

ENVIRONETHICS: GLOBAL STRATEGY FOR ENVIRONMENTAL QUALITY

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ABSTRACT

The various subjects identified for deliberation, however vital, require the fundamental discipline of context and strategic coordination if individual issues are to be effectively resolved, and general environic improvement achieved.

Official and private endeavors towards the resolution of this dilemma in practical physical planning have not noticeably reduced the devastations that prevail. In consequence, further attempts must be made to promote strategies of planning generalization wherewith to balance the intensity of an ethical obligation, an environethic!

The concept arose from private discussions with Margaret Mead, Buckminster Fuller and Helen Bryan Garland during Earthday coordination meetings prior to U.N. events. The subjects explored include:

- 1) the moral rectitude of endowing particular biological entities with legal standing, with the right of defense;
- 2) policies requiring the adaptation of synecological disciplines in the practice of synecotectural design and synecopolitan planning using vegetation on any structure for fundamental reasons of energy conversion and conservation, atmospheric vitality, psychological and aesthetic benefit, and wildlife security (examples: design for least tern accommodation in Miami); and
- 3) the system of conveying these issues by the publication of a multi-language Environic Almanac, issued not as a periodic tome, but as a continuous file.

No longer can we afford to build for human convenience alone. Henceforward, the obligation to provide for all species must be recognized as an integrated planning strategy.

As the resources of the earth are degraded, the prospects of peace depend less upon the ethics of man-to-man relationships than upon the environethics of man/landscape interaction.

INTRODUCTION

As the range of human activities increases, so must the realm of ethical responsibility expand. New opportunities impose new moral obligations and new behavioral disciplines must be learned.

As the threshold of spacial invasion is crossed, the design ethics of absolute material encyclement becomes a moral imperative in the form of design concepts recognizing that the affairs of man are inseparable from environmental context.

Technological extravagance now enforces a revised regard for material and biological economy that has neverbefore had to be considered by modern man. As the limits in resource consumption are approached, a new sense of values is required which acknowledges that the human destiny rests upon environic quality. The traditional ethics between man and man is now superseded by environethics between man and the uncompromising consequences of environmental conditioning.

There is no denial of the near desperate environmental disgrace that prevails, affecting the atmosphere, the waters and the earth itself. The crisis in environic quality has produced, inevitably, a moral crisis of intellect and of human conduct.

The inherited ethical concepts must apply, also, to species other than human, even including inanimate no less than animate material in confirmation of the universal unities being discovered.

Aesthetic appreciation gives ethics visibility in that the modern condition of ugliness gives warning that the human indolence is amiss, that economy is ignored and that design is inappropriate.

Meanwhile, perceptive anthropologists of the past century have emphasized that the traditional morality must become common to all mankind, and include all that is affected by human behavior. The environment is therefore involved, and in

consequence, a revised concept of ethical conduct is now required that exceeds the conventional man/man ethic in favor of a man/landscape ENVIRONETHIC.

Abraham Lincoln expressed this ethical dilemma, most succinctly, when addressing Congress in 1862, declaring that "The dogmas of the quiet past, are inadequate for the stormy present. The occasion is piled high with difficulty, and we must rise with the occasion. As our case is new, so we must think anew, and act anew. We must disenthrall ourselves, and then we shall save (the condition of) our country." /1/

His exhortation to think anew in response to the environic stress that prevails is most timely, while the need to disenthrall ourselves of sterile economic practices in favor of strategies in environmental vitality is obvious when reviewing the anxieties of international commerce and raw material exchange.

The phenomenal rise in the number of private organizations determined upon the protection of wildlife species, their habitat and landscape reservations, in architectural preservation and special area conservation is encouraging evidence that the intellectual leadership required for the development of environethical disciplines is already vigorous as a basis for a new environethical dogma.

The issue is, fundamentally, educational.

"As our case is new," environethical principles must be taught as the basis of human behavior, as practical planning strategy and design discipline, of cause and effect, "so we must think anew, and act anew" in revising educational priority and in devising innovative public instruction conforming to reality.

At a time when this nation is in an agony of disillusion respecting its academic standards and directions, technological advancements proceed unrestrained by traditional convictions of morality. While a new dedication is urgently required, no real progress can be expected without a drastic change in our appreciation of the environmental vitalities. Modification of behavior is required in the realization that human benefit depends upon ecological hygiene, consequently, a shift in emphasis from ethnocentric illusion in favor of envirocentric reality is essential as the basis of any revised thrust in education.

CONCEPT

The concept of ENVIRONETHICS is suggested, therefore, as the focus of a program of immediate practical response to the mounting educational dilemma in matters affecting energetics, synecological accord, and deliberate environic design.

The urgency for energy conversion, with ever less pollution, is confirmed by experience of environmental befoulment resulting from the continuation of ignorant practices long sustained after their obnoxious consequences are known. The Clean Energy Research Institute, University of Miami, and The Inter-

national Association for Hydrogen Energy are to be congratulated for their research and educational initiatives. Their academic leadership must be encouraged beyond the mere technological problems at hand, and their individual endeavors concentrated upon some formula of universal significance and immediate application in the form of an environethic which stimulates accord between all the environmental issues of the "stormy present."

The extravagant and avaricious consumption of the earth's resources leads, inevitably, to a scramble for control of the materials that remain. Such competition provokes traditional conflicts and intensifies struggles for territorial domination. Wars, in consequence, seem inevitable and unavoidable for reasons of resource economy, quite apart from prevailing ideological and religious antagonisms.

The blatant processing of such resources hinders natural environic production over ever larger areas, and degrades environmental quality thereby aggravating the human and ecological distress. The energy conversion process are further impeded by the ever increasing demand for accommodation which becomes yet more desperate as populations multiply.

Under such pressures, inherited ethics, based upon practical compromise between man and man, can be effective no longer amid the restraints imposed by scarcity and by the penalties of degradation. Ethical conduct, arising from mutual concession, is no shield against the heavy hand of natural retribution. There can be no compromise with the environic consequences of the human defiance of the natural forces and physical factors.

Conventional ethics based on negotiation must now yield to the belief that environic dependency represents the reality of social survival. An environethic, which recognizes that mankind is maintained by the grace of natural vitality and abundance must be devised, upon synecological actuality. No prevailing ethical convictions governing human behavior can restrain acts of desperation arising from the need of diminishing resources and degraded habitat turned rancid by technological inadvertence.

An environethic, would determine behavior in response to ecological context. The recognition of the absolute imperative of environic condition must become the dominating academic commitment of our time. The primacy of environethics in achieving cultural reconciliation and synecological interaction is vital if the human momentum is to be maintained. While there may be nothing new in the concept of environethics, it requires formulation in terms of practical strategies in the use of resources, in conservation policies and as an educational agenda, even as a formula in achieving religious accord.

DEFINITION

The definition of the term ENVIRONETHIC is based upon The Oxford English Dictionary, /2/ and is offered for critical consideration by reason of simplicity in use and clarity of meaning. The term 'ethics', described as "the science of morals" and is

further confirmed as a "department of study concerning the principals of human duty."

The injunction of "duty", is perhaps the essence of the issue in that duty is not identified. Duty to whom?, to other humans, obviously, but does the obligation rest there?

In so far that everything depends, eventually, upon the condition of something else, it is logical to suggest that the human duty must include respect for the condition of the environment by which the quality of life (of anything) is maintained. Denial of that human duty leads to desperation, degradation and demise, and consequently the prime motivation behind the concept of ethics would seem to be the maintenance of conditions of vitality for any species. Moreover, the precision implied by the term "science" respecting imprecise morals is not strained in this context of environic quality.

The more detailed dictionary descriptions confirm this hypothesis with references to "rules of conduct recognized in certain associations of life"; "the whole field of moral science including, beside ethics, properly so called, the science of law, whether civil, political or international" and to "the treating of moral questions, and of ethics as a science."

It is only a small adjustment in scale to expand "the science of law, whether civil, political or international" to include environics, the condition of the environment. The philosophical issue implies, simply, that human well-being and environmental quality are synonymous.

Webster's Dictionary /3/ amplifies the Oxford Dictionary description with reference to ethics as "a system or code of morals of a particular philosopher, religion, group, profession, etc." Environologists, conservationists, biologists are obviously embraced by this description which would seem to be in conformity, also, with Aristotelian logic.

This ethical emphasis concerning environmental well-being is a common theme among the many distinguished American authors who have written with the greatest eloquence in terms of the conservation of quality. The environethical writings of John Muir, Aldo Leopold, Buckminster Fuller, Ian McHarg, Hugh Johnson, Emiel Christensen and Lewis Mumford are sufficiently emphatic to justify mention in this context. Such expressions have inspired leadership in the establishment of pioneering conservation institutions. The Sierra Club, The National Audubon Society and enumerable influential organizations devoted to general and to particular protection of environic quality, symbolize the cultural initiative undertaken by these vigorous and varied people whose greatest planning demonstrations, The National Parks Service, TVA and yes, The U.S. Corps of Engineers are the envy of the nations. Such initiative is confirmed by the official Environmental Protection Agency, and by the private Environmental Protection Fund, The American Rivers Conservation Council, The National Trust for Historic Preservation, etc., many of which have emerged in accord with their predecessors in Great Britain. These great institutions are supplemented by many local-interest protectionist groups dedicated to the welfare of species, scenes

and spectacular items in their infinite diversity, are sufficient to constitute a force that demands political recognition. Such a broad collective influence for good order demands coordination in terms of a cultural morality in defense of environic quality.

It is time, therefore, that some organization of private endeavor, including certain industries, emerged to formalize the ethical influences of these numerous and diverse groups on an international scale, especially now that the effectiveness of UNESCO seems to be in some doubt. The situation requires the moral rectitude that is clearly free of prevailing political shadows which characterize both national and United Nations operations. It is urgent that the "voice" of nature be heard as an independent expression in the deliberations of nations, registered by informed opinion whose critical-mass may soon become decisive in international affairs.

The creation of some environic focus, serving all conservation interests, emphasizing the essential unity which binds all such interests, formulated as a global strategy of environmental quality, is now essential. The United Nations has not shown, it seems, the necessary thrust to compete with routine political anxieties or to counteract the prevailing environic decline, the condition of the Seas for instance.

STRATEGY

The prospects for any effective reorientation in the handling of resources are indeed dim. Political objections are rekindled as programs advocating the redistribution of resources prompted by scarcities as conditions degenerate and as acts of desperation increase.

The human propensity to divide, possessively and politically, that which the natural forces cause to be unified, ensures that successive civilizations must contend with the consequences of continued defiance of environic disciplines. Some planning strategy which counters this insistent instinct is required. It can be devised upon the concept of environethics in recognition of the material realities of the earth, its evolving climate, and synecological continuity. By comparison, the triviality and expedience of transient human economy is obvious. Any code of morality in human behavior is better based upon the consistent evidence of synecological discipline than upon cultural illusion, however long sustained.

"The power of an idea whose time has come" is exceeded only by the force of retribution of a hostile environment enraged by human mistreatment. The domination of ethnocentric concept must be replaced by envirocentric humility.

While the concept of The United Nations perpetuates the political practices of territorial subdivision, so disastrous to environmental consistency, the actuality of 'earth indivisible' must dominate political judgment if the degradation of the biosphere is to be reduced. The value of what is shared, as compared with what is possessed, must provide the basis of fresh inspiration in the conduct of international policy. More effort

is spent on the maintenance of boundaries than upon the substances enclosed.

It is clear, however, that the emotional, possessive, nationalistic instincts are too ingrained to be revised without the influence of environic disaster. The fear of consequences, may enforce some modification of the possessive instincts, but the race to possess diminishing resources and the natural retaliation from environic injury indicate a bleak future.

Pleas made at The United Nations on behalf of environic quality and wildlife security, for the representation of non-human species in defense of their "rights" and reasonable expectations have been made to seem preposterous in the political atmosphere of possession.

While it might seem preferable to expand established instruments of international policy exchange, the necessary changes involve the entire mechanism of organizational inertia. The immense task of speedy public instruction, on a global scale, is so imperative that a new instrument to "think anew and act anew" is required. The delicacy of the human predicament is too serious to be left to governments alone, and environic political parties have already emerged in France, Japan, West Germany, and in The United Kingdom.

The impetus of political reaction emerging from environic evidence confirmed by scientific research, deserves expression which only environethical conviction can provide. The essence of every crisis is time and timing which applies, especially, in matters of environmental degradation. Time, here, is as much past as future in that the particular pressures with which we must contend began with industrialization, and are accumulative, as the incidence of acid-rain demonstrates so geographically.

In consequence, water should symbolize, perhaps, the urgency of environmental quality in the immediate well-being of any species, and in the destiny of mankind. Since all political and economic issues are now complicated by environic factors, ethnocentric considerations must be accepted now as envirocentric imperatives.

SYMBOLISM

Existing educational systems and facilities represent the first order of change in cultivating an informed populace. As the crisis in environmental awareness coincides with anxiety over educational inadequacies, a new focus of educational attention is timely wherewith to concentrate upon the velocity of the natural forces, and the human dependence thereupon. The creation of a vigorous instructional program based on environethics, therefore, would be seemly, and water should symbolize any new educational endeavor.

The appreciation of WATER INDIVISIBLE, the basis of biological perpetuity, offers both symbolic aspiration and practical evidence for the development of a strategy of general education in environmental quality and environethical standard as

the planning discipline most likely to redeem the degradations that prevail. Sooner or later all civilizations create and are condemned by their own water crises. It is strange, therefore, that human histories are not yet written in terms of water husbandry, in riverine economy, of coastal adaptation and adventure, in forestry, in wetland drainage and consequence.

In scientific terms, the absolute limit to the quantity of water available, in all its forms, seems established, its biological influence recognized. In religious terms, the symbolism of water is ever-present, while water has remained an integral part of any intellectual attainment. In architectural design, as demonstrated in the gardening arts of Persia, China and Japan, in the Mogul terraces, throughout the landscape appreciation's of the European renaissance inventiveness, to climax in the English parks of the eighteenth century, water has represented, consistently, the highest achievement of any cultivated landscape.

In respect of medical hygiene, the influence of water and its conditions are paramount. The visibility of water is, also, a psychological necessity, and the planning of fountains as part of urban hydro-psychotherapy is an essential precaution for the reduction of emotional tension and disorders in areas of high population density. The effects of water pollution, resulting from the careless discharge of chemical wastes, industrial, agricultural, nuclear and domestic, is now so all-pervasive that water-purity holds priority among the environic problems of most communities, and is at crisis pitch in many.

An international program in hydrodynamic strategy, similar to that now revealing meteorological continuity, is required immediately, wherewith to propagate the sanctity of water as the prime factor in environic redemption. As the abstract concept of 'peace' was formulated to justify the creation of The United Nations, so now some practical concept of environment redemption is required, and water may serve to symbolize the fundamental commitment.

Mistreatment of water is self-instructive. Defiance of hydrodynamic disciplines is genocidal. It is biocidal. Water symbolizes the environethical concept in action, as visible energy of infinite force, of cause and effect, whereby the form of any landform is as it is now perceived.

Bioethics in detail, and environethics in general, should be explored as the ultimate global cultural obligation and educational objective, if humanity is to survive and social progress be made on this planet, the mechanics of water purification and reuse (poiesis) is fundamental to practical space colonization now that the nation has determined upon this essential investment, commercial and military.

Environology, the study of condition in all its manifestations, constitutes perhaps, the fundamental cultural imperative of our time. The scale of this practice is global and indivisible. It involves every material, every chemical and thermal condition, for energy and environics are co-incident.

An unprecedented effort is required by private enterprise, rather than governmental agencies, to facilitate speedy coordination between the numerous conservation organizations, in response to their common concern with water quality, to initiate imaginative instructional programs in hydrodynamics, the environethics of the water dilemma and on the human prospect upon its successful resolution (for the program must be optimistic however bleak the reality).

HYDRORAMA

The cultivation of environethical concepts of behavior towards the natural elements and the synecological vitality that must be maintained requires stimulating demonstration. The subject can no longer be confined to the classroom. It requires the most innovative exposition yet devised in the form of an internationally recognized "center" in which all the characteristics of water are displayed, in conditions, liquid, solid, crystalline and vapor. The hypothesis of an environethic cannot be better illustrated than by the energetic powers of cause and effect as wrought by water.

Moreover, the concept of environethics must be revealed, also, in historic context, showing that the earliest cultures were riverine in origin, and were sustained by consistent respect for the condition of water, eventually emerging as civilizations.

The quality of environic hygiene of the earth, of the atmosphere and of the waters indivisible, is now so precarious as a result of human deliberation or of inadvertence that fundamental changes of climate are in progress, though the effects remain in dispute.

A new focus, therefore, is needed to dramatize these awful potentialities, applicable at any scale, in any location, for every purpose, human and ecological, throughout time. In response to this challenge in speedy public instruction an innovative investment has been proposed, for the promotion of understanding in water economy.

This facility may be realized in the form of an HYDRORAMA, a unique museum-like research and exhibition center, sustained by hotel/motel accommodation with conference halls and classrooms.

The proposed composition is without precedent, and is intended to establish new initiatives in urgent public instruction in water husbandry, amid the evidence of diminishing ecological resources and declining environic quality, world-round, as may be made visible by remote satellite data, continuously.

The Hydrorama will contain departments of energy conversion, meteorology, geology, hydrology, biology, ecology, forestry, wilderness and wildlife research, supplemented by permanent exhibitions and travelling displays on every relevant topic, maintained by national and international industries and commercial operations. The Hydrorama may offer headquarters offices for any conservation and energy organization as a means of en-

sureing improved coordination among the widest range of such private organizations, and the agricultural/industrial and transport enterprises whatever their degree of water dependence.

Because of the need for visibility, a central site has been selected, /4/ which lies astride the prime transcontinental highway and railway to entice the travelling public and to inform them while enroute.

The participating private enterprises will be expected to maintain their own educational personnel available to join with academic faculty in research and instruction, thereby contributing directly to the alleviation of the national educational deficiencies, as an extension of present services usually provided as documentation. Under the auspices of a distinguished University, courses will be arranged for the benefit of any speciality, coordinated with courses provided by other academic establishments. Classroom and research accommodation may be rented, through the hotel, for special sessions, as long as required, whereby schools, universities, here and abroad, industrial and commercial interests, conservation organizations and social groups can assemble for the promulgation of their special interests on an incidental or regular schedule.

Now that hotel accommodation has been standardized from coast to coast, monotony results, and the prospect of an enterprising hotel chain offering similar services in public instruction in strategic locations is an exciting investment probability, in terms similar to the regular university extension services.

The private funding of the Hydrorama may be raised in the conventional money markets, combining the appeal of entertainment, education and commercial ventures, vital environic economics.

Any nation which can support three Disneyesque attractions devoted to the pursuits of "fun" can, surely, sustain one focus devoted to the understanding of the most vital cultural obligation to confront mankind, the condition of the earth as symbolized by water, to inspire ENVIRONETHICAL conduct to ensure a more stable society amid a healthier environment.

SUMMARY

The Environmental Ethic is emerging, encouraged by historical research and by a variety of long-established and new national and international publications of merit. /5/ Public anxiety over environmental conditions is rising as degradation imperils all ecological systems in their infinite indivisibility, and in this context of increasing disarray, the progressive concept of ENVIRONETHICS is, indeed, logical. The ethic of environmental discipline provides, also, the means of expression favoring the "rights" of the non-human species, to ensure the protection of the irreplaceable aesthetic scenes, the general biotic well-being, and for the survival of particular inhabitants.

ENVIRONETHICS is required, also, to stimulate a revision of values in the practical planning of wilderness, wetlands, marine marshes, of the shallow thalaspaces, in redeeming desecrated landscapes, and in the urban bewilderment.

The concept of ENVIRONETHICS should serve as a balm, a lubricant, between the traditional religions, political and mercenary forces by which human avarice is energized. Such a concept could bring a changed and a charged consciousness of the human dependence upon the vitality of other species in their holistic interactivity, as may be illustrated in the proposed Hydrorama.

The metamorphosis from man-to-man (anthropocentric) ethics to man-to-land (envirocentric) environethics represents, perhaps, the ultimate confirmation of H. G. Wells' dictum that "human history becomes more and more a race between education and catastrophe." /6/

REFERENCES

1. Abraham Lincoln, Annual Message to Congress, December 1, 1862. The parenthetical interjection is added to emphasize the necessary shift from the human (political) to the environmental (biological) context.
2. The Oxford English Dictionary, Oxford University Press, 1971.
3. Webster's New Twentieth Century Dictionary of the English Language, Unabridged, Second Edition, The World Publishing Company, 1971.
4. Proposed site, North Platte, Nebraska, GREAT PLAINS HYDRORAMA, in the center of The State, in the center of The Nation and central to The North American Continent, above the Ogallala Aquifer, at the junction of the two river systems of especial significance, amid a variety of existing hydrological facilities, and influenced also by the last ice-age hydrographics, previously forming a sea-bottom in relatively recent geological times.
5. As exemplified by new quarterly journals such as: "Environmental Ethics": dedicated to the Philosophical Aspects of Environmental Problems, a publication of the John Muir Institute of Environmental Studies, U.S.A.; "Mimar", Architecture in Development, Concept Media, Singapore; "Land Use Policy", devoted to practical issues of physical planning and evaluation, United Kingdom; "Geotecture", journal of the Geotecture International Association, University of New South Wales, Australia.
6. H. G. Wells, "The Outline of History," 1922.