflicts of interests, a depletion of China’s natural resources for energy, environmental degradation, and other life issues. In other words, the green development task of China still remains arduous in the future. Integrating China’s green development with and from a human being’s orientation of green development lies mainly in the difficulty of the following three aspects.

First, the economic base of green development is still very fragile, from an angle of the survival freedom theory. China’s large population with excessive numbers, low quality, and aging structure, are basic contradictions confronted by the country today. Also, since China’s agriculture is characterized by typical farming production, with vast rural areas, and some large-scale farms, how China walks out of the traditional agricultural economy with its rural society. China is rapidly realizing industrialization, urbanization, and marketization, the real subject of the current modernization and development in China. Basic contradictions in large population with low quality, and the triple transition of industrialization, urbanization and marketization, will influence how China development economically for quite a long time. It may even determine the speed and path of China’s economic development changes to an intensive low-carbon greener development.

Secondly, from the perspective of the social freedom theory, the system protections for green development are not perfect. Although all levels of the government have clearly felt the resources and environmental constraints confronted in a new greener economic development, and these same government agencies have developed the energy saving task and goals in the relevant planning report, the enactment of these new laws and regulations is still not perfect. Under the background of imbalance in the these three areas, economic development,

technological alienation, and globalization of social interaction, the building of regional, national, and international laws and a new regulation system to coordinate the conduct of individuals, enterprises, and countries, has undoubtedly become more important and complex. This requires that the government, and even all social sectors, to have far higher strategic vision and more resilient “greener” scientific attitude, as well as a more democratic and equal public selection process to integrate all countermeasures.

Finally, from the perspective of spiritual freedom, cultural cause development is far from compatibility of green development. Education as one of the most important means of cultural and its transmission plays a fundamental role in the dissemination of the green culture by promoting green development. Contemporary China’s national education system came into being under the macro background of trying to break the old imperial examination system while learning the west’s modern education experience and implementing a planned economy system. As the government is rigidly and uniformly monopolizing China’s schools and education system across the country, the national education system has less relevance to social needs, and is placing more emphasis on receiving an academic certificate and examination performance. Placing less emphasis on the quality of practice has a serious orientation bias, structural distortions, and institutional block in the long term, and has resulted in a tremendous negative impact on the cultural foundation upon which green development is built. Therefore, getting rid of the exam-oriented education crisis is the biggest challenge faced by China in its green development.

In short, we draw this conclusion. From the perspective of “macro history,” the so-called “green development” in the post-industrial era, is the elimination of “black development” within industrialized society and “white development” in the pre-industrial society, having a rich historical significance of “human development”. The basic orientation of green development takes freedoms expansion as the axis to achieve the overall development of a human being on life, social, and spiritual aspects. China has a long way to go in the low-carbon green development. How can China achieve multiple social and economic transformations, establish a sound security system for low-carbon green development, and get rid of exam-oriented education crisis to build up cultural roots supporting the green development? These things become the most arduous and complex historical mission and strategic tasks confronted by Chinese people in their mission to reach a low-carbon green development program.

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