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## ECOPHILOSOPHY AND DEEP ECOLOGY: THE SEARCH FOR A NEW PARADIGM OF HUMAN AND NATURE RELATIONS

**Abstract:** The article attempts to show the specifics of approaches to solving global environmental problems within the framework of ecophilosophy and deep ecology, traces the origins and basic principles of deep ecology, as well as the importance of forming a new worldview paradigm for resolving the most acute problems of our time.

**Keywords:** ecophilosophy, deep ecology, life, man, balance, harmony of nature and society.

The world's ecological situation is becoming more and more alarming. It could hardly be expected otherwise, as the world's population is growing steadily, so are the consumer demands and the efforts of the economic and social machines trying to meet them. It is not hard to imagine what can happen if these trends persist. If people do not change their attitude to the world in general and to the wildlife in particular, we will inevitably collapse. The question arises if there is a way out of the situation, or the crisis has gone too far and we have crossed the point of no return. Specific scientific data on the state of air, water, soil, changes in the biosphere, etc. are not enough to get an answer to this question. We need an integral, philosophical view of life that will allow us to discover the underlying causes of the whole complex of environmental and social problems, to link their solution with what future of the human-kind we would like to see.

The German scientist Hugo Convent is one of the pioneers of the modern ecophilosophy, whose name was widely known in the scientific world at the beginning of the 20<sup>th</sup> century. He outlined the main philosophical and ecological views in his main book *The Threat to Natural Monuments and Proposals for their Preservation* (1904) [see: 4]. His intellec-

tual influence on the development of ideas for the protection of wildlife was weighty enough in his day. Unlike the Americans, who were the first to create large national parks, G. Konopets raised the issue of protecting small natural objects placing special emphasis on the most important concept of a 'natural monument'. The famous scientist and traveler Alexander von Humboldt introduced this term in 1819. Comparison of the value of the plants discovered by him during his trips with monuments of art and history, the value of which was already understandable and recognized, was the impetus to the development of the movement for the protection of specific natural objects. G. Convent not only opened the eyes of contemporaries to the scientific, ethical and aesthetic value of natural monuments, but also offered to take them under the protection of the state. The scientist said that protection of the nature was part of the protection of the homeland, and thus was a national and patriotic task.

The concept of ecology originated in the 19<sup>th</sup> century. In 1866, E. Haeckel said that the ecology was 'the science of the relationship of organisms with the environment' [see: 2]. The concept of human ecology originated a few years before that of the classical biological ecology, and it had a different name. Auguste

Comte raised these problems for the first time in 1837. This concept called 'human biology' developed in Mechnikov's *The Nature of Man* (1903) and *Studies in Optimistic Philosophy* (1907) [see: 5]. As time passed by, a new science has evolved in two ways: the human ecology as a biological organism and social ecology.

At present, the relationship between society and nature is such that we should go beyond the boundaries of specific sciences into the sphere of the world outlook, to activate the ecologization of knowledge and environmental policy. There is an urgent need to address the complex problems of the 'ecology of mind', which, above all, shall mean the ethical problems of purification of the spiritual sphere of what makes a person an enemy not only of all living things, but himself as well. The preservation of life on Earth, and hence, the natural habitat of humankind, will depend on solving these issues. At this point, the natural and human sciences must combine, and the private knowledge must rise up to the level of philosophy. If this happens, we can go far beyond the framework of bioecology into a new synthetic area of knowledge combining the biological, anthropological, social and even cosmic components.

A new scientific area, which emerged in the last quarter of the twentieth century, called deep ecology sets this task. It is a doctrine of the interaction of human as a bodily and spiritual being with the biosphere of the Earth and quite definitely goes beyond ecology form the biological point of view. N. Reimers said, 'Deep ecology proclaims that 'the Earth is above all', i.e, our planet comes first, and the human, whose social and other opportunities are limited, comes second... This is no longer a science, but a biocentric social movement' [3, p. 22].

The term 'deep ecology' was first proposed by the Norwegian philosopher Arne Naess in his article 'Surface and deep: promising environmental movements' published in 1973 [see: 4]. Naess wanted to show what a spiritual attitude to nature should be, and how it differs from the purely pragmatic approach prevailing in the public consciousness and

during the last two centuries. A new attitude can be formed if people are extremely responsive to the world, wildlife, to themselves as intelligent and moral beings. Deep ecology raises questions about the meaning of human life on this planet, about the relationship between society and nature, about what kind of social system can be best for maintaining life in all its forms.

Naess A. criticized the Judeo-Christian attitude to nature, 'The man's self-concealment revealed in the Bible consists in the idea of superiority of being an intermediary between the creator and the creation' [8, p. 187]. This belief made the human, without any justification; consider himself as a supreme being, and all other living beings only as a means for satisfying his needs that are often not rational. Considering the right to life as his natural inalienable right, he denied the existence of such a right in all other animals and plants, subjecting entire species to extirpation.

Naess A. developed two basic normative principles of deep ecology representing a transition from a narrowly pragmatic attitude to nature to considering it at the level of philosophical thinking. These principles are biocentric equality and self-realization of man. Their practical use could radically affect the global environmental situation.

The principle of biocentric equality means that all species of plants and animals of the planet Earth, from microbes and lichens to dolphins and tropical forests, have equal rights to life and the development of their diverse individual forms. Each species of plants and animals of the global biosphere of our planet has its own intrinsic value, and is an element of a single interrelated organic whole. The principle of biocentric equality does not contradict the fact that many animals use other animals as food, a place for living or for other purposes. It is important to maintain the biotic balance, which is the basis for the existence and development of wildlife. People should treat all living beings not as their masters, but as ordinary members of the biotic community playing a very specific role in this community.

The principle of biocentric equality is connected with the principle of self-realization that by damaging the wildlife people harm themselves, because the boundaries in nature are purely conventional, everything is connected. The man should exert, if possible, a minimal impact on nature guided by Neiss's A. rule: simplicity of means, variety of results [see: 7].

Religious and philosophical approaches developed within the framework of Taoism, Buddhism or Islam can be an alternative to the expansionist attitude to nature prevailing in the Western thinking. The need to establish a harmonious relationship between man and nature was first realized in ancient India and ancient China, the regions that were first recognized by the demographic pressure of man on nature. In the 6<sup>th</sup> century B. C. the teachings of Lao Tzu and Buddha, in religious and philosophical form, offered the idea of unity and integrity of all living, as well as a subordinate position of man in the wildlife system. According to Buddhism, because of the infinite cycle of lives in the universe, no animal, irrespective of its size, shape and place in the wildlife, can be killed. The life of another being must be treated as one's own. 'Just as a mother abandons everything to save her only son,' Buddha said, 'a Buddhist should always show boundless love and compassion for all living beings' [1]. These ideas are extremely relevant these days.

The ideas of deep ecology are developed in the works of modern American scientist B. Devall. According to him, deep ecology goes beyond the

specific scientific level, 'rising to the level of the wisdom of the Earth and selfhood' [2, p. 5]. This doctrine rises above private environmental problems and tries to show what a comprehensive *religious philosophical worldview* should be in order to save the wildlife and man. The deep ecology, in this sense, speaks from the prospective of the philosophy of ecology, being one of its directions. Its peculiarity is that questions about the unity of man and nature are placed here in the context of various spiritual traditions, such as Taoism, Buddhism, Christianity, Islam, the religions of the aborigines of America, Africa and Australia. and attempts are being made to implement a certain religious and philosophical synthesis.

Summing up, it is necessary to note the following. For many centuries, the Western mentality has formed the setting according to which human is a supreme being that is the dominant force in relation to all other living beings, which are only a means to satisfy his desires. Deep ecology indicates that such illusions are false and dangerous. It forms the belief that the human is part of an organic whole planet, and he must understand that he is part of the life of the planet Earth and must preserve life in all its forms. If such ideas become imperative and people move from words to actions aimed at improving the situation, there will be a hope that the balance of the biosphere will be restored, humanity will have a chance for a favorable future.

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