

## Ecological deontology in the context of solving the task of ecologization of modern man thinking

### Deontologia ekologiczna w kontekście ekologizacji myślenia współczesnego człowieka

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#### Abstract

This article is dedicated to ground the philosophical and methodological concept of a new scientific discipline – ecological deontology (ecodeontology). The author considers ecological deontology as one of the means to address global problems of humanity. Thus, timeliness and prospects of ecological deontology in addressing the issues of *greening* of a modern man and society subject to practical activity is shown in the article. Scientific background of ecodeontology, its general principles are outlined, object and subject of the research as well as objectives and tasks of a new scientific discipline are defined.

**Key words:** sustainable development, ecological deontology, ecological knowledge, transformation of consciousness

#### Streszczenie

Materiał poświęcony jest uzasadnieniu koncepcji filozoficznej i metodologicznej nowej dyscypliny naukowej – deontologii ekologicznej. Autor rozpatruje deontologię ekologiczną jako jeden ze sposobów rozwiązania problemów globalnych. W artykule wskazuje się na znaczenie i perspektywy deontologii ekologicznej w rozwiązaniu problemów ekologizacji działalności przedmiotowo-praktycznej człowieka współczesnego i społeczeństwa. W artykule charakteryzuje się pochodzenie ekodeontologii, ogólne zasady, obiekt i przedmiot badania, a także cel i zadania tej nowej dyscypliny naukowej.

**Słowa kluczowe:** zrównoważony rozwój deontologii ekologicznej, wiedza ekologiczna, transformacja świadomości

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#### Introduction

The growing awareness of hazards from ecological and anthropological disasters, which in recent decades have become threatening, stimulated the rethinking of the *Man – Nature* correlation. As such, searching for new values and ethical regulations will contribute to its harmonization. Thus, a firm conviction was formed, that the existing, as well as potential environmental problems humanity faced at the turn of 21<sup>st</sup> century, was the primary evidence of a crisis of the belief system and the thinking paradigm

of a modern man. Unrestrained dehumanization of social relations, valuing anarchy, thirst of consumption, all-absorbing technocracy – this is a partial list of defects of the modern civilization which eventually materialized in the selfish and irrational use of natural resources, the polluting of the environment, the systematic extermination of various forms of life and the reduction in biodiversity.

However, man must face the problematic relationship with the world of nature (environment). It is our belief that – according to the standpoint of global evolutionary approach – man is simultaneously a pro-

tagonist (an actor) of several independent, but correlated, forms of evolution. It is referred to as biological human evolution (activity aimed at survival in the circumstances of changeable environment), socio-cultural evolution (activity aimed at improvement of social environment) and related technological evolution (transformation of the environment – natural and social, as well as a man, using various technologies). In this case, the last two forms of evolution relate to the significant impact on the outside world, and primarily on nature (which is the base for the human existence). Therefore, the three-way conflict between man, nature, and society exists *a priori*. However, the initiator of the conflict was, and will remain, man. Ukrainian philosopher Anatoliy Yermolenko notices that *the contradiction between a man and the nature is ontologically given, which always accompanied with ecological crisis of one kind or another* (Yermolenko, 2010, p. 398). Therefore, the relationship between man and nature is considered as a global environmental problem concerning the natural conditions of human and society existence.

### Prerequisites for deontological approach

In order to minimize the negative consequences, which have resulted from man's doing, the concept of sustainable development was conceived. Recently, this idea has gained considerable popularity. In our research we used the definition from the fundamental international document – *Agenda 21*, which was approved at the International Conference on Environment and Development in Rio de Janeiro (Earth Summit, 1992). This document discusses the need for all countries to take collective responsibility for the strengthening and the consolidation relating to interconnected foundations of sustainable development – namely economic and social development, as well as environmental protection at local, national, regional and global levels.

Meanwhile, a twenty-year implementation practice of the *Agenda 21* objectives demonstrates the key factor in the realization of sustainable development strategies, that is, values and principles that define the philosophical and ideological frames of society and state development, as well as the individual development of a person. The formation of a thorough and systematic environmental knowledge and environmental responsibility, forms a new environmental philosophy of modern man. Despite several decades of intense debate, there still remains the current task of understanding general planetary character – to prove it, it is enough to look through the publications of authors from different countries in recent years (Smith, 2000; Rhodes, 2003; Hardashuk, 2005; Reitan, 2005; Gore, 2006).

We think, that the harmonization of the *Man – Nature* correlation, in practice, includes the development and implementation of new standards for such

a relationship to ensue. Thus, the concept of *behavior standard* (in contrast to the term *behavior model*) is understood as something obligatory, unexceptionable, and proper. Meanwhile, a discipline that researches a *proper* sphere, is denoted by the term *deontology* (from Greek *deon – proper*). We are convinced that the real solution to environmental problems requires the deontological approach to solve issues of the *Man – Nature* correlation, as deontology distinctly defines the system of requirements for human's behavior in a particular sphere of life, as well as identifies their specific implementation. As a result, we consistently defend the idea that the means of *greening* of society practical activity could become a new discipline, which we define as ecological deontology (Matviychuk, 2006, 2009, 2010).

To understand the scientific concept of *ecological deontology*, it is necessary to specify the term *deontological approach*. Primarily, it is significant, that categories of appropriate, ideal, universal, normative are fundamental for analyzing social factors (Gaus, 2001). The central subject of the deontological approach consists of problems of an ideal world and norms, as well as their nature and validity as an important factor for moral regulation (Gert, 1988). The concept of *procedure* is extremely important for deontology, because compliance with certain procedures in deontological theories is the key to having good results. Rational limitation of absolute rights and responsibilities of individuals is also important for the deontological approach. This is caused by a generic link between deontology and moral theory, which poses the question about the correlation between being and existence (Guseinov, 1974). Moreover, contradictory-tense correspondence between the concepts, being and essence, act as some sort of structure for moral consciousness change throughout the history of its development (Drobnyskyi, 1974). Nikolai Berdyayev emphasizes that ethics begins with the opposition of being and essence (Berdyayev, 1902). Thus, the study of deontological issues necessitates uncovering the contents of the concepts essence and being.

We understand the most general idea of essence as ontological and ethically absolute, while being is a combination of various aspects of existence. The crucial point for our study on the concept of ecological deontology is that defined categories reflect significant moral contrast between the actual and morally-valuable positive state of circumstances. Moreover, essence in its axiological status, is something fundamentally higher than being. In other words, *essence permeating the whole structure of human activity is intentional, procedural and resultative comparison of actual reality and its value-oriented modification that goes into the long term and is converted by people from the potential into the actual reality* (Amelchenko, 2009, p. 81). Taking into consideration the aforementioned, we understand essence as the appeal to a certain ideal (individual or

social), as a special means by which man is directed towards progressive changes (or directed to weal). However, the problem of argumentation of the ideal (or weal), always arises in the moral theory. Yet, in the case of ecological deontology, such ideal (weal) – to a large extent – is the harmony of the *Man – Nature* correlation (or, in the most pragmatic terms, a question of the human survival).

Studying the features of deontological traditions and the application of deontological approach, we notice they are closely linked with the history of formation of ethical knowledge. The theoretical argument of deontology (conceptualization of the problem of proper behavior, obligation, its nature and socio-historical specificity) was carried out by representatives of many philosophical and ethical schools, and only in the 19<sup>th</sup> has it formed into a holistic study. Still, deontological study has formulated its own terminological and conceptual apparatus. The principal concepts for deontology are the concepts of *obligation, essence, imperative of behavior, responsibility, sacrifice* and *practical interest*. However, currently, many of these terms are a matter of considerable debate. For example, the question of the initial role of obligation in the ethical theory has not been solved yet, although such solution is of current concern since it determines the possibility of an adequate understanding of the role of holistic and active semantic field of culture in the formation of an individual. Ethicists also note that the ethical requirements and understanding on what actions people need to commit emerge from the notion *proper*. For a man these requirements are obligations; an aggregate form of general rules formulated by moral precepts, rules, and commandments (Gaus, 2001; Stratton-Lake, 2005). It should be recognized that the regulatory approach is common not only for deontology, but any ethical. Moreover, language, games and laws illustrate the way of action regulation through standards and rules. On this subject, the American philosopher Herbert Hart observed that a lot of groups of common rules, standards and principles are the main way of social life regulation (Hart, 1961).

In reference to the term *deontology*, it should be noted that it was implemented in the scientific field by the English philosopher and lawyer Jeremy Bentham. He introduced the term in the paper, *Deontology or Science of Morality*, which was published in 1834. Bentham used the term *deontology* to specify the theory of morality as a science of proper individual behavior or morals of in order to achieve a proper purpose – some kind of conduct rules. Today, the term *deontology* has a different meaning. The most common application of this concept is to indicate the direction of the applied or professional field of ethics (e.g., deontological ethics and legal deontology). The American scholar Samuel Freeman points out that in modern moral philosophy, the term *deontology* is mostly used to refer to moral concepts that ex-

plore the issue of obligation (right), the nature of values (weal), and the link between ethical concepts of rights and weal (Freeman, 1994). However, Freeman notes that in addition to the designation of the moral concepts, the notion *deontology* is also used to refer to moral principles or moral rules at all levels of generalization. Another American scholar Gerald House, formulates ten modern ways of understanding the concept of *deontology*:

1. as an ethical theory in which the right does not maximize production of the good;
2. as an ethical theory admitting considerations of justice;
3. as a moral theory that advances absolute moral commands or prohibitions;
4. as an ethical theory, such as Prichard's, in which duties and obligations are justified independently of the concept of the good;
5. as an ethical theory, such as Gauthier's moral contractualism, in which the concept of the right is not defined in terms of a substantive notion of the good;
6. as an ethical theory according to which our values and conceptions of the good presuppose justified moral principles;
7. as an ethical theory which holds that we have reasons to respect as well as to promote value;
8. as an ethical theory founded on, or giving a large role to, the concept of respect for person;
9. as an ethical theory in which gives pride of place to moral rules;
10. as an imperatival ethical theory (Gaus, 2001).

It should be noted that Gaus was not studying environmental ethics. His moral theories can be described as *deontological*, though he was not using the term *ecological deontology*.

The diversity of definitions regarding *deontology*, indicates that deontology – as a scientific phenomenon – has not received adequate philosophical and methodological conceptualization. On the other hand, the appeal of the theory of proper is caused by the need to search for effective forms which could contribute to various philosophical ideas and concepts in the area of practice. The research carried out on deontological theories suggests formulation of following thesis:

1. The original meaning of deontology is that a moral proper action is determined by a subject of an action and its notions of morality;
2. The source of deontological requirements can be both a subject of an action and an object of an action – another person (here the key notion for us is the concept of *another* because this *another* can be Nature as a complex of various forms of life);
3. Deontological conceptions generally focus on an action as the implementation of the rights or responsibilities, the compliance

with rules and regulations or achievement of moral goals – all of which are actions – makes deontology potentially practical.

The mentioned points are another argument in favor of our interest in deontology.

It is worth to mention, that in the past decade new types of professional ethics began to appear in the scientific literature: deontology of journalism, deontology of education, deontology of management, deontology of economics, political deontology and others. We believe the increasing interest of researchers from different scientific fields to deontology is caused by:

- the need for a transition from general considerations on the change of ideological beliefs and values of modern man (which, obviously, are largely caused by current global crisis), to setting effective schemes of mechanisms' activation for the formation of new, more humanistic (in particular environmental),
- awareness and appropriate style of thinking and behavior in the modern world.

On the other hand, appeal to the deontological approach generally corresponds to a trend typical for the modern ethics – its practical character and transformation into a legal regulative mechanism. We think it can be explained in two ways:

- it can be caused by excessive pragmatism and utilitarianism common for our contemporaries (including the knowledge of philosophy);
- on the other hand – a modern man faces a number of very specific problems in which the solution involves deep philosophical conceptualization (e.g., within ethical knowledge) and simultaneously requires immediate actions to resolve these problems or minimize their negative effects. As a result, deontological theory is increasingly perceived as relevant tools in solving these issues.

### **Ecological Deontology and its Conceptual Characteristics**

We consider ecological deontology as a theoretical science and an academic discipline that is defined by a system of special knowledge (ecodeontological) in regards to the effects of human activities on nature and a system of principles, requirements and norms of proper, environmentally oriented subject-practical or social (including professional) activity. Therefore, ecological deontology serves not just to fix the gap between proper (from an environmental point of view) and real life of man, but aims to search for values and moral standards that will eventually be reflected in formal and informal requirements and directives of psychological, ethical, legal, political and economic nature. Compliance with these requirements and their implementation in everyday life and professional activity will overcome the disharmony in the *Man – Nature* correlation.

We believe ecological deontology as a philosophical discipline will facilitate the rational and critical response to emergencies, which are accompanied by various problems that threaten human spirituality as well as human physicality. At the same time, the norms of ecodeontological morality pave the way for the creation of new strategies for human existence and progress which do not disturb harmony with nature. This harmonious message of ecological deontology is correlated with the paradigm of *common world* that was developed by German philosopher K. Mayer-Abikh (Meyer-Abikh, 2004). According to it, man is a part of nature, and culture is a human contribution to the history of nature. The philosopher believes even though a man diversifies and enriches the world of nature and holds a special place therein, but he cannot go beyond it. Thus, a person must withdraw from anthropocentrism which interprets nature as an environment in favor of nature centrism with a leading idea of a common world.

The common world according to its definition, requires common rules and implies a formation of the corresponding deontological space. If we discuss the space, expressed by the *Man – Nature* correlation, that is, we have the right to talk about the rules and norms of this coexistence – how it should be from an ecological point of view. Otherwise, we should talk about the ecological deontological space, and this, in our opinion, forms the true understanding of ecological deontology. The absence or nonfulfillment of such rules – in other words, neglecting of ecodeontological requirements – questions the possibility of harmony between man, society and nature.

In the context of revealing the philosophical and methodological concept of ecological deontology, we must emphasize that the object of study is the system expressed by the *Man – Nature* correlation; that is, the practice and specificity of human activity in nature, which is to meet basic human and societal needs. In this case, ecological deontology, in our opinion, should answer the following questions: What should be the content of such practice? What means, techniques and methods should it use to meet the needs of people with minimal environmental damage and, therefore, the life of a man? How should effective and reasonable conditions of such practice be created? What should a man of the 21<sup>st</sup> be like to overcome critical phenomena of our time? What personal qualities must such a man possess and what standards and rules of conduct be guided?

These issues are of fundamental significance for defining the subject of ecological deontology. Since the object of any science revealing different aspects of the research object determines its systematic content, we believe that the *subject* of ecological deontology covers the following points:

1. The problem of balance and correlation of proper and existing in human life;
2. Research of the content of actual consciousness of a modern man, which includes visual embod-

- iment (in a form and content) of values, knowledge, skills, abilities, needs, interests etc.;
3. Development and codification of rules, requirements and standards of proper behavior in human life;
  4. The study of the diversity of ecological relationships and actual human behavior, nature and methods of human activities as well as development of recommendations for their improvement;
  5. Studying environmental expectations of different social groups and demands they put forward to the result of human activity practices as well as searching for ways of compliance of actual activity and human behavior in the nature to the defined environmental expectations;
  6. Studying the possibility of universal system development of environmental requirements of human behavior as well as the development and formation of a motivation system and encouraging man to proper behavior from an environmental point of view in the *Man – Nature* system;
  7. Studying and summarizing the experience of environmental organizations (governmental and non-governmental) of leading world countries to create prerequisites and organize environmentally motivated human behavior;
  8. Development of a reasonable, ecological and moral point of view, system of requirements, norms and rules of human behavior in the modern world (primarily, in the world of nature).

Thus, ecological deontology aims to summarize the ecological system of human knowledge and provide it with the tools necessary to create environmentally defined principles, standards and rules which a man should guide in his object-practical activity, and a social sphere for the spiritual process of self-creation. In this case, the applicable objective of ecological deontology standards should be a person, society or individual professional groups involved in the practical aspects of implementation of the *Man – Nature* correlation that eventually will contribute to of the moral and ecological motivation of human activity.

### Conclusion

After reading the above stated, a critically minded reader will question, why the author did not focus on current environmental and ethical concepts in the problem solution of ecologization consciousness of modern man and society. Why not use the achievements of environmental ethics as a moral foundation to address modern global challenges? Why does necessity of ecological deontology eventually occur? To answer these questions:

*First*, we note that heuristic and methodological potencies of ecological deontology are determined by its generic relation to ecological and ethical

knowledge, spheres that in modern science nowadays have definitely particular status.

*Secondly*, we consider ecological deontology as a special area of research for combining two methodological approaches:

- *substantial*, applied in environmental knowledge, when the nature of environmental problems are determined on the basis of knowledge on what it should be and fixing of what it is in the environment;
- *functional*, that is characteristic of ethical knowledge and helps to understand what needs to be done to restore harmony in the *Man – Nature* correlation.

Ecological deontology, due to its integrative nature, creates opportunities for combining defined approaches, directs theoretical works on greening the consciousness of our contemporary into practice, and gives valuable and imperative prominence to environmental knowledge and ethical considerations that ensures compliance with environmental liability of a person.

It is worth to remembering, that ecological knowledge itself, as any natural knowledge, leaves no space for human subjectivity: here we are interested in an investigation of the truth, in particular, studying of environmental laws, as well as the possible consequences of their violation. However, understanding the admissibility of such violations, or more globally, the possibility of human interference in the nature and its laws, directs our considerations on an ethical level, and construction and conclusions we can make here will always be subjective and outlast other values and ethical beliefs we share. Thus, there is a need for a scientific discipline, which basing on environmental and ethical knowledge can formulate principles, requirements and regulations of the highest possible subject-positive human activities (narrower, a representative of particular profession). On the other hand, ecological deontology may be considered as a practical attempt to minimize the threats and risks of modern civilization, which are connected with its independence of the value-normative structures rapid dynamic of its development.

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