

The Relationship between Human and Nature from the Perspective of Instrumental Rational Thought

Taijin Zhang

Qinhuangdao Vocational and Technical College, Qinhuangdao, China

Abstract: *The relationship between man and nature has been in a very dangerous state, which forces us to re-examine the relationship between man and nature. Horkheimer's instrumental rationality thought deeply criticized human's blind worship of the utility of science and technology. The proliferation of instrumental rationality concept not only makes human ignore their own value, but also leads to a crisis in the relationship between human and nature.*

Keywords: instrumental rationality; Man and nature; Harmonious symbiosis.

1. INTRODUCTION

The rise of Enlightenment thought and the progress of science and technology have promoted the development of capitalism, which has caused problems one after another, among which the most prominent problem is the deterioration of the relationship between man and nature. Horkheimer, as a representative of the Frankfurter School, also reflected deeply on the problems brought by science and technology based on the social background at that time, namely the critical thought of instrumental reason. Instrumental critical thinking also began to arouse people's attitudes towards science and technology.

2. THE REASON FOR HORKHEIMER'S INSTRUMENTAL RATIONAL THOUGHT

As we all know, the beginnings of capitalism originated in British industry in the 17th century. After the revolution, capitalism began to develop rapidly in the following 300 years, and science and technology also developed vigorously. Technical rationality and scientific culture became increasingly powerful. The energy of science and technology was also shown in every aspect of our life, which changed people's lives and also changed the development pattern of the world. The development of technological rationality promotes the dominance of instrumental rationality and makes people lose the pursuit of their own value. On the one hand, the development of instrumental rationality promotes the progress of science and technology, and makes human beings transform from agricultural society to common industrial society. On the other hand, it also worsens the relationship between human and nature, and human beings are faced with a huge ecological crisis.

Instrumental rationality dissimilates the relationship between man and nature. With the development of science and technology, people are gradually introduced into a commercialized and materialized society. People's needs for things become more and more close, whereas people's spiritual needs become more and more distant. In the face of human alienation, the problem is becoming more and more serious. One of the most serious and urgent problems is the relationship between man and nature. The crisis between man and nature has gradually deepened with the development of society. We are faced with the worsening ecological environment, the increase of the world population, the shortage of renewable energy and other problems, which have affected the survival and development of human beings. In fact, these problems all come from the fact that science and technology have changed the way of life of human beings. Human beings begin to blindly worship science and technology, which puts human and nature in an unequal position. Instrumental reason has the absolute right to speak, and human beings begin to be controlled by instrumental reason, which leads to the alienation of the relationship between human and nature.

Facing such a social and historical background, Horkheimer deeply criticized science and technology, and he believed that the root cause of these problems was science and technology. It was Horkheimer's acuity to philosophy that made him foresee that science and technology would cause more social problems in the future, including the breakdown of the relationship between man and nature and the problems of man himself. Therefore, he proposed the critical theory of instrumental rationality to express his strong criticism and dissatisfaction with science and technology. At the same time, Horkheimer also criticized the totalitarianism with instrumental rationality as the dominant thinking, believing that such thinking would make people lose their subjectivity and independence, and people would lose their humanity under the control of instrumental rationality and gradually become tools.

3. THE MAIN CONTENT OF HORKHEIMER'S INSTRUMENTAL RATIONAL CRITICAL THOUGHT

The development of rationality is a long process. Horkheimer traced rationality from ancient times to modern times. He believed that rationality was divided into objective rationality and subjective rationality in the development process, and the two interacted with each other. The development of reason is also closely related to the development of human society. With the progress of human society promoted by science and technology, subjective reason also comes to the fore and surpasses the

existence of objective reason. With the advent of the Renaissance in the West and the rapid development of capitalism, personalized thinking was increasingly sought after, and subjective reason also reached its heyday in this era. People also associated subjective reason with freedom. People rescued from the oppressive church by enlightenment thinkers believed more in the importance of subjective reason for individual liberation, which packaged subjective reason into truth. However, the development of reason is not as expected as the Enlightenment, it began to break away from the existence of objectivity, and eventually became a tool for people to live. "With the popularization of the rationalized product of individual rationality, namely individual invention, leading to the development of the capitalist mode of production, the bourgeoisie's control over social economy, politics and culture is constantly deepened, and the slogan of rationality and individual freedom gradually loses its progressive historical significance and becomes the tool of irrational capitalist rule. In fact, it loses its function as a standard of truth and eventually deforms into instrumental reason." [1] This kind of instrumental rationality emphasizes subjectivity and purpose, and holds that both means and results that meet the purpose and can achieve the purpose are compatible. At the same time, the value of instrumental rationality is also reflected in human's manipulation of nature, and whether such activities are purposive or not and whether the service has a purpose become value oriented. Instrumental rationality also dissipates the original negation and criticism of thinking, and forms a single and positive inherent mode of thinking.

Instrumental rationality makes people lose their sense of self. In the process of industrial reform, "reason itself has become an auxiliary tool of the universal economic machine. Reason became a general instrument for the manufacture of all other instruments, with a single aim and as serious consequences as the production of precisely calculated material activities. The results of material production, on the part of mankind, are beyond the reach of all calculations. It has finally fulfilled its long-cherished wish to serve as an instrument of pure purpose." [2] Horkheimer believes that after people form this kind of fixed thinking mode, their self-awareness also begins to gradually disappear. In the beginning, people still have some right to decide and choose in production and life, but with the influence of instrumental rational thinking mode, people are completely controlled by this thinking mode until they lose self-consciousness. This loss of self-awareness is not only a threat to human freedom, but also prone to totalitarianism. Instrumental rationality integrates rights, which not only makes people lose their independent decision and judgment, but also threatens social order and values. People are increasingly dependent on science and technology in production and life. People's dependence on science and technology is reflected in all aspects of production and life. People are blindly immersed in the welfare of science and technology, but ignore the problems caused by science and technology.

Horkheimer pointed out in *Dialectics of Enlightenment*: "The purpose of enlightenment has always been to make people get rid of fear and become masters. But the fully enlightened world is full of great unhappiness." [2] Due to the profound influence of enlightenment rationality on people, instrumental rationality has also achieved unprecedented development, and because of this, science and technology have further grown. Therefore, the development model of society has undergone great changes, forming an unprecedented world. People also begin to transform nature, ignore nature, and attempt to conquer nature, which makes the relationship between man and nature in a state of separation, and step by step deterioration, and finally lead to the relationship between man and nature facing a greater crisis.

Horkheimer regards instrumental rationality as a kind of technical rationality. Although he affirmed that technological rationality promoted the development of science and technology, he also strongly criticized the solidification of people's thinking mode. He believed that people were also controlled by instrumental rationality, which led to the deterioration of the relationship between man and nature. Instrumental rationality would gradually become an ideological control over people, and such manipulations would be gradually integrated into people's production and life. People also become complete tools. "The expansion of instrumental reason has created not only the power to destroy nature, but also the power to control man, and man's power to destroy is so great that once this power is realized, the whole earth will become barren. So enlightenment reason as instrumental reason actually ends up as reason." [3]

In a word, Horkheimer believes that instrumental rationality does more harm than good. Instrumental rationality not only causes the deterioration of the relationship between man and nature, but also causes the alienation between people and eventually forms the materialization of man himself. Therefore, instrumental rationality has become a new ideology to control people, resulting in the suppression of individual personality, the gradual loss of humanity, the birth of an irrational product, and the whole world has gradually become an accessory of instrumental rationality.

4. INSTRUMENTAL RATIONALITY WORSENS THE RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN MAN AND NATURE

Modern society has been dominated by instrumental rational thinking. The "technical" thinking led by instrumental rationality has successfully become the advocate of the new era of thought, and instrumental rationality has become the spokesperson of "rationality". The whole society relies on the convenience brought by instrumental rationality. People believe in the purpose between subject and object, but ignore the interaction between subject and object. "Useful" becomes the best expression of instrumental rationality, which also makes people lose their deviation from their own value.

The proliferation of instrumental rational thinking worsens the relationship between man and nature. Because people in modern society prefer to pursue the results that satisfy their own needs, they tend to ignore the rules for the nature that they cannot

perceive. Instrumental rationality strengthens the expansion of interpersonal relationship in modern society, which is different from the inherent relationship between people in traditional society. In the traditional society, the relationship between man and nature is very close, and people are also very dependent on the nature, while instrumental rationality breaks the relationship between man and nature in the traditional society, and tends to the relationship between man and nature in a state of purpose, rationalization and program. Therefore, people regard whether to conform to the mode of instrumental rational thinking as the norm of production and life. The relationship between instrumental rationality and human becomes master-servant, and people worship instrumental rationality more, and people's behavior is also to better realize the purpose of instrumental rational thinking.

Instrumental rationality is integrated into modern society. "Instrumental rationality manifests itself everywhere in social institutions and orders. This kind of presentation is a kind of collective behavior of countless individuals in pursuit of the judgment of instrumental rationality, and the individual is countered by the phenomenon. This is the so-called system pointed out by Cummins, that is, "collective action controls individual action", and this collective action is not only the action control of human beings, but also the liberation movement of individual people, which makes people free from all kinds of unfair treatment. At the same time, this collective action is an expansion of individual will." [4] Instrumental rationality has made the modern social order tend to rationalize, and the rational development has made people gradually forget the social structure of the traditional society, and the order and system of the modern society have become the purpose in line with human's own needs. Under the influence of instrumental rationality, all purposes that do not conform to human needs should be spurned. Environmental problem is the most obvious problem of instrumental rationality. In the traditional society, people had a kind of reverence for nature from the heart, but in the modern society, people have changed from relying on nature to dominating nature, and the crisis between people and nature is from this kind of unequal relationship, which is caused by the overflow of instrumental rationality.

Instrumental rationality cannot solve the deterioration of the relationship between man and nature. The biggest reason for the deterioration of the relationship between man and nature is that we try to solve the problems caused by instrumental rationality with instrumental rationality. As we keep trying, if one thing doesn't work, we use another thing, if one thing doesn't work, we try another thing. This cycle repeats, in the constant self-denial, we do not get such as Haegel-style sublation, but make people become more and more numb, pathological objectification can be seen everywhere.

5. THE ENLIGHTENMENT OF CRITICAL THOUGHT OF INSTRUMENTAL RATIONALITY ON THE RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN MAN AND NATURE

Horkheimer valued the relationship between man and nature. In the face of increasingly serious environmental problems, the relationship between man and nature has been unable to return to the harmony of traditional society. The nature has also expressed strong dissatisfaction with the destruction of human beings. The frequent outbreak of natural disasters in recent years has forced human beings to attach importance to the relationship with nature. Horkheimer advocated that human beings should respect and Revere nature, and conform to the laws of nature in the process of transforming nature. Harmonious coexistence between human and nature is the foundation of human's future, which is exactly the concept of sustainable development that we advocate today.

Look squarely at the relationship between man and nature. As a member of nature, human beings should cherish everything given by nature, and should not be unscrupulously obtained and destroyed. For the development and application of nature, the protection of nature should be the first condition, controlled development, so as to form sustainable development. The relationship between man and nature should also be guided by Marx's materialist view of nature, and we and nature should be regarded as a whole. Human beings need to face up to the relationship between themselves and nature, and finally create a harmonious and symbiotic world. Therefore, human beings should essentially change their attitude towards nature, face up to the relationship with nature, and form a symbiotic relationship with nature.

Form the concept of symbiosis between man and nature. Science and technology have narrowed the distance between human and nature, and human beings are not independent individuals outside the nature. Human beings have transformed nature through practical activities, and the relationship between human and nature has become closer and closer in the process of transformation. By transforming nature, human beings predict the future and the importance of nature to future life. For the sustainable development of human life, human beings must coexist with nature in harmony, so that human beings can have a better life.

We will strengthen management of the ecological environment. In the face of severe environmental problems such as air pollution and ecological crisis, human beings must follow the law of nature, speed up the treatment of environmental deterioration under the reasonable law of nature, strictly prohibit willful destruction and pollution of the environment, and change the mode of excessive consumption of natural resources to the mode of protection of natural resources as soon as possible. So as to realize the real sustainable development of ecology.

6. CONCLUSION

Horkheimer's critical thought of instrumental rationality is a double-edged sword. Horkheimer's critical thought of instrumental rationality is to take technical rationality as the object of criticism. This critical theory has triggered people's reflection on modern life to a certain extent. Horkheimer saw the positive role of technological rationality in the process of human history development and the promotion of the development and progress of human civilization. At the same time, he also predicted the serious consequences brought by technological rationality, among which the most serious problem was the relationship between man and nature, and instrumental rational thinking also promoted the materialization of man to a certain extent. Therefore, Horkheimer criticized technological rationality more fiercely, denied all science and technology, and believed that the source of social alienation is technological rationality. However, Horkheimer's attitude towards technological rationality was too negative. He confused technological rationality with social alienation, gradually turned his criticism of capitalism into criticism of science and technology, and the critical thought of instrumental rationality ignored the existing problems of capitalism in the later development process, which, in a certain sense, deviated from the viewpoint of Marxism. Therefore, our attitude towards science and technology should be neither rationalistic nor overly pessimistic. The development of modern science and technology should be established on the basis of human sustainable development in order to better play the positive role of science and technology.

Respect nature and advocate the harmonious coexistence between man and nature. Horkheimer's criticism of instrumental rationality is precisely because he attaches great importance to the relationship between man and nature and fully thinks about how the relationship between man and nature can coexist harmoniously. Due to the neglect of nature, the relationship between man and nature is antagonistic, and finally the relationship between man and nature deteriorates further. Horkheimer's critical thought of instrumental rationality emphasizes respect for natural laws, human relations

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