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Ecological Reality: From the Modern Scientific Perspective to the Contemporary Philosophical View

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Abstract:

Ecological reality is the very future of life upon which nations and human civilizations are built and established; this has been the inherited truth since the earliest eras of humanity. However, our reality today can no longer forge a future based on that same traditional pattern, precisely because the core of our planet, Earth, is suffering. Consequently, it has become impossible to sustain past practices due to the unethical treatment of our planet—a trend that has persisted since the emergence of modern and contemporary sciences, which have been stripped of philosophical reflection. Therefore, it is incumbent upon us to present arguments and discussions aimed at building a new ecological and environmental reality.

Keywords: Environment , Ecology, Philosophy, Ethics

المخلص :

إن الواقع الإيكولوجي هو مستقبل الحياة الذي على أساسه تقوم وتشيد الأمم والحضارات البشرية، وذلك ما هو متوارث منذ العهود الأولى للإنسان، لأن واقعنا اليوم لا يستطيع أن يجسد مستقبلا على نفس النمط لأن جوهره يعاني أي (كوكب الأرض)، وبالتالي عدم إمكانية ممارسة ما هو موروث وهذا بسبب التعامل غير الأخلاقي مع كوكبنا وذلك منذ ظهور أسس العلم سواء الحديث أو المعاصر المجرد من التفكير الفلسفي فكان علينا تقديم بعض النقاشات التي تهدف لبناء واقع إيكولوجي وبيئي جديد.

الكلمات المفتاحية: البيئة ، الإيكولوجيا ، الفلسفة ، الأخلاق .

Introduction

The construction and establishment of a contemporary ecological reality appears to have had backgrounds rooted in modern humanity, in that mankind liberated itself from the shackles of the environment that had, for ages, governed the conduct of human life. Humanity found itself in a conflict that impeded the very course of its existence, which drove it to confront a series of environmental obstacles by relying on what applied science could offer. Here begins the journey of transforming human life a journey that was, at its outset, a pivotal turning point for asserting the rational truth of humanity. However, this condition, adorned with the aesthetics of science, came at a price: it turned the natural environment into an arena for externalizing and embodying everything the mind could produce, so as to assert humanity's centrality as the very essence of the universe. Humanity felt entitled to enjoy the resources it found around it without rationality or mindfulness, having fallen under the sway of its own greed. Yet the

ecological reality responded in kind or more forcefully still for when the 1960s arrived, humanity found that it had destroyed its own world.

It is here that a rational, philosophical intellectual journey began in the contemporary era, known as the question: *"Where is the ecological reality heading?"* a journey that succeeded in presenting a perspective contrary to that of science and the experimental method, which came to be regarded as a double-edged sword, both beneficial and harmful. Scientists across various fields found themselves compelled to forge a close connection between science and philosophy in order to ensure continuity, survival, and the revival of a love for the ecological reality, as well as a love for the human self, in a manner consistent with the current condition in which ecology finds itself. At this juncture, we find ourselves led to pose the following problematic question: *Can new philosophical-ethical thinking alter the objectives of science in a way that serves the ecological reality in the future?*

The objectives of this research are embodied in the dissemination of ecological and environmental awareness, given that it is the collective responsibility for which future generations will hold us accountable. In so doing, we take the initiative in assuming responsibility to highlight the importance of the ecological and environmental subject. As for the methodology adopted in addressing the problematic question, it is the analytical method, so that we may understand and grasp the depth of the ecological subject. Our focus was therefore structured around the following outline: the philosophical foundations of contemporary ecological science; followed by ecological psychology; and finally environmental philosophy, through which we are introduced to a new form of ethics linked to the ecological-environmental world.

1. The Philosophical Foundations of Contemporary Ecological Science

"Ecology emerged in the late nineteenth century as a branch of biology, in the context of the increasing proliferation of scientific specializations. The German scientist Arnt Heil derived the term from the Greek word *OIKOS* (family home) and transferred its meaning to planet Earth, regarding it as our home as human beings. His aim was to express a new field of biological research dealing with the relationships that bind the members of planet Earth together." 1

For the contemporary scientific present has brought about radical and accelerating transformations in its applied fields in biology transformations that encourage the idea of appropriation and control without restraints or conditions through its attempt to alter the original pattern of living beings and inert physical entities alike, under the banner of human centrality, since humanity is the being that transcends most of what exists, not only at the ecological level but at the universal level as a whole. This prompted certain individuals attentive to the importance of the subject those who regard themselves as specialists in the philosophical field to offer a purposeful, forward-looking perspective, embodied in the importance of

the family home, that is, planet Earth: the home of all living beings (plants, animals, and future humanity), for this reality encompasses not only present humanity.

"Arniset Haikel presented a clear definition, stating that by the word 'ecology' we mean the study of the totality of relationships that bind the animal to its surrounding environment, whether organic or inorganic, and whether directly or indirectly... and it determines the concept of the physical, chemical, and biological environment that surrounds the living being." 2

Here lies the new starting point for modern humanity: offering a conceptual perspective that is simultaneously a practical one, seeking to present a balance between both sides — whether from the biological or the physical angle, both of which are grounded in the ecological-environmental reality. For it is a direct and sequential relationship in which each element completes the other. This relationship is the one that has been revisited anew, because the subject has several backgrounds that cannot be bypassed or ignored. The one who destroyed this relationship is the human being, boastful of his centrally-grounded rationality, established in the era of the Industrial Revolution.

In summary:

"The word 'environment' and 'ecology' in Western thought signifies the place in which humanity lives, and naturally this occurs according to certain conditions of life. Accordingly, it can be said that the etymological meaning of 'environment'... is a meaning upon which there is consensus: that the human being, as a biological entity, must reside in an environmental place suitable for life." 3

The revival of the terminological significance of 'environment' and 'ecology' is therefore in itself a turning point from empirical reasoning to philosophical inferences and conclusions concerning the concept of environment and ecological reality. This conceptual refinement established conditions and parameters in a mandatory and binding manner, determining

the new foundations for discussing and expanding the rational horizons required to reintegrate the human element into its ecological reality, with the aim of continuity a right belonging to everything that exists and is present in this world. It is not merely a matter tied to the present; rather, it is a lesson for rebuilding a future that witnesses a revolution at the level of ethics and thought, not a revolution at the level of science and its achievements. Here we may say that it constitutes a pivotal turning point whose essence lies, first, in the ecological reality, and second, in the future of humanity so that centrality may be transferred to the ecological environment.

"For the human being is, above all, a child of his environment. Nature cradles him and provides him with the necessary conditions for life. Hence, humanity must be aware of itself, its nature, and its environment, so that it may, as an ontological being, continue to exist and realize its potentials. However, humanity's pride in its rational power has driven it to challenge irrational nature." 4

Humanity thus found that, in order to continue existing in this physical environment synchronized with the contemporary present, it must commit to ethical parameters and revisit as previously mentioned conclusions in line with the new reality. For it must do so not because it is aware and attentive to what it has done but because of the destruction and devastation it witnesses, which exerts an effect on life as a whole.

2. The Negative Manifestations of Science Toward the Ecological Reality

In this context, we find that:

"Humanity's relationship with the surrounding environment and nature has varied in accordance with the growth of its knowledge and the development of the information through which it attempted to unravel the mysteries of the world and its various phenomena — transitioning from a state of fear and submission to the gods of land and sea, to which it was always bound

when unable to explain the mystery of floods." 5

For its rational characteristic imposed this upon it, being by nature a lover of knowledge, eager for discovery and for asserting its centrality whether consciously or unconsciously. It always resorted to attempting to help itself within this environment whose secrets it had not previously understood, and through perseverance it managed, across different eras, to achieve many accomplishments that brought it benefit. Its focus, however, was solely on the human element and therein lay its flaw; for its starting point was not correctly oriented toward both itself and its surroundings together in an ethical manner. It found itself in conflict with nature rather than in harmony with it, constituting a pivotal turning point in the world and the universe alike, leading to the emergence of an ecological crisis one that:

"...expresses the totality of environmental problems arising from the disturbances that occur in ecological systems or in the Earth as a whole, including the more comprehensive system in which life has developed." 6

This was the shock in which humanity found itself and, more gravely, it was the primary driver in founding and building this crisis as a way of life, under the banner of science and what the experimental method offered for a happy and easy life. Yet, parallel with the multiplication and development of methodologies, consequences emerged that resulted in the destruction of the planet which is in reality not merely inert physical phenomena as it was previously regarded, but rather the indispensable essence. For what nature offered in terms of contradictions and conflict in inert material phenomena was precisely what was fundamental and necessary for humanity's continuation. What appeared to be negative was, in truth, a divine blessing.

Here we may state that:

"Science may deviate from its primary function and become a source that feeds the will to power and tyranny in those who use it

for their personal interests, which conflict with the interests of humanity as such. When this occurs, consequences arise that are deeply regrettable, resulting from the conflation of the results of science with the function of science... which refers us to the magnitude of the great devastation that has befallen nature." 7

To speak of nature's pain is not merely a metaphorical description, as some tendencies may believe; rather, it is a reality that manifests itself in humanity's betrayal of itself and its material world. Here, humanity finds itself colonized by itself and destroyed by itself as well. For the residues of science are not limited to the destruction of the present alone, but extend beyond that into a terrifying future a future in which there is no peace for any ecological element, save for humanity and its mental capacities, which it also failed to properly utilize, contenting itself only with the initial premises of its mind without examining and scrutinizing their consequences.

"Humanity and the environment are inseparable twins that complement one another — they are, indeed, mutually supporting counterparts. The subjugation of the environment amounts to an assault upon it, inflicting harm upon the totality of biodiversity. For this reason, care for the environment is considered one of the most important civilizational benchmarks by which peoples are classified, and environmental studies are not the exclusive domain of developed nations alone; they have extended to Third World countries as well." 8

For planet Earth is an integrated whole whose parts cannot continue without the presence of this unity among its fundamental components which, in appearance, are different, yet are at the same time harmonious and constant. Despite the diversity and difference of human races which is in itself a motivation and a powerful distinguishing feature indicating the resemblance between humanity and its environment this diversity is compelled to coexist in communication with all members of the human race. The purpose

of this discussion is not to blame one group over another; rather, it is quite the opposite: it is an attempt to broaden and unify a purposeful vision that seeks to achieve the peace and harmony affirmed by the ecological reality and this represents the key to success that restores hope to both the material and the living sides alike.

For this reason:

"The American Worldwatch Institute issued a report stating that if new efforts are not made to prevent the corruption of the environment through pollution, the felling of trees, and the conversion of virgin land into unplanned farms, then 20% of the species of living beings that inhabit the surface of the Earth may become extinct within the next thirty years." 9

By speaking of a report on the pathological condition in which the environment exists, we mean that the environment previously regarded as inert, a giver without return, a view that prevailed for centuries and dominated human consciousness was proven by early humanity to be the subject of human brutality as a result of its tyranny over its surroundings. Humanity ultimately found that it had tyrannized itself, for trees and plants are part of human life; what, then, of the atmosphere and the natural system as a whole? Every part of nature today lives and communicates with humanity in an indirect manner, signaling that the environment and the ecological milieu are in a pathological condition that demands swift intervention in order to preserve and salvage what can still be preserved and saved.

"The human being is a species of living creature that manifests all signs of life with full clarity. The relationship of humanity with other living beings is a relationship as old as its own existence. From ancient times, it came to know the living beings in its environment and formed a mental image of them, viewing them from the angle of benefit and harm to itself. This perspective persisted until the emergence of organized human communities, when it became concerned with classifying the living beings

surrounding it in order to determine the nature of its relations with them. Among the first serious attempts in this field is what was undertaken by Aristotle, who classified plants... and animals." 10

What proves that humanity's first perspective was the closest to being correct is its view of itself as part of this external ecological world it sought to discover what benefited and harmed it, developing an instinct for self-preservation and continuation of life. Although its early existence lacked most of the conditions of life, what must be credited to humanity during that period is that it did not seek destruction or the exploitation of its ecological surroundings. Instead, it programmed itself to coexist with what was suitable for it. Yet we always return to the turning point that altered this relationship: when humanity reprogrammed its mind toward classifications in which it naturally placed itself at the forefront and here we cannot assert that it failed to succeed in doing so though its dealings with what surrounded it were mistaken in most situations related to the modern era, under the banners of the Industrial Revolution aimed at controlling the universe, and not merely the ecological environment. Humanity no longer saw itself as a part of the components of the ecological environment, but rather as master over all that existed, through its unethical practices against the components of the ecological environment:

"Yet the components of the environment form an interlinked chain that maintains the balance of the system, and every element completes the other. Any flaw or damage leads to the loss of environmental balance, whether with respect to living or non-living components. The environment is a cycle interconnected in all its parts; it is a complete ecosystem and one of the signs of the creation and greatness of God. Humanity's intervention must therefore be limited; otherwise, an environmental catastrophe of unpraiseworthy consequences will occur." 11

These theories and visions contributed to the advancement of the human element and to the reprogramming of human consciousness in a manner contrary to the old programming that occurred in the modern era not because humanity desired it consciously, but because it was compelled to establish it anew with the aim of continuing in life. We observe that the goal has not changed, but the manner of achieving and reaching it was entirely different from what had passed, and even from what had prevailed at the beginning of the contemporary era. It thus became necessary to re-examine the results of science across all its fields whether manifested in living or inert matter, or even in what was embodied on broad scales in the fields of astronomy and space, and so forth. What examines and discusses this is not science by its nature, for science was unable to critique itself. It therefore became necessary to revive the humanities and link them to an empirical study that differs from previous studies — and here, a revolution took place at both the scientific and the philosophical levels specifically.

3. Ecological Psychology

"Due to humanity's ambition to dominate nature which negatively reflected upon its physical and psychological well-being amid increasing noise and clamor environmental awareness became the slogan of many organizations in industrialized countries, and numerous conferences were held that concluded with a series of agreements concerning environmental protection... It is observed that there is a growing increase in environmental awareness demanding climate justice, through which a new vision for the future of humanity and its close connection to the issue of environmental and natural protection is being formulated." 12

The totality of changes that have begun to materialize on the ground as a consequence of what the ecological reality has brought upon modern humanity owing to the wars it waged against humanity itself and against the planet as a whole placed both sides in a position of loss. The environment no longer

yields its harvest, having come to suffer problems that give rise to psychological illnesses, for the atmosphere has been damaged, as have water and soil all of which are fundamentals that are no longer in their previous state. These are material problems linked to physical phenomena that are, at the same time, of organic and physiological dimensions, and are also accompanied by psychological-psychical dimensions. This was never accounted for during the establishment of the experimental science that altered the goals and aspirations of humanity.

"Ecological psychology holds that there is a symbiotic interaction between the well-being of the planet and the well-being of the human person; or, in other words, the needs of the planet are the needs of the person and the rights of the person are the rights of the planet. In the context of these principles, research has emerged addressing various aspects of the psychological relationships between humanity and the environment... and the ecological context is absent, whether in psychological theories or in the contemporary way of life." 13

What was known as classical psychology focused solely on the conscious life of the psyche, regarding it as the only life lived within the interior of the human being. Given the foregoing, we find that the ecological reality has begun to speak to humanity through the appearance of physical phenomena that fall outside the boundaries of the natural environment indeed, extending beyond that to the emergence of illnesses and psychological states, which also contributed to humanity's awakening toward its surroundings. This enabled humanity to realize that love of the planet is identical to love of the self, bound to the deep ego that plays a fundamental role in achieving a complete and balanced psychological life. Had humanity not experienced contemporary psychological disturbances, it would not have been able to grasp the magnitude of the future catastrophe that awaits it. The subject of protecting the ecological environment found wide resonance among psychologists, who

drew attention to the ecological reality in achieving psychological therapy for the human being is a child of its environment: the more it is separated from a state of ecological peace, tranquility, and beauty, the more anxious and tense it becomes. Going out into nature represents a contributing step in the process of psychological therapy, for the divine enchantment of the ecological environment is the greatest remedy. Here, ecological psychology emerges as a new specialization in the field of the humanities, calling for the necessity of preserving the ecological reality.

4. Environmental Philosophy (Ecological Philosophy)

"Environmental ethics emerged as a new discipline and as a philosophy grounded in the ethical relationship between humanity and the environment — on the basis that the human being is the only rational creature that was able, by means of its reason, to think about nature and to create means and techniques driven by its resistance to nature and its harshness... and on the basis that the human being is the only ethical creature capable of founding values and ethical standards that express its value dimension." 14

For ethics is linked to rational foundations that enable humanity to determine parameters and conditions within the framework of its value dimensions, which had encompassed all aspects of human life in order to define what ought to be in terms of principles, values, and behaviors that render it more secure and more fully realizing of its totality of rights. However, the subject here has taken new directions: the topic of ethics has transitioned from a human-to-human orientation to become a human-to-ecological-environment orientation — all for the sake of continuity in harmony with what is most suitable for the future. It thus became necessary to revisit previous ethical studies so that the subject of ethics would come to be distinguished by a character of comprehensiveness, through what is known as ecological ethics.

"It is this new environmental ethics that, since its emergence, has been linked to an ecological crisis the likes of which humanity had never previously experienced. This crisis expressed, at its deepest level, a human crisis first and foremost and, more specifically, a crisis of modern humanity in particular... which stripped humanity of its humanness and its ethical values." 15

These ethical values had been present in social dealings, and this theorization prevailed until the end of the modern era at which point humanity was caught off guard and found that it had been stripped even further of its ethical values toward its ecological world, which cannot be compensated for or reconstructed. Rather, what remains possible must be saved. The only solution is to reprogram human minds with a new ethical pattern in relation to its ecological world. Here begins the role of philosophy first, then it is supported by the other branches of the humanities with the prerequisite that this be conducted on a global scale, not directed at or confined to any specific group or nation. Rather, there must be broad participation to achieve ecological-ethical consciousness, so as to mitigate the severity of the problems that science directed toward the ecological environment. This is what environmental philosophy attempted to discuss as a new specialization in the philosophical context, possessing a future-oriented rather than a momentary vision.

Conclusion

The problematic of the ecological reality in its philosophical formulation remains among the most prominent issues that have brought about a revolution at the level of philosophical discussions, which played a role in enlightening the contemporary mind and re-examining the true nature of science. It was therefore necessary to refine the philosophical foundations of contemporary ecological science, for science had its negative aspects that manifested themselves in human life. Several points were addressed in an attempt to remind the reader of the importance of the situation, which led to the emergence of

ecological psychology. Accordingly, transcending this ecological reality must be achieved by directing collective responsibility one not confined to a specific group alone for the ecological environment encompasses planet Earth as a whole, and indeed the universe, since the entire environment is interconnected. The only being capable of changing the reality toward what is hoped to be achieved is the human being, who draws strength from its rationality.

What is known as environmental philosophy was therefore proposed, for it was the beginning of an intellectual, philosophical, and scientific journey in founding the new specialization known as the Philosophy of the Environment. This led us to present a series of recommendations, the most prominent of which is the inclusion of environmental philosophy and its ethics as an educational model not confined to academic research alone, but one that must take on a social character in which all segments of society participate: the media, schools, mosques, and so forth. It is thus that we can elevate a new and beautiful ecological reality.

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Footnotes

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