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## **Environmental ethics and human interests: problems of mutual relations**

More and more people in the world begin to understand, that without the change in the dominating outlook the mankind will hardly manage to rescue the Earth nature and to find the way out of the environmental crisis.

A new, ecocentric outlook is conceived as environmentally thinking person who cares not only about his own well-being and comfort, but also about well-being and comfort of other nonhuman living things, nature in general. That is environmental thinking is focused on harmony and common development of human and nature, where the human limits her ambitions and needs, which allows nature to continue its existence in the variety of its living forms.

Certainly, no outlook paradigm can exist outside of certain ethical doctrine. Ecocentrism is not an exception being based on two doctrines - ethics of reverence to life and environmental ethics. They will be discussed in the present article.

### **What is environmental ethics?**

In the interpretation of Ukrainian eco-philosopher Vladimir Boreiko: "environmental ethics is a set of principles of human thought and behavior, focused on the good of the whole human-nature system, including animals, plants and ecosystems. Hence the main task of environmental ethics is creation of internal, moral barriers in the society, internal taboos, forbidding some actions towards nature. These barriers and taboos emerge when the person voluntarily limits her selfishness, realizing, that other entities also possess rights for life, freedom, happiness, use of resources. Natural objects, as well as humans, have their own intrinsic value, that is they are valuable in themselves, as the ends in themselves, rather than as the means for the human ends. Intrinsic value of nature exists irrespectively of human relation towards it. It cannot be estimated economically for it has no price - it has worth. Possession by representatives of the natural world of only the intrinsic value is already sufficient basis for their protection.

Opponents usually object, that nature can not have intrinsic value and the rights resulting from it because it has no consciousness, does not understand happiness and in general, it does not matter for it, which way it will exist. But the same can be said also about babies and mentally retarded people! However their rights for life, freedom, etc. are provided legally and are not questioned. Parallels arise by themselves with racists, aristocrats, and chauvinists who at their time also denied rights to women, blacks, and peasants. That animals and plants are not as intelligent as the humans are (the same way as women are weaker than men) still is not the reason for ignoring their interests. An American environmentalist Richard Primak writes on this subject: "All species represent the unique biological solution of survival problem. For this reason existence of each species should be ensured, irrespectively of distribution of this species and its value for the mankind. It does not depend on number of the species, on its geographical distribution, whether it is ancient or recently appeared species, whether it has economical importance or not. All species are parts of life and consequently have as much rights for life, as humans do".

A classic of environmental ethics, Aldo Leopold wrote: "Original ethics concerned relations between individuals; the further additions are already related to mutual relations of individual and society. But the ethics regulating mutual relations of human with the land, with animals and plants living on it, is not yet existing ... Extension of ethics upon this third component in human environment is - if I interpret correctly all attributes - an evolutionary opportunity and environmental necessity".

We have already learned that democratic society has on its own historically come to include new members into its moral system. Spiritual development of mankind goes on. As V.Grishchenko suggests, the recognition of environmental ethics will be the following step in overcoming by man of its "animal" instincts. "Species egoism" and boundless expansion, - he

writes, - are biological properties of human as species. Overcoming it will help the human to elevate spiritually, towards which it aspires for a long time. No animal is capable to do this. If we want, that the word "Human" at least sometimes is written with the capital letter, we have to be worthy of this capital letter".

### **Practical application of environmental ethics**

Environmental ethics is often criticized for a low level of practical application. They say that ideas, which are good theoretically, do not work at everyday life level. How, for example, should we act towards foxes, killing hens or sharks attacking swimmers in a coastal zone of many resorts. V. Boreiko responds that "ethics is a science not about the possible, but about the appropriate. Ethics does not answer the question: "What is to be done?", but only answers the question "Is it good or bad?". In our actions we should be guided by the ideal.

Now I would like to suggest some environmental philosophy reflections concerning the solution of disputable situations from the perspective of ecological ethics: "For the case of the conflict of moral rights of for example animals and people, environmental ethicists have developed following position. Both human and animal have basic (vital) and non-basic (not vitally important) moral rights, based on vitally important and not vitally important interests. We can consider among the basic moral rights (interests) the right for life, freedom, reproduction. Among the non-basic we can consider, for example, the right (interest) to drink a cold beer. Therefore if there is a conflict of rights between an animal and a human it is morally allowable all other things being equal to act so that non-basic moral rights (interests) of the human were overridden by the basic moral rights (interests) of the animal, and non-basic moral rights (interests) of the animal were overridden by the basic moral rights (interests) of the human. For example, tourists want to place a tent on a sea coast. However there are nests of sandpipers and sea gulls there, which in this case have the basic right for life and reproduction, unlike the non-basic right (interest) of tourists for recreation in this place. Therefore the human should give the place for the birds.

If the basic rights of people oppose the basic rights of animals then as the majority environmental philosophers agree the preference should be given to the human.

Much in observance of animal moral rights still depends also on where the animals are: in a human house or in a nature reserve. It will be reasonable to assume, that in a human house moral rights of wild animals should be maximally limited, and in a reserve, on the contrary, human moral rights will be limited.

Unlike legal, moral rights have moral support. Their violation results in the disapproval, condemnation from the part of various persons or society as a whole. Except for the external control from the part of society there operates control from within the person, called the "conscience".

We see, that nature, wild, being in its natural condition and maintaining the ability to self-regulation, should be whenever possible prevented from human intervention. Reserves from "scientific ranges" and "storerooms of the preserved resources" should turn into moral institutions which, like churches or courts, should become a symbol of spiritual growth of the mankind, of its pride.

### **Environmental ethics and economics**

Economics has so strongly entered the life of modern man, his outlook, that we can not even imagine our life without it. Economical problems had led in the hierarchy of priority problems at global, national and grassroots levels. The economical factor is the most influential now in the solution of any questions; even traditional ethical institutes, such as religion, law, humanism, democracy give up to pressure of money. We see everywhere, how for the sake of money people make a compromise with their conscience. Moreover the environmental ethics, which demands from person even greater will-power, even greater spirituality?

Environmental ethics and economics are now on opposite poles of human interests. And opposition of these interests is very serious. It is expressed in two aspects.

First is the general contradiction between ecology and economics, when destruction and exploiting of wild nature proves to be more economically profitable, but is environmentally more dangerous and unjustified from the point of view of environmental ethics. Many human economical activities are included, for example felling wood in reserved woods, hunting, construction of dams on "wild" rivers, etc.

Second, there is a contradiction inside conservation itself between supporters and opponents of economical arguments for nature conservation. Currently, there are two alternative approaches to this matter. One of them - based on environmental ethics - we have already

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examined. The other assumes that all problems can be solved with the help of "environmental" economics, which is capable to calculate the true value of animals and birds, biodiversity, wilderness, nature reserves, etc. that will allow nature managers to accept always correct, adequate situations, economically justified decisions. For some reason it is considered, that such calculations will be useful for nature preservation. Indeed, when economical efficiency of preservation of a certain species or part of nature is obvious and urgent actions are necessary to save them, the use of economical estimations will make sense. But in the overwhelming majority of cases cost calculations do not do any good to nature, but rather harm it, turning in the so-called "economical estimation of environmental damage" (which, by the way, till now was never carried out objectively) with further compensation for the losses not clear to whom and for what. In our opinion it is the as absurdly, as "compensation for losses" to the families of killed miners. What money can compensate for the loss of a loved person?

The opponents of "economical" nature conservation sharing the positions of environmental ethics call any attempts to calculate the cost of animal and bird lives, of biodiversity, of wilderness as immoral as would be immoral to attempt a definition of human life cost.

It is impossible to prove the "utility" of existence of nature reserve from purely economical perspectives because the profit from the resources exploitation will always be higher. And the matter is not that methods of calculations of the cost of natural objects are still far from perfect and require further development. It is necessary to give up them at all, protecting wild nature against whims of the market as once the mankind has put beyond the market relations a human person, having forbidden slavery and sex, having forbidden prostitution. Calculations such as "how many people are willing to pay for existence of wild nature?", which gain popularity nowadays, are not less immoral. Indeed, is the money you are willing (to be exact – you are able) to pay for the life of your son or mother their market cost? Such calculations, in the best case, are offending.

The greatest methodological mistake of economists lies in that that they are inclined to consider nature preservation as "rational nature usage". However these are absolutely different things. If rational nature usage is focused on gaining the maximal profits for a maximum number of people for a long time, nature preservation is protection of nature for its own sake. And if in the first case economic estimations can be used (with certain ethical restrictions of course), in the second one they are absolutely inadmissible. Nature conservation is moral first of all, and like patriotism, mercy, and religion, it cannot be equaled to the economic gain.

Except for the intrinsic, wild nature possess enormous number of non-material values (as, for example, aesthetic, enlightening, educational, scientific, historical and cultural, religious, etc. values), money worth of which is difficult or more often absolutely impossible to calculate. We can not estimate the price of inspiration, which is experienced by an artist, admiring a virgin landscape, or predict, what benefit in future will be brought to the mankind by one or another species, which can be now hastily destroyed, even not yet being discovered and studied.

With the loss of all wild nature, the life of the majority of people will become defective, the elements, which for many of them already almost form the meaning of life, will be lost. "We want to hear and see in the wood, what is not sold in the market - said Holmes Rolston III – a nightingale song, a smell of wet leaves, a frog croak. One can not expect these goods from the market". However, unfortunately, people start to realize value of many things, only having lost them. The same can happen also to wild nature.

And one more point. It is impossible to expect the profit from nature conservation. This kind of activity, like education, academic culture, library activity, is always unprofitable. Therefore it is very dangerous to consider national and regional natural parks (which are versions of protected natural territories) as attractions for tourists. On the contrary, ecotourists can limitedly visit these territories, enjoying wild nature and trying to avoid harming it even in the slightest degree. If ecotourism starts to harm, it should be immediately stopped whatever profits it brings.

Unfortunately, people on which specific decisions depend - officials, businessmen, lawyers, economists - are not familiar with environmental ethics and not interested with its subjects. Therefore Ukrainian nature conservation keeps dashing against the rock of selfish materialism. Following is a "real life" example: Recently the Ministry of Transport of Ukraine has aimed at constructing a navigation canal, which would connect the Ukrainian part of the Danube delta to the Black sea. Among the examined projects, there was chosen the one, which involves the least capital expenses (though expenses for clearing of the channel

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bottom during its operation will constantly increase) and hence, the greatest profit in the first few years. However this project has "regrettable" drawback: the route of the channel is laid directly through an absolutely protected zone of the Danube biosphere reserve. Do you think that existence of the reserve means anything for officials? No! Demonstrating not only absolute environmental ignorance and lack of ethical principles, but also legal nihilism (indeed, inviolability of protected areas in our country is guaranteed by Law), neglecting negative results of environmental and scientific and legal expertise, officials of the Ministry of Transport together with the customer, state-owned enterprise "Delta - Lotsman", persistently lobby adoption and funding of the above mentioned project. The reserve sticks in their throat, the designers call it with hatred "a noose on Danube's neck".

Unique aquatic and swamp ecosystem, where nest and stop during their migrations millions of birds, where like Indians in their reservations, have found their last shelter a host of rare and disappearing living things, every of them being unique, perfect, and forming a unique part of the chain of ecological links in the biosphere called Life, - all this is threatened with destruction for the sake of economic and political interests. Not to speak about the international reputation of Ukraine and interests of people, for whom rescue of wild nature has much more value, than growth of economic parameters.

The economy is an integral part of our life, but when it faces nature, it is necessary to put a kind of a "muzzle" of ecological ethics on it. In the end I would like to cite a Ukrainian environmental philosopher V.Boreiko: "Reserves are often called temples of nature. But they will become the real temples only when merchants will be expelled from them".

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