

THE NECESSITY OF THE NEW RISE OF THE ECO ETHIC

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REZUMAT. Necesitatea apariției unei noi eco-etici. Civilizația modernă este în criză. Lacunele sunt numeroase și profunde! Impreună cu noile și marile descoperiri științifice, omenirea, în același timp, nu s-a elevat. Acest lucru ne-a condus la o dezorientare morală în diverse domenii ale vieții. În pe sfârșitul anilor 60 și începutul anilor 70 a secolului trecut, primele semne premonitorii ale acestei evoluții s-au dovedit încurajate, în special, de amenințarea poluării mediului. Dezvoltarea umană nelimitată dovedește un prim impact negativ asupra lumii în care trăim, natura care ne înconjoară. Omul modern devine mai conștient de faptul că poate distruge barca plutitoare, casa în care trăiește. Textul tratează despre nevoia crescută de a răspunde la două întrebări de bază în acord cu noua arie de cercetare etică, i.e. comportamentul uman în raport cu natura. *Prima întrebare* este – avem noi într-adevăr, pentru rezolvarea acestei probleme, o strategie științifică postulată pe elementele fundamentale ale ecologiei ca știință a mediului și transformată în decizie socială și politică (ca biopolitici la nivel internațional și național), sau avem nevoie de o nouă etică pentru mediu care va fi stabilă ca o strategie științifică și, prin urmare, ca biopolitici? *Al doilea aspect* este de a ști dacă natura și protecția mediului sunt interesante pentru noi doar la nivel instrumental sau noi credem că natura are o valoare intrinsecă, deci poate exista chiar și fără om?

Cuvinte-cheie: *eco-etică, natură, mediu, ecologie.*

ABSTRACT. Modern civilization is in crisis. The gaps are numerous and deep! Along with new and great scientific discoveries, the humanity at the same time isn't increased. This led us to moral disorientation in various areas of life. In the late 60th and early 70th of the last century, the first premonitory signs of this development showed especially encouraged by the threat of environmental pollution. Human unlimited development showed the first negative impact on the world in which we live, the nature that surrounds us. The modern man becomes more aware of fact that it can destroy the flying boat, the house in which lives. The text deals with the increased need for answering two basic questions according to the new area of research in ethics, i.e. **human behavior towards nature**. The *first question* is do we need indeed, for resolving this problem, a scientific strategy

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postulated on the basics of ecology as a science of the environment and transformed into social and political decision (as biopolitics on international and national level) or do we need a new ethics for the environment that will be established as a scientific strategy and therefore as a biopolitics? The *second issue* concerns whether the nature and environmental protection are interesting for us only on an instrumental level or we believe that nature has intrinsic value, so it can exist even without man?

Keywords: *eco-ethics, nature, environment, ecology.*

INTRODUCTION

Modern civilization is in crisis, the downfalls in it are numerous and deep. Will it survive or as like the previous civilizations, will vanish in time? Many doctors, bowed over her bed, are searching for that answer.

... one of its many serious diseases is the moral disease. The moral is undoubtedly an important part of every civilization. If the moral is sick, what are the consequences for the human, for the civilization, for the society? This particularly, because along with new and great discoveries in science, the humanity in people had not increased at the same time, but more and more we come to a moral disorientation in various areas of life².

In this constellation, the economy affects even more on the whole human life, because of the simple fact that the money for the scientific discoveries comes from the economy. With this conceptions in business and generally in economy, world becomes solitous. In this context, the neocapitalism from the 80tees in the U.S., is a typical example, i.e. capitalism of the Regan's era with the slogan of the neocapitalists of Walt Street: "*To get rich is to borrow, so to spend and enjoy*". All this resulted in a moral crisis, primarily in the West, and then wider in the world³.

At the same time, from the many of the ethical issues related to science, and which disturb the public, some of them can be directly and justifiably placed upon the original scientific research or scientific conclusions. This is so because most of the issues are concerning the society which actually monitors and

² R. Wisser, *Odgovornost u mijeni vremena*, Svjetlost, Sarajevo, 1988, str. 283-318.

³ There are different indicators of this crisis. For example, in developed societies from West, indicators of this crisis are internal political and social pecks. In our region, it is obvious the behavior of Europe and the world toward wars on Balkan. It is politics in which on the first place is the interest and calculation, political pragmatism, and on the second place there are justice and actions for peace.

funds scientific researches and decides on the application of scientific results. In this conflict between political and scientific interests, science always loses and it is always put on the dock, for example, for the atomic bomb, for the Chernobyl disaster, for the destruction of rain forests, for the emergence of greenhouse and ozone holes ...

Moreover, today's democratic governments misled by the rapid enrichment, invest less in science, and more in antiintellectual movements. Paradoxically and symbolically, but true, the money earned from dynamite, are partly financing the Nobel Peace Prize today! It shows that society and politics are increasingly reinforcing the impact of the choice and range of scientific research. The development of science today depends on the programs of governments, not of the issues that today's scientists meet as strange and unknown questions. Instead of this, man investigate how from the originally acquired knowledge to come to a greater wealth and thus to satisfy the growing need for exclusive material desires of modern civilization. Today's technological revolution progresses through selectively developed applied sciences. Science is capricious and unstable alliance of the political actions!

In this context, in the late 60ees and early 70tees of the last century, the first premonitory signs of this development emerged, and with that, the need to answer these questions, increased. It was especially encouraged by the threat of environmental pollution. The human unlimited development impacted firstly on a negative way for the world in which we live, and the nature that surrounds us. Modern strongman becomes more aware of the possibility of destroying the boat in which it sails, the house in which he lives.⁴

So "the interest in nature within philosophical circles of contemporary thought grew again, especially with the thinking through the crisis of the dialectics of techniques, which brought at the surfice the experience that progress of scientific and technical culture leads to the destruction of man and his environment".⁵ So the question is: Are we just owners or agents of the Earth that we have, like *boni patres familias*, and we should put it in better condition for future generations?

THE RISE OF THE NEED FOR ECOLOGICAL ETHICS

The momentary culmination with the cumulative problems of the mankind called the ethics on stage again, but this time it brought expansion in terms of its area, i.e. expanding of all spheres of human life - in terms of itself and

⁴ For further inquiry see Rudi Supek, *Ova jedina zemlja*, SNL, Zagreb, 1978, str. 79-83.

⁵ I.Koprek, "Etika", in *Etika - Priručnik jedne discipline*, I.Čehok & I. Koprek (eds.), Školska knjiga, Zagreb, str. 186.

its needs, in terms of the Other and other people, in terms of community, nature and universal existence. For all these mentioned new areas of moral, within the ethics there are new relevant disciplines developed, i.e. social ethics, the ethics of social communication, political ethics, economic ethics, medical ethics ...

Among them, as a special, new area, appears **human behavior towards nature**.⁶ Although man is a natural being, up till' the present era it didn't thought ethically much about nature, in which, the feeling of the effects of the consumption of resources begun, of the industrialization and of the pollution. The utilization of the resources of the Earth increased, depletion of natural resources, enormous spending large amounts of energy, increasing the overall temperature, pervertation of climate, the occurrence of bad weather conditions, excessive use of oxygen and water, irrational cutting of large areas of forest, throwing garbage everywhere..., all of these are the acts of man. An economic greed, war, overloaded planet with a large population, made life becoming more difficult for living, survival began hanging over every head.

The actions and the negative consequences of its irrational and bad behavior led, once again, to today's need of ethical awareness and understanding of human activity in a unit, with a vision for survival. Hence, the two questions. **First**, whether to resolve this problem do we need a scientific strategy postulated on the basics of ecology as a science for environment and translated into social and political decision (as biopolitics on international and national level), or we need a new ethics for environment that will be a base not only for the the scientific strategy, but as well as for the biopolitics? In other words, it is about the question wheather the key challange of the new era, one of the hottest issues, can be solved pragmatically, or we need one general ethical and philosophical-religious reorientation, a transition from antropocentric ethics, religion and philosophy, to ecocentric? The **second** question refers onto whether the nature and the environment protection is of an instrumental interest for us (as a means to further survival of humanity) or we consider that nature has intrinsic value, that would exist even without the man?⁷

The answers to both of the questions are hiding in the facts that speak for our actions in the past 80 years, i.e. from the time when the first warnings from Karl Jaspers appear, tied to environmental problems and population. "Certain problems such as population, (...), tooth or misuse of natural and human resources and genetics, must not be adrifted to a blind destiny. It is time when the human race not only can, but must take the intelligant control of their own fate", warned Jaspers, concerned about the growth of the world population.⁸

⁶ Д. Донеv, „Еко-етичките проблеми како круцијален дел на биоетичките дилеми,, *Филозофија*, бр. 31, јуни 2011, стр. 57-67:59.

⁷ P. Singer, *Praktična etika*, Signature, Beograd, 2000, str. 270-290.

⁸ K. Jaspers, *Duhovna situacija vremena*, Matica Hrvatska, Zagreb, 1998.

This testifies that ever before, in the past 80 years, we only spoke about the dominant Western tradition, according to which God has given dominion to the people over the natural world and he does not care about how people will act. Human beings are the ones that are only morally important members of this world. Nature itself has no value by itself, and the destruction of plants and animals can not be wrong if it does not harm human beings.⁹ In other words, this dominant Western tradition does not exclude our care for nature, but only if it refers on human welfare. It's a tradition, an ethics in which moral frameworks refer to the man, while the preservation of the natural environment is not a value of the highest importance.

BIOCENTRISM VS. ANTHROPOCENTRISM

Hence, until the last century, mankind had only acknowledged two forms of ethics: ego-centered and homocentric form of ethics, which tells about the domination of man over all, in another words, they were basically anthropocentric views. Given all the negative actions that people have taken in relation to the environment, these two forms of anthropocentrism are no longer sufficient today for rehabilitating the consequences.

Somewhere in the second half of the 20th century, the need for domination of the so-called ecocentrism appeared, i.e. biocentrism over anthropocentrism as a possible solution to environmental problems. This is because some believe that the exit in the general reorientation of the view on the world, and actions taken toward this, i.e. the creation of eco-ethics - is a final and complete replacement of the anthropocentrism with ecocentrism, not just kind of replacement. In addition to this the fact that we had, up till' now, a traditional, religious, philosophical, antropocentric ethical teachings, even older than two thousand years, that have not stopped, not only the ecocide, but homicide, ethnocide, and wars.

Both thesis, i.e. anthropocentrism and biocentrism lead in many contextual questions in relation to the same requirements. For biocentrics position the change in posture is important. Ethics is not depleting in establishing norms. It also owns the ethos, i.e. the emotional attitude that motivates proper treatment. Therefore, it is not enough solely aesthetic attitude towards nature. It is a danger to reduce the treatment of nature only by the matter of subjective taste.

Biocentric thesis requires a position that arises from the aesthetical toward ontological value of nature, which recognizes and values it. Instead of thinking, according to which nature is only a means for satisfying human interests, it should take the model of cooperation. Thus the man should take

⁹ P. Singer, *Praktična etika*, Signature, Beograd, 2000, str. 270-290.

into account the nature, with which he grows up to its goals, because the man is a being of the community, a being directed towards the others. The ecological crisis forces us also to look in the human community. It should be realized that we are heavily dependent from other organisms, so we should admit their contribution for us, **but only if we have respect for their interests and needs.**

The human privileged position is not being jeopardized by this, but only more pronounced.¹⁰ Biocentrism does not mean naturalism because the distinction between subject and object of morality is still being emphasized. By respecting the aims of the nature and looking at it as a partner, for the man this means taking responsibility for himself. In terms of anthropocentrism, the man is still a part of the nature. He is not separated from nature. As a spiritual and physical being, he is part of nature and as such, is determined by the laws of material life. That's why the humanity today calls so much for ecocentric ethics!

BIOCENTRISM AND THE LIFE WHO WANTS TO LIVE

All this initiates the issue for ecological ethics, which develops along with the degradation of the environment and the living conditions for the other living creatures.¹¹ Inversely proportional to the decline of living conditions, the awareness about the importance of good conditions for real life rises and grows. This is best reflected in the statement: "*We are all victims and we are all guilty.*" The main issue is how to save nature if this saving is not a part of the ethical values of all, if everyone does not contribute, if we do not consider our actions?

Therefore we need an ethics that will arise from the deep respect of life, on which Albert Schweitzer and Paul Taylor called, which will erase the line of the old ecological ethics that outlines and thus closes the sphere of moral action on those beings who are able to feel, leaving all the other beings out of that round. The treatment of ancient forests, the disappearance of certain species of animals and plants, the destruction of several complex ecosystems, the stopping of the wild rivers ... it should all be taken into account! Therefore, the question arises: whether it is possible to make a break with the traditional position and create ecological ethics that will accept the intrinsic value of what will come in a wider circle of moral action.

Hence, it is not difficult to sense the main outline of a true ecological ethics. At its foundation, this ethics should build respect for all sensitive beings, including future generations! It should be followed by an aesthetic of respect for

¹⁰ See also J. Đurić et al. *Životna sredina: Moralni i politički izazovi*, Službeni glasnik & Institut za filozofiju i društvenu teoriju, Beograd, 2012 and Džozef de R. Žarden, *Ekološka etika: Uvod u ekološku filozofiju*, Službeni glasnik, Beograd, 2006.

¹¹ Also see T. Krznar, *Znanje i destrukcija*, Pergamena, Zagreb, 2011.

wild and unadulterated nature. This ethics should advocate for small families, to reject the ideal of a materialistic society, in which success is measured by the accumulated funds. This new ethics should promote temperance, which would contribute to reducing pollution, and to multiple usage of what was previously used. Towards this, leads us and the call of "green consumers", which are calling for recycling and buying those products that do not pollute the environment. We need to redefine our term of extravagance and call for national solidarity against visible immediate dangers.

In this context, because the man, as an expression of the whole, has impact on life, can not bear a sense of responsibility for its own environment until realises that it is a part of the nature. The range of this responsibility should first determine the negative, in the way of respecting certain limits of its own technical operation and disposal. Under this negative limitation of technical and rational attitude towards nature, there is the necessity hidden in the positive constraint: *call for allowance - to be!* That view is called awe of life.¹² Ecological ethics has to start from the human mind: *I am a life that wants to live, implied by life which wants to live.*

CONCLUSION

According to the previous, we need a **complete attitude towards nature**, and then consistently, a full ecological ethics.¹³ Ecological ethics must start from this fact, to assume **the awareness of the whole**. It must offer a framework that will regulate the instrumental mind not becoming a pure no-mind. This means that, all the relevant spiritual and social-scientific stakeholders of technical action, must be included in finishing the future ecological ethics.

It is about an ethics that does not exhaust in mediating between deontological and teleological ethical theories, between the ethics of moral actions (dedication) and ethics of responsibility (consequessialism). Ecological ethics should also mediate the emotional attitude, the ethos, that motivates the doing of good. It means a new ethics, not only in content, but also according to essence. It is the sharpest ethics so far in humanity, with generally good thought, with rigid liability, with absolute idea to refrain from violation of the others, and with the ultimate awareness of the universality of the consequences of actions.

If the task of philosophy is to maintain awareness of the whole in all, then she has to unite, direct and spread the thought of love for wisdom up to successful, good life. It should be calling for awareness that the aim of mankind is not having a bad life, even not life by itself, but the good life. Perhaps the philosophy showed the biggest dissapointment for this issue so far!

¹² H. Jonas, *Princip odgovornosti*, Veselin Masleša, Sarajevo, 1990, str. 13-44.

¹³ К. Темков, *Етиката денес*, Епоха, Скопје, 1999.