

# ЭКОЛОГИЧЕСКАЯ АКМЕОЛОГИЯ

## Ecological akmeology

УДК 159.9

### ECOLOGICAL ANTHROPOLOGY: ASPECTS OF INTERACTION IN THE SYSTEM «HUMAN – ENVIRONMENT – CULTURE»<sup>1</sup>

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#### ABSTRACT

The study on the humanitarian perspective analyzes the particular interactions in ecological-anthropological system «Human – Environment – Culture», underlines the necessity to study the particularities of fundamental personality formations (environmentally-oriented mindset, environmental culture, environmental competence) in this context.

**Key words:** ecological anthropology (eco-anthropology), ecological-anthropological system «Human – Environment – Culture », psycho-pedagogical aspect, environmentally-oriented mindset, environmental culture, environmental competence.

Universalization and formation of planet-wide uniform structures, connections and relationships in various spheres of life (universal evolutionism) have made the world community to comprehend the necessity of developing and implementing the concept of sustainable development which calls for coordinated socio-economic measures, as well as policies in science and technology, natural resources and nature conservation, humanities based on modernization and a more environmentally-oriented education system. As is known, the need for the world to make a transition to a development concept which would provide for the sustainability of the 'socioeconomic problems – environmental conservation' system as well as fill the needs of the present generation while preserving such an opportunity for the ones to come was voiced by Heads of states and governments at the UN Conference on Environment and Development held in Rio-de-Janeiro in 1992. A planetary disaster was identified as an alternative to sustainable development, and as the fundamental conditions for it the following factors were listed: achieving stable socioeconomic development without harming the environmental basis; better life conditions with limiting the impact of economic activity on the biosphere in order not to destroy the natural biotic mechanism of environmental regulation or cause global environmental change.

Later, scientists became concerned about the irreversible effect of ecological imbalances on the planet, and this found its way to various approaches to a scientific understanding of sustainable development which, in Russia, spurred the formation of a measurably coherent concept. The concept focused on the fact that future environmental stability, environmental security and the co-evolutionary development of man and nature required organizing high-quality environmental education for individuals and the society as a whole for the purpose of

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<sup>1</sup> Работа выполнена при финансовой поддержке Российского гуманитарного научного фонда, проект «Экология человека: фактор культуры. Развитие экологической культуры детей и молодежи в информационном обществе» (№ 13-06-00479).

cultivating non-utilitarian perception of nature because precisely by a utilitarian approach that we can explain excessive use of natural resources and the technogenic impact on nature which have considerably undermined its recovery potential and led to an increased number of areas susceptible to ecological disasters.

According to the summit participants, it is imperative to meet these requirements to assure the conservation of inhabitable environment for generations to come. At that, the transition to sustainable development implies gradual restoration of natural ecosystems to the point when environmental stability can be ensured. This can be achieved by joint effort.

Countries must start moving towards this objective individually by making a transition to sustainable development via:

- adopting legislation related to the use of natural resources, environmental clauses of agreements, etc.;
- altering present thinking stereotypes which neglect the capabilities of the biosphere and form reckless attitude towards the environment and environmental security.

The above mentioned measures are no doubt worth supporting because they are primarily directed at conservation (rescuing) and development of nature and the mankind.

But on the other hand, what do we see today, 18 years after the Rio summit? Has the environmental situation improved? Almost none of modern large-scale environmental problems have been solved whereas the number of natural and man-caused disasters has dangerously grown. Generally insufficient environmental orientation of the world education system is also exposed by the fact that the past twenty years have not seen considerable improvements in real man-nature relations.

Let us analyze an example. Approximately 60% of Russia's population already live in environmentally unfriendly territories (Saraeva N.M. Intellectual and emotional characteristics of a person living in a environmentally unfriendly territory: Thesis of Doctor of Psych. Science. Moscow, 2010). Attempts to solve this problem result at best in adopting environmentally-oriented laws.

But do these laws (up to 200 in Russia alone) actually work?

If not, why? And what should be done so that they did?

It is clear that agreements and draft laws alone cannot solve regional and global environmental problems although tackling those is just as important.

As it has been mentioned earlier, the modern environmental agenda comes down to:

- the necessity to understand the acceptable limit of anthropogenic impact on the biosphere;
- the necessity to develop moral standards and values which will not allow exceeding this limit.

It should be stated that today the humanity does not fully comprehend the mentioned limit and environmentally-oriented values are poorly developed.

What is the reason?

One can be certain that laws «do not work» primarily because they do not comply with the needs of every individual, and the level of environmental knowledge and the resulting attitude towards nature do not promote increased environmental orientation of economic activities.

This is why, in our opinion, the implementation of the concept of sustainable development should and does result, most importantly, in understanding the role of the mindset, culture and professional competence in solving and preventing local and global environmental problems.

In this context, the phenomenon of «sustainable development» should be considered principally as a new trait of general human culture which at the level of individuals should find its way to the realization of chief components (motivational, cognitive, relations- and activity-related) and personality functions (environment-orienting, cognitive, meaning-constitutive, system-constitutive, regulative), and should therefore show in corresponding personality formations and environmentally reasonable behavior of an individual or professional, including environmentally-problematic situations.

Another example (V.I. Panov, 2010). It is not enough to install «environmentally friendly» equipment at an enterprise, it is also necessary for managers and workers to have the

corresponding («environmental») motivation and an environmentally-oriented mindset of sorts which are needed to effectively meet the environmental requirements for using this equipment.

Hence, the issue of an environmentally-oriented personality comes to the forefront. It is the manifestation of this personality (mindset-, culture- and competence-related) via actions that determine the mentioned corresponding (environmentally reasonable) behavior of a professional in environmentally-problematic situations. The issue of conditions for and methods of developing such a personality are also of paramount importance.

The described problems have been discussed by philosophers, psychologists, teachers and social scientists for over 300 years but today, with the «space» of sustainable development actively forming in Russia, it will inevitably include many fundamentally new aspects.

All that has been said raises at least four questions, as well as the necessity to understand and answer them in terms of the concept of sustainable development.

1. «What should be the typical traits of an individual capable and ready to solve local and global problems of sustainable development?»

Undoubtedly, it is an individual whose personality was formed on the basis of an environmentally-oriented mindset which is important to be viewed as an acmeological phenomenon:

- as an ideal («acme») personal trait which determines one's role as a subject in a developing environment (natural and social);

- as the central mindset component of environmental consciousness and individual behavior, as a stable system of judgements and beliefs concerning nature, its relations with the society and the planet as a habitat;

- as a multi-dimensional system and multi-component dynamically complex structure including fundamental environmentally-oriented achievements of a developing individual which, in turn, determine the personality functions of an environmentally-oriented mindset.

2. «What personal quality should reflect the psychological, theoretical and practical readiness of an individual to take the environment responsibly, the capability to use one's environmental knowledge, ideas and skills in practice, and which also characterizes the particularities of an environmentally-oriented mindset, behavior and activity in interacting with nature?»

Here coming to the forefront are the environmental culture of an individual and the opposing types of environmental consciousness backing it (anthropocentric and eco-centric). The anthropocentric consciousness is distinguished by prioritizing pragmatic interests of an individual in interacting with nature over its own development patterns, while the priority of the eco-centric consciousness lies with environmentally-oriented values and meanings. The current environmental consciousness includes both cases, with «accentuating one or the other often depending on a particular environmental risk situation which requires a certain decision» (V.I. Panov, 2010). This raises the need to focus on the environmentally-oriented managerial decision-taking culture at different management levels; which, in turn, creates two more questions:

- what should a manager's consciousness and behavior be like to both conform to the strategic and tactical goals set forth in the concept of sustainable development and provide for effective decision implementation?

- what are the psychological and acmeological techniques used in taking such decisions and in psychological and acmeological training of managers?

3. «What should the skills and, accordingly, the consciousness of an employee (from a worker to a politician) be like to make one's actions and decisions in situations of environmental risk both work in terms of the concept of sustainable development and promote effective meeting of environmental requirements for a certain profession?»

In this case, manifestation of an employee's environmental competence becomes most important being the fundamental (system-constitutive) formation of one's personality and the central criteria indicating a fully-formed environmentally-oriented mindset and environmental culture. In substance, environmental competence is an individual manifestation of environmental competence which, in turn, is constituted by the essence of professional occupation and its

environmental requirements; an immanent component of a high professional level disregarding professional orientation which includes the knowledge allowing an individual to analyze environmental issues within one's profession, and also personal traits which enable an employee to exercise professional activities in the context of their environmental feasibility.

4. What should be the techniques of shaping the mentioned personality formations in order to assure that an individual (employee, manager) is ready from the point of view of the mindset, cultural views and skills to successfully implement the concept of sustainable development?

Environmental education in all its forms and at all levels has long been one of the traditional, and at the same time the most powerful means of forming an environmentally-oriented personality. It is therefore natural that following the adoption of the concept of sustainable development the concept of education for sustainable development was adopted, it being a general and necessary model for evolutionizing education in developed countries. The pedagogical implication of this concept lies in stronger environmental orientation of the education process at all levels which would facilitate shaping an environmentally-oriented individual at all personal and professional development stages. However, as V.I. Panov rightly noted at a conference on environment in 2010, «ecology, even in the broadest sense of the word, does not equal the concept of sustainable development». Indeed, ecology and adjacent humanities (psychology, acmeology, education and social science) are sciences while the concept of sustainable development is a socioeconomic evolutionary model being a part of the general globalization process.

In this context it is necessary to define the role of the analyzed personality phenomena – an environmentally-oriented mindset, environmental culture and environmental competence.

Understanding the role of the concept of sustainable development in evolutionizing environmental education in this case can be achieved by answering the question: «Does the term «environmental education for sustainable development» itself formalize to a certain extent the essence of the contained process of shaping a nature-friendly individual (an environmentally-oriented personality); or does it even imply a clear opposition of man and nature?»

In essence, speaking of «environmental education for sustainable development» in most cases we, again, separate ourselves from nature: «environmental education for saving nature for the sake of future generations», «saving nature for the sake of having a place to live and to obtain food from»...

How is this possible if it was as early 90's, almost immediately after the Rio summit, that P.D. Deryabo and V.A. Yasvin, environmental psychologists, raised the issue of «saving nature for the sake of itself», its own value. This is where the way out of the environmental dead-end lieP.

It is possible that a linking transitional element is missing in the system which is strategically important for the future of the human civilization: «environmental education (of a individual or the society) => ??? => sustainable development (of the humanity and nature)».

Such an element may and should be represented by man himself, or rather his sustainable development as of an offspring of nature (importantly, not as a «part of the whole» but as a «part inside the whole»), an eco-social and acmeological (developing) being.

And in this case one should not refer to environmental education aimed at promoting sustainable development of a joint «man-nature» system but rather to education which is meant to form an environmentally-oriented mindset as the central motivational and meaning-constitutive component of environmental consciousness and behavior. Therefore it is destined to form the environmental culture of every individual and the society as a whole, environmental culture as a measure and way of exercising individual essential abilities in the eco-social reality. Applied to professional occupation, this translates into shaping actual implementation of the mentioned qualities in the form of environmental competence of an employee.

This means that the «sustainability» of development must evidently go in line with an individual taking himself or herself as a subject of the planet's sustainable development. At that, along with other traits – ways of learning natural surroundings; environmentally reasonable (environmentally-oriented) behavior and personal (subjective) attitude to these surroundings; motives and needs; ultimately, the singularity of a person as a mindset subject, –

an environmentally-oriented individual should be principally distinguished by such life values and beliefs that are based on the inherent significance of nature and the planet as a whole, as well as on confidence that, being a homo sapiens, one is responsible for their conservation and sustainable development.

In this case one can refer to an individual with a personality which at its highest (ideal, acme) level of development makes one an «environmentally-oriented individual within developing natural surroundings», within a joint harmonious and sustainable development of the «man (personality, activity) – nature (surroundings, habitat)» system.

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## ЭКОАНТРОПОЛОГИЯ: АСПЕКТЫ ВЗАИМОДЕЙСТВИЯ В СИСТЕМЕ «ЧЕЛОВЕК – СРЕДА – КУЛЬТУРА»

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### АННОТАЦИЯ

В исследовании в гуманитарном ключе анализируются особенности взаимодействий в эколого-антропологической системе «человек – среда – культура». Подчеркивается необходимость изучения в данном контексте особенностей важнейших образований личности – экологоориентированное мировоззрение, экологическая культура, экологическая компетентность.

**Ключевые слова:** экологическая антропология (экоантропология), эколого-антропологическая система «человек – среда – культура», психолого-педагогический аспект, экологоориентированное мировоззрение, экологическая культура, экологическая компетентность.